Understanding Anticipatory Socialization for New Student Affairs Professionals

A dissertation presented to
the faculty of
The Patton College of Education
of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Kara M. Lombardi

May 2013

© 2013 Kara M. Lombardi. All Rights Reserved.

This dissertation titled
Understanding Anticipatory Socialization for New Student Affairs Professionals

by
KARA M. LOMBARDI

has been approved for
the Department of Counseling and Higher Education
and The Patton College of Education by

Peter C. Mather
Associate Professor of Counseling and Higher Education

Renée A. Middleton
Dean, The Patton College of Education

Abstract

LOMBARDI, KARA M., Ph.D., May 2013, Higher Education

Understanding Anticipatory Socialization for New Student Affairs Professionals

Director of Dissertation: Peter C. Mather

The purpose of this study was to examine the anticipatory socialization experiences of new student affairs professionals. The focus was to gain a deeper understanding of how new professionals experience their anticipatory socialization, specifically the job search and pre-entry communication with their new organizations. The theory that emerged provides insight to hiring organizations on their hiring practices, graduate school preparation programs on the strategies used to prepare students for the job market, and graduate students and new professionals as they transition from graduate student to new professional.

A constructivist grounded theory approach was used to develop theory regarding the anticipatory socialization of new professionals. Data were collected over the course of 8 months with 14 participants. Participants engaged in 3 rounds of journal writing exercises and interviews at different stages of their anticipatory socialization. It was found that these participants experienced and managed a public job search, as well as a private job search.

Aspects of the public job search included the public nature of cohort membership, participating in placement conferences, networking and interviewing, and accepting a job offer. It was also found that participants were managing private aspects of their job search, which included redefining relationships, finding fit, trying to make sense of

experiences, varying levels of confidence, managing expectations, and seeking connections with others.

These findings contribute to the profession's understanding of the experience graduate students face as they move from student to professional.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my committee, Dr. Laura Harrison, Dr. John Hitchcock, Dr. Brittany Peterson and my chair, Dr. Peter Mather. Your guidance, expertise, support, and encouragement made it possible for me to reach the finish line. I would like to especially thank Dr. Mather for the many hours of discussion on this topic, prompt and thoughtful feedback, and for challenging and supporting me over the last several years. I am so grateful to each of you for being a part of this process.

I would like to express my gratitude to the 14 graduate students who shared their journey with me. It was a great privilege to have the opportunity to get to know each of these participants and their stories. They made this study such a wonderful learning experience for me. I would also like to thank all those at Ohio University who played a part in helping me move through this process, including the faculty in the HESA program and my friends in the College of Business, who cheered, supported, and let me sneak out of work to get some good “D” time in. A special thanks goes to Dr. Kent Smith for bringing my family to Athens and creating the opportunity for me to consider the idea of earning a doctoral degree.

Thanks to my parents, Paul and Denise Heisey, for ensuring college was an option for me. Their hard work and sacrifice to make sure I had the opportunity will always be appreciated as the foundation that made it possible to pursue my dreams.

I would like to express my deepest and sincerest thanks, appreciation, admiration, and love to my husband, Ryan, who has always believed in me. His love and encouragement keeps me going every day. At times when I doubted my ability to get this

done, he was there to push me. At major milestones, he was there to celebrate with me. I am so grateful to have him as my partner in life. Thanks to him for being a great husband and father and for pulling more than his fair share at home when late night and weekend writing sessions were required.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Anna and Emily, who motivate me to try my best every day. I hope that they will grow up to be confident young women who will always pursue their goals. I love those two little girls more than they know and I am lucky and proud to be their mom.

Dedication

Dedicated to my daughters, Anna Grace and Emily Ryan

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgments.....	5
Dedication	7
Chapter 1: Introduction	11
Organizational Socialization.....	12
Stage Models.....	14
Anticipatory Socialization for New Professionals.....	14
Need to Study Anticipatory Socialization in Student Affairs: Turnover.....	17
Statement of the Problem.....	19
Purpose.....	19
Methodology.....	20
Significance	21
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.....	23
Turnover in Student Affairs.....	23
Organizational Socialization.....	25
Socialization Tactics	27
Stage Models.....	32
Graduate Preparation Programs for Student Affairs Professionals	37
The Recruiting Process	42
Socialization and Organizational Relationships	46
Proactive Behaviors	50
Summary.....	52
Chapter 3: Methodology	56
Suitability of Qualitative Methods.....	56
Sample	57
Interviews.....	62
Document Analyses	65
Observation.....	66

Data Analysis.....	67
Theoretical Sensitivity	69
Positionality.	69
Credibility.	70
Summary.....	72
Chapter 4: Findings.....	73
Emily.....	75
Debbie.....	78
Whitney.....	81
Timarie.....	84
Kim	87
Geoff.....	90
Olivia	92
Brittany	94
Parker.....	97
Harrison	100
Sophie	104
Pete.....	107
Laura	110
Jeremy.....	113
Cross-case Analysis	115
The Public Job Search.....	116
The public nature of cohort membership.	116
Placement conferences: No small intimate affair.	120
Networking: Telling everyone you know.	126
Interviews: Being on display.	129
Accepting an offer.....	133
The Private Job Search	136
Redefining relationships.	137
Finding fit.....	140
Trying to make sense of it all.....	144

	10
Confidence coming and going.	148
Comparing self to others.	153
Managing expectations.	154
Seeking connections.	158
Final Reflections	162
Summary	168
Chapter 5: Discussion	169
Summary of the Study	169
Restatement of the Problem and the Research Question	170
Summary of Methods.....	172
Findings: The Public and Private Job Search	173
Discussion.....	179
Socialization tactics.	179
Graduate school as anticipatory socialization.	180
Recruitment as anticipatory socialization.	182
Pre-entry relationships as anticipatory socialization.....	185
Proactive behaviors during anticipatory socialization.	187
Electronic media and anticipatory socialization.	189
The two sides of cohort membership.	191
Transition theory as a lens for anticipatory socialization.	192
Implication for Theory	195
Implication for Practice	198
Implication for Research.....	204
Researcher's Reflection	207
Summary	209
References.....	211
Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Guides.....	226
Appendix B: Participant Journal Prompts.....	228
Appendix C: Coding Categories and Themes.....	230
Appendix D: Schema	235

Chapter 1: Introduction

Anticipatory socialization occurs prior to joining an organization. During this time, individuals experience a form of socialization in which they imagine their future roles and what it might be like to be part of a particular organization (Jablin, 1987, 2001; Kramer, 2010). Anticipatory socialization for new student affairs professionals takes place during graduate preparation programs, through the recruiting and hiring process for their first full-time job search, and from pre-entry communication with current members of their newly joined organizations (Collins, 2009; Jablin, 1987, 2001; Kramer, 2010). Socialization efforts play an important role in increasing newcomers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Jones, 1986; Klein, Fan, & Preacher, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). Furthermore, socialization is important because a successful adjustment to new roles and organizations results in increased job satisfaction and reduced uncertainty, which decreases turnover (Allen, 2006; Bauer, Bodner, Erdongan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Feldman, 1976a, 1976b; Jones, 1986; Wanous, 1980). Successful socialization may also result in greater identification with the organization and work group, and organizational fit, also tied to lower rates of turnover (Boehman, 2007; Myers & Oetzel, 2003; Waldeck & Myers, 2007; Wanous, 1980). Given these findings, the profession of student affairs would benefit from a deeper understanding of how new professionals perceive and respond to their socialization experiences, specifically anticipatory socialization.

Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization is defined as “the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211). Through the process of entering the field and joining new organizations, new professionals gain substantial information about their recently acquired roles. They also learn how their roles function within the larger institutional context.

The type of institution a newcomer joins plays a key role in shaping that individual’s professional practice and socialization (Hirt, 2009). Colleges and universities have unique cultures that require special attention for newcomers, and those who fail to understand, accept, and be accepted by the culture of their new institution will fail to grow into productive members of the organization or will be more likely to leave (Carpenter, 2001; Renn & Hodges, 2007). Within the institution, the socialization process should provide newcomers with plenty of opportunities to learn the philosophies and procedures central to their new department and division, as well as learn what is expected of them to perform their new role.

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) identify 12 socialization tactics, arranged in six opposing dichotomies, used by organizations: collective versus individual; formal versus informal; sequential versus random; fixed versus variable; serial versus disjunctive; and investiture versus divestiture socialization processes. These socialization tactics are described in further detail in the following chapter. Some of the tactics encourage the newcomers to accept the organization as it is without challenging the status quo, while

others encourage content and role innovation, in which the newcomer feels empowered to change or improve the knowledge or practices required to perform the role (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Jones (1986) organizes socialization tactics into two distinct categories, institutionalized and individualized socialization tactics. Institutionalized tactics have been shown to be positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Jones, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997b; Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007), task mastery, job performance, and perceived fit (Saks & Ashforth, 1997b; Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007). Institutionalized tactics reduces anxiety (Jones, 1986), role ambiguity, role conflict, and intentions to quit (Ashford & Saks, 1996; Saks & Ashforth, 1997b; Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007). Individualized socialization tactics force newcomers to proactively seek information to reduce uncertainty and increase opportunities for understanding their new organizational environment (Gruman, Saks, & Zweig, 2006).

There is value in organizations utilizing a mixture of institutionalized and individualized tactics (Gruman et al., 2006), but little is known about successful strategies for socializing new professionals in student affairs (Strayhorn, 2009b). Exploring how these socialization tactics are perceived by new professionals will develop a deeper understanding of the socialization process for these newcomers and shed light on the effectiveness of the various tactics.

Stage Models

Scholars have developed a series of stage models for the socialization process. One of the most commonly used models consists of four stages: anticipatory socialization, encounter, metamorphosis and exit (Jablin 1987, 2001; Kramer, 2010). Each stage represents a different point in time and contains unique characteristics within the socialization process. Because each stage in a model deals with specific aspects of the socialization process, the models provide a solid framework to examine the process (Buchanan, 1974; Collins, 2009; Feldman, 1976a, 1976b; Jablin, 1987, 2001; Mather, Bryan, & Faulkner, 2009; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Wanous, 1980).

The anticipatory socialization stage includes different activities, such as educational preparation, the recruitment process, the selection interview, realistic job previews, and pre-entry interactions between the newcomer and current organizational members (Jablin, 1987, 2001; Kramer, 2010). During anticipatory socialization, potential newcomers develop expectations and beliefs about joining a particular occupation and organization (Jablin, 1987, 2001; Kramer, 2010; Wanous, 1980). Unfortunately, these potential newcomers can also begin to develop unrealistic expectations about the organization and on the role (Kramer, 2010; Louis, 1980; Wanous, 1980).

Anticipatory Socialization for New Professionals

New professionals are “likely to experience higher levels of role-related and career uncertainty when entering a new [organization] than at any other time in their organizational tenure” (Miller & Jablin, 1991, p. 94). Organizational socialization, with particular attention to the anticipatory socialization stage, has the potential to play an

important role for new professionals' transition to their first full-time positions. Bauer and Green (1994) found that early newcomer involvement caused participants to feel higher levels of acceptance and experience less role conflict. The anticipatory stage offers an ideal time to begin integrating newcomers to the organization and assisting them with seeking accurate pre-entry information and developing important relationships with supervisors and colleagues.

Graduate students in student affairs preparation programs are, by nature of the experience, engaged in the anticipatory socialization stage of entering the profession (Clair, 1996; Collins, 2009; Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Mendoza, 2008; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Saltee, 2011). Graduate school serves as a time for individuals to learn the norms of the profession, therefore serving as an important component of the anticipatory socialization process. Through coursework, graduate assistantships, and other practical experiences, graduate students are beginning to engage in the sense-making that allows them to anticipate outcomes and events for their future professional positions (Mendoza, 2008). Expectations of what it is like to work in a college or university and in specific roles are being formed. The transition from graduate school to the first full-time position is filled with unanticipated challenges and anxiety (Chipman & Kuh, 1998; Jones & Segawa, 2004; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004).

Organizational socialization for student affairs professionals begins prior to the on-campus interview (Carpenter, 2001; Collins, 2009). As part of the exploration of vacant positions, new graduates will gather information regarding their new potential employers (Collins, 2009). New graduates will begin building knowledge about potential

employers and roles by seeking information through the job search process. Therefore, these experiences play a role in new professionals' anticipatory socialization along with other forms of communication to gather organizational information and insight into vacant positions.

The recruitment and selection process of hiring new professionals provides initial opportunities for both new professionals and organizations to begin learning about one another. When organizations understand how new professionals experience this process and how it shapes their expectations, they can refine their communication practices to ensure greater socialization success. The communication provided by organizations during socialization can facilitate new professionals' involvement, resulting in higher levels of perceived acceptance (Bauer & Green, 1994).

The pre-entry or pre-arrival period—the time between the acceptance of the job offer and the time the new professionals starts the new role—also is an important time period for the new professional to begin learning their new role. A well-developed staff orientation program for newcomers is necessary for providing support during organizational entry (Mather et al., 2009). Winston and Creamer (1997) suggest that orientation begin with the recruitment process and continue until the newcomer has acclimated to a new role. The pre-entry period should offer an opportunity for newcomers to begin getting acquainted with their new supervisor and colleagues.

Anticipatory socialization for new professionals includes graduate school experiences, the recruitment process, and the pre-entry period. As new professionals complete their graduate educations, they typically engage in the job search process.

Organizations that thoughtfully consider the socialization processes for their newcomers can acknowledge these challenges and work toward reducing anxiety through the anticipatory socialization process.

Need to Study Anticipatory Socialization in Student Affairs: Turnover

The student affairs profession has long struggled with the issue of early turnover of new professionals. Some have labeled it a concern and others have noted that turnover is necessary. In a seminal study, Bender (1980) found that 25% of student affairs professionals did not intend to do student affairs work for their entire careers, and that figure increased to 31% for respondents ages 23–36. Ward (1995) reported that the attrition rate of new student affairs professionals was between 39% and 68% in the first five years.

Lorden (1998) posited that perhaps attrition in student affairs is not overly concerning since such a large number of master's graduates enter the field not intending to continue in the field for their entire careers. That said, the issue of turnover in student affairs is well documented in the literature, and there is benefit to having a stronger understanding of the phenomenon.

Universities typically favor horizontal organizational structures rather than multilevel vertical structures offering limited opportunities for upward mobility. This creates a common practice for student affairs professionals to move on to other institutions for career advancement opportunities, the “up and out dilemma” (Holmes, 1982, p. 29). As a result, turnover is expected for those interested in advancing in the profession (Kortegast & Hamrick, 2009). Turnover that results from promotion within

the field or lateral moves to find a better fit within the higher education context is understandable. More troubling is when new professionals leave the profession altogether, particularly when the trend seems to be more prevalent with certain groups. Burns (1982) found that women left the field in higher numbers than men. The profession would benefit from understanding how pre-entry socialization experiences shape newcomer expectations and affect socialization outcomes that contribute to early turnover.

Early departure can be attributed to lack of institutional fit, poor career decisions, unrealistic expectations of the first position, low starting salaries, and lack of advancement opportunities (Barham & Winston, 2006; Winston & Creamer, 1997). The process used to socialize new professionals to both the profession and their first full-time positions may influence some of these reasons for early departure. Of particular importance is the impact of anticipatory socialization on institutional fit, making appropriate career decisions, developing realistic expectations, and understanding career advancement opportunities. The anticipatory socialization stage is when newcomers begin learning about and developing expectations about what life in the organization might be like (Jablin, 1987, 2001; Kramer, 2010; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Considerable research in the field of student affairs addresses new professionals. A majority of this research focuses on the graduate school experience and how organizations train and orient new professionals (Carpenter, 2001; Lorden, 1998; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Richmond & Sherman, 1991). The research that does exist regarding the recruitment process does so from the perspective of the

organization and recommends effective staffing practices (Carpenter, 2001; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Little scholarship addresses the importance of providing information to new hires prior to their start dates, but rather stresses the importance of providing new professionals with effective orientation once they arrive to the new job (Carpenter, 2001; Mather et al., 2009). There is a gap in the literature that focuses specifically on how new professionals experience their pre-entry period of the socialization process.

Statement of the Problem

Turnover in student affairs is costly and time consuming to both organizations and those who choose to leave (Collins, 2009; Tull, Hirt, & Saunders, 2009). Successful socialization has the potential to increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment and reduce uncertainty (Feldman, 1976a, 1976b; Jones, 1986; Wanous, 1980), but not enough is known about how socialization—specifically anticipatory socialization—unfolds for new student affairs professionals, and how these new professionals describe and respond to their socialization experiences prior to the onset of work.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how new student affairs professionals make sense of their anticipatory socialization experiences. I wanted to understand how new professionals describe and understand their own experiences with the job search and pre-entry communication with their new organizations and what proactive measures they take in the socialization process. The following research question guided this study:

RQ: How do new student affairs professionals experience anticipatory socialization, specifically the job search and pre-entry communication with their new organizations?

Methodology

I used qualitative methods to answer this research question. My interest was to understand and interpret how new student affairs professionals construct an understanding of their experiences with the job search and pre-entry communication with their new organizations (Glesne, 2006). Specifically, I used a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2002). This approach allowed for deep and thorough exploration of the topic. Through the data collection process, substantive theory emerged.

Qualitative interviews, document analysis, and observation provided data sources. Data was collected at three points during the participants' socialization process. An initial set of semi-structured interviews was conducted during the last year of participants' graduate school program prior to the official launch of their job searches. Charmaz (2002) describes theoretical sampling as means to develop theory. Theoretical sampling shaped and directed the subsequent interview guides (Charmaz, 2006; Glesne, 2006; Hood, 2007). A second set of interviews was conducted during the recruiting and interviewing phase of their job searches. The final set of interviews was conducted after the new professionals accepted a job offer, but prior to their start dates. Observation and document analysis also took place during the study.

The study's participants consisted of 14 graduate students from the College Student Personnel program at Midwest University. This purposeful sample fit the following criteria: all were finishing their graduate programs and seeking full-time professional positions in the field of student affairs. By targeting this sample, I was able to engage in several observations, conduct multiple interviews with each participant, and develop the status of "trusted person" for the participants (Glesne, 2006, p. 49).

Consistent with grounded theory guidelines, interview transcripts and field notes were coded, and memo writing informed the analysis process (Charmaz, 2006). Four stages of coding occurred: initial, focused, axial, and theoretical coding, resulting in the emergence of substantive theory. To promote trustworthiness in the findings, a number of credibility measures were put in place. These measures included triangulation, prolonged engagement, researcher reflexivity, member checks, peer debriefing, and thick description (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005; Glesne, 2006; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). These measures allowed for the development of a theory related to the anticipatory socialization of new student affairs professionals.

Significance

Not much is known about new professionals' socialization to the field of student affairs (Strayhorn, 2009b). Bauer and Green (1994) suggest that the socialization literature would be enhanced if more focus were given to the recruitment experiences of newcomers. Through communication processes, organizations' socialization strategies affect how newcomers develop pre-entry expectations and make choices about joining organizations (Jablin, 1987, 2001; Wanous, 1980). Understanding how new

professionals perceive their anticipatory socialization experiences, particularly the recruitment process and pre-entry or pre-arrival period, has implications for graduate students and new professionals, graduate preparation programs, and hiring institutions (Collins, 2009). Further understanding how new professionals experience anticipatory socialization would contribute to the field of student affairs.

By gaining information from new professionals about the strategies that organizations use to socialize newcomers, new professionals may be enlightened by the process and become more proactive in their own socializations. In addition, organizations that understand how their attempts at anticipatory socialization are received might tailor their strategies to ensure that they are able to successfully integrate new professionals into their organizations. Employers who are familiar with the knowledge and attitudes that new professionals bring into their first jobs can better plan training activities (Levine & Hoffner, 2006). Finally, graduate programs preparing new professionals for the field might also benefit from a more sound understanding of how new professionals make sense of their pre-entry experiences. A deeper understanding of pre-entry experiences could serve to strengthen graduate coursework and improve career advising offered to students transitioning from student to new professional.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Turnover in Student Affairs

Turnover of new student affairs professionals undermines staff stability and productivity (Ward, 1995). Attrition of new student affairs professionals carries significant costs in terms of time invested in educating, hiring, training, and supervising. High turnover results in lost efficiency, consistency and quality of services, and loss of institutional knowledge (Rosser & Javinar, 2003). When new professionals leave the field, not only are resources lost, but also these new professionals' potential is never fully discovered (Tull, et al., 2009). Within the higher education context, student affairs administrators are more likely to leave their positions than administrators in academics, business, and external affairs (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999).

Twenty-five percent of student affairs professionals do not expect to do student affairs work for their entire career; the figure increases to 31% for respondents ages 23–36 (Bender, 1980). Younger employees and those with fewer years of service are more likely to leave their positions than their older, more experienced counterparts (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999). The turnover rate of new student affairs professionals during their first several years on the job is between 39% and 68% (Holmes, Verrier, & Chisholm, 1983; Ward, 1995). Richmond and Sherman (1991) found a steady migration out of student affairs and into areas such as continuing education, academic affairs, or business administration. Many new professionals in entry-level positions anticipate remaining in the role for two to three years (Richmond & Sherman, 1991). Since the student affairs

profession tends to fill vacancies with external candidates (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999), it is not surprising that new professionals have high rates of turnover.

Early departure can be attributed to lack of institutional fit, poor career decisions, unrealistic expectations of the first position, low starting salaries, and lack of advancement opportunities (Barham & Winston, 2006; Lorden, 1998; Winston & Creamer, 1997). A commonly cited reason for leaving the field is perceived limitations on advancement opportunities (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999; Lorden, 1998; Richmond & Sherman, 1991). Another reason for high attrition has been linked to job satisfaction (Bender, 1980; Tull, 2006). Much of the literature that addresses turnover recommends that graduate preparation programs better prepare students for entry into the field and that employers implement effective orientation programs for newly hired professionals, improve supervision, and provide professional development opportunities to help retain new professionals in the field (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006; Winston & Creamer, 1997). An area that has not received much attention is the role of anticipatory socialization, particularly the experiences a new professional has during the recruiting period and the time following a job offer but prior to actually starting the new role.

Successful socialization can instill in new members a sense of belonging and reduce the attrition rate of new professionals (Tull et al., 2009). Of particular importance is the role of anticipatory socialization on finding institutional fit, making appropriate career decisions, developing realistic expectations, and understanding career advancement opportunities. The anticipatory socialization stage is when newcomers

begin learning about what life in the organization might be like (Jablin, 1987, 2001; Kramer, 2010; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). When new professionals are socialized to perform proficiently, students will benefit (Tull et al., 2009). Institutions should strive to find a healthy level of turnover that provides opportunities to develop current employees to maintain stability and secure new talent to ensure organizational vitality (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999).

Organizational Socialization

“Socialization is the process by which new members of an organization come to understand, appreciate, and adopt the customs, traditions, values, and goals of their profession and their new organization” (Tull et al., 2009, p. x). More specifically, organizational socialization is described as acquiring “the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211). Organizational socialization requires both the newcomer and the organization to be actively involved (Collins, 2009). This active participation by both groups is necessary for socialization, or assimilation, to be successful (Myers & Oetzel, 2003).

Communication scholars have disagreed on which term most accurately reflects the process of newcomers joining organizations. Much of the literature uses the term *socialization*. Some have referred to the process of socializing newcomers as *assimilation* (e.g., Jablin, 1987, 2001; Waldeck & Myers, 2007). Jablin (1987, 2001) refers to the socialization process as assimilation and defines it as the process in which individuals become part of an organization. His use of the term assimilation involves both the strategies an organization utilizes to train newcomers of the customs, processes

and rules in place—socialization—and the efforts of the newcomer to modify the role to better fit their own needs and skills, or individualization (Jablin, 1987).

In contrast, Bullis and Bach (1989) argue that the term assimilation assumes that both socialization and individualization occur for newcomers when, in fact, newcomers are not always involved in creating their roles within organizations. Some scholars believe that the term assimilation emphasizes newcomers' giving up their individualities to become part of the new organization (Bullis, 1999; Clair, 1999; Tierney, 1997; Turner, 1999). The term assimilation comes with negative connotations. For example, in a multicultural context, it implies a minority group is absorbed into the majority culture, a difficult struggle for non-dominant groups (Bullis, 1999). It also minimizes the power of an individual to shape an environment. In the context of new employees, each new hire brings his or her unique background and experiences to the organization, thus changing the culture, even while being shaped by membership in it (Tierney, 1997). To recognize and honor individuals' unique backgrounds and experiences, I use the term *organizational socialization* to refer to efforts made by the organization to influence newcomers and the responses and behaviors exhibited by newcomers as they adjust to their new roles.

As new professionals enter the field and join new organizations, they must learn about their newly acquired roles and the institutions as a whole. There are two basic kinds of learning in socialization: role-related learning specific to the job and learning organizational culture (Louis, 1980). Colleges and universities come in a wide assortment of institution types and cultures. These various contexts have the power to

shape professional practice and influence socialization (Hirt, 2009). For instance, the size of the institution can often affect how the campus operates. Small campuses may rely on relationships to facilitate meeting the requirements of the job. Larger campuses may rely on a set of policies to dictate when and how to operate within the organization. Those who fail to understand, accept, and be accepted by the culture of their new institution are more likely to leave (Carpenter, 2001). The socialization process should provide newcomers with plenty of opportunities to learn the philosophies and procedures central to their new departments, divisions, and institutions, as well as learn what is expected of them to perform their new roles.

The experience of entering new organizations is characterized by “disorientation, foreignness, and a kind of sensory overload” (Louis, 1980, p. 230). During the socialization process, organizations should attempt to reduce newcomers’ uncertainty in order to create a smooth transition that will ensure a greater likelihood of newcomer success (Wanous, 1980). Socialization tactics provide a good starting point to become familiar with the socialization process.

Socialization Tactics

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) identify 12 socialization tactics used by organizations, arranged in six opposing dichotomies: collective versus individual; formal versus informal; sequential versus random; fixed versus variable; serial versus disjunctive; and investiture versus divestiture.

In collective socialization, newcomers are put through the same set of experiences; in individual socialization, experiences are unique to each newcomer. New

professionals in residence life programs may find it more common to experience collective socialization when multiple new hires join the organization at the same time and together experience a training program. Hiring multiple newcomers to similar positions facilitates collective socialization. Student affairs offices that hire one individual in a given hiring cycle will likely use individual socialization tactics. Colleges and universities may use collective strategies to provide university-wide orientation to newcomers across the entire institution. Typically the focus is on institution-wide mission, goals, and values and is not specific to the newcomer's department or role.

The next dimension that Van Maanen and Schein (1979) outline is the formal versus informal socialization process. In formal processes, the newcomer has experiences that are outside of or separate from existing organizational members and the work context. This allows supervisors to carefully monitor newcomers in a practice environment and is useful when there is high risk associated with the newcomers' work roles. Role-playing during training, such as having resident assistants practice responding to emergency situations, provides a form of formal socialization. In contrast, informal socialization tactics do not separate the newcomer from the existing organizational members or the work setting. The newcomer learns through on-the-job training or experiences.

Sequential socialization refers to the degree that an institution's organizational socialization has specific steps that are clearly defined in terms of content (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). As individuals move through an organization, they understand that step "A" leads to step "B." In random socialization, these steps are not clear. Student affairs

will typically employ random tactics where newcomers are hired for a specific role. A newcomer who is ready for new challenges will either apply for a new position or be promoted within their current institution, or leave the institution for a promotion at another institution. With random tactics there are no specific guidelines or systematic steps for individuals to move from one role to another.

Fixed socialization processes refer to the specific timeline associated with each step of the socialization process. This outlines the time a newcomer can expect it will take to move to a target role or promotion. For instance, tenure-track faculty members can expect that in their sixth year of employment they will go up for tenure. During the seventh year, they will either be granted tenure or not. Variable socialization does not provide such timelines. Newcomers are not sure when they might expect career advancement within the organization. Variable processes may create anxiety and frustration for individuals who are unable to consult reasonable timelines to inform them of when they might expect a promotion within the organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Serial socialization provides newcomers with access to seasoned members of the organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). This may be in the form of a role model or mentor or it could mean the newcomers have access to their predecessors. In a disjunctive tactic, the organization does not provide such interaction for the newcomer. Since higher education administrators typically leave organizations for promotions at new organizations (Holmes, 1982), it is likely that newcomers will not have access to those who were formerly in their newly acquired role. This may be particularly true on small

campuses where a particular student affairs professional may be the only professional in their given role, e.g., only one orientation professional or one judicial administrator. However, supervisors could serve as role models to help newcomers learn about their roles and organizations.

The final dichotomy that Van Maanen and Schein (1979) offer is that of investiture versus divestiture tactics. Investiture strategies value, praise, and appreciate the skills and attitudes that the newcomer offers the organization. Divestiture socialization tactics seek to remove personal characteristics from the newcomer by breaking down the newcomer's self-image in order to rebuild it based upon what is important to the organization.

A custodial response to socialization is associated with sequential, variable, serial, and divestiture tactics. Collective, formal, random, fixed, and disjunctive tactics encourage content innovation or create an environment in which the newcomer feels empowered to change or improve the knowledge or practices required to perform a role. Individual, informal, random, disjunctive, and investiture processes encourage the newcomer to redefine not only how to meet the requirements of the role, but also encourage a change in the mission and goals of the role (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The use of these tactics may have the potential to shape how a new professional experiences anticipatory socialization.

Jones (1986) organizes socialization tactics into two distinct categories: institutionalized socialization tactics and individualized socialization tactics. Individualized tactics are individual, informal, random, variable, disjunctive, and

divestiture processes. Institutionalized tactics are collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and investiture processes. Institutionalized tactics are positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, task mastery, job performance, and perceived fit, and negatively associated with anxiety, role ambiguity, role conflict, and intentions to quit (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Jones, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997b; Saks et al., 2007). Consistent with these findings, Kim, Cable, and Kim (2005) suggest that organizations that seek to foster a high degree of fit between the person and the organization should implement a socialization plan.

Social (serial and investiture) rather than context (collective and formal) types of institutional socialization tactics have more effect on newcomers' transitions into organizations (Jones, 1986). Saks and Ashforth (1997b) noted that promoting social connections with organization members was the most useful mechanism for ensuring that new employees obtain important information about their work and workplace environment. These tactics emphasize the importance of newcomers having access to and interaction with others within the organization. Institutionalized socialization tactics encourage information gathering through feedback and observation with colleagues and supervisors (Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). In particular, newcomers who undergo fixed and serial tactics are "likely to receive messages about what it will take to perform proficiently in the organization and in their jobs, which in turn led to reduced levels of role ambiguity" (Hart & Miller, 2005, p. 303). Newcomers will gather information provided by other organizational members; these exchanges of information can be critical to ensuring a smooth transition for the newcomer.

Individualized socialization encourages newcomers to be actively gathering information that will help them understand their new setting (Gruman et al., 2006). However, “[n]ewcomers are more likely to engage in proactive behaviors when their socialization is structured and formalized” (Gruman et al., 2006, p. 101). This suggests that organizations should mix institutionalized and individualized socialization tactics. Organizations can benefit by creating a more tailored approach to socialization that blends both individualized and institutionalized tactics (Saks et al., 2007).

During the anticipatory socialization process for new student affairs professionals, it is expected that a variety of socialization tactics will be used. Of particular interest is how new professionals describe these tactics and how they respond to them.

Stage Models

Socialization stage models provide a framework to examine the socialization process (Buchanan, 1974, Collins, 2009; Feldman, 1976a, 1976b; Jablin, 1987, 2001; Kramer 2010; Wanous, 1980). Mather et al. (2009) divide the socialization process in four stages: pre-hire, pre-arrival, the first six months, and ongoing following initial entry. Others see socialization unfolding in three stages: pre-employment and orientation, transition, and settling in (Renn & Hodges, 2007). Jablin (1987, 2001), one of the most commonly cited scholars on stage models, argues that socialization is a communicatively created process. He arranges socialization in four stages: anticipatory socialization, encounter, metamorphosis, and exit. Stage models provide a developmental perspective of the individual-organization relationship, relying on an interaction between the organization and the individual (Bullis, 1993).

During the anticipatory socialization phase, newcomers develop expectations and beliefs about joining a particular occupation and organization (Jablin 1987, 2001; Kramer 2010; Wanous, 1980). Through a variety of events, individuals form understandings and expectations about occupations and organizations. Anticipatory socialization is comprised of two categories: vocational and organizational anticipatory socialization (Jablin 1987, 2001; Kramer, 2010). Vocational anticipatory socialization includes the experiences an individual has that shape that person's beliefs and expectations regarding specific career choices. One's vocational anticipatory socialization begins in childhood and is influenced by family members, educational experiences, part-time work, friends, and messages from the media. It develops and evolves over an extended period of time. For example, one might expect a lawyer to spend a significant amount of time in court trying highly sensationalized cases, as seen on popular television shows. These vocational anticipatory socialization experiences shape individuals' career choices.

The organizational anticipatory socialization process includes the experiences that influence one's beliefs and expectations about joining a specific organization. It usually is developed over a relatively short period of time and is influenced by the recruiting process, organizational literature, access to insiders, and the selection interview (Jablin, 1987, 2001). During anticipatory socialization, outsiders begin to develop unrealistic expectations regarding the actual workplace experience (Kramer, 2010; Louis, 1980). Incongruence between anticipatory socialization and organizational reality will affect the new professional's transition to the organization (Sallee, 2011).

The encounter phase of organizational socialization is the early entry period when newcomers are learning and becoming aware of the requirements for a new role (Jablin 1987, 2001; Kramer, 2010). “If the newcomer has not accurately anticipated his or her new job or organization, this stage can be a very traumatic period” (Jablin, 1987, p. 695). During the encounter phase, newcomers are learning what is considered to be acceptable attitudes and behaviors. There are three main sources in which newcomers draw upon to learn about the norms and culture of their new role and organization: the organizations, their supervisors, and their colleagues (Jablin, 1987). What happens in the encounter phase will likely have a significant impact of newcomers’ success within their organizations.

The third stage of organizational socialization is metamorphosis (Jablin 1987, 2001; Kramer, 2010). During metamorphosis, the newcomer accepts and adjusts to the new environment. Role conflict is managed by the newcomer during this stage. Rather than occurring at a specific point in time, metamorphosis happens when the newcomer becomes an insider (Louis, 1980). Status of insiders occurs when one becomes trusted with responsibilities and organizational information, and colleagues begin to rely on them as a resource (Louis, 1980).

A final stage is the process of disengagement or exit (Jablin, 2001). There are three phases in the exit stage: preannouncement, announcement and exit, and post-exit. During preannouncement, individuals begin to put out disengagement cues. For example, one might express job dissatisfaction as a disengagement cue or talk about other career interests as a means of sending messages about the potential of leaving. These cues may

be directed at any number of targets: one's boss, colleagues, family members, etc. Because the individual leaving has put out disengagement cues, the actual announcement of departure often does not come as a surprise. During the announcement and exit period, communication between the individual leaving and colleagues remaining with the organization attempts to reduce uncertainty. Narratives the departing individual uses to explain the exit, going-away parties, and the amount of experience the organization has with turnover will affect how both the leaver and those staying make sense of the departure. The period of post-exit is stressful for both the leaver who is joining a new organization and the stayers who experience uncertainty regarding the leaver's replacement. Exit is an important stage as it completes the process of organizational socialization from the organizational perspective. As members leave, new members join and the ongoing process of socializing newcomers continues.

There are several issues with a stage model of organizational socialization (Bullis, 1993, 1999; Jablin, 2001; Turner, 1999). First, it is difficult to identify when one stage ends and the next stage begins. Some have described socialization as an evolutionary process where one stage blends into the next (Bauer & Green, 1994). The evolutionary nature of socialization creates a holistic process where changes in the newcomer happen over time, rather than at discrete points of time (Adkins, 1995). Socialization levels rise and fall over time as a result of changes in leadership, management policy, and relationships with colleagues (Myers & Oetzel, 2003). The actual process of socialization may be more fluid than can accurately be described by a stage theory.

A second problem with stage models is that they are difficult to test without longitudinal studies. While many researchers have conducted longitudinal studies, such examinations may not extend long enough to get a true sense of the impact of stage model processes. A third issue is that the stage model perspective does not account for the individuality of the newcomers involved. All newcomers are not likely to be socialized at the same pace. Finally, stage models fail to recognize that as newcomers join new organizations, they are also leaving some other organization or situation (Louis, 1980). It has been suggested that “stage models of socialization may be useful in understanding socialization *into organizations*, but it fails to provide a full picture of work socialization and promotes an organizationally driven ideology” (Clair, 1996, p. 265, emphasis original). Stage models have also been found to be insufficient for explaining relationship development (Bullis & Bach, 1989). However, socialization models provide a convenient metaphor or visual representation that assist in understanding; like all models, they cannot capture the entire process (Kramer, 2010). Stage models provide a useful heuristic device for inquiry into socialization.

A stage model of organization socialization provides a useful framework to examine the pre-entry socialization of new student affairs professionals. The anticipatory socialization of new professionals is tied to graduate school experiences, the recruitment process, and the post-recruitment/pre-entry period. Categorizing socialization stages provides a beneficial perspective from which to examine new student affairs professionals’ experiences with joining new organizations. By understanding how new professionals make sense of their anticipatory socialization experiences, we can assist

graduate school programs and organizations that hire new professionals successfully help them make the transition from student to professional. Graduate students and new professionals also stand to benefit from a deeper understanding of how anticipatory socialization is experienced by those just entering the field of student affairs.

Graduate Preparation Programs for Student Affairs Professionals

Graduate students in student affairs preparation programs are, by design, participating in the anticipatory socialization stage of entering the profession (Mendoza, 2008; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Because individuals learn the norms of the profession in graduate school, that setting is an important component of the anticipatory socialization process (Quinn & Litzler, 2009). Through coursework, graduate assistantships, and other practical experiences, graduate students are beginning to engage in the sense-making that allows them to anticipate outcomes and events for their future professional positions (Mendoza, 2008). Weick (1995) describes sense-making as retrospectively creating meaning to understand experiences. It involves the interactive process of assigning plausible meaning to something that has already occurred (Kramer, 2010). During their graduate training programs, new professionals are forming expectations of what it is like to work in a college or university and in specific roles.

Graduate preparation programs provide an orientation to the field and initial employment experiences through assistantships and practica (Amey, 1998). Since many are experiencing their initial exposure to employment in their graduate programs, it is not uncommon that these assistantships and practica often serve as their first real jobs. Clair (1996) found the characteristics of a real job to be a decent salary, utilization of formal

education, and enjoyable work assignments with a standard work schedule. Having only limited work experiences affects these graduate students when they enter the profession; with little to compare their new organization and experiences to, these newcomers have limited knowledge to help them navigate their new setting.

It can be expected that the “transition from school to a first full-time, career-related job to be accompanied by more changes and, therefore, more to cope with than a transition from one work organization to another” (Louis, 1980, p. 236). In addition, graduates often lack the career competencies needed to successfully transition from student to professional (De Vos, De Clippeleer, & Dewilde, 2009). Self-authorship is defined as how one makes meaning of knowledge, how one views oneself in comparison to others, and how one perceives one’s sense of identity (Baxter Magolda, 1999). New professionals’ capacity for self-authorship will influence how they understand and negotiate this transition (Jones & Segawa, 2004). This transition from graduate student to new professional provides a number of challenges that must be navigated and negotiated as part of the socialization process into the professional world and into specific roles.

Despite the creation of a set of competencies developed by a joint task force of the American College Personnel Association and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2010) and Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2006), there is no consensus on which competencies new student affairs professionals need to be successful in their first full-

time, entry-level positions, which adds complexity to new professionals' early entry experiences (Dickerson et al., 2011). Some argue that the student affairs profession fails to define a clear set of skills and knowledge needed by new professionals and does not agree on the necessary graduate coursework to prepare students entering the field (Herdlein, 2004; Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009). In a recent study examining the expected and perceived levels of new professional competency, a number of inconsistencies were identified between the perceptions of the faculty of graduate preparation programs and senior student affairs officers (Dickerson et al., 2011). Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, and Molina (2009) suggest that the profession of student affairs consider focusing on curriculum and practical experiences to help new professionals develop a wide range of competencies rather than limiting skill development to those skills most referenced by entry-level positions. Various institutions place different priorities on skills that they seek when filling vacancies. Even when institutions have similar positions, it is very possible that they value a divergent set of characteristics in their candidates (Kretovics, 2002). This makes it challenging for new professionals to navigate new roles, sometimes making them question if they are in the right roles, at the right institutions, or pursuing the right careers.

The graduate school experience plays an important role in socializing new professionals. "Through socialization, students learn the norms of their target profession and make decisions about assimilating to those norms or turn away from the profession" (Quinn & Litzler, 2009, p. 69). The practical work experiences that come in the form of assistantships, practica, and internships have a significant impact on creating new

professionals' expectations. New professionals perceive their out-of-class learning in graduate school to be more closely tied to their work than their in-class experiences (Mather, Smith, & Skipper, 2010). From these out-of-class experiences, new professionals develop a clearer idea of where they might specialize in the field. Graduate students often seek full-time positions in the area of their internships or practicum experiences at a rate of almost 50% (Richmond & Sherman, 1991). An assistantship that affirms a graduate student's skills and attributes might encourage that individual to pursue that path as a career. When the fit of an internship is not quite as clear, the graduate student might seek other specialties or determine that he or she might be better suited to a career outside of the student affairs profession. "Experiences in graduate school influence students' opinions about the target career and their level of confidence in their preparation for it, as well as their subsequent career decisions" (Quinn & Litzler, 2009, p. 69). Graduate school experiences are likely to have a long-term impact that lasts beyond completion of the program and the transition to the first job.

Many graduate programs for student affairs professionals are designed with a community-based, cohort model (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009). An incoming class works together through the program requirements; as a result, strong relationships are formed. The cohort model provides students with a support system as they learn about the profession, encounter challenging experiences in their assistantships, and navigate the necessary coursework and practicum experiences. These cohorts can provide both positive and negative outcomes (Greenlee & Karanxha, 2010; Maher, 2005). From the perspective of the student, being part of a cohort provides the social connections that

assist in socializing to graduate school and the first professional experience (Tull et al., 2009). Having a group of peers to rely on expands the newcomers' network and creates a larger pool of connections when sense-making is necessary. However, being part of a cohort limits how the student learns to cope with newness, surprise, and socializing to a new environment. As these students become new professionals and join new organizations, they no longer have the support of the cohort in the same way. While fellow cohort members will likely continue to be supportive of one another and remain important colleagues (Tull et al., 2009), they are no longer experiencing the same events and therefore become less effective in assisting other new professionals with sense-making in new environments (Settoon & Adkins, 1997).

Scholars have called for the profession to pay attention to the preparation of new professionals and the orientation of newcomers as they join new organizations (Carpenter, 2001; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Carpenter (2001) briefly addresses the importance of providing information to new hires prior to their start dates, but mostly stresses the importance of providing new professionals with effective orientation once they arrive on new jobs. There is a gap in the literature that focuses specifically on how new professionals experience their pre-entry period of the socialization process. Since graduate school plays such an important role in the anticipatory socialization process for new professionals, and students typically begin their job search during their final term, it makes sense to begin the examination of their anticipatory socialization experiences when they are completing their final months in their graduate programs.

The Recruiting Process

As new professionals complete their graduate education, they engage in the job search process. Hiring the right person for the job is a major concern in the field of student affairs (Winston & Creamer, 1997). However, the process is largely about finding the right fit between candidates and institutions (Winston & Creamer, 1997). As part of the exploration of vacant positions, new graduates will gather information regarding their new potential employers. It is common practice in the field for new graduates to participate in placement centers through professional association conventions (Winston & Creamer, 1997). New graduates will begin building knowledge of potential employers and roles by seeking information through placement centers and formal and informal networks. This pre-entry knowledge plays a key role in the new employees' adjustment (Wanous, 1992). As newcomers gather information about their new organizations, they are preparing themselves to understand how they might fit in. Pre-entry information helps the newcomer learn what is expected within the environment and what is entailed to perform the work function, and provides an introduction to the social norms within the new setting. This pre-entry time should provide plenty of opportunity for the new professional to begin understanding the role and the institution. There is greater potential for productivity when new professionals understand the institution (Winston & Creamer, 1997). According to Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg (2003) pre-entry knowledge has been positively related to task mastery, role clarity, work-group integration, and political knowledge. In addition, realistic pre-entry

knowledge is related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Klein et al., 2006).

During the recruiting process, organizations attempt to influence and provide information to new professionals through various forms of communication. One such strategy is using realistic job previews. Realistic recruitment is a practice that puts forward true and accurate information about the organization or the role, including aspects that may not be the most favorable (Wanous, 1980). Conflict during the recruiting process between organizations and individuals creates challenges for providing realistic views of how organization and new professional might fit. The first conflict occurs because the newcomer needs complete information to make a good decision about which organization will be a good fit. However, organizations typically utilize traditional recruiting strategies and put forward only the most positive information or fail to provide accurate information due to the biases of the recruiter (Wanous, 1980). Overstating organizational attributes inflates newcomer expectations, making successful employee socialization difficult (Buckley et al., 2002).

The second conflict occurs because individuals want to generate as many job options as possible. As a result, many savvy job seekers do not disclose their shortcomings and often describe their skills and interests based on what they think the organization desires (Wanous, 1980). These conflicts create difficulty for both the organization and the individual to provide realistic previews of what it might be like for the individual to accept a particular role within an organization. The interview process should serve as a means to determine if the potential newcomer fits into the

organizational environment. However, because both the organization and the individual seek optimal results from the recruiting process, the outcome often ends up being less than perfect (Jablin, 1975). As a result, the employee selection process often does not create an optimum fit between the organization and the recruit (Ashford & Saks, 1996).

Most job applicants have unrealistic expectations (Wanous, 1980). Organizations stand to benefit by providing realistic previews for their potential newcomers. Realistic recruitment deflates the newcomers' expectations, resulting in more optimistic job attitudes and increased job survival rates for newcomers (Wanous, 1980). Bauer and Green (1994) found that those entering new roles with a realistic idea of what the role entailed experienced "less role ambiguity and role conflict, felt more accepted, and were more productive" (p. 220). Unrealistic expectations are not created solely by organizations. Newcomers can have difficulty separating their hopes from their expectations (Wanous, 1980). This may be particularly true for new professionals, who are eager to find jobs or may have excitement about the potential for joining a new institution.

Individuals joining new organizations can benefit from paying close attention to the information they receive during the recruiting process, asking thoughtful questions regarding what it might be like to work for the organization, and thinking about what it might be like to assume the target role. Recent college graduates who were able to consider what life might be like in a new organization prior to joining perceived having organizational fit, influence on their new environment, and knowledge of the culture of the organization once they started their new role (Holton & Russell, 1997). Similarly,

Adkins (1995) found that newcomers' pre-entry expectation of their job satisfaction is the best predictor of actual job satisfaction during the early entry period. New professionals' expectations at the point of entry play an important role in how successfully they are socialized into their new environments. The job search process provides a key opportunity for both organizations and new professionals to form realistic expectations.

The job search process for new student affairs professionals is an adventure with feelings of anticipation and fear and a time for newcomers to seek out institutions that offer a good fit (Chipman & Kuh, 1988). Having secured a job offer, the new professional moves into the next pre-entry stage of the socialization process. One could argue that the recruitment process ends once the new professional accepts a position and schedules a start date. However, the period between accepting a position and starting employment could be several months. This period of time has the potential to significantly affect a new professional's perceptions of the new organization, personal expectations of the new role, and the individual's ability to assume the appropriate attitudes to be successful. Providing detailed job previews and an institutional overview and appointing a transition team and mentor to the newcomer in the pre-arrival stage are recommended (Mather et al., 2009). An internal contact for the new professional during this period can help answer questions and facilitate a smooth entry (Carpenter, 2001).

Initial interactions between new professionals and their new supervisor and colleagues help to shape new professionals' expectations and contribute to a successful socialization experience (Buckley et al., 2002). Proactive communication can help organizations manage newcomer expectations, making it important for supervisors and

colleagues to be intentional with communication exchanges early in the socialization process (De Vos, Buyens, & Schalk, 2003). By providing clear and open communication, organizations can increase the likelihood that newcomer and organizational expectations are aligned.

Bauer and Green (1994) suggest that socialization research could be enhanced by paying more attention to the recruitment process. Much attention has been given to new student affairs professionals. A majority of this research focuses on the graduate school experience and how organizations train and orient new professionals (Carpenter, 2001; Lorden, 1998; Mather et al., 2009; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Richmond & Sherman, 1991). The research that does exist regarding the recruitment process does so from the perspective of the organization and recommends effective staffing practices (Carpenter, 2001; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Understanding how new professionals experience the process will enhance the existing literature.

Socialization and Organizational Relationships

Gibson and Papa (2000) identified organizational osmosis as “the seemingly effortless adoption of the ideas, values, and culture of an organization on the basis of preexisting socialization experiences” (p. 79) and suggested that pre-entry knowledge is not the same for all newcomers. Those newcomers with preexisting socialization experiences move from the encounter stage to the metamorphosis stage at an accelerated rate. During the anticipatory socialization stage, organizations can affect some of the pre-entry knowledge new professionals develop. As relationships with new supervisors and other new colleagues are developed, new professionals become more embedded in

the organization and develop more resources for shaping their knowledge. Many of the relationships that the new professional will develop with supervisors and colleagues begin to form during the pre-entry stage.

Active involvement in supervisory relationships is critical for successful socialization (Tull, 2009). The feelings one has toward the organization can improve as a result of a positive relationship with a supervisor (Myer & Oetzel, 2003). In addition, building relationships with supervisors has the potential to positively improve performance reviews (Ashford & Black, 1996). Relationship development between new professional and supervisor is important not only for helping the new professional find fit with the organization and successfully perform in new roles, but also help the new professional come to terms with unrealized expectations. The detrimental effects of newcomers' unmet expectations can be overcome with a quality newcomer-supervisor relationship (Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner, 1995).

Supervisors' level of support for new professionals is strongest during early socialization. New professionals and supervisors might consider building these relationships in the pre-entry stage. Tull (2009) points out that "supervisory relationships hold great potential to influence self-image, job satisfaction, and professional development" (p. 130). Many of the obstacles new professionals encounter during the anticipatory socialization process can be avoided when active, supportive relationships are formed between supervisor and new professional (Tull, 2009). Newcomers perceive that their supervisors' support decreases 6 to 21 months after entry, resulting in decreased role clarity and job satisfaction for the newcomer (Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009). It is

recommended that organizations provide better resources to help supervisors with the socialization of newcomers. Newcomers should be informed that it is not feasible for supervisors to sustain high levels of support to newcomers over an extended period of time. They should capitalize on the support they receive early in the entry process. To compensate for supervisors' inability to provide sustained high levels of support, newcomers should be encouraged to develop informal ties with other organizational members to provide support and resources for sense-making in the new environment.

Social tactics (serial and investiture) are related to positive adjustment, suggesting there are benefits to providing newcomers with mentors or helpful individuals who can assist them in navigating their new organization (Klein et al., 2006; Saks et al., 2007). Personal interaction between insiders and newcomers allows newcomers to feel less confused about their roles in their organizations (Slaughter & Zickar, 2006). New professionals who engage frequently with their colleagues are more satisfied with their jobs and work setting, and less likely to leave their current institutions or the profession altogether (Strayhorn, 2009a, 2009b).

New professionals are not the only ones who benefit from relationship development with existing organizational members. The practice of creating work cultures that encourage relationship development provides a source of support for all members of the organization. Social networks have the potential to be meaningful for both newcomers and existing organizational members (Slaughter & Zickar, 2006). Those who feel a sense of belonging at work are generally more satisfied and less likely to leave (Strayhorn, 2009a).

Positive relationships in a work setting have the potential to benefit organizations and employees. By creating opportunities for relationship transformation and high-quality connections between organizational members, organizations produce the capacity to help organizations thrive (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). Dutton and Heaphy (2003) argue that high-quality connections at work create employees who have more energy, demonstrate more resilience, learn faster, and find paths for their own development. High-quality connections improve the flow and rate of resource exchange, create employees who derive positive meaning about their roles with their organizations, activate their development trajectories, and facilitate learning.

Strayhorn (2009b) notes that “new professionals’ acquisition of information and understanding of a given profession are shaped to some degree by their interactions with professional colleagues and staff peers” (p. 155). Peers help newcomers develop knowledge and skills related to the office or newly acquired role. Since colleagues are as likely to supply organizationally consistent messages as higher-ranking employees (Stohl, 1986), leveraging relationships across the organization is beneficial. Fostering positive relationships with colleagues not only is useful during the socialization process, but also is a valued practice within the student affairs profession (Rosser & Javinar, 2003) and contributes to the development of professional social networks. Colleagues and supervisors are well positioned to facilitate the socialization process for new professionals within their organizations (Strayhorn, 2009a, 2009b).

The socialization of new professionals is not the sole responsibility of the organization that hires them. New professionals also play a role in the process. New

professionals' relationship development with supervisors and other colleagues during the pre-entry stage sets the stage for proactive socialization behaviors.

Proactive Behaviors

Organizations do not have total control over socialization tactics in newcomers' person-organization fit (Kim et al., 2005). The newcomer plays an important role in the process through "positive framing, sense-making, and relationship building" (Kim et al., 2005, p. 234). By the nature of being new to an organization, new professionals experience a heightened sense of uncertainty and surprise (Louis, 1980; Miller & Jablin, 1991). This uncertainty results in new professionals being mindful of the values and behaviors needed to perform their roles and to consider where there might be gaps and how to obtain the information to fill the gaps (Miller & Jablin, 1991). In order to reduce uncertainty and to gain knowledge that will help the new professional rewrite environmentally appropriate cognitive scripts, information seeking occurs. Miller and Jablin (1991) outline a number of tactics newcomers use to seek information, consisting of overt questions, indirect questions, third-party sources, testing limits, disguising conversations, observation, and surveillance. To minimize "high social costs associated with seeking specific kinds of information from particular sources, newcomers may select information-seeking tactics that are less overt" (Miller & Jablin, 1991p. 97). New professionals seek information to gain clarity on their new role and to better understand their new organization.

Socialization is not a passive process; new professionals should actively participate in their own socialization (Tull et al., 2009). In fact, new professionals play

an important role in their own socialization (Gardner & Barnes, 2007). Proactive behaviors are strongly related to learning (Ashforth, Sluss, & Saks, 2007). Being proactive in one's own socialization will help with adjustment to new roles and organizations. Newcomers find control in their new organizations by participating in activities such as information seeking and fostering relationships with fellow employees in order to diminish the sense of uncertainty that often comes with being new in an organization (Black & Ashford, 1995). Having a clear sense of how one is performing early in their tenure contributes to successful socialization; this suggests that new professionals should actively seek performance feedback from their supervisor (Bauer et al., 2007). Proactive personalities are related to mastering work tasks, integrating with work groups, and understanding the politics in the work environment. Newcomers who reported using proactive behaviors experienced more positive adjustment to these outcomes (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Gathering information facilitates role clarity, social adjustment, and job performance (Bauer et al., 2007). In addition, proactive career behaviors are related to early career success (De Vos, De Clippeleer, & Dewilde, 2009). New professionals need to be prepared to be proactive in their own socialization, which can contribute to career success.

Ashford and Black (1996) propose a model in which control serves as the motivating factor for newcomers' information seeking. The more a newcomer desires control, the more active the newcomer will be in the socialization process, resulting in higher satisfaction and performance levels. Those "with a high desire of control sought more information, socialized more, networked more with interdepartmental colleagues,

negotiated more job changes, and tried to put a positive frame around their situations” (Ashford & Black, 1996, p. 210).

Organizations should encourage newcomers to tap into colleagues and supervisors to help them better understand the culture of the organization (Settoon & Adkins, 1997). “If organizations want newcomers to play an active role in their own socialization and to facilitate their own adjustment, then they need to provide newcomers with social and interpersonal opportunities to interact and communicate with other members of the organization” (Gruman et al., 2006, p. 102).

New professionals use proactive behaviors to mediate their socialization to new organizations. The proactive behaviors used during the pre-entry stage of employment should affect what kind of pre-entry knowledge a newcomer obtains prior to entering the organization. These proactive behaviors not only should provide the newcomer with useful information about the new organization, but also help facilitate the development of critical relationships that will ultimately assist the individual to make a smooth transition from newcomer to full organizational member.

Summary

Turnover may be a natural progression in the field of student affairs. To achieve career and professional growth within student affairs, individuals must change jobs if there are limited advancement opportunities at their employing institutions (Kortegast & Hamrick, 2009). Staff turnover is understandable and often necessary to achieve individual career goals. When staff turnover is due to a lack of institutional fit, unrealistic expectations, and poor career decisions, however, it makes sense to understand

how new professionals experience pre-entry interactions with their employing institutions. These interactions likely influence how new professionals make decisions about joining organizations and developing expectations about what their new roles will be like.

New professionals who are just entering the field of student affairs are likely to experience a great deal of uncertainty during their first few months on the job (Miller & Jablin, 1991) as they are socialized not only to their new role and organization, but also to the field of student affairs. Organizational socialization, with particular attention to the anticipatory socialization stage, has the potential to play an important role in new professionals' transition to their first full-time positions. Becoming highly engaged early in one's tenure creates feelings of acceptance and reduces role conflict (Bauer & Green, 1994). The anticipatory stage offers an ideal time to begin integrating newcomers to the organization and assisting them with seeking accurate pre-entry information and developing important relationships with supervisors and colleagues.

A significant part of new professionals' anticipatory socialization occurs in graduate school. This is where introduction to the field of student affairs begins. Through examination of new professionals' organizational anticipatory socialization experiences, graduate programs can better understand their influence on students. This has the potential for graduate programs to make meaningful adjustments to their curricula to ensure that what students learn in graduate school aligns with entry-level job experiences they will have once they enter the field. Better alignment will help new

professionals develop more realistic expectations and reduce surprise once they join organizations.

The recruitment and selection process of hiring new student affairs professionals provides initial opportunities for both new professionals and organizations to begin learning about one another. When organizations understand how new professionals experience this process and how it shapes their expectations, they can refine their communication practices to ensure greater socialization success. The communication provided by organizations during socialization can facilitate new professionals' involvement, resulting in higher levels of perceived acceptance (Bauer & Green, 1994).

Proactive behaviors from new professionals during the anticipatory socialization stage provide the kind of information and knowledge necessary to make a smooth transition into the first professional position. Student affairs professionals who have increased knowledge, experience, and awareness of career options report higher levels of satisfaction with their graduate preparation and their professional positions (Richmond & Sherman, 1991). By creating structures that facilitate and encourage new professionals to be proactive in the anticipatory stage of socialization, the organization can shift some of the control of socialization to the new professional. As organizations welcome new professionals, providing a gateway for them to enter a career community consisting of supervisors and colleagues should prove beneficial. Parker, Arthur, and Inkson (2003) found that "career communities provide a basis for career support, a context for individual sense-making, and that they facilitate both individual and community learning" (p. 510). By transferring some of the control of the socialization process to

new professionals, they may become better skilled at setting and managing their own professional goals and career trajectories (Parker, Arthur, & Inkson, 2003; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological choices for this study. It begins with a rationale for the methods used and then offers a discussion of the appropriateness of constructivist grounded theory for addressing the research question. The data collection and analysis plan using in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis is covered. The chapter closes with a discussion of trustworthiness and credibility.

Suitability of Qualitative Methods

The goal of this study was to develop an understanding of how new student affairs professionals experience anticipatory socialization. Through deep investigation of these new professionals' experiences, I gained insight into what their experiences were like and how they responded to them and constructed a theoretical interpretation of their experiences (Charmaz, 2006). Qualitative researchers "seek to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them" (Glesne, 2006, p. 4). As such, the study resulted in the construction of a substantive theory on the anticipatory socialization experiences of new student affairs professionals.

A benefit of qualitative inquiry is the lack of predetermined categories for responses, allowing participants to be open and describe their experiences in ways that are true to their individual experiences (Patton, 2002). A qualitative epistemology holds that reality is understood through interactions and explorations of perceptions (Glesne, 2006). Therefore, qualitative inquiry provided an ideal approach to seek an understanding of new professionals' anticipatory socialization.

A constructivist grounded theory approach guided this work. Charmaz (2002) outlines three assumptions for constructivist grounded theory: (1) multiple realities exist, (2) data are constructed mutually by both the researcher and participants, and (3) the researcher enters and is affected by the participants' worlds. Through my research approach, I captured the realities of each participant. Each participant offered a unique understanding of the anticipatory experience and together we captured these experiences through the use of interviews, observations, and document analysis.

The use of constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling, and theoretical saturation of categories promoted the analytic power (Charmaz, 2002; Hood, 2007). I followed the principles and practices of constructivist grounded theory offered by Charmaz (2006). The systematic process she offers provides flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct grounded theory. Consistent with a grounded theory approach, theoretical sampling was used in this study.

Sample

An initial phase of the sampling process began with a thorough description of Midwest University's College Student Personnel program. This description will assist readers in determining the transferability of the findings (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Patton, 2002). Once this step was complete, I identified the individual participants for the study.

Observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis were conducted to understand how new student affairs professionals experience anticipatory socialization. Purposeful, criterion sampling was used to construct a sample of students completing

their graduate preparation in the College Student Personnel program at Midwest University. This allowed identification of participants who offered specific insight to anticipatory socialization for new student affairs professionals (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Participants were selected based on two criteria: all participants were finishing the graduate program and all were entering a professional job search in the field of student affairs. Via purposeful, criterion sampling, attempts were made to generate a sample with maximum variation, capturing participants seeking employment in a diversity of institution types including public and private and two- and four-year institutions of varying sizes.

To allow for relevant data collection and an analytic direction to emerge, theoretical sampling was used following the criterion sampling. Charmaz (2002) describes theoretical sampling as “sampling to develop the researcher’s theory” (p. 689). As data were collected, they shaped the direction of the subsequent data collection stages. Participants provided data at various points during the anticipatory socialization stage, including prior to the launch of their job search, early in the interviewing process, and after a job offer was accepted, but prior to the official start date, or pre-arrival, of their newly acquired role. Theoretical sampling allowed for the collection of rich data while fully developing theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2002). Due to the nature of theoretical sampling, data collection evolved as data were collected (Glesne, 2006; Hood, 2007). Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, it was expected that unanticipated results would emerge encouraging the exploration of additional sources of data (Nastasi

& Schensul, 2005). In the case of this study, interview guides were adjusted to encourage further exploration of ideas brought forward by participants.

This sample provided a set of participants who were currently experiencing the anticipatory stage of socialization. Their recently lived experiences provided firsthand accounts of how they perceived and responded to anticipatory socialization. By gaining a clear understanding of the participants lived experiences, graduate school preparation programs, hiring institutions, graduate students, and new professionals can determine how findings apply to their own context (Hood, 2007; Patton, 2002).

Personal characteristics and job search information were elicited in the initial data collection phase. Participants reported past work experiences, any graduate assistantships held as part of the preparation program, and the types of functional roles, institutions, and geographic locations they were seeking in their job search. Asking these initial questions ensured that the criteria for the sample were met. Gathering these data also helped to place data in context for comparative analysis across the entire sample. For example, participants searching for jobs at small, private liberal arts colleges may experience anticipatory socialization differently from their peers seeking jobs at large, public comprehensive universities. As the data were collected, the sample and the interview protocol evolved for further exploration of emerging themes, discovery of variation within theoretical categories, and identification of gaps within categories (Charmaz, 2002; Hood, 2007).

The sample size was 14 participants. This represented over three-fourths of the second-year College Student Personnel cohort at Midwest University. The literature

recommends a sample size of 15 to 50 for grounded theory studies (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). While my sample size fell slightly below the lower end of the suggested range, additional measures were put in place to increase trustworthiness. Measures of credibility were triangulation, researcher reflexive journaling, member checks, peer debriefing, and thick description (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Glesne, 2006; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).

A sample size smaller than the recommended 15 to 50 participants is not uncommon. Renn and Hodges (2007) produced a useful grounded theory study on the experiences of new student affair professionals using a sample size of 10. Bowen (2008) notes, "Sample size is important only as it relates to judging the extent to which issues of saturation have been carefully considered" (p. 140). Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) found that an almost complete full range of thematic discovery occurred within the first 12 interviews. In this study I interviewed each participant at three points, resulting in 41 interviews (one participant discontinued participation before the final interview). In addition, each participant provided three written journals. Data collection from the 14 participants attempted to exhaust the development of theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006).

The sample was generated with assistance from the College Student Personnel program coordinator. All second-year students were made aware of the study and invited to participate. Due to the multiple-phase process of data collection, it was anticipated that some attrition would occur. Only one participant discontinued involvement after he had participated in the first and second phases of data collection. Interviews took place at

convenient times and locations for the respondents, which encouraged ongoing participation. When participants were unable to keep scheduled interviews, rescheduling occurred.

This sample plan presented a series of limitations for the study. First, the small size of the College Student Personnel program at Midwest University created a challenge for recruiting a larger number of participants. However, the prolonged engagement and persistent observation aspect of the design, along with limited resources, prohibited expanding the sample size. A second limitation was the transferability of the findings. To allow readers to make judgments on their own about transferability, thick description was used to detail participants' experiences related to their anticipatory socialization (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Patton, 2002). Participants provided data based on their understanding of their individual experiences within the context in which they experienced them (Maxwell & Loomis, 2003; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). Because of the uniqueness of individuals' understandings of their experiences, transferability remains an issue even if a larger sample size were obtained. Therefore, the focus remained on prolonged engagement at Midwest University to allow for a deeper understanding of the respondents' experiences related to anticipatory socialization.

A final potential limitation was presented by the nature of the job search process and anticipatory socialization. The length of time participants were in each of the three targeted phases—prior to launching a job search, early in the interview process, and after accepting a job offer, but prior to start date—varied for each participant. In some cases, a phase was as short as a week or two. Of particular concern was the period of time

between the job offer and the official start date. Since this period was marked as an important time for data collection for this study, those with abbreviated time frames were difficult to interview while in this phase. It was not possible to conduct a final interview before one participant's start date. Our final interview occurred during her second week on the job.

Interviews, observation, and document analysis with the sample provided a deeper understanding of how new student affairs professionals experienced anticipatory socialization as they enter the field of student affairs. What follows is a discussion of how each of these data collection processes was handled in this study.

Interviews

Interviews are well suited for studying how participants describe their experiences and their perspectives of activities and events (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2002). They allow for in-depth exploration of phenomenon and are therefore a useful method for this type of inquiry (Charmaz, 2006). From an interpretive constructionist point of view, gathering the accounts from participants offered a useful tool for determining common expectations and meanings participants assigned to activities (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Since newcomers relied on how they make meaning of their experience to make decisions about joining or leaving organizations, it was important to get a sense of how they interpreted their anticipatory socialization experiences.

There is some controversy as to whether individuals' retrospective explanations of their experiences are a productive means for examining socialization. Saks and Ashforth (1997a) argue that "retrospective accounts of individuals' socialization experiences do

not adequately capture the dynamic nature of the socialization process” (p. 256).

However, when individuals rely on their interpretations of their experiences to make decisions about how to respond, whether they remain with the organization or the profession, there is significant value to understanding how they come to their decisions. Bauer and Green (1994) note, “When individual perceptions and attitudes are determining employees’ responses to work, self-reports should be a valid and useful source of data” (p. 22).

I interviewed participants at multiple points during their anticipatory socialization processes resulting in a total of 41 interviews. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to one hour in length. The initial interviews took place prior to the participants’ launch of their professional job searches. During this stage, the focus was on early expectations about the job search process and joining a new organization. Theoretical sampling guided the remaining interview phases (Charmaz, 2002; Hood, 2007). “Theoretical sampling ensures that you construct full and robust categories and leads you to clarify relationships between categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 103). Grounded theory requires direct control over the construction of data so as ongoing analysis occurs, subsequent data collection will evolve (Charmaz, 2006). The analysis of early interviews shaped the interviews at later phases to encourage emerging categories.

A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A) was used in the first interview phase. These questions provided flexibility to explore and probe topics not specifically identified in the guide (Patton, 2002). Analysis of initial interviews resulted in semi-structured interview guides for subsequent interviews.

Prior to beginning each interview, the participants were informed of the confidential nature of the interview and asked for permission for the session to be recorded. The process of building rapport with participants began during the first scheduled interview as I collected basic descriptive information such as their graduate assistantship experiences, past work histories, and types of roles, institutions, and geographic locations they were seeking for their first full-time professional student affairs positions. In addition, a brief overview of the study was provided to each participant prior to beginning the question phase of the initial interview. These interactions helped to build trust between the participants and me (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Field notes were taken during each interview session. These notes captured key themes and ideas that emerged from the session. They were reviewed and became part of the initial analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002).

Interviews consisted of open-ended questions designed to allow participants to take the interview in the direction they chose, using their own words (Patton, 2002). Initial interviews began with a broadly worded question that served as a means for the participants to walk the interviewer through their early anticipatory socialization experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The purpose of using these broad questions was to gain a solid understanding of the participants' experiences, to encourage unfiltered responses, and to evoke unexpected themes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Beginning with broad questions also allowed for appropriate probes. Glesne (2006) describes probes as requests for more explanation, clarification, description, or evaluation. They provided a

means for exploring themes that were unanticipated by the researcher and provided a mechanism for getting a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences.

In this study, the target was for each participant to engage in a minimum of three interviews at three different points in the anticipatory socialization process. Those periods included the time prior to launching a job search, early in the interview process and finally, in the period following acceptance of a job offer, but prior to beginning the new job. In addition to interviewing, document analysis comprised part of the data collection process.

Document Analyses

Document analysis added to the data collection process in a couple of important ways. They corroborated interviews, increasing the trustworthiness of the findings (Glesne, 2006). More importantly they raised questions about hunches and shaped new directions for observations and interviews (Glesne, 2006). The documents that were analyzed for this study included vacancy position descriptions, resumes and cover letters of the participants, and participant journals. These documents were analyzed throughout the data collection process.

Each participant was asked to journal at several points during the process. Participants were asked to respond to brief prompts regarding their anticipatory socialization experiences (Renn & Hodges, 2007). The first journaling phase also included a question regarding their aspirations for their first full-time positions and documented their concerns with the job search process (Appendix B). Subsequent journal prompts followed the guidelines set forth by a constructivist grounded theory

approach and focused on categories that emerged from analysis of previously gathered data. Participants were asked to journal after job interviews and after they have accepted a job offer. These elicited texts provided another source of rich data. They “elicit thoughts, feelings, and concerns of the thinking, acting subject as well as give the researcher ideas about what structures and cultural values influence the person” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 36).

The final source of data consisted of a series of observations. Observations provided an additional set of information that enriched the analysis process and strengthened the study’s findings.

Observation

Participant observation was the third data collection source of this study. “[G]etting close to the people in a setting through firsthand experience permits the inquirer to draw on personal knowledge during the formal interpretation stage of analysis” (Patton, 2002, p. 264). A few observational settings fostered my ability to gain firsthand knowledge regarding the job search process. Observation settings included the participants’ practicum seminar in which they discuss the job search process and informal interactions with the participants, such as brief encounters on campus or discussions over a cup of coffee. Following these observations I took field notes in order to capture “ideas, reflections, hunches, and notes about patterns that seem to be emerging” (Glesne, 2006, p. 55).

According to grounded theory guidelines, analysis occurred concurrently with data collection (Charmaz, 2006). Analysis happened at each stage of data collection.

Data Analysis

Constructivist grounded theory results in the development of interpretive theory that emphasizes understanding rather than explanation. As such, it assumes “emergent, multiple realities; indeterminacy; facts and values as inextricably linked; truth as provisional; and social life as processual” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 127). A constructed, interpretive theory was a product of the shared creation of knowledge with the research participants. The analysis process began with memo writing and data coding and concluded with the development of interpretive theory regarding new student affairs professionals’ anticipatory socialization experiences.

Key features of grounded theory include “coding for action and theory construction, successive comparative analysis, inductive-abductive logic, memo-writing, theoretical sampling, and theoretical integration” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2009, p. 51). Consistent with grounded theory, I engaged in multiple levels of coding (Charmaz, 2006). I coded interview transcriptions, field notes from interviews and observations, and participant journals. Coding occurred at four levels: initial, focused, axial, and theoretical (Charmaz, 2006). I began with initial coding, followed with focused coding that was “more directed, selective, and conceptual” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). The purpose of the third level of coding, axial, was to “sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data and reassemble them in a new way” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). Finally, I concluded with theoretical coding that moved the data in a theoretical direction (Charmaz, 2006).

Focused coding resulted in a series of categories that were organized into themes during the axial coding phase. These themes resulted in the creation of the public and

private job search theory. For example, during the focused coding stage the following codes emerged: connecting to people, engaging with interviewer, feeling welcome, feeling valued, feeling support, finding fit, finding happiness, getting to know them, identifying with colleagues, making personal connections, peer influence, positive communication, positive experience, role of colleagues, role of social event, role of supervisor, and seeing self in job/organization. These codes created the subcategory *seeking connections*. Seeking connections was one of the seven themes that comprised the private aspects of the job search process. Additional categories and themes follow (Appendix C).

The purpose of memo writing was for discovery and theory development. Analysis occurred through memo writing and diagramming, which helped to shape the collection and subsequent analyses of data (Lempert, 2009). Memo writing provided a process for becoming engaged with the data, developing ideas, and fine-tuning subsequent data gathering (Charmaz, 2006). It is through the memo-writing process that I initiated the constant comparison process, fleshed out emergent concepts, and began making connections between categories within my data (Wasserman, Clair, & Wilson, 2009). Continuous engagement with the data and ongoing memo writing guided the theory development (Lempert, 2009). Through this process, codes were raised to categories and those categories shaped the emerging theory.

Theoretical Sensitivity

Positionality.

As a qualitative researcher enters the field, she will have some level of a priori ideas related to the topic studied (Charmaz, 2006). It is improbable that one enters the field with no knowledge or experience with the topic. My interest in the research topic comes from experience in hiring and training new professionals. After going through the lengthy process of hiring new professionals only to find that some left the profession within just a year or two in the field, I began to develop a curiosity about how new professionals experience being socialized into new organizations, how their expectations are shaped, and how they make sense of this process. This experience has the potential to strengthen the analysis of the data due to a deeper understanding of the field. Patton's (2002) description of connoisseurship places the expert at the center of the evaluation process but notes that this does not limit the observer from identifying new and emerging ideas. Charmaz (2006) points out the value of the researcher's observations and ideas during the analysis process, especially intuitions that may lead to the exploration of new leads. It is important to note that being too close to the field can introduce ethical and political dilemmas (Glesne, 2006). A series of strategies such as reflexive journaling, member checking, and peer debriefing were put in place to increase rigor and keep my own perspectives in check through the research process. A number of credibility techniques were incorporated to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings.

Credibility.

Trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry relies on three things: rigorous methods, the credibility of the research, and the belief that qualitative inquiry is valuable (Patton, 2002). A number of credibility measures were incorporated into this study to increase trustworthiness: triangulation, prolonged engagement, researcher reflexivity, member checks, peer debriefing, and thick description (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Glesne, 2006; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).

Triangulation is “based on the premise that no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival explanation” (Patton, 2002, p. 555). Therefore, multiple data sources were used in this study, namely observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Consistency checks occurred across these data sources. Observations were compared with interviews, public talk was compared with private talk, consistency across participants’ interviews was checked, and interviews were checked against documents to seek corroboration (Patton, 2002).

Prolonged engagement provided a second credibility technique to increase trustworthiness. Time at the research site, interviews with participants, and the rapport-building process with participants contributed to the trustworthiness of the data (Glesne, 2006). Multiple interviews over several months along with several observations provided adequate opportunity for positive rapport building with participants. In addition, my personal background contributed to my accurate understanding of socialization in student affairs. With 15 years of student affairs experience, I have been a new professional seeking my first student affairs position and also been in the position to hire and socialize

new student affairs professionals. Finally, through my own professional experiences, I developed considerable institutional knowledge of the graduate school context of the participants. The challenges associated with prolonged engagement were addressed through reflexive journaling.

Reflexivity means to be as “concerned with the research process as you are with the data you obtain” (Glesne, 2006, p. 125). Through journaling and memo writing, my personal feelings and perspectives regarding the research topic and process were documented. This exercise brought light to my positionality and increased my own self-awareness. For example, my own professional training in career development work emphasizes the importance of a professional approach to the job search process, including well-prepared resumes and cover letters, and sharpened interview skills. The participants in this study demonstrated various levels of professionalism during their job searches. By reflecting on the variations of approaches, I noted the differences and then focused on how each participant was experiencing anticipatory socialization.

Member checking and peer debriefing were also incorporated to increase trustworthiness. Each participant was asked to review my summary of their experiences to determine if I accurately captured their experiences. In addition, seasoned student affairs professionals and graduate preparation program faculty were asked to review my findings and interpretations. Discussions with these seasoned professionals and faculty provided additional insight that confirmed or provided additional input into the findings, improving the soundness of the research.

A final technique that strengthened credibility and increased transferability of the findings was the use of thick description. “Thick description is used to ensure that consumers can make fully informed decisions about the applicability of findings to other contexts and populations” (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005, p. 185). Careful consideration was given to incorporate the participants’ own words that provided adequate description of the data. Thick description also provided context, situations, emotion, intentions, meanings, and understanding of social connections that take the reader into the anticipatory socialization experience of new student affairs professionals (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002). The use of multiple credibility measures provided a rigorous and sound qualitative research design that resulted in theoretically rich findings.

Summary

For this study, I used a grounded theory approach to examine the anticipatory socialization experiences of new student affairs professionals. Purposeful, criterion sampling was employed followed by theoretical sampling. The use of in-depth interviews, document analysis and observation were used to collect data. Guidelines set forth by grounded theory were utilized to collect and analyze the data resulting in the emersion of substantive theory. A series of credibility measures were put in place to increase the soundness and rigor of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

Student affairs graduate preparation programs vary in curriculum content, program pedagogies, and experiential foci. The focus of a program can often be categorized as counseling, student development, or management and administration (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009). Programs might also represent a combination of these three categories. While curricular offerings across programs vary greatly, there is great consistency in the role experiential learning plays in these programs. About 95% of the programs found in the ACPA Directory of Graduate Preparation Programs require some form of practical experience in the form of assistantships, practica, and internships (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009).

The ACPA Directory of Graduate Preparation Programs (2010-2013) lists 146 programs. Programs self-report whether they meet the APCA Professional Preparation Standards and CAS Standards (Dean, 2006), which outline a list of competencies that might be expected of new professionals. The College of Education at Midwest University offers three graduate degrees from the Department of Counseling and Higher Education: master of education in college student personnel, master of education in higher education, and doctor of philosophy in higher education. This study focused on members of the master's in education in College Student Personnel program and was guided by the following research question:

RQ: How do new student affairs professionals experience anticipatory socialization, specifically the job search and pre-entry communication with their new organizations?

The master's degree program is a two-year, cohort-based program. The curriculum blends theory and practice with coursework focusing on student development theory, administration, counseling, and higher education. Most students in the program will secure a graduate assistantship in Student Affairs or other student services position within the university. The core values of the program include community, diversity, individuality, holism, service, and learning with the mission to "enrich the student experience" (Midwest University, 2011, para. 1)

Guidelines from the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education provide the framework for the curriculum. While many of the core courses are similar to those found in preparation programs across the country, the program differentiates itself by providing three unique practicum experiences beyond the graduate assistantship and offering a series of specialized courses that allow students to explore various interests and build skills in topics such as student leadership, assessment, wellness, and supervision (Midwest University website). While the program requires one counseling-based course, the curriculum provides a blended combination of coursework in student development theory and administration (College Student Personnel Program Coordinator, personal communication, November 6, 2011).

Each of the 14 study participants shared their personal experiences of the anticipatory socialization process as they moved from graduate student to new professional. All participants' names have been changed to honor confidentiality. Of the 14 participants, 9 were female and 5 were male. They represent 77% of the graduating

class. Thirteen of the participants were Caucasian and 1 was African American. Brief profiles follow.

Emily

Emily is a high-energy young woman who was intentional about her career choice. She attended a small, private undergraduate institution in the Midwest. As an undergraduate student she was a resident assistant, but she did not consider graduate school immediately after college. Initially she pursued a career related directly to her undergraduate major. Her job brought her to an East Coast metropolitan area where she experienced several years of progressive career advancement in her field. The hustle and bustle of a significant daily commute, long hours, and increased stress at work resulted in her losing passion for the work that was once her dream. She began to experience a growing sense of dissatisfaction with her selected profession to the point that her quality of life began to suffer. This crisis encouraged her to reevaluate her career choice and devise a strategy for a career change. Her reflection on her undergraduate experience resulted in her decision to pursue a degree in college student personnel, which would allow her to join the student affairs profession. The decision to return to school, in many ways, was her way of pursuing happiness.

The decision to return to school was a significant one. She knew that pursuing a career in student affairs would significantly reduce her salary and would be a lifestyle change. Emily did not make the choice to return to school alone. Her decision had an impact on her partner as well, who decided to leave his job to relocate with her. The role

of her partner ended up being an important part of her experience in navigating the job search and the anticipatory socialization process.

At the beginning of the job search process, Emily was considering positions in residence life, leadership, and student activities. Since she attended a small, private college, she envisioned herself working in a similar setting. She talked about seeking an institution with a welcoming campus and a family environment. Important to her was a community that valued women as demonstrated by having women in leadership roles. She also wanted to join an institution that enabled her to identify a mentor who could offer her professional support, encouragement, and advice. Emily also talked about finding a position that allowed her to program, supervise, and engage in leadership initiatives. She hoped that her first job would provide her with a wide variety of experiences so that she would be well equipped for advancement after a few years. Because she joined the profession with five years of professional work experience in a different field, she anticipated being able to advance more rapidly than some of her less-experienced classmates. Her ultimate career goals were less clear. While being a dean of students at a small, private institution sounded appealing, she also talked about allowing her career to progress “organically” and balancing career aspirations with having children. This ended up becoming a reoccurring theme with other women in the study.

Emily was excited to begin the job search process and eager to know where she would end up landing a job. She was proactive in planning her attendance at the placement conference hosted by one of the national associations. Prior to arriving to the placement conference, she had a number of interviews scheduled and she scheduled

several more while she was there. While she described the placement conference as “one of the most stressful things I have ever done,” she continued by stating, “I learned more about my interview skills and what I wanted from my future institution within a three-day period.” Emily was very intentional about her interview preparation, preparing extensive portfolios for each institution for which she had an interview. Part of her preparation included community research, which she and her partner conducted together to determine if it met the necessary requirements: being either in a larger city or within 30 minutes of a larger city; close to family, if possible; and a sufficiently strong economy to allow her partner to find appropriate employment.

Following her interviews at the placement conference, Emily and her partner ranked each of the schools she met with for interviews. They determined a priority list including the top five institutions, five runner-up schools, and five that were not a good fit. The creation of this list was the result of a negotiation that blended their priorities. For example, some schools made it to the top of the list because the job opportunity was very promising, while others made the list due to their geographic locations.

When Emily talked about her more favorable interviews, she talked about having positive connections with the interviewers, being energized by the interview, being able to see herself working with those who would become her colleagues, getting timely feedback about next steps, being made to feel that her background and experiences would be valued at the institution, and having her partner invited to come along on an interview trip. Those things that stood out in less-favorable interviews were being asked strange or inappropriate questions such as, “How would a white, blonde woman be able to deal with

our cynical, intelligent students?” She also referenced being invited to a social gathering where the hosting institution did not acknowledge her presence. Other interviewing experiences that did not make a positive impression on her included interviewers talking about the position in a less than positive light, not connecting with those who would potentially be her peers, getting questions she was not completely prepared to answer, and interviewers who seemed uninterested in and disengaged from the process.

Emily was invited to two on-campus interviews and was offered and accepted a position at her top choice. The position she accepted was a residence coordinator role at a large, public university with growing enrollment and a newly developed residence life program. The institution is located 20 minutes outside a large city.

Debbie

Debbie was proactive and intentional about her career progress. As a graduate student, she was particularly engaged in developing a presence in the field. Due to the nature of her graduate assistant role, she had the opportunity to regularly participate in regional conferences, thus building a number of relationships with other professionals. She referenced mentors who have been supportive of her and who have helped her to become well connected in the profession.

Approaching the job search, Debbie had a couple of concerns. First, while she was well connected in her specific field within student affairs, she also understood that the number of job openings in her area would likely be limited. One way she prepared herself for the uncertainty of finding a job in her field was to diversify her experiences. She intentionally sought out practica that would help her build skills in other areas.

However, she was concerned that these additions to her resume would make her appear as a “jack of all trades,” lacking sufficiently significant experience in those areas to qualify her for those types of jobs. Her second concern was balancing a dual career search. Debbie had a partner who was attending graduate school at a different institution and seeking positions in the same specialty area within student affairs. She discussed the difficulty, if not the impossibility, for them both to land their ideal positions at the same institution. Part of the reason she focused on diversifying her experience was to open the door to pursuing a position within student affairs, but outside of her targeted field. This negotiation between finding a job in her preferred area, or pursuing something different so she could be closer to her partner, was present through her job search.

Due to being so well connected to mentors and other professionals in her targeted field, Debbie was able to be proactive in the job search process. When a desirable position was posted, she engaged her network. Through contacts, she learned more specifics of the job, began to understand what type of candidate the institution sought, and gathered information regarding the institution and community. When she was invited for an interview, she was confident that she had the right background and credentials for the job.

Debbie described the interview process as a positive one. Some of the more memorable aspects of the process included her engagement with people. Her interaction with the department director left her feeling inspired and eager to join an organization with a visionary leader: “I kind of realized he is definitely a visionary when it comes to big picture things.” The interaction she had with the students she met during her

interview made her feel excited to work with such a motivated group. The level of engagement in the interview process that she experienced from the entire division of student affairs at the institution impressed her and left her visualizing herself with such colleagues. “The department in general, I feel, is a really good fit and it is just exciting to be a part of that.” Throughout the interview process, she felt valued and welcomed by her hiring institution. She referenced being excited to join such a dynamic organization.

Debbie interviewed for only one position and was offered an opportunity to join that institution. Since this was an ideal position with a well-respected program, she accepted it happily. However, there were a couple of issues she needed to deal with in the process of deciding to join the organization. Due to the timing of her job offer and the expectations for her to start as soon as possible, she had to negotiate matters with her graduate program. Her start date with her new employer was scheduled prior to her graduation date, so she had to work out finishing her academic work and her graduate assistantship responsibilities a full month earlier than expected. These negotiations added stress as she worked toward getting things wrapped up. Another area for negotiation was with her partner. Since the position was ideal for her and her partner was still navigating his own job search, they decided the best course of action was for her to accept the position and for them to continue their relationship living in different states.

After accepting the position, Debbie had plenty of opportunity to interact with her new colleagues. By phone and e-mail and in person, she continued to develop her understanding of her new organization. One of the more memorable experiences she talked about was receiving e-mails from her new colleagues once it was publicly

announced that she had been hired to fill the job. This made her feel welcomed and excited about her new colleagues and the organization. She was able to spend time with some of her new colleagues at a regional conference after she accepted the position. This face-to-face time with her new colleagues proved to be a valuable opportunity for exchanges that allowed her to better understand some of the dynamics of her new organization. It presented her with information that allowed her to better gauge some of the politics that she would likely have to maneuver. “I know going into my position that my ideologies differ somewhat from the program director.” While these politics were not of major concern to her, she did begin to build relationships with peers that would help support her as she learned to navigate her new organization.

Whitney

Whitney was not a very involved undergraduate student. As a student, her focus was on her studies, securing internships related to her major, and working to help pay her way through college. A career in student affairs could not have been further from her mind. Halfway through her senior year, while having a discussion with a trusted advisor, she began to examine her dissatisfaction with her internship. “I wrote a press release today, but in the end, what does it matter? I wasn’t feeling fulfilled.” This discussion led her to do some serious self-reflection, resulting in a realignment of goals. Her trusted advisor, who had come to know her over the course of her undergraduate years, recommended she consider advising students as a career option.

After reevaluating her career path, Whitney decided that a career in student affairs was a suitable choice. Many of her friends were surprised by her decision to pursue

graduate studies in college student personnel. They questioned her motivation and wondered why she would abandon the field she had been preparing for over the last four years. However, her family was extremely supportive of her choice. Her mother encouraged her to follow her passion.

Because she made her decision too late in her senior year to apply to graduate programs, Whitney went into the job market and landed a job as a legal assistant. She worked in the position for a year while she applied and prepared herself for graduate school. Upon entering her graduate program, she was clear on what area within student affairs she would pursue. She secured a graduate assistantship in line with her interest in advising students. Similar to her undergraduate experience, she aligned her academic coursework with experiential education to help prepare her to pursue her target career. This time she hoped that she would find her target was a better fit.

Feeling fulfilled with her graduate assistantship, Whitney was confident that her choice to work in student advising was the right one. She began the job search with a broad scope and was interested in pursuing different types of advising roles. In addition to advising students, some of the other important things that she was seeking in her first full-time professional role included having the opportunity to receive training and professional development, guidance and supervision, and a clear set of expectations. Whitney's greatest concern was settling for a job that was not the right fit. "My fear is that I will have no choice but to settle due to the limited number of positions in my area of interest because I have student loans that I have to begin to repay."

Whitney understood that the national placement conference would offer few vacant positions in her field of interest. She still decided to attend and applied only to positions in advising. As a result, she had only a few interviews at the conference, but that was what she expected. She felt that the conference was worth the investment even though she did not have the number of interviews that some of her peers were able to secure. Her participation in the placement conference resulted in one on campus interview.

In addition to attending the placement conference, Whitney diligently reviewed job listings and applied to all advising positions that were of interest to her. Through this process, she learned more about functional roles within various advising positions and narrowed her search to include only one type of student advising, career advising. She knew that this would limit the number of open positions even further. However, her diligent efforts at the job search were rewarded. She landed a campus interview at a large, public institution and one at a small, private institution.

Whitney described the “hurry up and wait” of the interview process as frustrating. Specifically she talked about hiring institutions scrambling to set up phone interviews, then taking several weeks to follow up with an invitation to campus (with the expectation that the interview be scheduled within a week’s time), then having to wait several more weeks to hear if she would be offered the job. Another notable experience she mentioned was the challenge of evaluating the work environment and the larger community during her campus visits. While her initial geographic preference was within a larger city, she found many of her options were in small college towns. She questioned her ability to

find happiness and friendship in a small community. She spent a significant amount of time considering these issues as she evaluated her options.

Whitney was surprised by her reaction to her campus interviews. She imagined that through the interview process she would feel either excited by the prospect of joining the organization or find that it was not an appropriate fit. However, after both interviews she was left feeling indifferent. “I was expecting to walk away being either in love and super excited about the position and I was just like, ‘I don’t know.’” In the end, after much consideration and evaluation, she identified all the important elements were present and accepted a position at a large, public institution in a rural setting. While her initial target was a larger city, she considered the options available to her and selected an institution that fit her needs in many ways. Once she made the decision to join, she was excited about the position and about beginning the transition to new professional.

Timarie

Timarie, a first-generation college student who valued the public-institution experience, was looking forward to joining a public university for her first full-time position. She was very intentional in selecting her assistantship, which prepared her well for the transition from graduate school to professional role. Her longer-term goals would include moving into a director level position in her field. She mentioned aspiring to be a dean of students, but almost sees that role being in conflict with motherhood. When she referenced the potential of such a role, she said she would be interested in being a dean of students, “but I would also like a family.”

From the beginning of her job search, she knew that her experience would be unique. Her relationship with her significant other would limit her job search to one small community. Together with her partner, she decided to limit her job search to the one institution that was located in their community, the same institution that she attended for graduate school. While she had a clear preference in the type of role she would like to secure, she also was open to other alternatives due to this geographic limitation.

Luckily for Timarie, early on in her job search she received word that the office where she held her assistantship would have an entry-level vacancy. She applied and was interviewed for the position. She described her experience as an internal candidate as intense. She noted that being an internal candidate was a disadvantage because she would “hear a lot of the discussions that go on.” For example, she learned that the search committee disagreed on the number of campus interview invitations that should have been extended. As an internal candidate, she also knew when the other candidates were having their interviews, which caused anxiety when those candidates were on campus. Another notable observation from Timarie was that she felt that those involved in the process who knew her best did not ask very good questions in the interview. She attributed that to them feeling like they already knew her strengths and weaknesses. She felt this limited her opportunity to provide examples of her strengths and reasons why she was the right person for the job. Timarie felt that she received better interview questions from those involved in the process who did not know her quite as well. Through the process, a few things stood out as important. Timarie wanted to be sure to have the opportunity to sell herself based on her collective experiences and not rely on being

evaluated based on what colleagues thought to be her strengths. Since many of her colleagues knew her in one capacity, she was afraid their evaluation of her would be one-dimensional. Another hurdle as an internal candidate was her ability to demonstrate that she could easily move from a graduate assistant role to a professional role. She stated,

I really wanted to communicate that in my interview and I talked about the natural progression a person makes going from a GA to an assistant director. Mine just happens to be at the same campus and I don't think that should hinder me at all from these opportunities.

A final noteworthy experience that Timarie mentioned as an internal candidate was her access to feedback. She received informal feedback from some who were involved in the process. Mostly this included positive comments regarding her candidacy and interview, but she also developed assumptions regarding her status as a candidate. For example, as mentioned above, she perceived that others thought she would have a difficult time transitioning from graduate assistant to professional. In the end, though, she enjoyed the interview experience and felt more confident after the interview.

The process moved rather quickly and within a couple of weeks after her interview, she was offered the position and gladly accepted. There were three months between the time she accepted the job offer and her official start date. Immediately, she began navigating the interesting process of being a graduate assistant and transitioning into a professional role within the same office. Quickly her role began to change. She was included in e-mail lists reserved for professional staff and began attending meetings in place of her supervisor. Her perspective on the institutional culture changed during

this time too. Participating in campus-wide meetings allowed her to survey the politics of the place in a new way. She began to make note of relationships among her colleagues—who seemed to be able to get things done and who were perceived as “power players.” This type of access helped her gear up for her official transition. Timarie also noted her relationships with students changed after accepting the position. The student leaders in her office began to see her as someone with more authority.

After accepting the job offer, Timarie learned that the role was still evolving. This required that she be flexible with her expectations. Details, such as where her office would be located, were still being determined. She also found that major aspects of her role were still under development. She learned that she would be reporting to two different supervisors and that caused her some anxiety. While she was still learning about the organization and the new role through this period, she was pleased that she had secured the position. It was her first choice from the beginning of her job search and it continued to make her excited about moving into a professional role.

Kim

Kim started graduate school with some experience under her belt. As an undergraduate student she took leadership roles in residence life. After graduation, her undergraduate institution invited her to stay on as a professional hall director. She stayed in that role for two years before returning to graduate school. Starting her graduate program with a few years of professional experience gave her a different perspective on graduate school. She was eager to have an academic challenge to prepare her for the next career stage. Initially she began her job search with a focus on positions more advanced

than entry level. However, this target changed for her during the process. Her confidence was shaken after her participation in one of the national placement conferences. She convinced herself that she was not ready to move on to a more advanced role:

I think that a lot of learning happens when you are a residence director, because you are doing so many different things. And even though I have the full-time experience, I kind of have an idea of what makes a successful student affairs professional. I feel like doing that position [entry level] again with that framework to work from could be very helpful. I also realize that there are people less qualified than me applying for positions higher than me and that they are probably going to get them, but I don't feel like professionally I need to rush into that, because so many times I've heard people say that their live-on experience shaped them.

Kim also talked about keeping her expectations low and that her first job after graduate school did not need to be the perfect job as long as she has opportunities to enjoy herself outside of work. Moving to a place that had lots of opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and nature were a priority.

After a few campus interviews, Kim landed a job at a private school in the south. The position offered her much of what she was seeking: she perceived her new supervisor to be supportive, she would have the opportunity to supervise professional staff, and her role would be more advanced than entry level. However, she had a hard time getting excited about moving to the community. She worried that the community would not be a

good fit for her and she was apprehensive about moving to a big city by herself. Kim experienced a great deal of self-reflection shortly after she accepted the position.

All along Kim talked about being able to do anything for two years and so it was not critical for her to find the perfect job right after graduate school. She also felt pressure to have a job and felt that turning down a job offer would not be an option. During our third interview, her apprehension with the location was evident. “The logical person in me was like, ‘This is the right decision,’ but the heart or the emotional person was like, ‘Oh, I am scared.’” She shared this apprehension with her new supervisor, who quickly provided her with names and contacts of several people from the area, several of whom reached out to her to share their perspective on the area. This helped her in two ways: it made her feel welcome and it eased her nerves regarding the new community. “I feel like there is a lot of support, these are great people at [institution].”

In addition, Kim considered her personal situation as she was leaving her old role of graduate student and moving into a new role at a new institution. She wondered what her life would be like in the new community and hoped that she would find happiness. “I don’t like my life here, so I don’t want to have this life there.” The uncertainty of what her new life would be like was compounded by the nature of her new job not being clearly communicated to her. With shuffling of staff members at her new institution, she was not sure which residential community she would oversee or what her new apartment would look like. After our third interview, she was encouraged to follow up with her new supervisor to get more details on her role. She reported back, “They are officially putting me in the Leadership Village so that I can have more opportunities for teaching, and I

will supervise a full time RD, and an RA staff of 25!” This exchange with her new supervisor made her much more excited about her new job. In a final informal interaction I had with Kim, she had come to really look forward to her new role and her new community.

Geoff

Geoff moved several states away from home to attend a small private college for his undergraduate degree. No stranger to student affairs (his mother had a career in the field), it took little time for him to become involved in student activities. He secured an RA position in his sophomore year and continued to be actively involved in residence life for the remainder of his time there. Going to graduate school for a degree in college student personnel was a natural progression.

Geoff’s initial goals for his job search were to secure a position in residence life or student activities with a preference for finding a position that blended the two functional areas. Due to his experience with the small private school, he preferred that environment, but remained open to any institution with desirable openings. Geoff had several concerns as he began his search. “I sometimes worry that if I go for these jobs [student activities], they won’t see my large programming experiences [from my undergraduate experience].” He also showed a lack of career focus in some regards.

It is really hard to give you a straight answer for that question, because I’ve been trying to figure out what I want to do for the rest of my life for the past year and a half and the problem is that I keep finding different things I want to do.

Geoff attended one of the national placement conferences and secured several interviews. He described his interview experience as not going very well initially and wondered why he did not feel like he had “the engagement of my interviewers.” He attributed this to the fact that his interviews were taking place among 200 other interviews or that perhaps he did not project an accurate level of excitement. He mentioned seeing a noticeable improvement with his interviews on the second day of the conference, after he had a few interviews under his belt.

One of the challenges Geoff talked about was finding the balance between being proactive and being more selective. He referenced wishing he did not have so many interviews at the conference. On the other hand, he wondered if he were not as aggressive with applications, would he find himself in an unfavorable position. He worried about applying to too many jobs, but had a hard time knowing when enough was enough. “Am I going to be flooded with a bunch of ‘no’s’ in two weeks and then realize that I need to start applying to more jobs?” Geoff talked about other uncertainties through the process, such as trying to read between the lines of the thank-you notes received from interviewers. When an interviewer wished him good luck with the process, did that mean, “Best wishes, we are no longer interested in you?” When interviewers simply read questions from a structured interview guide without engaging him on his specific background or probing further on any of his responses, did that mean that he was not engaging? When institutions provided no response at all to his application, did that mean that they had eliminated him from the process or was he still under consideration? While Geoff had all of these questions after the placement

conference, his confidence was boosted by the level of interest he was receiving from some employers.

After several more phone and campus interviews, Geoff landed a position at a small, prestigious private school in its residence life program. After accepting the offer, he received 10 to 15 welcome e-mails from his new colleagues, which contributed to his level of excitement about joining the organization. “I’m excited to be at a small school. I’m excited about the close and welcoming community. People at [institution] really seem to guard the spirit of [institution].” Geoff described his new position with great enthusiasm and was pleased to land a position that fit his original target.

Olivia

Olivia grew up in the same town where she attended undergraduate and graduate school. Because her father worked at the institution, attending the university was a natural choice for her undergraduate studies. During her junior year, when she decided to pursue graduate school to prepare for a career in student affairs, she began to consider her options. Mentors encouraged her to leave town and attend a different institution and get a different experience. However, after researching several other graduate programs in the state and being offered her preferred assistantship at Midwest University, she determined that staying put was the right choice for her.

Olivia held a graduate assistantship in a student advising office. She was intentional about selecting a graduate assistantship that would provide her with different experiences from her undergraduate studies. As an undergraduate student, Olivia loved being an RA. Because of her fond recollection of the job, she was clear from the

beginning of her job search that she preferred to land a job in residence life. “This is my main focus, because that is what got me here and that is what I fell in love with.” She was interested in staying in state or finding a position in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Early in the job search process, she identified residence life as her primary target with student activities as an additional area of interest. She showed preference toward small private schools, but did not rule out public schools if they were not too large. Olivia identified three major concerns with the job search: moving away, interviewing, and rejection. The fear of rejection caused her great anxiety.

During each phase of the study, Olivia referenced family and her significant other. Family turned out to be a very important part of her job search process. Growing up, she learned the value that her parents, particularly her father, placed on being a professional. Pursuing an advanced or professional degree was always something she figured she would do. Her father served as a sounding board throughout her job search. Eventually he expressed his interest in having her remain in the state, which was a factor in her decision to narrow her search halfway through the process. Another important factor that limited her search was a marriage proposal from her hometown sweetheart. While there were incentives for her to stay in her hometown, she remained committed to leaving Midwest University so she could gain a new perspective at a new institution.

Olivia participated in one of the national placement conferences. Describing herself as shy and sometimes socially awkward, she had trouble getting started with her interviews at the conference. She described the experience: “Not knowing [what to expect from the conference] and being nervous, I felt like my first day I was kind of a

bland version of myself, so going into day two I was much more relaxed, because I knew what to expect.” She talked about having good and bad interviews. Some of the bad interviews she attributed to interviewers intending to make her feel unvalued. “You just feel like they aren’t listening or something, it just made me feel awful.” With a mix of positive and negative interviews, she left the conference feeling like she had some good leads.

On-campus interviews were slow to come. When she secured an interview with one institution in the state, she gladly accepted. When the call came with a job offer, she was delighted and soon after accepted the offer, but not before talking it over with her father. “I pretty much knew I would go with them, but I also wanted to talk to my father and make sure I was making a good decision and he was pretty delighted about it too.” Her father told her that she described the position with more enthusiasm than any of the other positions for which she interviewed. This observation from her dad helped her to feel really good about her decision to join.

Brittany

Brittany attended a small, liberal arts institution as an undergraduate student and grew to value the small school experience. Part of her attraction to her graduate program was the small cohort that created a small community within a large institution. Brittany knew from the beginning that her job search would be different from her peers pursuing residence life. She would target student activities and orientation positions and expected that the number of options would be limited.

Brittany was in a significant relationship. Her partner, who could work remotely from anywhere in the country, agreed that he would follow her to her first job. The negotiation was minimal since he was agreeable to most places. However, out of respect, Brittany discussed the location of each of the jobs for which she applied. The relationship did add a level of stress to the search process. On more than one occasion, Brittany expressed her concern with finding a position before graduation so that they could make relocation plans, as rental leases would expire in June.

Brittany discussed one of her strengths also being one of her weaknesses. She held two different assistantships in graduate school: she worked with international students in her first year and took a more administrative position her second year. In the summer between her first and second year, she did an internship in orientation. While these varying experiences gave her a wide array of experiences, she worried that she would come across as lacking any expertise in any given area.

I have a lot of different experiences, which I feel has helped me grow a lot. But it worries me that I won't be a specific enough candidate, like that I don't have enough specific experience in one area, so I'm really appreciative of my experience. But when I look at it, I'm wondering maybe I should have narrowed it or something, I don't know.

This worry was confirmed in one of her job interviews when an interviewer asked her about her focus. In the interview, she heard, "You have a lot of transferrable skills, but you don't have any focus."

Throughout the process, Brittany struggled with comparing herself to others and experienced varying levels of confidence. Brittany approached the job search in a more private way than her peers. She talked about not making her job search public. Doing so would make her vulnerable. If her peers knew that she had several interviews, what would they think if a job offer was not extended? Her peers who approached the job search more publicly caused her to compare herself to them and second-guess herself. “When I hear people say they have 20 interviews, I’m like, ‘Ugh, am I doing something wrong?’” Yet, she maintained throughout the process that she should confide in only a few close friends and mentors. She was confident in some cases, but lacked confidence in others. The constant comparison to her peers weighed on her confidence. Even in a journal she stated, “I think I would feel better about the whole process if I would stop comparing myself to my other cohort members.”

This was a concern for her as she considered her job search strategy. Even from the beginning of the search, she referenced measuring her success in comparison to others.

I’m sure I will feel pressure from seeing my cohort mates getting jobs and if I am the last one to get a job, I mean I would love to say that that wouldn’t influence me to settle, but it probably would.

In the end, Brittany maintained her confidence. She received an offer from a school for a position that she felt was not a good fit. Rather than take the position, she gracefully turned it down having hope that a better opportunity would present itself. A couple of weeks later, she received an offer for a position at a school she would be delighted to join

and she happily accepted. She was excited, because it was the kind of position that she preferred from the beginning of her search, at the type of institution where she could see herself working.

Throughout the process, Brittany talked about building her confidence as she imagined herself in some of the jobs for which she applied. “Now I realize that no matter what job I will take, there will be some sort of learning curve, but I am confident I can do the job.” The process of interviewing also helped her to understand herself and the fit she was looking for in a position and institution. However, the public job talk and the constant comparison to others caused her great stress along the way.

Parker

When Parker started his job search, he was confident that he had a solid set of skills to offer potential employers. His short-term goals included working in student conduct, first-year experience, or residence life. Long term, he aspired to a position that would allow him to move up within student affairs while still allowing him to support students directly. His self-assessment of his skills indicated that he would thrive in a position where he was not in an ultimate decision-making role. “One of the things that I know about myself is, as a professional, I don’t function well as a top dog, but I am phenomenal as second in command.” Like many of the other participants in the study, Parker’s short-term job search targets shifted slightly as he became more engaged in the process.

Parker expressed a couple of concerns early on in the process. He discussed being nervous about applying to positions and relying on his application materials to make a compelling case for potential employers to want to interview him.

I feel like I have a strong background in certain areas, and if I get an interview, I can sell it. I'm not concerned about that, I think it is, more or less, wanting to make sure someone will read [resume and cover letter].

I want my materials to speak for themselves.

In many ways, Parker described the interview process as superficial and sometimes unprofessional. He drew from his own experience serving on search committees. He recalled asking applicants questions intended to break the ice, but offering no opportunity for applicants to demonstrate their skills and what they had to contribute to the organization. An example that he offered was asking the applicant to identify what color Skittle they would be and why. Parker valued an interview that focused on what one would bring to the table.

There is definitely a place for questions such as, What are your passions? What are your interests? I'm happy to answer those things, but when it comes down to a really cheesy question, it's like, I'm not here to entertain you, I'm here to show you what I can do.

He anticipated that he would likely get the types of questions he perceived to be superficial and unprofessional and did not look forward to it.

Another concern he expressed early on was getting outside his comfort zone in terms of social relationships. He described himself as an introvert and preferred to be

more reserved and cautious when making new friends, and he worried about moving into a new environment without a social network. “I think it will be hard for me in a professional environment where I don’t have a social structure set up.” His personal relationship with his significant other played into his job search in a variety of ways over the course of several months, providing both a source of support and stress. He was always encouraged by his partner, but as they defined and renegotiated their relationship, his geographic preferences shifted.

Parker returned from the national placement conference rather discouraged. He adopted a conservative approach to the application process. He did not want to overextend himself or find himself with a packed schedule that would prevent him from interviewing with his top-choice institutions. His strategy was to be selective in where he applied and where he would accept interviews. Due to his selective approach, he went into the conference with only one interview scheduled. He remained optimistic, however, that he would secure more interviews once he arrived at the conference. He secured a handful of interviews at the conference and reported various levels of engagement across them. He commented, “I have been very surprised at the lack of professionalism by some institutions. I have applied to at least 10 to 15 positions and haven’t heard anything back from many of them.” He also expressed discontent with his interactions with some of the interviewers who were reading directly from lists of questions and not making the interview personal in any way. “This is incredibly distressing, because I’m getting no feedback as to if my answers are meshing with the

institution or if there is a possible fit.” The impersonal nature of some interviews was a great disappointment.

Parker also found the role of competition in the job search process to be somewhat troubling. While he did not categorize himself as a competitive person, he acknowledged that the job search process is, by nature, a competitive one. The placement conference exacerbated this reality. The proximity to other candidates made it impossible to not overhear where people were interviewing, how many interviews they had, their invitations to socials, etc. He summed this up by stating, “The fact remains that there are a limited number of positions available and I really prefer not to know who I am up against.”

Following his placement conference attendance, he was disappointed in the lack of response from potential employers. Parker tried to make sense of why he was not generating interest from positions for which he perceived himself to be qualified. His response was to become more aggressive in terms of the number of job ads to which he would respond. After being diligent and dealing with several months of ups and downs, Parker landed a job that blended residence life and first-year experience work, two of his original targets. He was delighted to gain closure on the job search process. While many parts of his new job were exciting to him, he had a few minor reservations that he hoped would quickly subside once he started the job.

Harrison

Harrison approached his search in a very organized fashion. He was very enthusiastic as he began his job search journey. Harrison’s graduate assistantship was in

off-campus student services, which sparked his interest in working in that area. Initially his targets were off-campus student services, enrollment management, administrative roles in admissions or financial aid, assessment, and civic engagement. He saw these types of opportunities as a way to blend his student affairs experience with his undergraduate major, finance. While he preferred these types of positions, he also actively sought residence life positions. Harrison worried early in the process about settling for a position. This concern motivated him to get an early start on his search.

Harrison's parents were influential in his undergraduate major choice. They also were active in providing job search advice, often adding stress to the process. His parents, both engineering professionals, encouraged him to select an undergraduate major that would result in a successful career. When he told them of his decision to pursue student affairs as a profession, they worried about job prospects. Later in his job search, his mother expressed high levels of stress related to his not yet having secured a job. He described his parents as "a constant source of stress throughout the process."

Harrison had a lot of interview activity. Many of the jobs for which he had interviews were in residence life. He described the process as both empowering and stressful. The lack of communication from institutions was frustrating for him; so was the waiting game.

The job search has been the one task on my list that, no matter how hard I work toward it during the day, cannot be crossed off yet. For someone who likes closure and productivity, this has been difficult for me.

After the initial set of phone interviews, Harrison adjusted his expectations. He determined that with his skill set and experience, he would have more opportunities in residence life. He also made some observations regarding the job search process. He perceived that private schools were quicker to move forward with their processes than were public schools. He also reported feeling better about the interviews where the communication was an equal exchange, with him learning about the organization and the organization exploring his background and learning about him as a candidate. These types of interviews made him feel valued. "I want people to recognize my skills and recognize that I've had a lot of experience as a grad student. I just want to feel valued." Subsequent interviews with other schools, where he did not feel valued, did not make a positive impression. He also talked about some interviews being impersonal.

It was so structured to the point where they never asked me to expand on anything. They never gave any kind of feedback and they didn't seem very interested. It was just question after question. Just right down the list.

In April, Harrison received a very attractive job offer. The position had many positives and relatively few negative aspects. When weighing his options about the position, he determined it was too far away from his family and significant other. He declined the offer. This was not well received by his family, who were anxious for him to secure a position. In the end, he made the decision not to take the job based on his assessment of his ability to be happy living so far away from loved ones and his confidence in his ability to find appropriate employment closer to home. This served as a turning point in his search. Harrison's confidence was boosted from his interaction with

this employer and the job offer that followed his interview. A positive campus interview with another institution played a role in his increased confidence. He was confident that this second institution would also extend him an offer. However, a second job offer did not materialize. Turning down one job offer without having another in hand created great tension in his family.

I mean they were constantly yelling and encouraging me to take the job offer that I had, but I am glad that I had stepped up and fought back. They were accusing me of putting my personal life ahead of my professional life. I guess to them, they think success at work is the key to happiness, when to me I know that it is the opposite.

Through the month of May, Harrison experienced many ups and downs. He communicated that he was experiencing a great deal of stress, not only from pressure he put on himself, but also from his parents who were eager for him to be employed. In June, after commencement, Harrison found himself presented with another job offer, and he was expecting yet another. Once again, he was in the position of deciding on taking the sure thing, or waiting to see if a second, one he thought to be a more appropriate offer, would follow. This time his patience paid off. He received an offer from an institution that he thought was the right opportunity and he gladly accepted. He described the offer as being from an institution that provided a good fit professionally, with values in line with his own, a compensation and benefits packages that exceeded his expectation, and a location close to his significant other and family. He was delighted with his job offer. He reported back after his start date that he was enjoying his new role.

“I am really impressed with my new colleagues and with how together everything seems considering the size of the department and the institution.” While he summed up the job search as “a long, crazy process,” he was pleased with the outcome and happy that he had the patience and courage to wait for a job that he perceived to be a good fit.

Sophie

In my initial interaction with Sophie, she said, “I have a tendency to take the ‘life will work itself out’ approach, and in a competitive economy, that hasn’t really been a good strategy so far.” Throughout her job search process, this held true. Her strategy was to apply for a few things at a time. Her priority target was international student services, but she was also interested in residence life positions. Early on, she talked about having realistic expectations. She did not expect her first job to be her dream job. However, she had a hard time imagining herself being miserable in a student affairs position. After all, she would still get to work with students, which is what she wanted. Geographically, she talked about moving to a new place to experience new things, preferably to the East or West coast, but then directly contradicted herself when she talked about trying to find a job at one of the local universities.

As she began applying to positions, she sent out a half a dozen or so resumes. She was pleasantly surprised by this initial batch of applications, landing several phone interviews that resulted in a couple of campus interviews. Sophie found it hard to balance following up with employers, identifying and applying to additional opportunities, the demands of her schoolwork, and responsibilities of her assistantship.

It is hard for me, because the job search process has been so challenging. I like the job-search process, I just don't want to be doing anything else in the middle of it and for me I have slacked off on all my school work.

During this time of follow up and interviews with this initial set of employers, she suspended her search, not applying to any new positions. When those interviews did not result in job offers, she selected more vacancies for which to apply. Rather than having a continuous application process, she would apply to jobs in small batches and then wait to see what would happen.

After having the chance to participate in on campus interviews, Sophie reevaluated her preferences. She determined that moving to a new location was no longer appealing. She reflected on her relationship with a younger sibling and considered how their relationship would be affected if she lived far away. She decided that living closer to family was a priority and that she would adjust her job search accordingly.

Sophie talked about the social aspect of the job search. For example, she recalled being excited about the interviews where she enjoyed the students. She reflected on one institution having engaged, intelligent, and respectful students. She talked about being drawn to the places where there was a connection to the people and identified the difficulty of finding this connection through phone interviews.

The only phone interview that I have enjoyed was with [institution] and that was just because their personalities just came across through the phone, I don't know how they did that, but they definitely did come across as really cool people.

She was discouraged by phone interviews in which the people on the other end of the line sounded “dead.” These interactions were important to her. She noted the importance of finding a social network with her new position.

With limited international student services vacancies available, most of her job search activity focused on residence life positions. She figured that many international student services jobs would not become available until the summer months. However, she continued to be somewhat selective and apply to a few positions at a time. By the time graduation approached, Sophie was still without a job. She made a plan to move back home with her parents and continue her search from there. Several weeks after graduation, Sophie was still on the job market. With more time to focus her energy on the search, she continued to apply for positions and was getting a number of interviews. At this point, she also began considering opportunities outside of higher education. With more time spent in her hometown, closer to family and friends, her interest in finding a job close to home became even more important. She once maintained the philosophy that “life is life anywhere.” However, now her priority was to be close to family and friends, but she continued to apply for jobs in neighboring states. She picked up a part-time job to bring in a little income while she continued her search over the summer.

Sophie reflected on the process at this stage of the search. She expressed frustration with not having a clear plan or goal.

It’s a little frustrating. I don’t see it changing though, because I can see myself going in five different directions. There is a bunch of different things I could be doing, so it’s a little hard to do a search process and make decisions.

She could see herself in any number of student affairs positions and wondered how that played out in the process for her. She compared herself to her peers, characterizing her lack of goals as detrimental when many of her peers were further ahead due to having a clearer sense of direction. She talked about knowing that she would experience the job search differently from her peers, noting that she was not as driven as many of them and that she did not necessarily see student affairs as her life's calling. Not having a job did not cause her anxiety; she figured something would eventually work out. She claimed that one of her greatest attributes was being flexible and that, while finding the right fit was important, she could likely find happiness in any number of settings. Sophie found the job search to be a process of self-discovery.

In August, Sophie landed a residence life position working with first-year students at a small private school in a neighboring state.

Pete

Pete entered graduate school after several years of working in industry. After finding himself unhappy in his career, he began to look for a career that would be more meaningful. He was quite methodical as he researched career options. Once he narrowed in on career advising, he took all the necessary steps to educate himself about the profession. He researched the best type of graduate program to pursue, spoke with professionals in the field, and even took on a consulting assignment with his current employer that exposed him to career services in a higher education context.

Pete discussed being disappointed with the career advice he received as an undergraduate student. He reflected on being misdirected to his first career and wished

that he had had a mentor who challenged him on career choice and encouraged him to pursue something that suited his interest and not something that just seemed like a prestigious career to follow. This lack of guidance motivated him to play a more positive role for students as they progress through their undergraduate education and enter the workforce. When Pete began his graduate program, he was quite clear that he would target career advising.

With a very focused career goal, Pete also had a very clear geographic target. Pete's significant other was a well-established professional in a Mid-Western city. Pete selected his graduate program based on its proximity to his Mid-Western hometown, and after he completed this graduate program he limited his search to this metropolitan area. However, he did not see this geographic target as a limitation. "Yes, I'm staying there and for the most part I'm OK with that. I love all those things [family and friends] and I'm a big believer that where your heart is, that's the most valuable place." Knowing that job opportunities would be limited based on the parameters set by his personal life, Pete relied on networking as his primary job search strategy. His networking began before he started graduate school and continued through to the point of his accepting a job. Pete held an assistantship in career advising and pursued practicum experiences at institutions in his hometown to round out his experiences and make important connections that might be beneficial as he pursued vacant positions.

While expressing a desire to remain open to a variety of options, initially Pete was interested in working in a large, public institution where he might be able to specialize in career advising for business students. His view was that he would find more enjoyment

with students with a narrow career focus. In addition, Pete was eager to move out of a GA position and into a professional role. He appreciated his opportunity as a graduate assistant, but was excited about the chance to “flex his muscles” and make a lasting impact on a place.

As Pete began the interview process, he talked about his expectations shifting. He landed interviews with three very different institutions. Through the process of researching institutions in the interview preparation stage, he developed an appreciation for working with liberal arts students. He compared his newfound appreciation for liberal arts with his perceptions of liberal arts students prior to leaving the corporate world.

And in our world, I would have cared most for the business major and how highly ranked was your school, but the more I learn and study liberal arts, I see the value that they bring and I looked at the guys I worked with, the ones that were the most successful were not the business school ones. They were the liberal arts students. Through the job search process, he grew more excited about the prospect of working with such a population.

One aspect of the job search process that stands out for Pete was his interaction with one institution. Their process was so formal that it caused him concern. At one point in the process, as a formality, they had to perform the same interview twice just to make sure they were staying within their interview protocol. “It was a little bit of a turn off that this organization was so inflexible.” In contrast, he described a more informal discussion with another employer. “Basically it was just a discussion about careers and how it fit the [role] and those kinds of things. So I really enjoyed that.” Another positive

aspect that Pete referenced in the interview process was having the opportunity to interview with students, which helped him get a sense of student expectations for the role.

Pete was confident through the process, but was still anxious due to the very specific parameters set on his search. In the end, Pete had two job offers to evaluate. Both offers pleased him, and he seriously evaluated both before making a final decision. He accepted a position at a small, liberal arts school where he perceived the opportunity to be an exciting challenge that would stretch him professionally, providing him with the chance to work with dedicated colleagues while having the privilege of working with highly qualified students. All of these characteristics were listed as important aspects for him.

Laura

Laura approached the job search selectively. One of her primary goals was to land a job in a big city working in Greek life. In preparation of her participation in one of the national placement conferences, she selectively submitted her application to open positions. As a result, she landed only a few interviews at the conference. Some of the positions that were posted were at universities her peers recommended, yet she still hesitated to apply for positions that were not in desirable locations. Her early assessment of the job search was that the process was tough. She had hoped that there would be more options available to her and wondered if she was being too picky.

One of the surprising things for Laura was the lack of interviews that she had early in the process. She perceived herself to be qualified for many of the jobs for which she applied and found great disappointment not to be selected for more interviews. “I

thought I would be really qualified for these positions. I read the description of what they are looking for and I'm like, 'I can do this,' so I'm wondering, 'Who is getting the interviews?'" It was frustrating to her that she put forth so much effort in applying for positions that never materialized. She developed coping mechanisms to deal with this disappointment. "I think it is interesting that I will become very excited about a position and then get turned down and I then act like I never wanted to be there." She found it difficult to get invested in a place, only to get let down when she was not considered for the position.

After returning from the national placement conference, Laura began to wonder if her selectivity was the right approach. She learned that by not applying to a wide variety of positions, she lost the opportunity to explore potential employers that might have been an appropriate fit for her. For example, a large public institution had an appealing position available, but she did not apply due to her perceptions of its location. After missing the application deadline, she met the woman who supervised the position and was impressed with her professional involvement and the Greek program that she oversaw. She expressed some regret at not having explored the position further. As she navigated the process, she recognized that her selectivity was a problem. She talked about feeling "forced to be less picky." And while she talked about being more open to opportunities in geographic regions that were initially outside of her preferences, she realized she was not acting on them.

The only thing that has changed [from initial preferences] is location, but I have not changed too much. I am talking about it like I'm less picky, but when it comes time to apply for those jobs, I won't follow through.

Interviews were slow to come. At graduation Laura still had not secured a position, but she was still very active in the job search. She figured that since her job search was specific to Greek life, she would have to continue to pursue openings into the summer months. Shortly after graduation, she received a job offer from a position in Greek life, but did not feel that it was a good fit for her. She had the confidence to turn that position down and continue on the job market. At this stage of the process, she opened her geographic choices and focused more on the job description than the location. In July, she began to secure a number of phone interviews and landed a campus interview with a southern school. While this was not in a location on her initial preferences, the position was of great interest to her. Apprehensive leading up to the interview, she was not sure she would like the community. However, upon arriving on campus, she knew immediately that if offered the job, she would accept. To her delight, she received a job offer and gladly accepted.

She found the two-week time span between her campus interview and her start date to be a concern. However, during that time, she began forming relationships with her new peers through e-mail and social media. Laura felt welcomed by these early communications. One of her new colleagues expressed her willingness to help her in any way she could to make the transition to the new community. And while Laura was very

excited about her new position, she expressed some concern in her ability to perform in the new role. She also worried about how she would be perceived by her new colleagues.

Laura recalled the job search process as being difficult. She tried to make sense of why she was one of the last in her class to land a job. She began actively applying to positions in February and had not anticipated having the majority of her interview activity occur in June and July. She mentioned the stress of seeing her peers secure interviews and accept offers earlier in the process. Specifically she talked about getting “freaked out” when friends would talk about their new jobs when she was still actively on the job market. Toward the end of her search, Laura was getting a flurry of interview activity, which boosted her confidence. The advice she offered to those who follow is to be patient and stay the course. Opportunities will continue to present themselves during the summer months.

Jeremy

Jeremy found his way to graduate school in a different way from many of his peers. After studying international relations as an undergraduate student, he pursued a variety of options. He spent some time as a substitute teacher, sold auto parts, and had a brief stint as a graduate student studying French. However, at times during his final year of undergraduate study and in the two years that he was in the workforce, he often considered what it would be like to be an academic advisor. He discovered that he would need a master’s degree to pursue this option. He applied to two programs and attended the program that accepted him. Upon entering his graduate program, he was assigned a graduate assistantship in the advising center, but quickly discovered that he and his

supervisor did not see eye to eye. He was reassigned to a different assistantship midway through his first year. This experience caused him to question his interest in advising and his decision to pursue a graduate degree in college student personnel.

As Jeremy began the job search, it was clear that he was interested in finding a place that would restore his confidence. His job search was affected by his less than positive experiences in the classroom and in his assistantship. From the beginning of his search, he lacked focus. His priority was to find a place where he could “make a contribution.” However, as he tackled the task of finding a job, his strategy was somewhat haphazard. From early on, he expressed his interest in potentially pursuing a position outside of higher education but had not explored how he might go about doing so.

Jeremy was looking to join an institution where he could make a contribution. His initial targets were facilities, event planning, and advising, but later he added residence life in the mix. He reflected positively on his summer internship, which was in residence life. This gave him some hope that a career in student affairs could be rewarding. He talked specifically about keeping his expectations realistic. “I’m trying not to set high expectations for things, because every time that I do, it just hits a wall.” He also worried that his graduate assistantship experiences did not provide him with the type of opportunities that would make him a competitive candidate. “I worry that I don’t have any experience or skills to justify the autonomy, so that seem very frightening to me.”

Just prior to the national placement conference, Jeremy had applied to a few vacancies, but had not completely committed to attending the conference. In the days leading up to the conference, he secured a couple of interviews and decided to attend. There he had a couple of positive interviews. He focused on one of these job leads and landed an on campus interview. From here, his strategy was to focus on one opportunity at a time, suspending his search while he pursued one option. When one lead would fail to materialize in an offer, he began to consider other options again. He took a positive approach to evaluating opportunities. Jeremy would research the institution and its community and begin seeing himself in the job. While he became invested in the places he had interviews, he was not crushed when he did not receive offers. He looked at the bright side and felt privileged to have been selected for an interview. He figured something else would work out.

Jeremy discontinued participation in the study after our second interview. In our last communication at the end of June, he reported landing a temporary human resources position for a major retail company. He also reported applying to a Ph.D. program while continuing to search for positions in higher education.

Cross-case Analysis

In analyzing the data offered by the participants, the overarching theme present in the anticipatory socialization of new student affairs professionals was the distinction between the public and private aspects of the job search. Aspects of the public job search included things such as the role of being a member of a cohort graduate program, participation in national placement conferences, the public nature of networking and

interviewing, and receiving and accepting an offer. These aspects are often discussed among job seekers. Entire books are written about these topics. Mentors and advisors coached candidates on how to apply for jobs, the tricks of networking, the art of interviewing, and the negotiation involved in accepting jobs. These are the things we might expect job seekers to manage.

As participants navigated their public job search, they often talked about the more private struggles or experiences they encountered during their anticipatory socialization. Participants were redefining relationships, attempting to understand and find fit, trying to make sense of their experiences, working through issues with confidence, comparing themselves to others, managing expectations, and seeking connections. These activities were often more private in nature.

The Public Job Search

As these second-year graduate students approached graduation, their status as job seekers was taken for granted. Naturally, as their graduate school experience came to an end, the transition to new student affairs professional was assumed. Discussions about career goals and job search strategies were discussed in class, at assistantships, and with family and friends. Much of the anticipatory socialization process—such as their membership in a graduate cohort, participation in the placement conferences, networking, and receiving and accepting offers—played out publicly.

The public nature of cohort membership.

The nature of being part of a cohort contributed to the public nature of the job search. Participants understood that the next chapter after graduate school was to secure

a position to begin their careers in student affairs. As cohort members, participants generally knew what kind of jobs their peers were seeking. During one class, they each took a few minutes to share what kind of job they were seeking. This turned out to be a useful exercise in sharing with one another. This helped to facilitate a supportive environment; on occasion, participants would refer jobs to one another. Emily interviewed for a position with a school that she did not feel was an appropriate fit for her. However, she thought that the position would be well suited for Parker. When Parker pursued the position, he successfully landed the job. Parker had a similar experience with sharing. He had a phone interview with a school and after learning that Emily also had a interview with the same school, he shared with her what the interview was like, what he learned about the position, and what he thought they were looking for in a candidate based on his own interview experience with the institution. This information was very helpful to Emily as she prepared for her own interview with the school. In the end, she landed a job with that school.

There were other examples of how participants helped one another through the process. Olivia secured a position at an institution where Harrison later had an interview. Olivia was able to shed some light on the process for Harrison and help him set expectations for what he would experience in his own campus interview. Sending one another job vacancies was not an uncommon occurrence.

Well, the one I found at [university] was an assistant director job for student activities, and the minimum requirements and specifications they wanted were very close to the ones I had except for the fact they wanted someone who had

worked in Greek life, so it was just kind of sad for me, because I was like, “This is a perfect job and a perfect location, but I don’t have any Greek life experience or anything of that sort, but I know someone in my cohort who does.” So I sent her the stuff. It was nice to be helpful (Olivia).

Participants were a constant source of support for one another. “The cohort specifically, they are real supportive and we’re going to celebrate each person’s individual job as they get offers and stuff. They are real positive people” (Debbie).

The cohort experience, while providing support for many, also created an atmosphere of competition at times. Laura talked about being one of the last in her class to secure employment and the pressure she experienced as a result.

I was literally maybe one of the last to get a job. I started to freak out and you start thinking of stupid little things. I have a wedding coming up and I’m going to go and be the only one without a job.

Parker also discussed the tension between supporting other members of the cohort and feeling the pressure of competition.

Someone got a job here, which I think we all saw that coming. Debbie got a job at [institution] and we were all excited for her and I think in that sense, we do feel somewhat like a family. It’s more of a “Congratulations!,” and privately we may have a more mixed reactions, like “Ah, I don’t want to be the last one to get a job.”

This tension was mentioned by several participants who were genuinely supportive of their peers, yet often found themselves comparing their experiences to others. No one

wanted to be the last in the group to secure a job. This played out privately for many of them.

With the significant amount of time that the participants spent on applying to positions and researching organizations, it was inevitable that the job search was constantly on participants' minds. Several participants talked about how time consuming it was to apply for and research positions. Sophie specifically made a choice to suspend her job search during the final weeks of the academic year. Feeling overwhelmed with her graduate assistantship and coursework, she intentionally directed her attention away from the job search until after commencement. Due to the intense time commitment, participants felt that the job search was a common topic for conversation. One participant found it difficult to escape the job talk that occurred among her peers:

I don't like to engage in the group dialogue about it, only one on one, but other people felt the need to talk to everyone really publicly about their on campus interviews and they didn't get it [the job], and then people ask if they've heard back, and I don't want people asking me if I've heard back from schools. It is just so personal, personal information. I don't know, I guess other people don't feel that way. (Brittany)

Social media served as another means of making the job search public and constant in the cohort. Participants referenced Facebook as a way of learning when others were on campus interviews or when they had taken jobs.

Those who were interested in keeping their job search more private found it difficult to do so.

From the beginning, I really didn't want to talk about the job search a lot with other folks or want to compare myself to other people. It's pretty much impossible, if someone asks you, "How's your job search going?" to say, "It's private, I don't want to talk about it." (Brittany)

As a peer group, the talk about job search activity was difficult to avoid. As Parker mentioned, one could not avoid hearing about what others were experiencing at the conferences or in their job search. Being a part of a cohort made parts of the anticipatory socialization process public for participants. Most knew the job status of their peers. They talked in class, engaged during their normal daily activity, and stayed informed about each other's search via social media. They also knew who was going to attend the national placement conference and often traveled to these conferences together.

Placement conferences: No small intimate affair.

Participation in the national placement conferences created a more public venue for the job seekers. They were all aware who among their peers were participating in which conference. In many cases, they knew how many interviews their peers had secured. The open nature of the interviews at these conferences and the social events hosted created an environment that made it difficult to keep one's job search activity private. Many described their participation in the conference as a benefit even though it also served as a source of stress. Olivia and Geoff talked about being anxious the first day of interviews because they were not sure what to expect. Olivia specifically pointed out the first day of the conference as being more stressful than the days that followed. "I mean that first day was really kind of more stressful, because I didn't know what to

expect and I hadn't gone through it before. But after that, the second day, I was a little bit more relaxed and I felt more myself."

Balancing a full day of interviews followed by evening social engagements was draining for many of the participants. The social events that hiring institutions hosted for their candidates served as a great way to get to know the institutions a bit better, while adding a layer of anxiety to an already intense experience.

My first day was really stressful, I came home [to hotel room] and we had to go out that night. We had a social, so there was stuff that I had to go to that night.

And then the next day being on again and being invited to socials, I got invited to three, but didn't go to them. I was like, I am not going to be on and I knew that about myself. (Emily)

The decision to miss these social events caused Emily great stress, but it ended up being a strategic job search decision. She felt that making a good impression after such a long day of interviews would be difficult, so rather than risk making a poor impression, she decided not to attend some of her social invitations. Olivia had a slightly different take on her participation in socials:

I would consider myself socially awkward, so I wasn't a fan of these social things, you know, because for me, it's like, now I have to go put my best face on and try to take myself outside of my comfort zone.

Even with this assessment, she sounded an ostensibly contradictory note by stating that one of the socials she attended was fun with a relaxed environment. "It was fun, just getting to meet and talk to the people who are in the position that I want."

Another perspective comes from Brittany, who talked about being nervous about attending a social because she did not know what to expect. She really appreciated the opportunity to talk with people who were working at the institution, but noted the odd experience of socializing with other candidates while attending one of these social events:

The balance of candidates to folks who worked there was a little off; so, for a while it was just a table of candidates. And I was happy to do that, but the reason to go to the social was to find out more about the school, and nobody there knew about the school.

Two participants were invited to attend statewide socials. Both had less than positive experiences. Emily was invited and attended one and was disappointed when the institution that invited her never made an effort to connect with her there. Upon arriving, she socialized with other attendees and by the time she was free to connect with the inviting institution, she noticed that they all had left the social. Kim also was invited to a statewide social and felt that the dynamics were awkward.

I tried to talk to everyone, but it was like really awkward and it just seemed like there was a lot of socially awkward people. They weren't like "Hey, you should really come here." It wasn't like that.

She attributed her experience to the nature of such a big social with a large number of different institutions hosting candidates.

A final perspective came from Geoff who was a candidate for a position at the institution where he was a graduate student. This institution hosted a reception, which he attended. His participation created an interesting dynamic for him: the other candidates

who attended the social were interested in learning as much as they could about the organization, and he fielded questions about the institution from these candidates.

I didn't make it known that I was a candidate, because I wanted them [candidates] to feel at ease, but I answered their questions fine. I'm very supportive of our department, so I don't have any reason to be like I need to shoo this person away as if they were a threat.

The social aspect of the conference was a memorable experience for many of the conference participants. However, they were generally anxiety-creating events even if they were recalled as useful by the participants.

The participants planned for their conference experience differently. Emily talked about her significant preparation for the conference. She was diligent in reviewing job listings and applying for opportunities leading up to the conference. Prior to arriving at the conference, she had over 10 interviews scheduled. For each of these scheduled interviews, she prepared a portfolio that included facts about the institution, the job description, department philosophies, and any noteworthy items of particular interest to her. She perceived herself to be more prepared and less picky about jobs than some of her peers. However, she also felt a strong responsibility to secure a good position since her relocation would include moving her partner as well. Emily looked back on the conference experience as being valuable, but followed up by saying, "I would never do it again. I wouldn't do 15 interviews, I would go for three specific interviews and that would be different."

Geoff and Parker struggled with knowing what would be the right number of jobs to apply to in order to have a productive conference experience. Geoff applied to several positions and secured numerous interviews. In contrast, Parker was more selective in where he submitted applications and secured only a couple of interviews. In retrospect, Geoff was pleased with the outcome of his strategy, but mentioned that having so many interviews was stressful. Parker's evaluation of his strategy was that perhaps he was being too selective. He discussed regretting turning down invitations to interview with a few schools that actively sought his candidacy. He was anxious about filling his interview schedule with schools that were not on the top of his list of preferences. In the end, he did not generate the kind of interest that he thought he might from prospective employers and was disappointed with the number of interviews he secured and his overall conference experience.

Laura, Brittany, and Whitney approached the conferences with low expectations of the number of interviews they would secure. Each was interested in landing very specific positions and knew that the number of vacancies that would be posted would be limited. After the conference, Laura regretted being so selective regarding geographic location. Brittany and Whitney felt that they had taken advantage of all the opportunities that were presented to them, even though they believed the options were rather limited.

While most participants had pleasant things to say about their conference experience, each pointed out less than favorable experiences with their conference interviews. There was a consistent response about interviewers coming across as disengaged from the process. The most common complaint from participants was that

interviewers read directly off a list of questions without engaging the participants more deeply, probing their responses, or asking for any elaboration on the experiences listed on their resumes. “Reading directly off a form, I think, is very impersonal” (Parker).

Specifically, Sophie pointed out that interviewers were answering questions with canned responses. “I asked them what was the best and most challenging things about their job and it was just canned responses, like ‘Oh, OK.’” Geoff attributed the disengagement of some interviewers to the atmosphere. “I don’t know if it’s because you’re in a room where there are 200 tables and I just didn’t command their interest. It ended up being rougher than I thought it was going to be.”

Emily recalled an interviewer practically falling asleep during her interview. She also brought up an interaction with a senior student affairs officer that made a less than positive impression on her:

I really liked the dean, but when I got to know the vice president of student affairs, he kind of reminded me of my dad, and he is definitely a boys’ club kind of guy. I don’t know, I kind of wanted to ask the girl who was leaving, “Why are you leaving?”

In contrast, participants also commonly discussed feeling valued, finding fit, and connecting with people through the conference interview process. These themes came up through the entire process for many of the participants. Emily mentioned the positive impression left on her when one of her interviewers addressed her by name when she saw her several days later at the conference. Parker mentioned being particularly pleased by getting personalized notes from schools actively recruiting him. He felt that informal

interviews that did not rely on a list of questions provided opportunities for a more engaging and personal experience. He also appreciated getting timely feedback from employers, positive or negative. He appreciated just knowing where he stood and if he was still being considered or not.

Geoff also talked about a more personal interview experience. He remembers most fondly the interviews in which he felt as if the interviewer was genuinely interested in him as a candidate. Kim echoed Geoff's experience of having a positive reaction to interviewers who expressed an interest in her candidacy: "I mean of course it feels nice to get these e-mails that are like, "We consider you one of our top candidates." It's a good feeling to hear that."

Conference participation for these individuals was categorized as a stressful, but a worthwhile job search activity. Participation in the conferences was something that was talked about widely across the cohort, contributing to the public nature of these experiences.

Networking: Telling everyone you know.

Networking was a central job search strategy for Pete and Debbie. Both landed jobs specifically by building and utilizing a successful network. Geoff and Brittany also leaned heavily on their professional networks to learn about job openings and seek information regarding potential opportunities. Engaging a network was anything but private. Participants who focused on networking as an important job search strategy actively sought out other professionals and shared their goals, interests, and intentions for

finding employment. Keeping their job search more private was not their approach.

Instead, they focused on making their plans known to others.

From the time she was an undergraduate student, Debbie had begun to build her network. She received good mentoring and advice. Her mentor encouraged her participation in multiple professional conferences. Participation in these conferences was critical for her to become known in the field and for her to make connections with people who would later help provide her with valuable information for the job search. When a job that she really wanted was posted, she was able to employ her network to discern the specific nature of the job. Due to her positive reputation, she also had a number of professionals nominate her for the role. Her network positioned her well in the process and ended up paying off when she was offered the job.

Pete also knew the value of networking. While Debbie's networking was important for her to break into a very small, niche field within student affairs, Pete's priority was to network in a geographic region. He also began to build his network prior to starting graduate school. Pete identified and conducted informational interviews with many professionals within his geographic boundaries. He estimated that he conducted at least 30 informational interviews. He also focused his professional development involvement in his targeted metropolitan area. In addition, he planned all of his practicum experiences at institutions within his target area. The nature of connecting himself to the professional community served as a benefit that played out in a more public way.

Geoff's networking was a bit less intentional. His mother worked in the student affairs field, so much of the networking that was conducted on his behalf was directed by others and on occasion not welcomed by Geoff. He specifically mentioned that he wanted to do his job search on his own.

Growing up in student affairs, I got to know a lot of people at different places. I had a big thing, like, "Don't tell anyone I'm looking for a job." I'm really sold that I can do this on my own. The problem is that she's [mother] always going to find out, because people will tell her where I applied.

While he admitted that he found his mother to be supportive through the process, he expressed some frustration with her. He wanted her to provide him with advice from a student affairs professional's perspective, but often felt her advice was more motherly.

Brittany was another participant who often talked about the networking that occurred for her in the process. Her mentor provided her with job leads and resources. She also found her assistantship supervisor to be well connected, and on a couple of occasions provided endorsements for jobs, which she had applied. This engagement from her contacts required that she keep them informed of her progress.

Networking served some of the participants well as they moved through their anticipatory socialization processes. In Debbie's case, she was able to learn more about and shape expectations about a specific job. Pete's networking informed him of where he might find openings in his targeted area. Geoff and Brittany experienced networking that was engaged by others. These examples of networking demonstrated a public aspect of the anticipatory socialization process.

Interviews: Being on display.

As participants moved further along in the job search process from conference and phone interviews to campus interviews, their investment in the organizations increased. Many of the participants were willing to take first-round interviews with organizations that were lower on their list of preferences, figuring that a brief conference or phone interview would be only a small investment of time. Some were willing to take a chance on employers in hopes that by learning more about what the institution and position had to offer, they might find the position to be a fit. When participants were offered campus interviews, they were generally more invested and more excited about the potential of joining the organization.

Participants reported that their campus interviews most often lasted for a full day. It was not uncommon for these participants to have a meal either the evening before or the evening of their interview. They described the interview process as being a day full of meetings with various campus constituents. Some of the participants were asked to give presentations as part of their interview. This caused an increase in stress as many wondered what it would be like, who would attend their presentation, and what specifically were they being evaluated on based on their presentations. These presentations served as a way of putting these candidates on display during the interview process. A common response to the interview was that “being on” all day was a draining experience. “I found myself so exhausted from those [interviews]. You don’t understand how much being on the whole time really takes it out of you” (Brittany).

In contrast to conference and phone interviews, the participants had very few negative experiences with on campus interviews. In many ways, visits to campus helped the participants get excited about the potential of joining the organization. For instance, Geoff felt that he could feel the “spirit of the place” during his campus visit. This experience made him begin to feel like he was a part of the place prior to being given a job offer. Olivia noted that she was in awe of the beauty when she visited campus. Laura was inspired by possibilities offered by the local community when she was at her campus interview. She admitted to having reservations about the possibility of moving south, but was quickly won over during her interview experience.

Emily and Kim talked about the importance of having multiple campus interviews so that comparisons could be made when evaluating the organizations. Specifically, Kim talked about the importance of the campus interview in getting a truer sense of a campus. “I’m like, I need to take on campus interviews, because you think you know someone and then you go to campus. That’s what I learned about [a college where she interviewed].” She clearly felt that getting on campus helped to better assess if there was a fit.

A very important aspect of the process was the discussion of finding fit and connecting with people. Participants often mentioned the connections they made with their new supervisors during the interview process. Kim, Whitney, Pete, and Debbie were drawn to their institutions based on the connections they made with their would-be supervisors. Pete and Debbie felt inspired by the interactions they had during their campus interviews. Kim and Whitney talked about how supportive their would-be

supervisors were during the interview process and in particular during their campus visits.

Others talked about the host who would help to play a welcoming role during their campus visit. Laura and Sophie referenced positive experiences with a host who left them with positive impressions, while Parker and Kim had less positive interactions. Parker was surprised by the directness of his host.

I have been trying to figure out why they picked him [to host]. I think really the whole purpose of it was if they use him they are only going to get people who are very serious about it [the position] because he will turn people off. He was a character. He was late picking me up a few times, like 20 minutes, and I was like, “This is unprofessional.” (Parker).

Kim attributed her less than positive experience to the lack of a host. She noted that she was a bit surprised that the employer was not trying to be more welcoming during her visit. She recalled times when she was part of a search committee and hosted candidates and how she often tried to make the candidates feel welcome by offering coffee and checking in on the candidate.

Participants found that their interactions with the people they met on campus to be an important part of the process. Interactions, along with the experience of being on campus, served as a way to get the participants excited about the prospect of joining organizations. Geoff mentioned getting the sense of the school spirit on his campus visit, which he found motivating. Pete was impressed with the high quality of the professionals and students at one of the places he interviewed and referenced that as

exciting and a place he could see himself joining. Timarie felt more excited about her job prospect after her interview. Laura was apprehensive prior to arriving for one of her interviews, but left hoping that she would receive the offer. Learning about the organizations and connecting with the people through the campus interview process generated excitement among the participants. “I liked them—I don’t know, it just seemed like I got along with them. I would love to have worked there” (Jeremy).

While the campus interview served as a way to learn more about an unfamiliar institution, three of the participants experienced being candidates at the institutions where they were graduate students. Timarie applied for a position that was open in the office where she was doing her assistantship. She thought that being an internal candidate was harder than being an external candidate. She worried that people would feel like they understood her strengths and perhaps not think she was right for the job. She also felt that people who she worked with most closely in her assistantship did not ask her thorough interview questions, which did not give her the opportunity to elaborate on her strengths related to the position.

I felt like the competition was more intense because I was an internal candidate.

Like, I felt I had to prove myself more, because these people already knew me, but they might not think I am the best person for the position.

Geoff and Harrison were internal candidates as well and were deeply disappointed in how they were treated through the interview process. Neither was considered for campus interviews, which was hurtful to each of them. What made it more difficult was that those on the search committee were friends and colleagues. No one sat down with Geoff

or Harrison to explain the process or where they stood. They received word of their candidacy status from informal networks and by hearing that others had been invited to campus for interviews.

Campus interviews were a positive experience for these participants. Participants reflected on their interviews as a means of learning more about organizations. They also talked about finding fit in the organizations, yet most of the talk about fit referenced connecting with colleagues and supervisors, and identifying with the organizations. Interviews served as a means to generate excitement about joining the organization.

Accepting an offer.

Emily, Parker, Pete, and Laura all were apprehensive early in the interview process with the schools where they accepted offers. Emily was not sure about joining a large, public university, but connected with the colleagues who interviewed her and enticed her with the opportunity of working with a young and growing department. Laura had a hard time seeing herself moving to the community where she ended up accepting an offer. Pete was certain the right type of school for him would be one with business students, but took an offer at a liberal arts school. Parker had initially passed on applying for the job he ended up securing. However, all four of these participants were extremely excited about the job prospect after visiting campus and receiving job offers.

Whitney, Kim, and Parker provided a contrasting view. Each expressed concern at some point with the job they ended up accepting. Whitney returned from her campus interview hoping that the experience would have convinced her without a doubt that she should join the organization. While her description of the job fit most of what she was

looking for, she worried that the remote location of the campus would make it difficult for her to build a social network. She was also hoping to secure a position in a geographic location closer to her significant other. Kim also described the job offer as being a really great professional fit, but worried about living in the metropolitan areas where she would have to move. Getting excited about the job was difficult initially. Her strategy was to keep the job offer more private so she would not have to talk about it with her friends and classmates. However, her new supervisor and colleagues played a role in convincing her that she would enjoy her new community. Parker worried that he was going to have little time away from the job and expressed concern about work–life balance. He noted the professional development opportunities that would be present in the position and how it would contribute to his preparation for advancement down the road and that gave him something to get excited about.

The concerns expressed by Whitney and Kim were short lived. Once Whitney officially accepted the position, she began planning her move to the community; she identified roommates and focused on all the great aspects of the position. Her enthusiasm for the position grew and she began to look forward to her move to the professional role. Kim's excitement increased when she shared her concerns with her new supervisor, who had a number of Kim's new colleagues reach out to her to provide support. She was overcome by the generosity of her new colleagues and excited to learn more about her new community through these contacts. Parker was hopeful that once he started his new job, his minor concern with work–life balance would be resolved.

Relationships with significant others played out through the entire job search for many, but weighed more heavily for some during the final stages. One of the things that impressed Emily about her new employer was the invitation to bring her partner along on the interview. They knew that she was married and wanted her spouse to be involved in the process of evaluating the institution and the community. This investment from the institution made her feel like she was joining a family-friendly organization. Her partner was also very involved in helping her to narrow her list of potential employers. Together they identified those institutions that would be suitable based on the job and the community in which they were located. However, at times Emily worried that her partner did not have a solid understanding of the jobs she was considering. This played out when Emily was being recruited for a residence life position that carried a significant amount of conduct responsibility. She was trying to consider quality of life issues for the two of them as a couple, but wondered if her partner understood what it would mean to live on campus. She recalled a conversation they had.

Yeah, it would be \$33,000, which is great, it is more expensive to live there, and I'm probably going to be waking up at 3 a.m. and you probably are too. I think it has been really interesting, because I don't think that he fully understands and he has never lived on [campus].

They continued to weigh the options together to determine what would be best for them as a couple.

Pete's entire job search was limited to his hometown and when he had the choice of two different offers close to home, he was able to compare the offers with his partner

and decide on the job that was the best fit for him. Brittany's partner was supportive of her all along the way. When she was offered a position at a school in the vicinity of several excellent medical schools, a long-term goal for her partner, it became clear that not only would the job be a great fit for her, but also the location would benefit the two of them down the road. Timarie also focused her job search on the geographic area of her partner, because they did not consider living apart to be a viable option.

During the final stages of the job search, participants were excited to be presented with job offers. Many participants referenced welcome e-mails being sent to them from their new colleagues after accepting the job. For those relocating, supervisors and colleagues often provided support and assistance in helping them make the transition. These types of interactions contributed to their excitement to join their new organizations.

The Private Job Search

While much of what the participants were experiencing in their job search was of a public nature—discussions with their peers, their participation in placement conferences, and being interviewed by large numbers of people through the on-campus interview process—they were all working through their job searches on a more private level as well. A number of subthemes emerged as private aspects of the job search. Things such as redefining relationships and finding fit were of a personal nature. The importance of connecting with people and finding a social network were echoed throughout. The role that family and significant others shifted expectations, redirected plans, and affected decisions. Participants reported and expressed varying levels of

confidence through the process, sometime apparent and other times invisible to them.

Their confidence was often lacking when they compared themselves to others.

Redefining relationships.

Some of the participants approached the job search with consideration of partners' needs. This was true for Emily, Pete, Brittany, and Timarie. Others were in the process of defining their relationships during the time in which they were on the job market. Debbie, Whitney, Olivia, Harrison, and Parker had to consider what impact a job offer might have on their relationships. Each of these participants ended up taking positions that would geographically take them away from their significant other. For Debbie, finding perfect positions for both herself and her partner would have been close to impossible. Her area of interest was so narrow that typically a school would not have more than one entry-level position. Because she landed such a great position, as a couple, they decided the best course of action would be for her to take the job. One of the things on Whitney's list of preferences was to live close to her partner, but when it came down to getting an offer, she made a decision based on the nature of her relationship. She did not feel her relationship was at a point at which she should compromise securing a job that would be the ideal fit for her professionally. After taking the job, her intention was to continue her relationship from a distance. She reflected on the process she went through to evaluate her job offer and what the job might mean for her relationship:

Well, I think it just came down to thinking about the job and what about the job I didn't like, or what I did like about the office and really it had nothing to do with

the job or the office, it was just outside factors. OK, do I want to be in a small college town and then, also, with [significant other] being in [different state] that pretty much will kill our relationship if I chose to take the job? So I think that was something weighing on my mind. So I think, you know, at the end of the day, I worked so hard and it is such a great opportunity.

Whitney took the job that moved her several states away from her partner. She felt that the right thing for her was to pursue her professional goals.

Olivia was in a different position. She had recently accepted a marriage proposal from her significant other, who would have to remain back at school for one more year while he finished his studies. Olivia was quite intentional in planning to leave the university after graduate school. Since she spent her childhood and attended undergraduate and graduate school in the same town, she felt that professionally she needed a different experience. At the beginning of her job search she was open to and actively seeking opportunities in Mid-Atlantic States. After received the marriage proposal in February, she narrowed her search to remain in the state. During this time, her father also expressed his desire for her to live a bit closer to home, which also played into her decision to stay closer. For her, taking a job a few hours away from her family and fiancé allowed her to meet her goal of moving away for a new professional experience, while still being only a car ride away from home. In a year's time, she was planning to get married, with her new husband finishing school and relocating to her new city.

Harrison turned down one job offer because it would move him too far away from his partner and family. He struggled a great deal after turning the job down. It took him two months to secure another job offer. During that time, he experienced criticism from his family for not taking the position offered. They worried that he would not get another opportunity. Harrison had faith that he would land something, but admitted that the stress was sometime almost unbearable. During the process, he decided that being closer to his partner would have to take precedence and hoped that he would find a job that would allow that to happen. The position Harrison accepted was only a 20-minute drive from his partner, which made him very happy that he had the confidence to turn down one offer in pursuit of one that would better meet his needs.

Parker experienced ongoing negotiation with his partner through the job search process. Initially, he wanted to limit his job search to the Midwest to stay closer to his partner and family. His geographic preferences changed several times through the process as he and his partner defined and redefined their relationship. After a serious conversation with her about his job search, she encouraged him to search widely and not limit his options. His interpretation of this conversation was that she was not invested in their relationship. He widened his search to include positions well outside the Midwest. As he moved further along in the process, he and his partner experienced a turning point in their relationship and he once again began to limit his search to remain closer. Not only was Parker navigating the job search, he was also trying to determine what role his relationship should take in the process. He secured a position just a few hours away from his partner.

Personal relationships played an important role for these participants as they began the socialization into their first professional student affairs position. Partners influenced aspects of these participants' processes, including where they applied, how they evaluated job offers, and whether to accept or decline job offers. The role relationships played was more private than public and was negotiated between the couples. For some, the job search was much more about finding a place where they both could be happy. For others, it was a time to define the relationship and consider the next phase of their relationship.

Finding fit.

Finding fit was an important part of the process for participants. Early on, many talked about finding fit. Mentors and advisors recommended pursuing opportunities that were a good fit. Every participant talked about finding fit and the importance of fit at some point in the process. In many ways, it was assumed the talk about fit was understood, yet participants were having a difficult time defining fit. When Whitney discussed finding fit, she was referring to the challenging task of understanding an organization's culture. "I think that will be a big part. How well did I judge the culture and the job? Were my initial instincts correct?"

Fit seemed to be a feeling or a way of identifying with the organization. Finding fit was not necessarily aligning personal skill or values to the position or organization. Instead it seemed to incorporate the bigger picture, including assessing if the participants connected with colleagues and determining if they saw themselves doing the work or living in the community. Brittany, whose job search moved more slowly than some of

her peers' due to her narrow focus, was concerned when she had a campus visit and did not see herself fitting in. For her, it was not about having a solid understanding about what fit looked like, but knowing when there was a lack of fit.

I didn't expect to get the first job I applied to, but I just think it was really challenging that there were not as many orientation jobs out there. And I knew this going into it, but not finding the right fit right away, right after I came back from [campus interview] and I was like, I don't want to work there, I'm not going to have a job at graduation and feeling awful about it.

Even though she was eager to secure a job, she would not compromise fit. She also talked about the campus interview process helping her to define what fit would be for her.

I've already begun to understand more about myself and the fit I am looking for in a position and institution. The interview is really a good place to figure that aspect out, because you simply cannot get a complete understanding of the university from a web site.

Brittany ended up determining that if she could see herself attending the institution as a student, she would find it to be a good fit. This was shaped as she experienced the anticipatory socialization process and was not clearly defined until she began having campus interviews and closely evaluating institutions.

Laura used intuition to gauge fit, particularly when she was not feeling it. This was brought up after she had evaluated a job vacancy that seems to have a description that was in line with her career interests.

I can't explain what it was, but I was not that excited about pursuing it. It's been weird, the whole process. I have trusted my gut a little more than I should. I should have pursued that [job vacancy], but I feel like there has not been a whole lot I have been super excited about yet.

When opportunities were available, she sensed whether there would be a fit. This intuitive judgment determined whether she would apply. Further along in the process, Laura admitted that this strategy was self-defeating and she began to be less discriminating about where she would apply. This change in strategy turned out to work in her favor. She had apprehensions going into the interview with the institution where she landed a job. However, after getting on campus, meeting the people, and spending time in the community, she quickly recognized a fit with the institution and was excited about her new opportunity.

Geoff verbalized the struggle between finding fit, having realistic expectations, and securing a job.

People are looking for fit and I almost think there are times when that is unrealistic. I have to be honest, if I didn't get the [institution where he was hired] job and I was offered the [other institution where he interviewed] position, I felt like I could do the position at [other institution where he interviewed]. I do not feel like it was going to be the best place for me, but if I was offered, I would have taken it, because I want a job and I'm not going to hold out for the perfect job, because, I don't know, it's a really difficult market, both conventions had half the amount of jobs per applicant. That worries me. I don't want to turn down

something. I feel like they are telling people to pick fit and do that, but I feel in a way it's detrimental, because there might not be a second offer.

Kim shared this sentiment. She also worried about finding a job and while finding fit was important to her, she was more concerned about landing a job. "[I feel] pressure to take a job, because I don't know if I am going to have any more interviews."

For many, finding a good fit was of great importance. Harrison referenced how mentors and supervisors stressed that he should find the right fit. As he moved through the process, he reflected on a couple of jobs that he really wanted, but did not land. Later, he realized that those jobs would not have been a good fit. "While it hurt at the time, and it still does a little bit, I know that this job that I found is a much better fit for me than the [other] job." This played out for Whitney as well. As Whitney was trying to make a decision on her job offer, the notion of fit was central.

I really want to find a place that I can see myself being for a couple of years, so I think that I am putting more stress and pressure on myself in that aspect.

Thinking that I have to find something that is perfect when in reality, if I am not a huge fan of it, give it a year or two and then I can move on. And it's not the end of the world like I am making it out to be.

Participants brought up fit at every stage of the job search. From the time they initiated their searches, finding a good fit was important to them. As they moved into the interview phase they began to more clearly define fit. In the final stages, they were reflecting on fit and finding ways that they fit with their new organizations.

Mentors and advisors consistently emphasized the importance of fit to the participants. Each participant approached finding fit in ways that worked for them as individuals. And while one clear definition of fit did not emerge, it was important that each participant found a job where they felt that they had it.

Trying to make sense of it all.

There were many aspects of the job search that left these participants wondering and trying to make sense of things. In early stages of their searches, participants struggled with finding the right strategies and weighing advice. Geoff talked about getting conflicting advice regarding managing his participation in the placement conference. “You get conflicting advice all the time. Some people are like, ‘Don’t do 15 interviews,’ then there are some people that are like, ‘Fifteen is fine.’” Geoff ended up landing a large number of interviews at the conference. He felt like it was too much, but wondered if he would have had enough leads had he limited the number. In contrast, Parker was unsure how aggressive he should be in pursuing employers at the placement conference. He ended up using a more selective approach and, as a result, was disappointed that he did not land more interviews. He was confident that his experience would make him a competitive candidate and wondered why he did not receive more interest from potential employers.

At the placement conferences and during the early stages of the application process, participants also tried to determine what it meant when communication was lacking. “The ambiguity of like, whether or not you’re going to hear from a school. You know they are continuing the interview process, but I don’t know whether or not to

expect something from them” (Geoff). Others wondered how much time needed to pass to figure if one was still under consideration. For example, Harrison had applied to a position and was contacted by phone. The employer told him that they would be in touch to interview him in the coming days. Weeks passed before the employer followed up. He wondered if the employer was unorganized and he fell through the cracks or if he was not a priority candidate for them.

Participants experienced events that made them uncertain of their status with employers. Emily’s experience with a conference social left her guessing. Feeling confident about an institution, she attended their social event at the placement conference. When the hosting parties left the social without engaging her in a conversation, she questioned whether they were interested in her candidacy. Why would they invite her and then not talk to her? Kim was left wondering about her candidacy after she attended a conference social. She left the social feeling really valued and was confident that she would be invited to campus, but in the weeks following the conference she was not extended a campus interview. Whitney experienced an interview that made her uncertain. “I thought that is was a little weird, not being asked any questions. So then I thought, ‘Either they are really interested or they are not interested at all.’”

At times, the participants were accurate in assessing their status with employers, but there were several instances when this was not true. After a phone interview that Sophie described as not very successful, she was surprised. “I read him wrong, because they did bring me to campus.” After a campus interview, Harrison was quite confident that he would receive an offer based on his interpretation of his interactions with the

supervisor. This confidence played a significant role in his decision to turn down another job offer. When the expected offer did not materialize, he was left wondering how that happened. Parker also had a difficult time interpreting the meaning of some of his interactions.

I felt there was a match [with] the two of us and how I was so excited about their school and how there were a lot of possibilities for me. I thought I had good answers, but again, I couldn't read them and I couldn't tell if there was a fit or anything. It was very difficult to see what was going on.

Parker and Laura shared similar frustrations when they considered themselves to be qualified for positions for which they were applying, but they failed to secure the number of interviews that they expected.

Getting feedback from employers did not always make this process easier to understand. Geoff received positive feedback from one employer, but was still left trying to understand his status.

And then even afterwards, she was like, "You did really well," so I felt like that went well, but then I actually heard yesterday that I'm not in their first round of candidates that they're interviewing, which is very confusing.

Brittany was contacted by an employer and told that she did not make the cut for a campus interview. A few days later, they called back with an interview invitation. "So I was just trying to figure it out. I don't understand; what does that mean? This means I'm number 4 or 5 on their list?"

The timing of job offers was a concern for these participants. They wondered what would happen if a job offer came from one organization while their status at others was still pending. Harrison, Brittany, and Laura each turned down jobs hoping that a better offer would come along. When offers were expected, the waiting game was stressful and often left participants guessing.

He told me that I would hear back something by Monday/Tuesday, because I was the last person they had to interview and they were going to meet the next day to hash it all out. So I was like okay, Tuesday comes around and I didn't hear anything and thought it was not good. So I was very scared that I was not going to get selected so it was really a shock when I got that call saying they wanted me, because I pretty much already forgot and decided that it was not going to happen, because the timeline they gave me did not match what actually happened (Olivia).

As Parker was waiting to hear about an offer, he received a voicemail at the end of the day from the potential employer. Unable to reach her that day, he spent the entire evening wondering if she was calling with an offer.

The job offer came through actually on a Wednesday afternoon and it was like 4:45 and I was at a lake and so I didn't get cell phone reception, but I got a voicemail and I heard who it was and was like, "Oh my goodness, we need to leave," because I get no reception and I need to make this call. The phone message said it was the woman who interviewed me. She wanted to talk to me and give me an update on the job search and to call her tomorrow, because she is leaving the office. Who calls someone who is leaving the office in five minutes?

I'm nervous now. I'm thinking, "She is updating me on the process? Is this code language?"

As participants made their way through the anticipatory socialization process, they experienced things that made them question what they meant. They questioned advice they received from others, interactions with employers, and their performance in the process.

Confidence coming and going.

Levels of confidence among the participants varied at different stages of the process. In the initial phase, participants felt their graduate school experiences had prepared them for their careers of choice. They were confident that their assistantships and practica made them competitive in the market. At this stage, they were assessing their strengths and reflecting on what they had accomplished over the course of their studies. "I mean, I feel really confident in my abilities. I know that I've helped put a lot of new initiatives into the department" (Timarie). While they were confident, they also understood there was a lot to learn, but tied that to a desire to spread their wings as new professionals. "I think I'm pretty good, and I know what I know is a fraction of what is out there, but I think I can do a lot; so, I want freedom to be able to exercise and do what I believe will work" (Pete).

Geoff spoke confidently about his skills, but showed uncertainty regarding understanding what potential employers would be seeking. "I'm confident in my experience. I'm confident in how I present myself, it's just not knowing what they want." He contradicted himself when he talked about having a narrow scope in student

affairs. With the majority of his experience in residence life, he expressed concern that he did not have enough experience. “I almost feel like I haven’t had enough experience, as far as like, in other areas of student affairs, so that’s what I worry about.” This concern came up with Brittany and Debbie as well. Debbie had significant experience in her target field, so as a way to diversify her resume, she took on a variety of practica.

I’m kind of worried that I’ve made myself more of a jack-of-all trades with my practicum experiences rather than really specific. Like, if I want an advising job, I don’t know if I have enough advising experience to apply and actually do that or to do judiciaries or career services. I’m kind of worried if I have enough in one area to really do that.

Brittany and Jeremy also shared this feeling. Brittany referenced a potential employer questioning her focus due to her wide array of internships, assistantships, and practicum experiences. She expressed concern about not having enough specific experience to be competitive. Jeremy stated it this way: “I’m worried that my experience here hasn’t given me experience to actually do anything with it.”

Brittany also talked about being thrown for a loop when her confidence was shaken in an interview. Understanding that jobs would be competitive, she anticipated getting challenging questions during interviews. However, she was left feeling as if she was not good enough after an interviewer expressed her desire to hire an expert.

And in describing the person they were looking for, they used the word “expert,” which I think is a lot to ask for a grad student or, you know, someone who is

coming right out of grad school. To expect an expert, so I was like, “Oh okay, an expert?”

Kim also took a hit to her confidence when an interviewer asked her to talk about her expertise.

So I feel like I should have been more prepared in that way, but she asked me what I’m an expert in and I’m like, you know, I’m 25 and I really don’t feel like I’m an expert in anything.

Both Brittany and Kim expressed confidence early in the process, but these setbacks during the interview stage clearly affected how they thought about themselves and their skills and backgrounds.

Others expressed highs and lows in their confidence as they interviewed. Geoff talked about feeling good about himself when a potential employer gave him positive feedback on his candidacy. Laura reflected on a positive interview that was less structured, which created an environment that allowed her true character come through. “I feel like it doesn’t have to be an intense interview to get to know who I am. I felt like I was more myself and felt confident and relaxed.” Timarie recalled feeling valued on her interview. “For someone to believe in you and have faith that you can complete the position, I think was a really big confidence booster.”

Participants experienced periods of lowered confidence as well. In particular, Kim struggled with highs and lows in her confidence. Initially, she showed clear signs of confidence, but also questioned herself throughout the process. In our first interview, Kim was confident in her preparation for the job market. She had previous professional

experience and expected to land a position at the assistant director level. While confident that she had the right experience for such positions, she often let other people affect the way she felt about herself. In our first interview, Kim stated, “I’m not really concerned about anything. I feel confident that I will find a job.” She also recognized that she had insecurities.

I’m kind of having a self-defeating attitude, I guess. Maybe I’m just not ready.

Maybe I just need to put in more time. I’m not excited about it, but it’s like, every time I tell someone that I want to apply for these bigger positions, I just get negativity. So that’s like, maybe I should just stay [in entry-level position].

In our discussion following her participation in the placement conference, she had convinced herself that pursuing an entry-level position would be in her best interest. Kim accepted a position where she would teach a class and supervise one full-time residence director and 25 RAs. She reflected on her journey.

I think that I am talented and I think I can do a higher-level job. I honestly think that I can be an assistant director and run a residence life program on a smaller level where I am supervising RDs who are supervising staff and I feel like I have a vision. I feel like I am a good leader for that and I do deserve that job. I think that I was selling myself short when I was saying that I need to settle for an entry-level job.

Fortunately, she ended the search on a more positive note and landed a position that was more in line with her earlier goals.

Brittany's struggle with wavering confidence was expressed differently. She often spoke about the difficulty to keeping her job search private. She shared an example about how her public job search affected her confidence.

Everyone knew that I was applying to this job and you tell one person and they tell everybody, not like they shouldn't, then everyone knows and asks about it.

And everyone knew I wanted this job and it's going to be embarrassing if I didn't get it and I knew it was really competitive and I knew I was not their top choice.

That could be my perception of feeling insecure about not having a job and hearing those comments.

Brittany's efforts to keep her job search private were a strategy to save face. Others tried to protect their confidence by saving face as well. Sophie had a laid-back response to jobs. In a way, she would convince herself that it was not a big deal if she did not secure an offer. "It's perfect [job], but at the same time, it's like, if I don't get it, it's not the end of the world." Laura would get invested in a place and start to see herself in the position, but when she was not selected for an interview she would convince herself that the job was not that great anyway. "I think it is interesting that I will become very excited about a position and then get turned down and I then act like I never wanted to be there." When Parker was having difficulty securing interviews, he would critique the institutions and find reasons why the school did not appeal to him and would not have been a good fit.

When feeling confident, participants were open about expressing this confidence as they talked with me about their experiences. Some were open when they were questioning their confidence. Others did not openly admit their lack of confidence, but it

was expressed in subtle ways. It was clear that as these participants moved through this process their confidence was high at time and low at times.

Comparing self to others.

Participants talked about not wanting the job search process to be competitive and not wanting to compare themselves to others, but found that a difficult task. “From the beginning, I really didn’t want to talk about the job search a lot with other folks or want to compare myself to other people, but it’s pretty much impossible” (Brittany).

Comparing self to others most often had a negative impact on one’s confidence.

Emily perceived the ramifications of not securing a job to be more significant for her than for her unmarried peers. She felt more pressure to find a position that would be suitable for her in a location adequate for her partner. She compared her situation to one of her single peers. “She can move home with her parents. I’m married and I have to get a job, because my husband is waiting to get a job for me.”

Many of the comparisons made the participants question their own approach to the job search. At the placement conference, Parker had a difficult time not comparing himself to others. He questioned himself when he was not getting many interview invitations. “You are looking at people grabbing all kinds of things out of their mailbox, you think, ‘Oh my gosh, what am I doing wrong?’” The proximity of the candidates in the interviewing area added stress and negatively affected confidence. “It is very nerve-racking to be in a room of people who are applying to the same jobs as me. I don’t like to know who I am up against, because I do view it as a competitive process” (Parker).

Brittany could not help but worry about the number of interviews others were securing. She understood that her peers seeking residence life jobs would likely have more options, which would translate into more interviews. However, this still made an impact on her. “And then when you hear people who say, ‘I have 20 or 14 interviews,’ I’m like, ‘Ugh, am I doing something wrong?’” Laura found a little comfort in comparing herself to some of her peers who were also seeking position in orientation or student activities, which offered fewer vacancies. “I notice that other people in unique areas, like orientation, are moving slow in the job search process like me, so that makes me feel slightly more at ease.”

Laura, Brittany, Parker, Emily, Sophie, Timarie, and Kim all described experiences comparing themselves to others through the process. Brittany had a nice way of summing up the experience. “It’s hard not to compare when everyone in your cohort is getting jobs and you’re not hearing anything. I didn’t expect to get the first job I applied to, but I just think it was really challenging.” Sophie’s response to her own experiences with comparing herself to others provided a nice summary of how comparisons affected many of the others. “It’s detrimental when I compare myself to others.”

Managing expectations.

Participants reported their career targets in the first interview phase of the study. Some were confident that they would find exactly what they were looking for in a first job. Others remained flexible regarding their first position. As these participants moved

through their anticipatory socialization process, they revisited and reshaped their expectations.

Kim, Sophie, Emily, and Jeremy specifically talked about keeping their expectations low. Kim felt ongoing pressure to find a job after graduation. Even if she landed in a job that was not ideal, she was confident that she could “power through” until she moved on to her next position: “I could do anything for two years.” Sophie felt that she could be happy in any number of places and put it this way,

I have little expectations. I am very open to any position and I am a realistic individual and do not believe in stepping into a dream job in the first year of working. I expect it to be a full-time, paid position with minimal benefits. I would like to work with students, afford rent and food, and as a bonus, be within an hour of a beach so I can take up surfing. I feel these are realistic goals.

Emily expected that she would not like everything about her job. She was hopeful that she would find a position where she enjoyed “at least 70%” of her job. Whitney echoed this, then she said:

I know that I’m not necessarily going to love everything about my first job and I can’t be picky and I need to be open and flexible, but I want to be somewhat excited to start and to be there and not feel like I’m settling just because it is a job.

Jeremy was apprehensive about setting expectations too high. He referenced his past professional job searches that resulted in positions that were less than ideal. Keeping lower expectations would prevent him from being disappointed if he landed a position that did not meet all of his desires.

Some accepted that they would not find perfect positions and were prepared to take the good with the bad. Other participants worried about taking a job that was not ideal. Geoff, Whitney, and Brittany expressed concerns about settling for a job that did not meet their expectations. Whitney had concerns about having to settle for a job in order to support herself.

So I'm just scared that I won't be able to find a job in career services or academic advising, because they are less common and that I'm going to get stuck, come June, without a job. And my loan payments are going to be coming due and I'm going to have no choice but to choose a job so I can financially support myself. Brittany also perceived that there would be limited openings in her target area and worried about having to settle for something that was not her preference.

The thing that I am most nervous about is the lack of, or the limited amount of, orientation and student activity jobs. That really worries me, because I know the competition is going to be really tough. There are like, two [job postings] online now for entry level, so that really worries me, because it makes me feel like, oh, am I going to have to take a job, just to take a job?

Laura put another spin on the notion of settling. She felt as if people were pressuring her to accept any job that she could secure. "Everyone had an attitude, it seemed, that I'm trying to fight against, that because it's your first job, you just take whatever and just deal with it for a few years." Laura was more interested in finding a place where she would be happy and satisfied, not something she would just have to tolerate until she moved on.

Career targets for some changed over the course of the job search. Harrison began his search interested in a wide variety of positions. When he did not get interest from employers in those areas, he placed a higher priority on residence life jobs. Sophie, who preferred working in international student services, found that the majority of her interviews were for residence life positions. Laura and Whitney initially were interested in larger cities, but became more interested in other locations when they were not finding a large number of opportunities in their preferred locations. Pete developed an interest in liberal arts institutions along his journey, even though his focus began with working with business students. Emily and Brittany were interested in small private schools, but each found a fit with a larger public institution.

Laura and Parker were selective as they began their searches. They limited their applications to a narrow set of schools that fit into specific criteria. As they progressed through the process with little interview activity, they reevaluated their strategies and made adjustments. Parker reflected on his strategy:

I read their description of jobs and I was like, no, I don't know, and I visited their web page and that's as far as I got. Whether size or location or look of campus, I got turned off. So I learned really quickly I was being too picky. Even though I was open to location and where I wanted to go at the beginning, it turned quickly. I was being too specific of what I wanted to do. I needed to give people a chance to convince me otherwise.

Laura also recognized that she was being too selective and loosened her expectations when she was having limited success in securing interviews.

Participants adjusted their expectations along the way. They changed strategies, expanded their areas of interest, shifted their focus, and redefined fit and what would be considered settling for a job. In many cases, participants adjusted expectations based on the feedback, or lack thereof, from employers. Others changed their expectations for personal reasons. For most, expectations changed over the course of the study.

Seeking connections.

Connecting with others was noted as an important part of participants' decisions to join an organization. This did not unfold exactly the same for each of the participants, but there was a common theme for them to connect with supervisors and colleagues, to find professional relationships and mentorship, and to be able to build a social network in their new surroundings. Finding connections with others tended to be a more individual and personal endeavor. Connections played into participants' assessment of opportunities and evaluations of organizations and positions.

Participants talked about how important it would be for them to have a social network or the ability to develop friendships in their new positions. Sophie reflected on her feelings after she had an interview with an organization with few people her age, "I couldn't be in an environment where I was the youngest in the office, in a completely new place. Where am I going to meet people?" Parker sensed he would have a hard time if he did not have a social support system in place: "I think it will be hard for me in a professional environment where I don't have a social structure set up."

Social events during the interview process played a critical role in helping participants make important connections. Social events included socials at placement

conferences, meals that took place during campus visits, or other informal opportunities for the candidates to connect with either potential colleagues or supervisors, such as riding to and from the airport or campus tours. Parker lamented having to participate in social events as part of the interview process.

I hate it. It's so awkward. Some people love it and they can go into an environment and have cocktails and talk to people and just bounce around. I'm awful at that. I'm usually the guy in the corner relaxing.

Overall, Parker was not a fan of such events and questioned their value since they provided little opportunity to talk specifically about how his skills would be an asset to the organization. Yet he reflected on his participation in a conference social as an interesting experience and how he was forced to come out of his shell. Finding a social network was a concern when he took a position at an institution in a small town. "I need to make some friends while I'm there. I need to put myself out there." Once he landed a position, his new colleagues offered him support and assistance as he began his transition. He gladly accepted and began the process of building relationships with them prior to officially starting his job.

Having opportunities to make friends was discussed by several of the participants. Kim, Sophie, Parker, Laura, and Whitney placed great emphasis on having opportunities to develop a network of friends. While Whitney evaluated her job offer, she placed great importance on her assessment of how likely she would be able to make friends in the community. She specifically referenced having a hard time determining if the community would be good for her. To help her assess the social culture at her new

employer, she looked to young professionals who were part of the interview process. In an interaction with another young woman who had recently moved to the community and held a student affairs position, she felt discouraged. The young woman told her that it was difficult to live there and finding a social network did not happen easily for her. In contrast, a young man, also a student affairs professional, who drove her back to the airport following her interview, talked about it being a wonderful community and that there was a lot to do socially. These conflicting perspectives left her wondering if she would find the community she was interested in finding.

Some of the participants had perceptions about what type of schools would provide them with the opportunity to build the social experience they were seeking. Emily initially wanted to target a small, private school. She found her own undergraduate experience at a small, private school to be an intimate setting with a family feel. She found fit and connection when she interviewed at a large, public university and was surprised. Sophie was interested in finding a position at a big school, because she believed that a larger institution would provide more opportunities to make friends. She landed at a small, private school and was excited about the position and institution. Parker, Whitney, and Laura worried that they would be in better positions to find friends if they lived in a larger city, but each found jobs in college towns and were excited about the colleagues and opportunities for building social networks.

When participants could see themselves having positive relationships with their colleagues, they were excited about joining the organization. Sophie talked about working well with the people she could see herself connecting with socially. “They

seemed like people I could hang out with and work well with, so that stood out.” After accepting a position, Laura referenced being excited about the process of making new friends:

People I had not even met in my interview were, like, accepting me on Facebook and friending me. I was getting texts from this other young professional on the campus about how they can’t wait for me to be there and we’ll get together the first night I’m there. I’m super excited about it.

The potential for building a social network and connecting with others was part of what participants were looking for when they were describing fit. Emily described a positive experience with two colleagues in an interview:

I show up at the interview and it’s these two guys, really awesome. I just felt like I clicked with them right away and I just felt like by the end of the interview, I was energized and those would be peers I wanted to work with.

When Emily reflected on reasons for taking the job, she referenced her interactions with the people and the opportunity to work with the colleagues mentioned above. Parker used the same language to describe a great interview: “I thought it was fantastic, I thought we really clicked.”

Some of the participants mentioned interactions with would-be supervisors during the process that had an impact on their assessment of the position and organization. The interactions that Whitney had with her potential new supervisor played a huge factor in her decision to join, even though immediately after her interview she was feeling apprehensive about whether she would take the position if offered. “I think that even if I

don't see myself being happy there, one of the reasons that I see myself taking that job is because she is so awesome and I would love working with her.” Kim's new supervisor played an important role in making her feel welcome and easing her concerns about moving to a new community. This interaction helped her to feel excited about joining. Pete and Debbie had such positive interactions with their new supervisors that they felt inspired and eager to begin their new positions. When participants described positive interactions with their new supervisors, they also showed excitement and talked about feeling valued.

Finding a social network and connecting with colleagues and supervisors was often just as important to their comfort as the job the participants would fill. Finding fit often had to do with participants clicking with or having positive interactions with the people at the institution. These relational experiences were important and were managed in more personal ways.

Final Reflections

After participants secured positions and prior to joining their new organizations, I spoke with them about their new opportunities. As they reflected on the job search processes, I asked them what advice they would give to themselves retrospectively. Much of the advice they offered was to have patience and faith in the process. Few participants had advice related to the public aspects of the job search. Most focused on providing insight and recommendations for navigating the more personal and private aspects of their experience.

As Emily reflected on her experience, she expressed frustration with advice from others telling her to “be yourself.” “And I was just so annoyed, because you’re like what does that even mean? Yeah, I am myself, but when you’re in an interview, it’s hard to be yourself.” After experiencing the process, she understood better that being herself meant that she just needed to be genuine and let potential employers get to know her as an individual.

Participants discussed patience on a number of occasions. Laura experienced significant interview activity during the month of July. She perceived this to be late in the process since many of her peers had already secured positions. Her advice was to be patient. She found that there were many job opportunities in the summer months. Had she had a better sense that opportunities would continue to present themselves late in the process, she would have worried less. Brittany experienced something similar and began receiving invitations to campus later in the process. Harrison had interview activity and an offer earlier in the process. As he reflected on turning down the initial offer, he talked about how patience was a key to finding the right job.

Whitney, Olivia, and Timarie expressed the importance of having faith in the process and confidence in themselves. Whitney would give the following advice to herself: “I would tell myself to be confident and trust the process, that it will all work out, because if you work hard and put the time in, then it does. So I would tell myself to calm down.” Olivia also reflected on wishing she were more confident through the process. “I wish I would have told myself to be patient and positive and continue to think positive thoughts and know that whatever I’m striving to do, I’m going to get it done. That would

save me a lot of specific moments when I was giving up on myself.” Timarie had similar advice as she looked back on her experience. “Have faith in the work that you have done and it will speak for itself.”

Parker had a nice way of describing his take on having faith in the process.

Things are going to happen the way they are going to happen. I have limited agency in this process and that is something I had a hard time swallowing. I was too busy comparing my process with someone else’s process and worrying about where I’m at, what I’m doing wrong, and just understanding that it not all about me. There is a whole other side of this process. I needed to relax and that blew my mind at the end.

Parker, who adjusted his strategy midway through the process, suggested, “be more open minded.” Pete had a similar response to remaining open to options:

Make sure that you find the balance between knowing what you need to do and being open to other ideas, because no matter what you think you know, there is still more out there, so while you know right now that you want to work this way, don’t rule other things out. Gather your information and then make your decision.

The majority of the advice that participants offered focused on the private and personal aspects of the search, including having patience, faith and confidence.

Participants offered little advice on the logistical aspects of the job searches. Parker referenced being more targeted and intentional with writing cover letters. The only other logistical job search advice came from Geoff who offered the following,

You should not stop searching because you went to a [placement] conference.

The job I got and the job that I really wanted was posted after the conference. So

I would tell people it's good to sign up, but I almost feel like I was more

interested in the jobs that were posted, and I applied for, after the conference.

Geoff provided a more practical view of the advice echoed by Brittany and Laura, who advised being patient for positions that would become open in late spring and summer months.

In Harrison's last journal, he provided a thoughtful and thorough set of "lessons learned." His final reflection mirrored much of what other participants mentioned. I thought he did an excellent job of summarizing his experience. He offered a bulleted list of advice that would be beneficial for new professionals entering the job market. The following is taken directly from his final journal submission.

- Don't expect any communication from employers. I was lucky if I received an e-mail saying my application was received.
- If an employer says they're going to contact you, it doesn't always happen.
- Institutions typically move very slow unless they're extremely interested in you as a candidate. [One school] offered me the job the same day I interviewed and [another] offered it in "record time," two days after I left campus.
- At most institutions, the process is extremely impersonal until the campus interview. At one of the institutions to which I went to a campus interview, even this process was extremely impersonal. I was shocked that this institution

did not do a phone interview with their candidates, but rather asked me to drive four hours to do a campus interview. It wasn't until the campus interview that I learned they brought 20+ candidates to campus for these hour-long interviews.

- Patience is key, and this is probably the most memorable thing I learned from the search. The process usually does not happen overnight. I knew what I wanted and I am glad I had the patience to wait for it, because the pressure to take one of my first two offers was very high.
- Communicate your needs to stakeholders in your job search. I got a lot of heat from my parents for turning down two jobs in a rough economy, and despite constant tension, I am glad I had the patience (and perhaps a little bit of luck) to wait for [offer]. I would not have been happy at [one school] or the [another school] because of the institutional culture and being away from my partner and my family, nor would I have been in good shape financially in either of those positions. I am glad I had the courage to turn them down, despite my family criticizing me for putting my personal life ahead of my professional life by turning down the two offers.
- Keep applying until you finally get an offer.
- Use family contacts and contacts of people you currently work with. Student Affairs is a small world!
- Some advice is better than others. If I had taken the advice of my parents, I would have personally called every director of every office to which I applied

to introduce myself, share information about my skills, let them know I applied, etc. This is not my style and would not have been well-received by busy professionals.

- At times, I thought about applying for jobs outside of higher education. I never, ever would have thought I would have doubted my commitment to this profession, but in stress, I did. In the end, there's a place for me in higher ed, something my mentors told me all along.
- Finally... it's cliché... but "in the end, it'll work out." The main reason I turned down the [school] job was because I thought I had a very good chance of getting an offer from [another school]. [That school] strung me along for several weeks, but in the meantime, I was applying for other jobs—so when [that school] didn't work out, I had other irons in the fire. It was devastating when I didn't get the [that school] job, but in the end, it really did work out, because something much better came along—a great job that pays more, in a department with a lot of resources, at a great institution, that's close to people who are important to me.
- Overall, I would say that having patience, not settling, and knowing that the process takes time and can be extremely frustrating and, at times, misleading, are the most memorable lessons I learned from this six-month search. I am glad it's finally over, and that I landed on my feet with an excellent position that's an outstanding fit for me!

Summary

These participants entered the job market with their own stories and backgrounds. As they described their experiences, it became clear that they were working through the logistical aspects of the job search. As a group, many navigated these experiences in a more public way. Their membership in a cohort created an environment in which they supported one another and shared information regarding their individual job searches. They talked about job searching as a group, participated in placement conferences together, and were aware of the interview activity and later, the job offers of their peers.

Participants also described more personal and private experiences. These personal and private matters were rarely discussed in group settings. Mentors and advisors usually did not offer advice or guidance on these issues. Personal and private themes that emerged include redefining relationships, finding fit, making sense of their experiences, varying individual levels of confidence through the process, comparing themselves to others, managing expectations, and seeking connections.

After securing positions and reflecting on their anticipatory socialization, participants offered advice and lessons learned. This advice included having patience and faith in the process, believing in themselves, and keeping their options open. The majority of the advice they offered focused on the personal aspects of their job search experiences.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Having spent years working in the student affair profession, I developed a curiosity about how new professionals experience their entry into the field. As a hiring manager, I saw new professionals enter the field with excitement and energy. However, for some of these new professionals, this excitement and energy disappeared quickly, sometimes resulting in new professionals leaving their jobs or the profession altogether. I wondered how new professionals experience the process of joining new organization and how we might learn from their experiences.

Summary of the Study

The focus of this study was new student affairs professionals' experiences with anticipatory socialization, specifically the job search and pre-entry communication with their new organizations. The participants were 14 college student personnel graduate students from Midwest University, who were approaching the conclusion of their programs and entering the student affairs job market. Data collection occurred in three phases. The first phase occurred before the participants began their job searches. The second phase occurred after participants began interviewing with potential employers. The final phase was after the participants secured a position, but prior to the start date of their new role. Data collection spanned an eight-month period and the timing of each phase varied for the participants. For example, one participant had her final interview in April when all other participants were still in the second phase of the study.

Initial interviews focused on career goals and expectations for their first post-graduation jobs. Much of the first interview was spent gaining an understanding of the

participants' backgrounds and ascertaining how those backgrounds helped to shape their expectations. This included discovering who was influential in shaping the participants' goals, such as mentors, family, and peers. Participants also talked about how past experiences played a role in developing their expectations.

During the second phase of the data collection process, participants were asked to reflect on their interview experiences. They also talked about their experiences applying for positions, the responses or lack of responses that they received, and their interactions with potential employers through the interview process. Those who participated in one of the placement conferences shared their experiences being a candidate in this format.

The final phase of data collection took place after participants accepted jobs, but prior to starting with their new employers. During this phase, participants talked about memorable experiences through the process. They discussed the considerations that played into their decisions to join their new organizations and what types of interactions they had with new supervisors and peers. Most participants expressed great enthusiasm for their new roles. Few talked about reservations they had with their new opportunity.

These three phases of data collection allowed me to more thoroughly understand the process that the participants experienced as they moved through the anticipatory socialization process of their entry into the field of student affairs and into their first post-graduate professional position.

Restatement of the Problem and the Research Question

Turnover in the student affairs profession has been documented as problematic for the profession (Bender, 1980; Lorden, 1998; Ward, 1995). Related research has found

that 39% to 68% of new professionals will leave the profession during their first five years in the field. Turnover in student affairs is costly to organizations and to the individuals who chose to leave the profession (Collins, 2009; Tull et al., 2009). High rates of turnover result in lost efficiency, consistency, and quality of services (Rosser & Javinar, 2003).

Socialization is the process in which newcomers learn the expectations and norms of their new organization (Jablin, 1987, 2001). It is an interactive process that occurs between organizations and individuals (Collins, 2009). Successful adjustment to new roles and organizations has shown to increase job satisfaction, reduce uncertainty, and decrease turnover (Allen, 2006; Bauer et al., 2007; Feldman, 1976a, 1976b; Jones, 1986; Wanous, 1980). Specifically, this study focused on the anticipatory socialization stage of the process. During anticipatory socialization, new professionals develop expectations about joining an occupation and organization (Jablin, 1987, 2001; Kramer, 2010). Therefore, this stage is an important one to study.

The profession has the potential to benefit from gaining a deeper understanding of how new student affairs professionals experience anticipatory socialization.

Organizations that understand how their strategies are perceived can work to improve their processes for recruiting and selecting new professionals. Graduate preparation programs will be better situated to provide guidance to help shape students' expectations. Finally, graduate students and new professionals who have a sense of the experience of those who came before them can reflect on those experiences and determine their own

best strategies for tackling the job search and setting expectations in light of their own unique situations.

The research question that guided this study was, how do new student affairs professionals experience anticipatory socialization, specifically the job search and pre-entry communication with their new organizations?

Summary of Methods

Constructivist grounded theory was used to gain insight into what new professionals experienced in their anticipatory socialization processes—specifically, their experiences with recruitment and selection and their pre-entry interactions with their new organizations. I followed the principles and practices offered by Charmaz (2002, 2006), which are rooted in the assumption that each participant would experience the process in their own way; that the data would be constructed by me, as researcher, with the participants; and that I would enter the participants' worlds as theory was created.

Theoretical sampling was used to shape each phase of data collection. Semi-structured interview guides were created prior to data collection, but these guides were used only as a tool. Participants were free to bring up experiences that were meaningful to them as they engaged in their own anticipatory socialization process. Experiences that the participant brought forward were explored further to uncover themes that they determined to be important.

The primary forms of data collection included interviews and document analysis. Participants completed journals before each of the three interviews. These journals served as an open-ended way to get participants to think about and respond to their

experiences relevant to each phase of the study. In most cases, the journals helped me determine which parts of the process were meaningful for the participants. I reviewed the respective journals prior to each interview so that I could ensure I explored those items further during our face-to-face discussions.

Observation played a less significant role in the data collection process. However, observations in class and during informal interactions that occurred with participants did provide valuable information for memo writing. Each participant also submitted a resume and cover letter along with at least one copy of a job description that they pursued. These documents were helpful in getting a more complete understanding of the participants' backgrounds, motivations, and goals.

Data analysis began with coding the data and concluded with the development of interpretive theory. I employed memo writing in order to engage in the data, develop ideas, and fine-tune subsequent data collection (Charmaz, 2006). Memo writing was central to the constant comparison process, fleshing out emergent concepts and making connections between categories (Wasserman et al., 2009). Through this process, theory regarding new student affairs professionals' anticipatory socialization emerged.

Findings: The Public and Private Job Search

Participants described their experiences with anticipatory socialization in two categories: aspects that were public and aspects that were private and personal. Those aspects that were of a public nature included their cohort membership, participation in the placement conferences, networking, interviews, and accepting offers. The public job

search was what was talked about among their peers and was known by others, such as mentors, supervisors, family, and friends.

One aspect of the job search that created a public experience was participants' membership in a graduate program cohort. This reality created a setting that encouraged job talk and made it difficult for members to keep their job searches private. The job talk that occurred among the participants often created a supportive environment, but at times created an undercurrent of competitiveness. Participants often compared themselves to others, which sometimes negatively affected their confidence.

Participation in placement conferences played out in public ways. In obvious ways, these experiences were public, such as the nature of being interviewed in a large convention space among hundreds of other interviews. In addition, the proximity of the interactions that participants were having with other candidates had an impact. It was difficult not to overhear or observe how other candidates were progressing with interviews and for participants not to compare their experience to their perception of others' experiences.

Networking was an effective job search strategy for some of the study participants. The nature of networking was anything but private. It required being actively engaged with mentors, supervisors, and other professional contacts. Participants described reaching out to people to expand their networks. The focus of reaching out to others centered on gathering information, and discussing career goals and aspirations, often with people they did not know very well.

The on-campus interviews included a variety of activities. Interviews often included dinner before or after the interview and in most cases took place over at least one full day. Participants described engaging in a series of interviews with several audiences. Participants had interviews with chief student affairs officers, deans, directors, supervisors, colleagues, and students. Sometimes participants were asked to give a presentation that was open to a large group of people. These interviews played out publicly.

Finally, when participants received and were considering job offers, it was often a public process. All of the participants expected that they would secure job offers. When the offers came, some participants were negotiating with partners and family members, some were talking about their excitement of receiving an offer with their peers, and some continued to reach out to their new employers to gather important information about their new jobs and communities. Cohort members seemed to know who had offers and who did not. Participants expressed great levels of excitement when they received offers and they were typically happy to share this news with others.

Participants also experienced a private job search. Themes that emerged from the private job search included redefining relationships, finding fit, trying to make sense of their experiences, varying levels of confidence, comparing self to others, managing expectations, and seeking connections. The private job search was handled in more personal ways, rarely being shared publicly. When these topics were explored and discussed with others, it was with those in the participants' inner circles.

Some participants were in committed relationships as they began the process of identifying their first post-graduate, full-time professional roles. In these cases, the search was coordinated with a partner. Others were in relationships that were not as clearly defined. For both groups, the negotiation with partners happened privately. For some the negotiation was related to geographic location. For others the negotiation was related to the nature of the relationship. For example, should the participant limit job search options to remain in proximity to the partner or should he or she search widely, and what role would a new job play in the development of the relationship?

Finding fit was a theme that came up with all participants. They were advised to find fit and they consistently talked about its importance in their interviews. Some talked about refining their definition of personal fit after evaluating opportunities. Others identified when fit was lacking. While no single definition of fit emerged, all were striving to find their own personal fit.

During the participants' preparation for the job search, they received advice and feedback on resumes and interviews. They heard stories about job searches from the graduate students who were before them. Yet many were not prepared to interpret the process and the experiences they would encounter. Participants were left to try to make sense of their experiences. At times, they received conflicting advice or questioned why peers with similar backgrounds were getting more interview activity. The lack of communication from potential employers left participants wondering about their status and curious about their performance in the process.

During initial interviews with the participants, I witnessed confident graduate students eager to begin the transition from student to professional. They were confident that their academic preparation and practical experiences prepared them to enter the field. Some of the participants had professional experience prior to returning to graduate school and were optimistic that those experiences would make them appealing candidates to potential employers. However, as participants became more engaged in the process, their confidence dipped at times. Throughout the process, confidence ebbed and flowed.

Aspects of the job search made it difficult for participants to maintain privacy in their job search. The public nature of the search meant that participants were often aware of what their peers were experiencing, how many interviews they had secured, where they were offered jobs, etc. Having this type of knowledge created an environment that promoted comparing self to others. This resulted in participants questioning their own merits when they perceived that they were not as successful as their peers. Comparisons often left participants feeling less confident and unsure of themselves.

As participants began the transition from graduate student to new professional, they expressed a series of expectations. Participants managed expectations as they evaluated their strategies, developed a better understanding of the job market, redefined their relationships, and learned about themselves. Most participants adjusted their expectations in some way as they moved through the process.

The final private theme that emerged from this study was seeking connections. Participants wanted to find opportunities where they would have positive relationships with supervisors and colleagues. They wanted to be in places where social networks and

friendships could be formed. The ability to have connections was just as important as the jobs they would fill.

The phenomena represented by these personal and private themes did not work in isolation. One theme had the potential to affect another. For example, when a participant compared herself to others, her confidence was often affected. When confidence was affected, expectations often shifted. When one found fit with an organization, they often talked about connecting with others. When fit and connections were found, confidence was boosted. Participants did not receive a how-to guide to working through these private themes, as they did for resume writing, interviewing, and networking. Instead, they were left to figure out these matters as they were experiencing their entry into the field of student affairs and into their first post-graduate school professional roles.

In summary, as participants navigated through their anticipatory socialization experiences, they identified public aspects of their search, but were also dealing with private matters as they moved through their transition from being a graduate student to new student affairs professional. The public aspects related to their cohort membership, their involvement in placement conferences, networking and interviewing, and accepting a job offer. The more private aspects or themes that emerged related to redefining relationships, finding fit, trying to make sense of experiences, varying levels of confidence, comparing self to others, managing expectations, and seeking connections.

Discussion

Socialization tactics.

Van Maanan and Schein (1979) describe 12 socialization tactics, which are arranged in six opposing dichotomies. These tactics are collective versus individual; formal versus informal; sequential versus random; fixed versus variable; serial versus disjunctive; and investiture versus divestiture. Much of the research on these tactics centers on the use of these strategies once a newcomer joins an organization. I was interested in understanding if any of these tactics were present during the anticipatory socialization process for new student affairs professionals. Informal tactics were used during the recruiting and interviewing stage. Participants often described interactions with members from the organizations. For example, participants had access to other young professionals during conference interviews and on campus interviews. Part of the interview often included time with colleagues and peers. These interactions also occurred in less formal settings, such as meals, campus tours, and trips to the airport. These interactions allowed the participants to begin to understand what a job might be like on a day-to-day basis and a more thorough opportunity to assess the culture of the institution.

Serial tactics were used to give participants exposure to what their relationship might be like with their potential supervisors (Van Maanan & Schein, 1979). Supervisors played a central role in arranging interviews and meeting with the participants through the interview process. These interactions allowed the participants to get to know the people who would serve as their primary mentors, the people who would likely take the

lead in showing them the ropes if they were selected and decided to join. A final tactic that participants discussed described investiture tactics. When participants talked about feeling valued through the process, they were describing investiture tactics. For example, Emily felt valued and welcomed when her hiring institution invited her husband along for the interview, and Geoff was made to feel like he had the perfect background for the job he would end up being offered.

Jones (1986) characterized serial and investiture processes as institutionalized tactics, which have been shown to be positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Socialization tactics that are more social and interpersonal are important for new professionals (Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). The participants accepted jobs with institutions that made them feel valued and where they felt that they made positive connections with colleagues and peers. They repeatedly reflected on getting to know supervisors and colleagues and how important that was for helping to determine fit. Participants who emphasized the importance of making friends assessed their likelihood of making friends based on the connections they made with colleagues.

Graduate school as anticipatory socialization.

The transition from student to professional is not an easy one. It can be expected that as one transitions into the first full-time, professional role, one will experience more changes and have more to cope with than professional transitions they will encounter later in their careers (Louis, 1980). Not all of the participants in the study were pursuing their first professional position, but many of them were. Participants expected to learn a great deal in their new roles and were eager to test their skills in a professional setting.

Pete stated it nicely when he talked about looking forward to making contributions to his new employer while recognizing he still had a lot to learn. Timarie mentioned struggling to be seen as a professional and breaking away from the graduate student role as she assumed a professional role in the same institution where she had attended graduate school.

There is some disagreement on what skills one needs to develop in graduate school in order to be successful in the profession (ACPA & NASPA, 2010; Dickerson et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Mather et al., 2010). It is recommended that graduate students develop a wide range of competencies rather than limiting their development to skills referenced in entry-level positions (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009). Some of the participants in this study expressed concern with having a wide variety of experiences. Debbie, Brittany, and Jeremy each worried about coming across as jacks-of-all trades. They showed concern that potential employers would find their variety of assistantships and practica too broad to demonstrate depth in any one area.

When participants talked about being qualified for positions, it usually came back to their assistantships, internships, and practica. Participants' out-of-class experiences differentiated them from others and played a role in their perception of their qualifications (Mather et al., 2010). For example, when Olivia found an ideal position description, she figured she was not qualified because she lacked work experience in Greek life, which was just one of the areas noted in the description. Instead of applying, she passed the vacancy on to one of her peers with that type of experience.

Cohort membership provided connections that helped the participants as they were socializing out of graduate school and to the profession of student affairs (Tull et al., 2009). Cohort members were supportive of one another, sharing job leads, providing kind and encouraging words, and sharing their own experiences as a form of advising others. However, cohort membership also created an environment that made it difficult not to compare self to others. This constant comparison often left participants wondering what they were doing wrong in the process if they were not experiencing the same number of interviews as their peers or getting positive feedback from employers. For those not interested in sharing their job search progress widely, it was difficult to keep aspects of the job search private. The participants in this study were moving toward professional roles and socializing to new organizations and the profession. Yet their status as graduate student was still very central to the process.

Recruitment as anticipatory socialization.

Finding fit between job candidate and institution is important (Chipman & Kuh, 1988; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Participants used interactions at conferences, phone interviews, and visits to campus to help gauge their perception of fit. These experiences served as a means for developing pre-entry knowledge about the institution and the role they would fill. Participants were optimistic that their pre-entry assessment of the organization was accurate as demonstrated by their enthusiasm for their newly acquired positions. Pre-entry knowledge has the potential to influence socialization of newcomers. Having realistic pre-entry knowledge is related to role clarity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Klein et al., 2006).

It has been suggested that the recruiting process is not foolproof in identifying fit between organizations and new hires (Ashford & Saks, 1996; Jablin, 1975). One reason is the eagerness of the employer to present the most desirable aspects of the organization in order to recruit the most competitive candidates. Participants mostly discussed positive aspects of their interview experiences, but less positive interactions were discussed as well. For instance, Parker described his experience with his interview host as unprofessional due to his disclosure of his perception of problems with the department.

Another function that makes the recruiting process problematic in finding fit is the hopefulness a candidate brings to the process. New hires often approach the process with optimism that a match between their skills and background and a potential employer will occur. This optimism can make it difficult for new professionals to objectively assess their opportunities (Wanous, 1980). In my last communication with each of the participants in this study, there was a clear sense of excitement for their new positions. Some of these participants never expressed any concern with their new employer. They had a clear sense from the onset that the job offer they accepted was the right choice and a good fit. This was true for Brittany, Olivia, Harrison, Debbie, Geoff, Laura, Emily, Pete, and Timarie. Kim, Parker, and Whitney expressed some concerns with joining their new organization prior to accepting an offer, but once they decided that they would take the positions, they grew excited about transitioning to their new roles and becoming members of their organizations. One might speculate whether participants had an innate desire to be optimistic about their future prospects, or if their optimism was grounded in a genuine appreciation for what they were entering into.

Gilbert's (2006) notion of synthetic happiness could explain participants' overall satisfaction with their job selections. He claims that there is natural happiness, which is the result of getting what one wants, and synthetic happiness, which is what one makes when they do not get what they want. People have the tendency to place greater value on things that they acquire, even when it was not the initial preference or target. This could explain why all participants were excited and optimistic about their newly acquired roles.

Mather et al. (2009) recommended that detailed job descriptions be provided to newcomers prior to their entry. In their discussions with me about their new jobs, participants focused on their excitement about their colleagues and supervisors and their opportunities for professional development. While most showed enthusiasm for their jobs, a few were still left with questions about the specifics of their positions. For example, when Kim accepted her position, she was unsure which residential community she would oversee, which caused her a bit of concern. Similarly, Parker was not informed of his assignment until weeks after he accepted his position. After Timarie accepted her position, she learned that the position was still evolving. She discovered several weeks after taking the position that she would have two supervisors. These experiences with unclear expectations were minor for these participants, but each caused the participant some concern. Once Kim and Parker received their assignments, their concerns were alleviated. Timarie expected that she would be navigating between two supervisors for quite sometime, assuming that as time passed she would learn what each supervisor expected from her.

Pre-entry relationships as anticipatory socialization.

The relationship a new professional has with a supervisor can positively influence one's self-image and job satisfaction (Tull, 2009). Supervisors were actively involved in the recruiting and pre-entry experiences for the study's participants. Whitney's interactions with her would-be supervisor during the interview were so positive that she was willing to accept the position just to have the chance to work with her. After evaluating the job offer objectively, Whitney determined that the position was a great fit and that her initial concerns about living in a college town were minor. She believed that even if she experienced some disappointments with her new role or community, a solid relationship with her supervisor would likely help her to overcome these disappointments (Major et al., 1995).

Debbie also discussed the positive impact her would-be supervisor had in helping her see herself as part of the organization. The opportunity to work with a visionary leader made her want to join. Brittany left her interview feeling energized and excited about the prospect of working with an organized leader. Kim described her new supervisor as caring and thoughtful, characteristics she believed would be beneficial as she made the transition to her new role and community. Her apprehension about moving to a new community was eased by the support her new supervisor provided.

While participants described experiences with their new supervisors, they also talked a great deal about their interactions with colleagues and peers as they moved through their anticipatory socialization experiences. Relationship development with colleagues and peers is important for a number of reasons. These relationships help

newcomers feel less confused about their roles, create an environment in which individuals are more satisfied with their jobs, and decrease the likelihood of turnover (Slaughter & Zickar, 2006; Strayhorn, 2009a, 2009b). Participants described peer involvement through the process. For example, at the placement conferences, potential colleagues or peers were active in the interviews and represented their organizations at the social events, serving as a resource to job candidates.

Olivia talked about having a pleasant time learning about an organization at a conference social. Parker mentioned how it was helpful to have potential colleagues and peers to talk to at the social he attended. Potential peers and colleagues also played active roles in on-campus interviews, serving as hosts, participating in interviews, and dining with the participants. This involvement created an environment that encouraged the formation of relationships. On Whitney's campus visit, she connected with a young professional who helped to ease her concerns with living in a college town. After Emily had a conference interview with potential colleagues at her new institution, she talked about being very excited about the potential of working with them. Parker had a less than positive experience with a host, but once he accepted the job, his new colleagues actively reached out to him to answer questions and assist him with his transition to the institution. The interactions that Laura had with her new colleagues prior to starting her position had a positive impact; they made her feel welcomed and served as a way for her to better understand her new institution.

New relationships played an important role in participants' anticipatory socialization. The participants were eager to move into organizations in which they could

see themselves with colleagues they envisioned they would enjoy working, and with supervisors who were supportive and invested in them as individuals.

Proactive behaviors during anticipatory socialization.

To reduce uncertainty and gain role clarity, newcomers proactively seek information about their new organizations (Miller & Jablin, 1991). Socialization is not a passive process; new professionals play an important role in their own socialization (Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Tull et al., 2009). One way participants were proactive was in their preparation for interviews. Emily prepared very detailed portfolios for each of the interviews she had scheduled at the conference. When Jeremy was invited to campus interviews, he conducted research on the community, including learning about real estate and the social scene.

Participants also demonstrated proactive behaviors in their own socialization when they were building relationships with their would-be supervisors and colleagues. For example, Laura began connecting with her peers prior to her arrival. Harrison tapped into a new colleague prior to his start date. He met her for coffee to get more background information regarding his new job. Whitney identified graduate students at her new institutions and become roommates with them as a means to ease her transition to her new community. By identifying roommates, she felt she would more easily be able to navigate her new town.

Two participants whose proactive behaviors stood out to me during the job search process were Pete and Debbie. Both networked heavily as a job search strategy and were actively engaged in gathering information. Upon learning about the job opening that she

secured, Debbie reached out to her contacts to find out as much about the school and position as possible. When she was interviewed, she was very knowledgeable about what type of candidate the school was seeking. She was able to highlight how her experiences fit into the role. She also met with one of her new colleagues at a conference prior to starting her job and found the interaction with him to be very beneficial to begin learning about her new organization's culture.

Pete employed proactive behaviors through his networking as well. He relied on professional contacts to shape his understanding of what it would be like to work at a liberal arts institution. He took practica at a variety of institutions to round out his experience, allowing him to further develop his understanding of liberal arts institutions. Prior to starting his new job, he was invited to and attended a staff retreat. He wanted to take advantage of any opportunity to get a jump-start on learning about his new department and institution. Debbie and Pete were particularly proactive, but many of the participants were proactive when building relationships with new colleagues and supervisors, especially after they received job offers.

Employing institutions provided opportunities for these participants to proactively build relationships with members from their new organization. It began by including a wide variety of people in the process. Having the opportunity to meet and interact with potential supervisors, colleagues, and peers opened the door for building relationships and collecting important information about the department, institution, and community. This was true for Whitney, who seriously considered advice from a potential colleague when making the decision to take the job. It also held true for Kim, who was

apprehensive about moving to a new community, but whose anxiety turned to excitement with the support and encouragement of some of her new colleagues. Organizations that want their newcomers to be active in their own socialization should provide opportunities for them to do so (Gruman et al., 2006). This was demonstrated when organizations involved a wide variety of colleagues in the interview process, when participants received e-mails from peers welcoming them after they joined, and when new professionals were invited to participate in work-related events prior to their official start date.

Electronic media and anticipatory socialization.

Several of the participants discussed the use of e-mail during the anticipatory socialization process. As the participants secured positions and agreed to join organizations, they referenced receiving welcome e-mails from their new colleagues. These e-mail communications opened the door for information seeking. Harrison and Parker mentioned using these connections to seek clarification or to learn about their new positions. E-mail served as an important resource to socialize these new professionals. However, e-mail correspondence has limitations in a socialization context. Individuals often use passive strategies such as observation and personal interactions with others to learn values and expectations (Miller & Jablin, 1991). E-mail does not provide such opportunities. Ahuja and Galvin (2003) found that newcomers did not find e-mail communication with organizational members to be appropriate for learning about organizational norms. Even with this limitation, participants appreciated the opportunity to interact with their new colleagues virtually prior to joining their new organization.

Eighty-three percent of people ages 18–29 use social networking sites (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2011). Due to the large number of those using social networking sites, it was a surprise that the use of social media and social networks did not emerge as a significant aspect of the participants' anticipatory socialization process. Facebook was mentioned on two occasions: one participant had new colleagues friend her and another joined her new employer's Facebook page. Neither experience stood out as particularly memorable for these participants.

The use of social media will likely change the socialization landscape for both newcomers and organizations. Employers have access to digital profiles to help evaluate prospective employees (Sivek, 2010). Candidates also have access to information about potential employers through such venues. Organizations are increasingly using Facebook to reach out to employees; however, this presence creates a challenge for organizations since managing an organizational image on social media is difficult (McEachern, 2011). Access to these resources for information gathering has the potential to shape pre-entry expectations of newcomers and the expectations that organizations have for newcomers.

Social media has the potential to positively enhance socialization efforts from both the newcomer and the organizational perspective. Sixty-nine percent of adults using Facebook believe that online social networking is important to enable communication with others (Young, 2011). Facebook facilitates connections with new acquaintances and enhances offline social activity (Young, 2011). Its use contributes to individuals' sense of community during early entry (Stephenson-Abetz & Holman, 2012). While social media was not a focus of this study, there were clear indications of its role in the

socialization process. Newcomers' use of such networks can create opportunities to begin building a social network that will contribute to their successful socialization into their new organizations.

The two sides of cohort membership.

Cohort membership has been found to create a sense of affiliation, and a source of support, motivation and empowerment for students engaged in such groups (Greenlee & Karanxha, 2010; Pemberton & Akkary, 2010). Studies on cohort membership often focus on the positive aspects of the cohort model without much attention paid to the downsides they create (Greenlee & Karanxha, 2010). Maher (2005) suggests that research findings on cohort benefits have contradictory outcomes. She found that students identify both positive and negative aspects of being a part of a cohort.

Participants in this study described their cohort as supportive. They talked about sharing job leads with their classmates and celebrating job search successes together. Parker talked specifically of the social support network his cohort created and worried about not having such a cohort once he joined a new organization. When asked about the role of the cohort, participants were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about their peers and their own experiences with the group. Participants did not overtly express disadvantages of their cohort membership. However, several of the participants described their own experiences with comparing themselves to their peers and worried about their job search status in relation to their classmates.

Privately, participants discussed the competitive nature the cohort created. Many did not identify this competitive undercurrent directly. Rather they secretly hoped that

they would not be the last in their class to secure a position. When they were not getting the same number of interviews as their peers, they wondered what they were doing wrong. In some cases, they were surprised when they were not having the same success as their peers due to their perceived qualifications in comparison to other cohort members. These findings suggest that cohorts do create a supportive environment, but they also create a set of covert disadvantages for their members.

Participation in educational cohorts creates an environment where constant comparison occurs. This comparison can foster a competitive setting that challenges the supportive nature of cohort membership. Participants struggled with wanting to be supportive while also recognizing that they were competing for job opportunities with their cohort group. This struggle most often played out passively and was not necessarily identified by the participants.

Cohort membership played a significant role in the anticipatory socialization of new student affairs professionals. This membership helped to shape how the participants were experiencing their transition from graduate student to new professional. While they described their cohort membership as positive and supportive, there was clearly a darker side to their experience of being a member of a cohort group.

Transition theory as a lens for anticipatory socialization.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory provides a useful lens for examining new professionals' socialization into the field of student affairs. Transition is defined as "an event or nonevent that results in change" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 221). As new professionals wrap up their graduate school experiences and move into professional roles,

they are leaving behind established social networks, moving to new geographic locations, and taking on new responsibilities and roles. The process of transition is evolutionary and one's ability to cope depends on balancing pros and cons in terms of situation, self, supports and strategies (Evans et al., 2010). These four *S*'s play an important role in coping with transition.

Factors involved in the situation of transition include what triggered the event, timing, perceived sense of control, whether role change is involved, duration, past experience with transition, concurrent stress, and assessing responses to transition (Evans et al., 2010). Participants in this study were experiencing anticipated transition as a result of their graduate program coming to a close. They were expecting to enter the job market at the conclusion of their studies. They were venturing through the process together. There was a sense that they were not in control of the process. Harrison and Parker mentioned frustration with their perceived lack of control over the process. The participants were balancing other sources of stress as they encountered their transitions. This included relationship management, responsibilities related to completing their degree programs, and pressure from family to secure a job.

The second *S*, self, considers one's outlook on life along with their ability to cope. An asset here is the ability to have a positive outlook and belief in one's own abilities (Evans et al., 2010). The role of confidence played into participants' self-image. It was clear the participants demonstrated confidence at times, that shifted to periods where confidence was lacking. After securing jobs, the participants presented a stronger, more

positive sense of self, and wished they had maintained a healthy self-image and faith in their abilities throughout the process.

Schlossberg's third *S*, support, references networks that provide affirmation and honest feedback (Evans et al., 2010). Support was found with cohort members, mentors, family, friends, and significant others. High levels of support are important as one experiences transition. Participants worried that as they moved from graduate school to new roles in new communities their social networks would not be maintained. Many focused on finding new support networks through their new supervisors and colleagues.

The final *S* in Schlossberg's theory is strategies and encompasses the coping mechanisms: information seeking, action, inaction and intrapsychic behavior (Evans et al., 2010). Information seeking and proactive behavior were important aspects of the anticipatory socialization process. Proactive behavior was a strategy that participants used to gain some control, such as Pete's aggressive networking when he believed that his options would be limited due to geographic limitations. Sophie's job search techniques may be perceived as inaction due to the limited number of applications she submitted and her wait-and-see approach. However, she had a positive outlook and was confident that the right thing would come along.

As new professionals move from graduate student into professional roles, they are experiencing significant changes, often losing their social network and support, navigating multiple stressors and perceiving a lack of control over the job search process. Schlossberg's transition theory provides a perspective of which to exam how these new

professionals cope with this transition and experience the anticipatory socialization process.

Implication for Theory

Much of the research on socialization focuses on the encounter stage, or the early entry period when new professionals have joined the organization. Little research focuses on pre-entry socialization of professionals. It has been suggested that the socialization literature would be enhanced if more attention were paid to recruitment experiences (Bauer & Green, 1994). For the field of student affairs, research exists on the graduate student experience and the post-entry socialization of new professionals (Carpenter, 2001; Lorden, 1998; Mather et al., 2009; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Richmond & Sherman, 1991). Existing research on socializing new student affairs professionals takes the perspective of the organization. The literature lacks research on anticipatory socialization processes from the perspective of the new student affairs professional. This study provides a theory for understanding how new student affairs professionals experience the anticipatory socialization process as they are entering their newly acquired roles and the field of student affairs.

The findings of this study were largely consistent with literature on anticipatory socialization. Membership in a cohort-based graduate program provides social connections that assist in transitioning to the first professional position (Tull et al., 2009). The findings of this study suggest that cohort membership is beneficial because it creates a support system for new professionals as they experience the job search and transitioning into the profession. This study also found that cohort membership created a

competitive environment in which participants found it difficult not to compare themselves to others. This competitive environment often affected participants' confidence in negative ways.

Supervisors and peers play an important role in newcomers' socialization (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Klein et al., 2006; Strayhorn, 2009a, 2009b; Tull, 2009). The findings in the study support the idea that relationships formed between participants and their new supervisors and colleagues plays an important role. Participants who felt positive about their new supervisors and colleagues referenced finding fit and making connections. These were the most important aspects when participants were deciding to join their new organizations.

Participants in this study were proactive during the anticipatory socialization process. They were active in networking and preparing for job interviews; they also took advantage of opportunities to connect with and get to know their new supervisors and colleagues after an offer of employment was extended. Miller and Jablin (1991) suggest that new professionals seek information to reduce their uncertainty as they join new organizations. Socialization is an interactive process, requiring the organization and the newcomer to be active participants (Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Tull et al., 2009). This was consistent with my findings. Participants played a role in their own socialization when they conducted organization research prior to their interviews, sought out information from colleagues, and tapped into their supervisors as a resource prior to starting their new jobs.

Some of the findings were contrary to existing literature. Bender (1980) found that 31% of student affairs professionals ages 23–36 did not intend to remain in student affairs throughout their careers. All the participants in this study indicated that their long-term career goals included working in the field. It may be that once these new professionals have worked for a few years in the profession, their career aspirations will change. However, their long-term goals prior to entering the field indicated a commitment to the profession. It is noteworthy to mention that when one of the female participants in this study was asked about her long-term goals, she referenced wanting to be a dean of students. She followed that comment up by saying, “But then I also want to have kids,” suggesting that both would not be possible.

The literature on competencies in the profession of student affairs recommend that graduate students in preparation programs develop a wide range of skills to be competitive candidates for the field (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009). Three participants in this study were interested in diversifying their graduate school experiences to extend their skill sets. As these participants—who had a wide variety of experiences on their resumes—began the job search processes, they expressed concern about not having enough depth in any one area. One of the participants was questioned by a potential employer about her lack of focus due to her variety of assistantships, internships, and practicum experiences. This would suggest that graduate students must find a balance between building a variety of skills and having a certain level of focus.

This study contributes to the literature on socialization and student affairs. With the lack of research focused on anticipatory socialization, the theory that emerged from

this study adds to our understanding of anticipatory socialization from the perspective of the newcomer. Research on graduate students and new professionals is common in the literature. However, little research looks at the anticipatory socialization process from the perspective of the new professional. The findings in this study have the potential to inform practice and future research.

Implication for Practice

Turnover in student affairs undermines staff stability and productivity (Ward, 1995). The ability to successfully socialize new professionals into the profession and their new roles has the potential of making newcomers feel a sense of belonging and reduce attrition (Tull et al., 2009). Understanding the experiences that new student affairs professionals have as they move through the anticipatory socialization process may be useful to organizations that hire new professionals, graduate preparation programs, and graduate students and new professionals.

By understanding how the participants' impressions were shaped as they engaged in placement conferences, visited campuses for interviews, and engaged in communication after they accepted offers, organizations might reconsider their strategies for recruiting new professionals. Several participants talked about the impersonal experience of being interviewed by someone reading one question after another off a prepared list. Participants felt good about organizations when they perceived that the interviewer was interested in getting to know them on a more personal level and inquired about the specifics of their backgrounds. The value of having new professionals within organizations participate in the recruiting process on the organization's behalf was useful

for building relationships with the candidates. However, these new professionals may lack the skills necessary to follow interviewing protocol while also engaging the candidate on a deeper level. Providing training and guidance on how to create a successful interview environment could pay off for organizations.

Candidates continued to form impressions when they visited campuses. The participants in the study reported positive campus interviews. Having her partner invited to come along on her visit to campus made a lasting impression on Emily and her partner. The organization understood that she was managing a dual career search and that her partner would be part of her decision-making process. Emily interpreted this action from the organization as valuing her as a candidate and professional. Participants also appreciated having the opportunity to experience the off-campus community. Laura's tour of the town sold her on the opportunity. Participants were looking not just for a good fit in the positions they were considering, but also well-balanced lives, which included finding communities that would meet their needs. Kim and Whitney had reservations about their new communities as they weighed their offers. Organizations should consider ways to connect candidates to their communities through the interview process and invite partners to explore the community as well.

For some of the participants, the span of time between when they accepted their offer and their first day of the job was just a couple of weeks. For these participants, relocation guidance provided by the organization and its members was appreciated. For a few, the period of time between offer and start date was much longer. Emily accepted her offer more than two months before her start date. After she signed her employment

contract, she talked about a drop off in communication. She was extremely excited as she worked through the interview process and the details of her offer. Once her employment paperwork was complete, the interaction she had with her new supervisor decreased significantly. Employing organizations might be sensitive to new professionals' need to complete their graduate programs. However, organizations might explore ways to engage new professionals prior to their start dates, particularly when it is an extended period of time. An example could include inviting the newcomer to participate in training or staff development activities, if geography or technology permits. This may increase the frequency of interaction with peers, which has the potential to increase job satisfaction and decrease turnover (Strayhorn, 2009a, 2009b). Pete's participation in a staff retreat was valuable in involving him with his new supervisor and colleagues prior to his start date. This type of opportunity for new professionals may also provide encouragement to engage in proactive behaviors, which may create a more positive adjustment to task mastery, work-group integration, and political knowledge (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

Hiring organizations could improve their recruiting processes by putting more structures in place to communicate with their candidate pool. Participants expressed frustration with spending a significant amount of time preparing application materials, only to never hear back from the organization. Disappointing news was better than no news. Several participants expressed appreciation toward prospective employers who responded with news that they were no longer being considered. This allowed the participants to focus on opportunities where they were still under consideration. A

natural tendency for employers may be to avoid this type of communication. However, employers were held in higher regard when they were responsive and kept candidates informed of their status.

Graduate programs and hiring organizations may be well served by gaining a better understanding of how new professionals respond to the job search process. The job search process is not a perfect science (Jablin, 1975). Participants in this study discussed getting conflicting advice on how they should proceed with their searches, which left them feeling confused and not certain about how to move forward. An example is advice on how to balance interviews at the placement conferences. Advice ranged from being aggressive and taking 15 or more interviews to taking a more selective and focused approach. Hiring organizations might consider how this conflicting advice creates anxiety for candidates and think about ways to alleviate candidate anxiety. Graduate preparation programs might consider strategies to better prepare their students to experience activities such as conference interviews. An example might include having a panel of new professionals share their conference experiences with current students. This would highlight the various strategies used and the pros and cons of each.

Many of the participants in this study expressed being anxious on the first day of conference interviews, but finding the second day of interviews to be much less stressful. They also talked about not really being able to understand the placement conference experience until they had the chance to experience it. Finding ways to expose students to the conference experience prior to their scheduled interviews could help to reduce stress and create a better environment for interviewing.

Hiring organizations might also become more effective at recruiting and retaining new professionals, and graduate preparation programs might become better mentors and advisors to graduate students on the job market, if they understand the types of personal matters these students are balancing. I found that the participants were much more consumed by personal matters than I had anticipated. These were demonstrated in the themes that emerged, which included redefining relationships, finding fit, trying to make sense of their experiences, experiencing various levels of confidence, comparing self to others, managing expectations, and seeking connections. Hiring organizations might create more partner-friendly recruiting processes, allowing candidates to bring along a partner and providing the partner with some guidance on how to experience the community when the candidate is being interviewed. Hiring organizations could alleviate confusion candidates might experience through the job search process by being more intentional in their communications to candidates so they are not left trying to make sense of interactions. Finally, it might be wise for organizations to offer plenty of opportunities for candidates to connect with others during interviews and following job offers.

When graduate preparation programs understand how new professionals experience their socialization into the field of student affairs, they might be better equipped to advise students and their practitioner colleagues on how to best mentor these new professionals. Graduate preparation programs might front-load training on the basics of job searching, application materials, interviewing, navigating offers, etc., so that more focus can be placed on supporting students on the personal themes that emerged from this study when active in the job search process. For example, encouraging students

to seek out career coaches who will provide a holistic approach and provide a sounding board and source of support through all stages of the search may be helpful. Graduate programs might also consider how job talk can create a competitive environment. Job talk occurs in class formally as topics for discussion and informally when students seek advice from faculty and peers. Job talk was especially prominent in informal interactions among peers. Having sensitivity to the potential impact on students may create a more supportive environment.

The findings of this study have the potential to be a tool for graduate students and new professionals. With a greater sense of how the socialization process unfolds, new professionals may be better positioned to manage their own career searches. As one reads through the participants' descriptions of their experiences, one begins to understand that everyone has a different anticipatory socialization reality. These participants provide hope to any new professional on the job market. The 13 participants who completed all three stages of the study secured positions in student affairs settings and all were happy with their new employers. However, each had a unique journey. Laura, who was anxious about how long it was taking her to secure interviews, was pleasantly surprised that during the summer months there were still plenty of vacancies being posted and she was receiving a lot of interest from potential employers. Brittany and Harrison, who turned down initial offers in hopes of securing something with a better fit, both pushed forward and found opportunities that they believed would be better. Whitney shared her struggles in defining personal relationships and balancing her personal life with her professional life. Timarie offered her experience in moving from student to professional

in the same work context and the obstacles and benefits that presented. Pete showed how to be successful when geographical limitations are necessary. There is something to learn from each of these participants' stories. They offer diverse perspectives and various strategies for navigating the anticipatory socialization process, yet common themes emerged from their experiences.

Implication for Research

This study of anticipatory socialization for new student affairs professionals has the potential to inform future studies that deal with the transition of graduate students in college student personnel programs to professional roles. The findings from this study could also inform the same type of transition for fields outside of student affairs.

For new student affairs professionals, this study identifies a set of public and private themes that categorize participants' anticipatory socialization experiences. One of the public job-search themes that emerged from the data was the role that cohort membership played as participants moved through anticipatory socialization. The cohort experience created a community of support, which created a resource for participants to make sense of their own individual experiences (Parker et al., 2003). Membership in the cohort also created a competitive environment that promoted comparing self to others, one of the private themes that emerged in the study. Comparing self to others often led participants to question their job-seeking strategies and reduced confidence, another theme. More careful investigation of the role cohort membership plays for graduate students would add to the literature.

The private themes that emerged from this study include redefining relationships, finding fit, trying to make sense of their experiences, varying levels of confidence, comparing self to others, managing expectations, and seeking connections. Further exploration of each of these themes would provide a richer context in understanding how new professionals experience the more private aspects of the job search process and their transition from graduate student to new professional. Deeper knowledge of the role relationships play in the job-search process could give organizations ideas to enhance their recruiting processes.

Participants commonly discussed the importance of finding fit. However, there was not one consistent description of it. For some, fit was finding an institution at the right kind of school; for others, it was finding a school in the right kind of community. Still others associated fit with connecting with supervisors and colleagues. A more thorough investigation of what new professionals look for when they seek fit would be helpful not only to hiring organizations and graduate preparation programs, but also to graduate students and new professionals.

Studying the anticipatory socialization process in different professional contexts would add a layer of understanding to new student affairs professionals' socialization experiences. Determining if professionals from other fields describe similar themes would provide a better understanding of how transferrable these findings are to other professions or if people who pursue the student affairs profession have a unique way of experiencing anticipatory socialization. Studying anticipatory socialization in other

professional fields could also open the door to learning about successful socialization strategies that other organizations utilize in welcoming newcomers.

The role of social media did not emerge as a memorable aspect of the participants' anticipatory socializations experiences. It may be that the use of social media was such a common experience that they did not think to mention it. Opportunities presented by social media, in particular the opportunity for newcomers to seek information and to develop relationships with new supervisors and colleagues, likely has an impact on socialization. The socialization literature, as well as the student affairs literature, may be well served if social media in an anticipatory socialization context were explored further.

The benefits of cohort membership are often the focus of research ((Greenlee & Karanxha, 2010). However, this study found that less positive aspects of cohort memberships play a part in anticipatory socialization. A deeper understanding of the role cohort membership plays in new professionals socialization into the field of student affairs should be examined. The benefits of being a part of a cohort may outweigh the disadvantages, yet a clearer understanding of the disadvantages would shed light on the balancing act new professionals play in creating and being a member of a supportive network, while being aware of the competition between the group members.

The themes that emerged from this study provide an understanding of how new student affairs professionals experience their transition from graduate student to professional. More exploration of the themes that have emerged, the role of social media

and cohort membership would enhance this knowledge. Future studies might select different professional settings to investigate the themes that emerged from this study.

Researcher's Reflection

Studying the anticipatory socialization of 14 college student personnel students moving from graduate student to new professional over the course of eight months provided rich data. This experience was incredibly rewarding for me both as a researcher and practitioner. As a researcher, this study challenged me to consider the complex nature of the transition process. For each participant, individual background and experiences shaped how each approached the process, made decisions, and interpreted how things unfolded. These participants were instrumental in helping me to understand how they experienced their anticipatory socialization.

This study has provided me with the curiosity to continue pursuing knowledge of how new professionals transition into their first professional role. I believe that individuals who choose student affairs as a profession and who have taken on the serious task of pursuing graduate work to prepare to enter the field should be given support that will help them succeed. Developing strategies that help new professionals navigate the public aspects of the job search, in addition to finding ways to manage the more personal and private aspects of the job search, has the potential to benefit the profession as a whole. I intend to continue this investigation to satisfy my personal curiosity and my professional interests.

As a practitioner, what I have learned from this research will affect my practice. I have developed a deeper appreciation for the impact hiring organizations have on

candidates through the recruiting process. As a hiring manager, the goal is to find the best candidate to fill the job. Impressions an organization makes on candidates along the way matter. More importantly, new professionals are balancing a number of things that are likely not on the surface. The majority of my professional experience has been career coaching in a higher education context, most often with traditional college-aged students. While my approach when working with students has always been holistic, the results of this study indicate that I might need to recalibrate my strategies. For example, I might traditionally spend 70% to 80% of my time with students working through the details of the job search itself, coaching on strategies for learning about positions, networking, preparing application documents, interview coaching, and negotiating job offers. The remaining 20% to 30% of the time might include discussions of personal matters that emerge during the job search process. The findings of this study suggest that this distribution of time might be changed to allow more time to explore and work through the personal matters that students experience during the process of moving from student to professional.

As I practice in the future, I will keep in mind that new professionals may be redefining personal relationships, trying to find a place where they feel they fit, experiencing things that do not make sense, working through periods when confidence may be lacking, comparing themselves to others, managing expectations, and seeking connections with others. This will help me become more empathetic and effective in helping these new professionals find the right fit between organization and new professional.

Summary

As new student affairs professionals experience anticipatory socialization, moving from graduate student to new professional, they experience a public and a private job search. The public aspects of the job search are those things that they expected to experience. They knew that as they concluded their graduate program they would pursue professional positions along with their classmates. They were aware that attending a placement conference would be an optional resource. They understood that they would have to network and interview and they expected they would receive offers of employment.

New student affairs professionals also experience a private job search. These are the experiences that are kept more private and not shared widely or at all. Some of the private aspects were well known to the individuals; other aspects played out in the background and were not identified by the individuals. The private aspects of the job search include redefining relationships, finding fit, trying to make sense of experiences, dealing with confidence issues, comparing self to others, managing expectations, and seeking connections.

Hiring organizations, graduate preparation programs, and graduate students and new professionals could benefit from having a greater understanding of new professionals' experiences with anticipatory socialization. Much of the research conducted on the transition of graduate student to new professional focuses on new professionals once they join organizations. This study adds to what we know about how

new professionals interpret their pre-entry experience with the profession and their new organization.

References

- Adkins, C. L. (1995). Previous work experiences and organizational socialization: A longitudinal examination. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 38(3), 839-862.
- Ahuja, M. K., & Galvin, J. E. (2003). Socialization in virtual groups. *Journal of Management*, 29(2), 161-185. doi: 10.1177/014920630302900203
- Allen, D. G. (2006). Do organizational socialization tactics influence newcomer embeddedness and turnover? *Journal of Management*, 32(2), 237-256.
- American College Personnel Association and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (2010). *Professional competency areas for student affairs practitioners*. Retrieved from http://naspa.org/programs/prodev/Professional_Competencies.pdf
- Amey, M. J. (1998). Unwritten rules: Organizational and political realities of the job. In M. J. Amey & L. M. Reesor (Eds.), *Beginning your journey: A guide for new professionals in student affairs* (pp. 5-20). Washington, DC: NASPA.
- Ashford, S. J., & Black, J. S. (1996). Proactivity during organizational entry: The role of desire for control. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(2), 199-214.
- Ashford, B. E., & Saks, A. M. (1996). Socialization tactics: Longitudinal effects on newcomer adjustment. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(1), 149-178.
- Ashforth, B. E., Sluss, D. M., & Saks, A. M. (2007). Socialization tactics, proactive behavior, and newcomer learning: Integrating socialization models. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 70, 447-462. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2007.02.001

- Barham, J. D., & Winston, R. B. (2006). Supervision of new professionals in student affairs: Assessing and addressing needs. *The College Student Affairs Journal*, 26(1), 64-89.
- Bauer, T. N., Bodner, T., Erdongan, B., Truxillo, D. M., & Tucker, J. S. (2007). Newcomer adjustment during organizational socialization: A meta-analytic review of antecedents, outcomes, and methods. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(3), 707-721.
- Bauer, T. N., & Green, S. G. (1994). Effects of newcomer involvement in work-related activities: A longitudinal study of socialization. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79(2), 211-223.
- Baxter Magolda, M. B. (1999). The evolution of epistemology: Redefining contextual knowing at twenty something. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40, 333-344.
- Bender, B. E. (1980). Job satisfaction in student affairs. *NASPA Journal*, 18(2), 2-9.
- Black, J. S., & Ashford, S. J. (1995). Fitting in or making jobs fit: Factors affecting mode of adjustment for new hires. *Human Relations*, 48(4), 421-437.
- Boehman, J. (2007). Affective commitment among student affairs professionals. *NASPA Journal*, 44(2), 307-326.
- Bowen, G. A. (2008). Naturalistic inquiry and the saturation concept: A research note. *Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 137-152. doi: 10.1177/1468794107085301
- Brantlinger, E., Jimenez, R., Klingner, J., Pugach, M., & Richardson, V. (2005). Qualitative studies in special education. *Exceptional Children*, 71(2), 195-207.

- Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (2009). Grounded theory in historical perspective: An epistemological account. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The sage handbook of grounded theory* (pp 31-57). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Buchanan, B. (1974). Building organizational commitment: The socialization of managers in work organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 19(4), 533-546.
- Buckley, M. R., Mobbs, T. A., Mendoza, J. L, Novicevic, M. M., Carraher, S. M., & Beu, D. S. (2002). Implementing realistic job previews and expectation-lowering procedures: A field experiment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 61, 263-278.
doi: 10.1006/jvbe.2001.1856
- Bullis, C. (1993). Organizational socialization research: Enabling, constraining, and shifting perspectives. *Communication Monographs*, 60, 10-17.
- Bullis, C. (1999). Mad or bad: A response to Kramer and Miller. *Communication Monographs*, 66, 368-373.
- Bullis, C., & Bach, B. W. (1989). Socialization turning points: An examination of change in organizational identification. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 53, 273-293.
- Burns, M. A. (1982). Who leaves the student affairs field? *NASPA Journal*, 20(2), 9-12.
- Carpenter, D. S. (2001). Staffing student affairs divisions. In R. B. Winston, Jr., D. G. Creamer, T. K. Miller, & Associates (Eds.), *The professional student affairs administrator: Educator, leader, and manager*. New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge.

- Cameron, K. S., Dutton, J. E., & Quinn, R. E. (2003). *Positive organizational scholarship: Foundations of a new discipline*. Williston, VT: Berrett-Koehler.
- Charmaz, K. (2002). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J. S. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 311-330). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chipman, J. T., & Kuh, G. D. (1988). Organizational entry into student affairs: A metaphorical analysis. *NASPA Journal*, 25, 274-280.
- Clair, R. P. (1996). The political nature of the colloquialism, "a real job:" Implications for organizational socialization. *Communication Monographs*, 63, 249-267.
- Clair, R. P. (1999). Ways of seeing: A review of Kramer and Miller's manuscript. *Communication Monographs*, 66, 374-381.
- Collins, D. (2009). The socialization process for new professionals. In A. Tull, J. B. Hirt, & S. A. Saunders (Eds.), *Becoming socialized in student affairs administration* (pp. 3- 27). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cuyjet, M. J., Longwell-Grice, R., & Molina, E. (2009). Perceptions of new student affairs professionals and their supervisors regarding the application of competencies learned in preparation programs. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(1), 104-119.

- De Vos, A., Buyens, D., & Schalk, R. (2003). Psychological contract development during organizational socialization: Adaptation to reality and the role of reciprocity. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 24, 537-559.
- De Vos, A., De Clippeleer, I., & Dewilde, T. (2009). Proactive career behaviours and career success during the early career. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 82, 761-777. doi: 10.1348/096317909X471013
- Dean, L. A. (2006). Master's-level student affairs professional preparation programs. In L. A. Dean (Ed.), *CAS professional standards for higher education* (6th ed., pp. 349-358). Washington, DC: Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.
- Dickerson, A. M., Hoffman, J. L., Anan, B. P., Brown, K. F., Vong, L. K., Bresciani, M. J., Monzon, R., & Oyler, J. (2011). A comparison of senior student affairs officers and student affairs preparation program faculty expectations of entry-level professionals' competencies. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 48(4), 463-479. doi: 10.2202/1949-6605.6270
- Dutton, J. E., & Heaphy, E. D. (2003). The power of high-quality connections. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton, & R. E. Quinn (Eds), *Positive organizational scholarship: foundations of a new discipline*. Williston, VT: Berrett-Koehler.
- Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., Guido, F. M., Patton, L. D., & Renn, K. A. (2010). *Student development in college: Theory, research and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Feldman, D. C. (1976a). A contingency theory of socialization. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21, 433-454.
- Feldman, D. C. (1976b). A practical program for employee socialization. *Organizational Dynamics*, 57(2), 64-80.
- Gardner, S. K., & Barnes, B. J. (2007). Graduate student involvement: Socialization for the professional role. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(4), 369-387.
- Gibson, M. K., & Papa, M. J. (2000). The mud, the blood, and the beer guys: Organizational osmosis in blue-collar work groups. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 28(1), 68-88.
- Gilbert, D. (2006). *Stumbling on happiness*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Greenlee, B. J., & Karanxha, Z. (2010). A study of group dynamics in educational leadership cohort and non-cohort groups. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 5(11), 357-382.
- Gruman, J. A., Saks, A. M., & Zweig, D. I. (2006). Organizational socialization tactics and newcomer proactive behaviors: An integrative study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 69, 90-104. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2006.03.001
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough?: An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82. doi: 10.1177/1525822X05279903

- Hart, Z. P., & Miller, V. D. (2005). Context and message content during organizational socialization: A research note. *Human Communication Research, 31*(2), 295-309.
- Herdlein, R. J. (2004). Survey of chief student affairs officers regarding relevance of graduate preparation of new professionals. *NASPA Journal, 42*(1), 51-71.
- Hirt, J. B. (2009). The influence of institution type on socialization. In A. Tull, J. B. Hirt, & S. A. Saunders (Eds.), *Becoming socialized in student affairs administration: A guide for new professionals and their supervisors* (pp. 45-66). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Holmes, D. R. (1982). Exploring career patterns in student affairs: Problems of conception and methodology. *NASPA Journal, 20*, 27-35.
- Holmes, D., Verrier, D., & Chisholm, P. (1983). Persistence in student affairs work: Attitudes and job shifts among master's program graduates. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 24*(4), 438-443.
- Holton III, E. F., & Russell, C. J. (1997). The relationship of anticipation to newcomer socialization processes and outcomes: A pilot study. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 70*, 163-172.
- Hood, J. C. (2007). Orthodoxy vs. power: The defining traits of grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory* (pp. 151-164). Thousands Oak, CA: Sage.
- Jablin, F. M. (1975). The selection interview: Contingency theory and beyond. *Human Resource Management, 14*, 2-9.

- Jablin, F. M. (1987). Organizational entry, assimilation, and exit. In F. M. Jablin, L. L. Putnam, K. H. Roberts, & L. W. Porter (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational communication* (pp. 679-740). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Jablin, F. M. (2001). Organizational entry, assimilation, and disengagement/exit. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication* (pp. 732-818). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Johnsrud, L. K., & Rosser, V. J. (1999). Predicting and reducing mid-level administrative staff turnover. *CUPA Journal*, 50(1-2), 1-8.
- Jokisaari, M., & Nurmi, J. (2009). Change in newcomers' supervisor support and socialization outcomes after organizational entry. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(3), 527-544.
- Jones, G. R. (1986). Socialization tactics, self-efficacy, and newcomers' adjustments to organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 29(2), 262-279.
- Jones, S. R., & Segawa, J. M. (2004). Crossing the bridge from graduate school to job one. In P. M. Magolda & J. E. Carnaghi (Eds.), *Job one: Experiences of new professionals in student affairs* (pp. 59-76). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D., & Wanberg, C. R. (2003). Unwrapping the organizational entry process: Disentangling multiple antecedents and their pathways to adjustment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 779-794.

- Kim, T., Cable, D. M., & Kim, S. (2005). Socialization tactics, employee proactivity, and person-organization fit. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*(2), 232-241. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.90.2.232
- Klein, H. J., Fan, J., & Preacher, K. J. (2006). The effects of early socialization experiences on content mastery and outcomes: A meditational approach. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 68*, 96-115. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2005.02.001
- Kortegast, C. A., & Hamrick, F. A. (2009). Moving on: Voluntary staff departures at small colleges and universities. *NASPA Journal, 46*(2), 183-207.
- Kramer, M. W. (2010). *Organizational socialization: Joining and leaving organizations*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Kretovics, M. (2002). Entry-level competencies: What student affairs administrators consider when screening candidates. *Journal of College Student Development, 43*(6), 912-920.
- Kuk, L., & Cuyjet, M. J. (2009). Graduate preparation programs: The first step in socialization. In A. Tull, J. B. Hirt, & S. A. Saunders (Eds.), *Becoming socialized in student affairs administration: A guide for new professionals and their supervisors* (pp. 89-108). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lempert, L. B. (2009). Asking questions of the data: Memo writing in the grounded theory tradition. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The sage handbook of grounded theory* (pp 245-264). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Levine, K. J., & Hoffner, C. A. (2006). Adolescents' conceptions of work: What is learned from different sources during anticipatory socialization. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 21*(6), 647-669.
- Lorden, L. P. (1998). Attrition in the student affairs profession. *NASPA Journal, 35*(3), 207-216.
- Louis, M. R., (1980). Surprise and sense-making: What newcomers experience and how they cope in unfamiliar organizational settings. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 25*, 226-251.
- Magolda, P. M., & Carnaghi, J. E. (2004). *Job one: Experiences of new professionals in student affairs*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Maher, M. A. (2005). The evolving meaning and influence of cohort membership. *Innovative Higher Education, 30*(3), 195-211. doi: 10.1007/s10755-005-6304-5
- Major, D. A., Kozlowski, S. W. J., Chao, G. T., & Gardner, P. D. (1995). A longitudinal investigation of newcomer expectations, early socialization outcomes, and the new moderating effects of role development factors. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 80*(3), 418-431.
- Mather, P. C., Bryan, S. P., & Faulkner, W. O. (2009). Orienting mid-level student affairs professionals. *The College Student Affairs Journal, 27*(2), 242-256.
- Mather, P. C. Smith, K. J., & Skipper, S. (2010). A matter of competence: A national study of the preparation of new student affairs professionals. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparations, 5*(4). Retrieved from <http://www.ncpeapublications.org/volume-5-number-4-july-september-2010.html>

- Maxwell, J. A., & Loomis, D. (2003). Mixed methods designs: An alternative approach. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed-methods in social & behavioral research* (pp. 241-271). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McEachern, R. W. (2011). Experiencing a social network in an organizational context: The Facebook internship. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 74(4), 486-493. doi: 10.1177/1080569911423963
- Mendoza, P. (2008). Socialization to the academic culture: A framework of inquiry. *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, 31, 104-117.
- Miller, V. D., & Jablin, F. M. (1991). Information seeking during organizational entry: Influences, tactics, and a model of the process. *Academy of Management Review*, 16(1), 92-120.
- Myers, K. K., & Oetzel, J. G. (2003). Exploring the dimensions of organizational assimilation: Creating and validating a measure. *Communication Quarterly*, 41, 438-467.
- Nastasi, B. K., & Schensul, S. L. (2005). Contributions of qualitative research to the validity of intervention research. *Journal of School Psychology*, 43, 177-195.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Leech, N. L. (2007). A call for qualitative power analyses. *Quality & Quantity*, 41, 105-121. doi: 10.1007/s11135-005-1098-1
- Parker, P., Arthur, M. B., & Inkson, K. (2003). Career communities: A preliminary exploration of member-defined career support structures. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25, 489-514. doi: 10.1002/job.254

- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pemberton, C. L., & Akkary, R. K. (2010). A cohort, is a cohort, is a cohort...or is it? *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 5(5), 179-208.
- Pew Internet and American Life Project (2011). 65% of online adults use social networking sites. Retrieved November 22, 2012, from <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Social-Networking-Sites.aspx>
- Quinn, K., & Litzler, E. (2009). Turning away from academic careers: What does work-family have to do with it? *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education*, 2(1), 66-90.
- Renn, K. A., & Hodges, J. P. (2007). The first year on the job: Experience of new professionals in student affairs. *NASPA Journal*, 44(2), 367-391.
- Renn, K. A., & Jessup-Anger, E. R. (2008). Preparing new professionals: Lessons for graduate preparation programs from the national study of new professionals in student affairs. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(4), 319-335.
- Richmond, J., & Sherman, K. J. (1991). Student-development preparation and placement: A longitudinal study of graduate students' and new professionals' experiences. *Journal of College Student Development*, 32, 8-16.
- Rosser, V. J., & Javinar, J. M. (2003). Midlevel student affairs leaders' intentions to leave: Examining the quality of their professional and institutional work life. *Journal of College Student Development*, 44(6), 813-830.

- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saks, A. M., & Ashforth, B. E. (1997a). Organizational socialization: Making sense of the past and present as a prologue for the future. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 51, 234-279.
- Saks, A. M., & Ashforth, B. E. (1997b). Socialization tactics and newcomer information acquisition. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 5, 48-61.
- Saks, A. M., Uggerslev, K. L., & Fassina, N. E. (2007). Socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment: A meta-analytic review and test of a model. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 70, 413-446. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2006.12.004
- Sallee, M. W. (2011). Toward a theory of gendered socialization. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education*, 4(2), 170-192.
- Settoon, R. P., & Adkins, C. L. (1997). Newcomers socialization: The role of supervisors, coworkers, friends and family members. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 11(4), 507-516.
- Sivek, S. C. (2010). Social media under social control: Regulating social media and the future of socialization. *Electronic News*, 4(3), 146-164.
doi:10.1177/1931243110383266
- Slaughter, J. E., & Zickar, M. J. (2006). A new look at the role of insiders in the newcomer socialization process. *Group & Organization Management*, 31(2), 264-290. doi: 10.1177/1059601104273065

- Stephenson-Abetz, J., & Holman, A. (2012). Home is where the heart is: Facebook and the negotiation of “old” and “new” during the transition to college. *Western Journal of Communication*, 76(2), 175-193. doi: 10.1080/10570314.2011.654309
- Stohl, C. (1986). The role of memorable messages in the socialization process. *Communication Quarterly*, 34, 231-249.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2009a). Staff-peer relationships and the socialization process of new professionals: A quantitative investigation. *The College Student Affairs Journal*, 28(1), 38-60.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2009b). Staff-peer relationships in the socialization process. In A. Tull, J. B. Hirt, & S. A. Saunders (Eds.), *Becoming socialized in student affairs administration* (pp. 152-173). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Tierney, W. G. (1997). Organizational socialization in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 68(1), 1-16.
- Tull, A. (2006). Synergistic supervision, job satisfaction, and intention to turnover of new professionals in student affairs. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(4), 465-480.
- Tull, A. (2009). Supervision and mentorship in the socialization process. In A. Tull, J. B. Hirt, & S. A. Saunders (Eds.), *Becoming socialized in student affairs administration* (pp. 129-151). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Tull, A., Hirt, J. B., & Saunders, S. A. (2009). *Becoming socialized in student affairs administration: A guide for new professionals and their supervisors*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

- Turner, P. K. (1999). What if you don't? A response to Kramer and Miller. *Communication Monographs*, 66, 382-389.
- Van Maanen, J., & Schein, E. H. (1979). Toward a theory of organizational socialization. In B. M. Staw (Ed.), *Research in organizational behavior, Vol 1* (pp. 209-264). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Waldeck, J. H., & Myers, K. K. (2007). Organizational assimilation theory, research, and implications for multiple areas of the discipline: A state of the art review. In C. S. Beck (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 31* (pp. 322-367). New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.
- Wanous, J. P. (1980). *Organizational entry: Recruitment, selection, and socialization of newcomers*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.
- Wanous, J. P. (1992). *Organizational entry: Recruiting, selection, orientation and socializing newcomers*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.
- Ward, L. (1995). Role stress and propensity to leave among new student affairs professionals. *NASPA Journal*, 33(1), 35-45.
- Wasserman, J. A., Clair, J. M., & Wilson, K. L. (2009). Problematics of grounded theory: Innovations for developing an increasingly rigorous qualitative method. *Qualitative Research*, 9(3), 355-381. doi: 10.1177/1468794109106605
- Winston, R. B., Jr., & Creamer, D. G. (1997). *Improving staffing practices in student affairs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Young, K. (2011). Social ties, social networks and the Facebook experience. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society*, 9(1), 20-34.

Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Guides

Semi-structured Interview Guide #1 Prior to the Launching the Job Search

Explain your job target. What kind of position will you seek (elaborate from journal response)?

How did you develop your interest in this kind of position? What information or experiences helped to shape your interest? Were there specific individuals who played a role in helping you to shape this interest? Did you have past jobs that helped shape your interest in the field of student affairs? What role, if any, did your educational experiences have in influencing your career choice? Has the media been influential at all in your career choice?

How do you expect the job search process to unfold? What are you excited about? What are you concerned about?

Semi-structured Interview Guide #2 During the Interview Phase

Describe your interview experiences so far (elaborate from journal response).

What has been the best interview experience so far? The worst?

What makes those experiences memorable?

At this point, which organizations stand out as organizations you'd like to join? Are there organizations that you would not like to join based on your initial assessment of them through the interview process? Describe.

Semi-structured Interview Guide #3 After accepting a job offer, before the start date

What played into your decision to accept your new position? Why did you pick that school?

Describe the types of interactions you are having with your new employer/colleagues

By what means are you communicating (phone, email, in person). How frequently?

What are you most excited about regarding your new job? What do you perceive to be the greatest challenge with your new job?

Looking back on the job search and selection experience, what would you do differently?

Do you think you approached the process in similar ways as your peers? What did you do differently?

Appendix B: Participant Journal Prompts

Participant Journal #1

Prior to the Launching of the Job Search

Undergraduate institutions, degree and graduation year

Any graduate coursework or degrees separate from your current graduate program

List any full-time, professional work experiences you have had between your undergraduate education and the time you started your current graduate program. Please include your title, the company and the dates you held the position.

Why did you pick Ohio University?

Why did you pick the College Student Personnel program?

What did your family and friends think about your choice?

Please list graduate assistantships, practicum and internship experiences.

What type of position/role do you plan to seek?

Why did you choose these positions/roles?

What kind of institution will you target (public v. private, 2-year v. 4-year, etc.)?

What are your expectations for your first professional, post-graduate program student affairs position?

What concerns do you have regarding the job search process?

Participant Journal #2

During the Interview Phase

Please list your interviews to date, including the name of the institution, the position you interviewed for and the type of interview (phone, conference, on-campus)

What is your overall reaction to the process so far? Describe your feelings regarding the process.

How have your expectations regarding your first professional, post-graduate student affairs position changed from the time you started your job search until now? If nothing has changed, why not?

Participant Journal #3

After accepting a job offer, before the start date

Describe the type of communication that you have had with your new employer since you accepted the position (phone vs. email, frequency, type of topics in the communication).

Describe how you feel about your new employer.

What concerns do you have about joining the organization?

What concerns do you have about assuming your new role?

What is the most memorable aspect of the job search process?

Appendix C: Coding Categories and Themes

Public

Cohort membership

- Comparing experiences
- Comparing self to others
- Competition
- Confidence lacking
- Confidence present
- Feeling supported
- Holding back career talk
- Inquired creating pressure
- Peer influence
- Receiving advice from others

Placement Conference

- Applications
- Applying for jobs-limiting options
- Asking good questions
- Being discouraged
- Being prepared
- Being selective
- Disappointed
- Engaged interviewer
- Evaluating strategy
- Feeling anxious
- Feeling awkward
- Getting feedback
- Getting recruited
- Impersonal
- Interpreting experience
- Interview not going well
- Lack of communication
- Negative impression
- Sizing up the competition
- Trying to make meaning

Networking

- Connecting to people
- Describing career fit
- Getting to know them
- Having/using connections
- Info seeking

- Learning about organization/job
- Making personal connections
- Proactive behavior
- Receiving advice from others

Interviewing

- Asking good questions
- Assessing culture
- Being prepared
- Being selective
- Being self
- Connecting to people
- Engaged interviewer
- Evaluating opportunities
- Feeling welcome
- Getting to know them
- Identifying with colleagues
- Making personal connections
- Peer influence
- Previewing work
- Standing out

Accepting a job offer

- Accepting too early
- Addressing needs
- Evaluating opportunity
- Excited
- Family influence
- Family pressure
- Family support
- Feeling welcome
- Having doubts
- Identifying with colleagues
- Making decision on job offer
- Making personal connections
- Managing timing
- Negotiating offer
- Optimistic
- Pressure to take job
- Salary discussion
- Seeing self in job/organization
- Settling for a job
- Struggling with decisions/options
- Tackling transition

Taking a chance

Private

Redefining relationships

- Balancing work & life
- Family influence
- Family pressure
- Family support
- Geographic preference
- Negotiating with partner
- Significant other influence

Finding fit

- Balancing work & life
- Clear expectations
- Connecting to people
- Culture
- Describing career fit
- Feeling valued
- Feeling welcome
- Finding happiness
- Finding reasons not to like it
- Having doubts
- Making personal connections
- Misfit
- Not connecting with people
- Not feeling valued

Trying to make sense of it all

- Figuring in out
- Interpreting experience
- Lack of communication
- Navigating the process
- Perceptions
- Picking up on comments
- Reading into things
- Surprise
- Trying to make meaning
- Uncertainty

Confidence coming and going

- Confidence lacking
- Confidence present
- Contradictions

- Coping strategy
- Perceptions
- Questioning expectations
- Saving face
- Self-reflection
- Worrying about job prospects

Comparing self to others

- Cohort
- Comparing experiences
- Competition
- Confidence lacking
- Confidence present
- Inquires creating pressure
- Peer influence
- Self-reflection
- Sizing up the competition
- Worrying about job prospects

Managing expectations

- Changing expectations
- Changing the rules
- Concerns with job
- Knowing where I stand
- Navigating the process
- Not making compromises
- Questioning expectations
- Ready for professional role
- Regret

Seeking connections

- Connecting to people
- Engaged interviewer
- Feeling support
- Feeling valued
- Feeling welcome
- Finding fit
- Finding happiness
- Getting to know them
- Identifying with colleagues
- Making personal connections
- Peer influence
- Positive communication
- Positive experience

Role of colleagues
Role of social event
Role of supervisor
Seeing self in job/organization

Appendix D: Schema

OHIO
UNIVERSITY

Thesis and Dissertation Services