Why Do They Leave? Departure from the Student Affairs Profession

Tara E. Frank

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Joan B. Hirt, Chair

Jan L. Arminio

Penny L. Burge

Steven M. Janosik

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Abstract

Departure among student affairs administrators in higher education has been an issue for decades (Evans, 1988; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). Rates of departure from student affairs within the first five years of experience are estimated at 50% to 60% (Holmes, Verrier, & Chisholm, 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). However, there is very little research that examines the reasons that student affairs professionals leave the field.

I conducted a qualitative study, using purposeful sampling, to determine what factors were most salient in new student affairs professionals' departure. The conceptual framework was a modified version of Daly and Dee's (2006) model that described how psychological, structural, and environmental variables affect intent to stay with an organization. Participants included 24 former student affairs professionals who earned a master's degree in student affairs administration or a related field between 2004 and 2010 and who left the field between 2009 and 2011. Data were analyzed using a constant comparative method.

Findings suggest that new professionals depart student affairs for both Institutional and Individual reasons. Institutionally, professionals want to believe they are valued and supported, particularly by those in management positions. They want stable and supportive supervisors. They also seek stable organizational environments. Many feel they work too many hours for too little money and find few opportunities to advance. Individually, professionals seek a personal connection to their institution and job and leave the profession if those expectations are unmet. Additionally, some professionals find it difficult to obtain work/life balance. When they are left feeling unfulfilled in their jobs, they seek satisfaction outside of the field, pursuing other positions that more fully meet their wants and needs more. Future research could explore whether the rate of new student affairs professional departure is unusual when compared to other professions (e.g., teachers, social workers, nurses) or whether it is endemic to the student affairs profession.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The concept of long-term employment in the United States has changed significantly during the past three decades (Farber, 2008). Instead of dedicating an entire career to one organization, people now expect to change jobs frequently. In fact, Americans change their jobs an average of seven times throughout their careers (Jo, 2008). The ease of movement from one job to another has created a culture in which turnover has become the norm.

Turnover is an aspect of career mobility that refers to the transition of employees from one position to another (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1997). While employee retention is important for many businesses and organizations, there is a common misconception that all turnover is bad. This leads to ineffective policies and strategies designed to reduce turnover (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010). Organizational resources then become focused on these strategies rather than the employees themselves.

Turnover in an organization is inevitable. Some turnover is functional and may even be beneficial (Allen et al., 2010). When an employee leaves an organization, there can be financial benefits. Employers may elect not to replace the individual, choosing to save salary and other costs instead (Allen et al., 2010). In a cost/benefit analysis of turnover in nursing staff, financial benefits of nurse turnover included savings on salaries and benefits for new hires as well as savings from bonuses not paid to more experienced nursing staff (Jones & Gates, 2007). Sometimes these salary differences are significant. In Texas, the state was able to cut wages, sometimes by as much as 35% after an employee retirement. For example, an employee who retired making $76,000 per year was replaced by a new employee making $49,400 annually (Hansen, 2005).

Turnover can also provide benefits to the organizational environment. Employee departures can give organizations the opportunity to restructure the work place and set new goals (Allen, et al., 2010). New hires often infuse creativity and bring new knowledge and skills to the organization. They also may be more motivated than previous employees to accomplish organizational goals (Allen et al., 2010; Jones & Gates, 2007).

Benefits of turnover are not just relegated to the organization. Employees who remain with the organization also can gain advantages from changes in staff composition. Turnover can provide an avenue for upward mobility. Individuals in upper level positions may exit an

organization creating advancement opportunities for those who remain (Allen et al., 2010; McGarvey, 1997). Additionally, new employees have the potential to boost the morale of other employees in the organization if the previous staff member was not liked (McGarvey, 1997). This is beneficial not only for employees but for the organization.

However, turnover does have significant costs and can be dysfunctional to an organization. When employees depart, it can cost the organization significant time and money (Allen et al., 2010). Besides the obvious costs of turnover such as accrued paid vacation time and the costs of hiring a replacement, there is an array of other direct and indirect costs associated with turnover (Allen et al., 2010). Direct costs, in economic terms, are tangible and clearly attributable to turnover, such as salaries, benefits, time, and/or hiring costs. Indirect costs refer to those that are not easily measured or visible to the organization including loss of institutional knowledge or decreased productivity (Jones & Gates, 2007).

Allen et al. (2010) described these expenditures as separation costs and replacement costs. Tangible separation costs include time spent in conducting exit interviews and processing departing employees' salaries and benefits. They also include paid time off and providing temporary coverage for the vacant position. Intangible separation costs incorporate a diminished quality of work or output in the vacant position, loss of organizational memory, lack of continuity in the team or department, or one employee's departure prompting others to depart (Allen et al., 2010).

Replacement costs refer to the efforts made in filling an open position with a new employee. These include the time it takes to find and train a new employee as well as the financial costs for advertising, recruiting and interviewing for an open position (Allen et al., 2010). The orientation and training of new employees is also costly in terms of both time and money. Additionally, productivity of new employees and their coworkers may be diminished as new employees learn to navigate the organization, taking time to become socialized and efficient within their new environment (Allen et al., 2010).

Employees voluntarily leave positions for a variety of reasons. Nursing is one sector that experiences significant turnover. In a study examining reasons nurses leave, researchers found that nurses new to the profession were more likely to leave (Strachata, Normandin, O'Brien, Clary, & Krukow, 2008). Additionally, nurses cited long hours due to low staffing and lack of management support as reasons to leave the profession (Strachata et al., 2008). Other research

on job satisfaction and/or intent to leave has found that control over practice, having adequate support for their work (particularly between nurses and physicians), and perceiving their performance makes a difference to nursing staff (Larrabbee, Janney, Ostrow, Withrow, Hobbs, Jr., & Burant, 2003).

In sheriff operated jails there were four significant predictors of intent to leave: length of time on the job, administration support of future career plans, providing opportunity for advancement, and providing opportunities for challenge and creativity in the position (Price, Kiekbusch, & Theis, 2007). Researchers examining state employee turnover found that older employees with a longer record of service were less likely to quit than younger workers (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008). Additionally, workload, salary rewards for those with seniority, educational background (those with a degree are more likely to leave), autonomy, and ability to voice opinions of the organization all influenced turnover (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008).

Much of the literature regarding the costs, benefits, and causes of turnover has focused on the private sector or local and state government sectors, but turnover is also a concern in the higher education enterprise. In 2009, more than 3.5 million people were employed by universities and colleges. Faculty represented more than 1.3 million of those employees (Chronicle Almanac, 2012).

Faculty turnover in higher education institutions is inevitable as faculty members search for institutions that best match their interests (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). As in private industry, most higher education institutions view faculty turnover as costly because the search and hiring processes often come with significant expenses (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). Additionally, those who leave institutions are often the very faculty members that institutions would most like to keep (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). However, as with private industry, turnover can also bring in fresh, innovative ideas at a lower cost to the institution (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002).

Faculty members depart their positions for a variety of reasons. Some research findings suggest that a combination of factors determine whether a faculty member decides to leave or stay with an institution (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). Factors can vary depending on the classification of the faculty member (tenured, non-tenured, or an instructor). Zhou and Volkwein (2004) explored internal and external variables that contribute to faculty departure, examining all categories of faculty and identified internal variables such as individual

and family characteristics (demographics), organizational characteristics (institutional demographics), and work experience (rank, tenure, workload, etc.). They then investigated how these internal variables contribute to job satisfaction (autonomy, compensation, resources, etc.). External variables were defined as family needs, job market, research opportunities, teaching opportunities, and extrinsic rewards. All of these variables, both internal, external, and job satisfaction were used to determine faculty members' intent to leave (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004).

Seniority was the strongest predictor of intent to depart among tenured faculty, having both direct and indirect effects (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). Tenured faculty who were satisfied with compensation, job security, and available resources - all internal factors - were most satisfied with their positions. The most significant external factor affecting intent to depart was extrinsic rewards, including perceptions of higher salaries, better benefits, and opportunities for advancement at other institutions (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004).

Non-tenured faculty and instructional staff were more concerned with whether they had a doctorate, seniority, and job security (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). However, unlike tenured faculty, non-tenured faculty with a higher academic rank were more likely to depart the institution but those with high teaching productivity were more likely to stay. This research confirmed earlier studies on satisfaction and its effect on intent to leave (Rosser, 2004a).

Other scholars have used a combination of demographic, individual, and organizational variables (both structural and perceptual) to study faculty morale and intent to leave (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). Perceptual variables included professional rewards, administrative support, and quality of benefits. Demographic variables included race, gender, faculty rank, and years worked on campus. Structural variables were defined as amount of campus resources, size of institution, and institution type. However, rather than examine these variables' effect on job satisfaction, the authors examined how they affect morale and what effect morale has on intent to leave (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). Morale was defined as "a state of mind regarding one's job, including satisfaction, commitment, loyalty, and sense of common purpose with respect to one's work" (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999, p. 3). Morale was further characterized as faculty members' regard for their institution, dedication to their work, and overall sense of satisfaction (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). The authors concluded faculty members' perceptions of professional benefits, administrative support, and the quality of benefits and services enhance their morale, diminishing their intent to depart.

Beyond faculty, however, there are other groups of employees on college and university campuses. More than 2.2 million non-teaching, professional staff are employed in American postsecondary institutions (Chronicle Almanac, 2012). More than 225,000 of these are executive, administrative, and managerial staff, making up more than 10% of the overall university employee population (Chronicle Almanac, 2012). Student affairs professionals are included within this group. The total number of student affairs professionals is difficult to pinpoint due to the variability across colleges and universities about what departments and services constitute student affairs. However, the two national professional student affairs organizations, the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the College Student Educators International (ACPA) report having approximately 20,000 members between them (Tull, Hirt, & Saunders, 2009). Additionally, many student affairs professionals belong to specific function-based organizations such as the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA), National Orientation Directors Association (NODA), Association of College Unions International (ACUI), and a plethora of others (Tull, Hirt, & Saunders, 2009) so it is reasonable to assume that there are tens of thousands of student affairs professionals nationally.

It is estimated that 15% to 20% of the student affairs workforce is made up of new professionals, most having come directly from earning master's degrees in higher education, student affairs, or college student personnel administration (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). One national professional organization, ACPA, estimates that 43% of its membership is comprised of new professionals. New professionals are defined as those full-time administrators with zero to five years of experience (Cilente, Henning, Skinner Jackson, Kennedy, & Sloan, 2006). This population, therefore, makes up a substantial portion of student affairs administrators.

Attrition or departure of new professionals from student affairs has been considered an issue for decades (Burns, 1982; Evans, 1988; Holmes, Verrier, & Chisholm, 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). Rates of departure from student affairs within the first five years of experience are estimated at 50% to 60% (Holmes, et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). However, given the culture of mobility in the United States, some researchers in student affairs have questioned whether departure is just natural and not a cause for concern (Jo, 2008; Lorden, 1998; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). They argue the rate of departure may just be endemic within the field and should be accepted as inevitable (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). In research by Holmes et al. (1983), 60.8% of recent graduates working in student affairs reported optimism in reaching their

career goals but only 20.2% of them indicated they planned to be in student affairs for their entire careers. Lorden (1998) questioned whether student affairs practitioners left the field due to dissatisfaction or whether they simply left to pursue more appealing options outside of the profession. It can also be argued, as with turnover in private industry and faculty, that attrition is beneficial to the field, bringing in young, hard working new professionals who infuse their new work setting with talent and enthusiasm (Holmes et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998).

However, much of the literature on student affairs departure has focused primarily on the detrimental effects of high departure rates on the profession, predominantly among new professionals (Evans, 1988; Holmes, et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). Evans (1988), in a review of student affairs departure research, argues that given the amount of time and energy invested in new professionals, the rate of attrition should be a concern. The departure of new professionals represents a loss of talent and training in the profession, both from a graduate program and an institutional perspective (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Additionally, resources are affected as institutions must conduct searches and train new individuals (Holmes et al., 1983).

There are a variety of reasons why new professionals depart the student affairs profession (Tull, 2006). Transition from graduate school to professional life has been cited as a source of frustration, for example (Cilente et al., 2006). Graduate programs in student affairs, higher education, or college student personnel provide the foundation upon which new professionals formulate expectations and ideals of the field (Renn & Hodges, 2007). Often, the reality of the one's first job does not reflect the experiences and learning that occurred in graduate school (Cilente et al., 2006). Reconciling the identity of a graduate student with a new identity as a professional can sometimes prove challenging for many inexperienced administrators (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008).

Socialization effectively assists new professionals in transitioning to their first position (Tull, 2009). This socialization often starts with the supervisor. The effectiveness of a supervisor in helping a new professional transition to the field can significantly impact the satisfaction of new professionals (Tull, 2006). Because most new student affairs administrators enter the profession directly from graduate school, supervisors should be more aware of the needs of these new practitioners. New professionals may require more direction in identifying how they might transfer their graduate school learning and experiences to their new job setting

(Cilente et al., 2006). Newly minted administrators have noted that understanding campus culture and politics is crucial to their adjustment as a new professional (Cilente, et al., 2006). This can be achieved through effective and clear communication of institutional goals and values as well as more office-specific values (Collins, 2009). A formal and informal orientation to the institution, student affairs division, and the specific office and/or department also may be effective in lessening the shock of entering a professional position (Collins, 2009).

Supervisory relationships have great potential to influence new professionals' perceptions of their work environment and can help define who they are in the context of their position (Tull, 2009). Effective supervision is a key factor in new professional satisfaction (Cilente et al., 2006; Tull, 2006; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Supervision is a management role designed to support the institutional mission while also enhancing both professional and personal competencies within a staff (Tull, 2009; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Synergistic supervision is a holistic model of supervision, focusing on the clarification of expectations through a variety of methods including informal and formal discussions of performance (Tull, 2006; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Often, new professionals are unclear on supervisor expectations and feel a disconnect between overt and covert expectations of their supervisors (Cilente et al., 2006). Synergistic supervision is designed to resolve this disconnect.

One of the most frequently cited reasons why new student affairs professionals leave the field is a perceived lack of opportunity for advancement (Evans, 1988). Much of the student affairs literature in recent years has confirmed lack of upward mobility as a key factor in practitioners' dissatisfaction (Cilente, et al., 2006; Rosser & Johnsrud, 2003). It is possible that some student affairs practitioners decide whether to leave the field based upon the probability of obtaining higher-level positions (Lorden, 1998). There are an exceptional number of entry level positions in the field and a relatively limited number of mid-level positions. New professionals may elect to leave the field rather than wait for the possibility of an upper level opening (Holmes et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998).

There are a number of conceptual models that attempt to explain employee departure, particularly intent to leave, in higher education. For example, Johnsrud and Rosser (2002) proposed a multilevel, multidimensional model exploring how demographic, structural, perceptual, and attitudinal variables affect faculty morale and intent to leave. They have also used a similar model to explore higher education administrators' intent to leave. Zhou and

Volkwein (2004) developed another model distinguishing between internal and external factors that influence intent to leave as a faculty member. Internal factors included individual/family characteristics, organizational characteristics, and work experience while external factors included the external job market, extrinsic rewards, research opportunities, teaching opportunities, and family considerations.

For purposes of my study, however, I am using a modified version of Daly and Dee's (2006) model that explores how psychological, structural, and environmental variables influence turnover. While their model examines the effect of these variables on intent to stay, the same factors could be used to explain why people leave their position. Daly and Dee (2006) operationalize their variables in the following ways: psychological variables include job satisfaction and organizational commitment; structural variables include autonomy, communication, distributive justice (the perception of fairness in compensation), role conflict and workload; environmental variables include job opportunity and kinship responsibility.

For purposes of my research, I used their psychological variable of organizational commitment, referring to how strong individuals' identity and commitment is tied to an institution or their connectedness to the institution. I did not use the psychological variable of job satisfaction because their definition of this variable overlaps with their identification of structural variables. In Daly and Dee's (2006) model, job satisfaction is dependent on role conflict, autonomy, communication, and distributive justice, all variables also identified by the researchers as structural variables. I added several other psychological variables that have been identified in the literature including: felt work was not valued, lack of job security, lack of managerial and/or supervisor support, the profession was no longer challenging, and the profession was not what was expected.

I also adapted their structural variables. I used their variables of lack of autonomy, communication issues, and workload. I also added structural variables: opportunities for advancement, supervisor relationship, benefits package, hours per week worked (>40), lack of institutional/departmental resources, lack of clarification in job expectations, lack of professional development, organizational changes, and salary. Several of these variables have been identified as significant factors in student affairs administrator turnover in the existing research (Cilente, et al., 2006; Tull, 2006; Renn & Hodges, 2007).

I used Daly and Dee's (2006) environmental variables (job opportunity and kinship responsibilities) as defined. I further broke down kinship responsibilities into three distinct areas: issues with children, issues with spouse, and issues with other. I also added one more environmental variable, disillusioned with students.

Statement of the Problem

In summary, the American workforce is volatile and turnover has become the norm (Jo, 2008). Turnover is often viewed as negative but, in fact, has many advantages as well as disadvantages, for both the organization and its employees. Some advantages include salary savings, influx of new ideas, opportunities for mobility, and an opportunity to set new goals (Allen et al., 2010; Hansen, 2005; Jones & Gates, 2007; McGarvey, 1997). Disadvantages may include costs related to finding a replacement, lack of continuity in the workforce, and loss of institutional knowledge (Allen et al., 2010; Jones & Gates, 2007; McGarvey, 1997). A variety of reasons contribute to employee departure. The most commonly cited reasons in the non-higher education literature relate to seniority, autonomy, opportunity for advancement, and support from management (Larrabee et al., 2003; Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008; Price et al., 2007; Strachota et al., 2003).

While much of the turnover research has been conducted outside of the academy, the higher education sector has also been affected by turnover, both in the faculty and the administrator ranks. Research on tenured faculty most often cites seniority, length of time at the institution, and availability of resources as affecting intent to stay (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Rosser, 2004a; Zhou and Volkwein, 2004). Departure of tenured faculty is related to the perception of better salary elsewhere and more opportunities for advancement. Non-tenured faculty cited job security, seniority, and level of degree attainment as factors that influence intent to leave (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004).

Beyond faculty, however, other employee groups matter when it comes to turnover, including student affairs professionals. The departure of new professionals from student affairs has long been cited as an issue. It is estimated that 50% to 60% of new professionals leave the field within the first five years (Holmes, et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). Factors contributing to departure have included the inability to translate graduate school experiences to "real life," inadequate socialization to the student affairs field, ineffective supervision, and lack

of opportunities for advancement in the field (Cilente et al., 2006; Evans, 1998; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Tull, 2006).

My study had three aims. First, previous studies on intention to depart among student affairs professionals have not examined psychological, structural, and environmental variables collectively. While there have been studies that examined specific demographic, perceptual, and structural variables and their effect on intent to leave, the primary focus of these investigations has been on morale and/or job satisfaction rather than on actual departure (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999; Johnsrud, Rosser, & Heck, 2000; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Rosser, 2004b).

Second, very little of the literature regarding turnover is based on data from employees who have left the profession. One reason for this gap in the literature is that those who have departed the profession are difficult to locate once they have left (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1997). Additionally, they may no longer feel tied to the profession and, therefore, reluctant to assist with new research.

Finally, few researchers have explored turnover using qualitative methods, particularly turnover in the student affairs profession. There have been some qualitative studies designed to examine potential issues for new professionals that may contribute to job satisfaction, a variable that could potentially affect turnover (Renn & Hodges, 2007; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). There have also been qualitative studies that examine job change from one campus to another while remaining in the student affairs profession (Kortegast & Hamrick, 2009). However, no qualitative studies appear in the literature that examine individuals who have permanently left the field. My study addressed all three of these existing gaps in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine employee turnover in higher education. Specifically, I explored factors that contribute to student affairs professionals leaving the profession. The conceptual framework for this study was a modified version of Daly and Dee's (2006) model that explored how psychological, structural, and environmental variables affect intent to stay with an organization. While Daly and Dee used these factors to focus on intent to stay, the same factors can be used to explain employee departure.

Participants in this study were former student affairs professionals who left the student affairs profession within five years of receiving a master's degree in student affairs, higher education, student personnel, or other related field. Participants had left the field no more than

two years prior to the time of data collection. Data were collected via an online survey and telephone interviews during 2011.

A qualitative study provided an in-depth exploration of the turnover experience of former student affairs professionals who made the decision to leave the profession. The former professionals described their turnover experiences in their own voice. Themes emerged from the data that provided an understanding of the factors that precipitated departure from the profession.

Research Questions

This study was initiated to answer three questions:

1. How do psychological variables influence former student affairs professionals' decision to leave the student affairs profession?

2. How do structural variables influence former student affairs professionals' decision to leave the student affairs profession?

3. How do environmental variables influence former student affairs professionals' decision to leave the student affairs profession?

Significance of the Study

The current study was significant for several populations including faculty in higher education programs, supervisors of student affairs professionals, and chief student affairs officers (CSAOs). Faculty in higher education programs may identify ways in which to incorporate the findings of this study within their programs. Issues identified by the participants could lead to changes in the curriculum in order to better prepare students for their first professional positions within student affairs. Perhaps conversations around practicum assignments, internships, and/or field experiences could also include a discussion of the results of this study. Determining ways to connect learning and practical experiences from graduate school to students' first professional experience may be effective in stemming the departure of new professionals from the field.

Supervisors of new professionals can assist their employees in the adjustment to life as a professional. Supervisors should be more aware of new professionals' unique needs since they are often viewed as mentors. Findings could provide supervisors with information about needs that were not met for former professionals. Managers may use the findings to support new employees. For example, if findings illustrate difficulty in transitioning from graduate school to the profession, supervisors may consider providing in-depth orientation programs that convey both formal and informal information about the institution, the department, and the specific

office in which the new administrator may work. Expectations of responsibilities could be made clear and opportunities for feedback on performance could become frequent rather than occasional. All of these tactics might assist new professionals in becoming acclimated and socialized to the profession.

Chief student affairs officers (CSAOs) might benefit from this research by providing opportunities for professional development for supervisors and new professionals. Supervisors do not always have experience in directing new professionals and/or may lack effective skills to do so (Tull, 2006). If the data demonstrate lack of professional development as a factor in departure, CSAOs might consider providing training focused on staff development and effective communication that may help supervisors provide the support their new staff members need (Tull, 2006).

This study also had significance for future research. I explored former student affairs professionals and investigated psychological, structural, and environmental factors that influence their departure from the student affairs profession using qualitative methods. A future study may explore the same population but use a larger sample and quantitative methods to determine the degree to which these factors influence departure of new professionals.

A future study may also focus on the rate of departure in new student affairs professionals and compare that information to the rate of departure found in other professions. This could help determine whether the departure rate from the profession is average in comparison to other professions or whether rates of departure among new professionals are abnormally high or low.

Lastly, a researcher might focus on the departure of student affairs professionals who are in midlevel or cabinet positions. Are factors contributing to their departure similar to those of new professionals? Some research has already been conducted on intent to leave with mid-level managers and CSAOs (Anderson, Guido-DiBrito, & Morrell, 2000; Rosser, 2004b: Rosser & Javinar, 2003) but those studies have not compared rates of departure to those of new professionals.

There were also policy implications that resulted from my study. The findings revealed causes of employee departure. Human resources departments may want to review employee policies related to whatever the findings reveal. For instance, if the results suggest that new professionals left because they never felt they had a grasp of the campus, or because they did not

have professional development opportunities, human resource administrators may want to review policies on new employee orientation or continuing education for current staff. Student affairs departments, in particular, may need to consider incorporating policies that specifically focus on new student affairs professionals, not only orienting them to the institution but also to the field.

Delimitations

As with any research project, my study has several delimitations. The first related to my sample. I chose only those former student affairs professionals who had a master's degree in higher education, student affairs, or a related discipline. It is possible that former student affairs professionals with different graduate degrees may have different experiences than the sample represented here.

I also only selected student affairs professionals who left the student affairs profession within the first five years of professional practice. Reasons for departure from the field in general may be different than those factors suggested by only studying new professionals. It is possible that factors influencing departure vary depending on length of time in the field as well as level of responsibility.

Additionally, my data were collected via telephone interviews. Telephone interviews are often depicted as a less effective methodology of obtaining qualitative data (Novick, 2008). Face-to-face interviewing is thought to be more effective because the researcher can note both verbal and nonverbal cues creating a fuller interpretation of participant interviews. Face-to-face interactions also are thought to be more effective in establishing rapport with participants, creating a more relaxed atmosphere conducive for conducting qualitative research (Novick, 2008). The nature of my study, which included former professionals across the country, prohibited face-to-face interviews, however.

Organization of the Study

The present study is organized around six chapters. Chapter One introduced the topic of the study, the research questions, and the significance of the study. The second chapter provides an annotated bibliography of literature relevant to the study. Chapter Three describes the methodology of the study, including sampling techniques and the procedures used to collect and analyze that data. Chapter Four provides a brief summary of findings while Chapters Five and Six are written in a journal article format.

Chapter Two

Annotated Bibliography

Rather than the traditional doctoral dissertation format, my home institution offers an alternative manuscript option. The manuscript option consists of the traditional first three chapters of the dissertation. However, in lieu of the typical Results and Discussion chapters, two articles that are of sufficient quality to be submitted for review by a refereed publication are generated. These articles are structured around the most compelling findings of the study.

I have selected to write my dissertation using the manuscript option. As a result, I will be generating literature reviews in each of the two articles. Consequently, this chapter includes an annotated bibliography that represents relevant research related to the topic of this study, departure. The citations include journal articles, books, and other documents that may be used to generate two articles about the study's most compelling findings.

The literature on departure comes from the private sector, the government sector (non-higher education), and the higher education sector, including faculty and administrators, specifically student affairs administrators. In organizing the annotated bibliography, I was interested in two issues: the major theme(s) addressed in the article and the sample or population addressed in the manuscript. The bibliography is organized around the three themes that emerged when I examined the literature: psychological variables affecting departure, structural variables affecting departure, and environmental variables affecting departure. Each annotation notes population that was central to the research so that I can sort articles by sector.

Psychological Variables

There is ample evidence that psychological variables affect employee departure. Psychological variables include job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Daly & Dee, 2006). Additional psychological variables include feeling that work was not valued, lack of job security, lack of managerial and/or supervisor support, the profession no longer challenging, and the profession not being what was expected. This section presents literature focusing on the psychological variables that affect employee departure.

Anderson, J. E., Guido-DiBrito, F., & Morrell, J. S. (2000). Factors that influence satisfaction for student affairs administrators. In L. S. Hagedorn (Ed.), *What contributes to job satisfaction among faculty and staff?* New Directions for Institutional Research, *105*, pp. 99-110.

The researchers provide a review of the literature examining job satisfaction, life satisfaction, stress levels, and role conflict among student affairs professionals, from entry level to SSAOs. The authors suggest several implications for creating work environments that lead to greater satisfaction and lower stress including flexible work environments, fair expectations, policy changes, and greater involvement in decision-making processes.

Daly, C. J., & Dee, J. R. (2006). Greener pastures: Faculty turnover intent in urban public universities. *The Journal of Higher Education, 77*(5), 776-803.

Daly and Dee examined structural, psychological, and environmental variables that contribute to faculty departure at urban public universities. Structural variables were found to be most impactful on faculty departure including perceptions of autonomy, supportive communication networks, equity in rewards, and congruent work expectations between faculty and departmental leaders.

Evans, N. J. (1988). Attrition of student affairs professionals: A review of the literature. *Journal of College Student Development, 29,* 19-24.

The author conducted a review of the literature examining departure from the student affairs profession and reasons for job dissatisfaction. Factors cited include limited job mobility, lack of opportunity for personal growth, lack of autonomy, and lack of opportunity to use knowledge learned in graduate school.

Holmes, D., Verrier, D., & Chisholm, P. (1983). Persistence in student affairs work: Attitudes and job shifts among master's programs graduates. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 24*, 438-442.

The authors examined the persistence of student affairs professionals and determined whether factors such as job satisfaction and influence of a mentor were related to attrition and retention. The authors found disparities in job satisfaction between those new professionals who had a strong mentor (i.e. supervisor) versus those who did not.

Johnsrud, L. K., Heck, R. H., & Rosser, V. J. (2000). Morale matters: Midlevel administrators and their intent to leave. *The Journal of Higher Education, 71*(1), 34-59.

The authors defined the construct of morale empirically and how morale affected midlevel administrators in higher education and their intent to depart their

position. Worklife issues affecting morale included whether their work was considered meaningful, quality of supervision, fair treatment, and whether their opinions are valued.

Johnsrud, L. K., & Rosser, V. J. (1997, November). *Administrative staff turnover: Predicting the intentions of stayers and leavers.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The authors explored demographic, structural, and perceptual variables that influenced intent to depart by mid-level university administrators. They found that individual perception significantly affects turnover intentions.

Johnsrud, L. K., & Rosser, V. J. (1999). College and university midlevel administrators: Explaining and improving their morale. *The Review of Higher Education, 22*(2), 121-141.

The authors explored demographic, structural, and perceptual work-related factors that explain the morale of college and university midlevel administrators. Perceptual variables were most helpful in explaining morale. Recognition of competence, supervisor relationship, relationships with senior administrators, and lack of mobility all affected morale.

Johnsrud, L. K., & Rosser, V. J. (2002). Faculty members' morale and their intent to leave: A multilevel explanation. *The Journal of Higher Education, 73*(4), 518-542.

The authors found that morale is a primary factor in faculty members' intention to depart their positions, institutions, and their profession. Contributors to morale include faculty worklife that is further broken down into professional priorities and rewards, administrative support, and quality of benefits and services.

Larrabee, J. H., Janney, M. A., Ostrow, C. L., Withrow, M. L., Hobbs, Jr., G. R., & Burant, C. (2003). Predicting registered nurse job satisfaction and intent to leave. *Journal of Nursing Administration, 33,* 271-283.

The authors explored predictors of intent to depart among registered nurses, specifically the influence of variable nurse attitudes including psychological empowerment and hardiness on job satisfaction. The authors found that the major predictor of job satisfaction was psychological empowerment that included hardiness, group cohesion, and physician/nurse relationship

Lorden, L. P. (1998). Attrition in the student affairs profession. *NASPA Journal, 35*, 207-216.

> The author conducted a review of the literature examining departure from the student affairs profession and reasons for job dissatisfaction. In her review, the author found the most commonly cited reason for leaving student affairs is limited opportunity for advancement. Other research reviewed has also cited burnout, unclear job expectations, conflicts between personal values and institutional values, and low pay.

Price, W. H., Kiekbusch, R., & Theis, J. (2007). Causes of employee turnover in sheriff operated jails. *Public Personnel Management, 36,* 51-63.

> The authors examined county jail employee turnover, long considered to be an issue. Staff at five jails were surveyed to determine prominent predictors for turnover. The most significant, controllable influences on employee departure were   opportunities for promotion, full use of employee skills, and a genuine interest in employee satisfaction and well being.

Rosser, V. J. (2004a). Faculty members' intention to leave: A national study on their worklife and satisfaction. *Research in Higher Education, 45*(3), 285-309.

> The author found that a combination of worklife perceptions and overall job satisfaction influenced intent to depart among faculty. Faculty worklife included administrative support, professional development, and committee obligations. These factors were all demonstrated as affecting job satisfaction and, therefore, intent to depart.

Rosser, V. J. (2004b). A national study on midlevel leaders in higher education: The unsung professionals of the academy. *Higher Education, 48*, 317-337.

> The researcher conducted a study on midlevel leaders in higher education and their quality of worklife, satisfaction, morale and how those affected their intentions to leave. Midlevel leaders were defined as academic and non-academic support personnel. Findings suggested that perceptions of worklife significantly impact satisfaction, morale, and turnover.

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.

The authors examined midlevel student affairs professionals and how morale and satisfaction contribute to intent to depart. Specifically, they examined demographic characteristics and work life issues contributing to morale. The authors found professional development opportunities, recognition for competence and expertise, work relationships, and work conditions all had a significant impact on level of satisfaction, morale, and intent to depart.

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.

The author examined how supervision affects job satisfaction in student affairs professionals and how job satisfaction, in turn, affects intent to turnover. Using the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) and the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (MOAQ), the author found a significant correlation between synergistic supervisor and job satisfaction.

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.

The author explored the supervision of new student affairs professionals by addressing tasks associated with supervision, types and phases of supervision, and outcomes or obstacles to the supervisor relationship.

Tull, A., Hirt, J. B., & Saunders, S. A. (2009). Becoming socialized in student affairs administration. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

The authors examined how the socialization of new student affairs professionals may be a factor in determining why new professionals depart or persist within student affairs. They examine processes of socialization, contexts, strategies to enhance socialization, and implications for the future.

Zhou, Y., & Volkwein, J. F. (2004). Examining the influences on faculty departure intentions: A comparison of tenured versus non-tenured faculty at research universities using NSOPF-99. *Research in Higher Education, 45*(2), 139-176.

The authors explored internal and external variables that contribute to faculty departure, examining all classes of faculty. Seniority was the strongest predictor

of departure for tenured and non-tenured faculty. External factors such as perceptions of higher salaries, better benefits, and opportunities for advancement at other institutions were also identified as contributing to departure.

Structural Variables

Structural variables affecting employee departure include autonomy, communication issues, workload, opportunities for advancement, socialization to the field, supervisor relationship, benefits package, hours per week worked (>40), lack of institutional/departmental resources, lack of clarification in job expectations, lack of professional development, organizational changes, and salary. Each of these variables has been demonstrated as a significant contributor to employee departure in the literature. This section presents literature focusing on structural variables that affect employee departure.

Burns, M. A. (1982). Who leaves the student affairs field? *NASPA Journal, 20*, 9-12.

> The author examined factors that influence departure from the student affairs field. Individuals who left student affairs cited a desire for more responsibility and variety in their position, lack of opportunity for advancement, and lack of synchronization between work and personal values.

Cilente, K., Henning, G., Skinner Jackson, J., Kennedy, D., & Sloan, T. (2006). *Report on the new professional needs study.* Retrieved from American College Personnel Association website: http://www.myacpa.org/research/documents/NPS_Final_Survey_Report07.pdf

> Focusing on new student affairs professionals, the authors identified six professional development needs that emerged from focus groups: a better understanding of the organizational culture; transitioning from graduate school to a new job; establishing an effective mentor-mentee relationship; clarification of job expectations; and guidance on developing future career goals in the student affairs profession. The authors suggest that supervisors can be instrumental in addressing these needs.

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. 129-151). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

> The author discussed four stages of socialization within the student affairs profession (anticipatory, formal, informal, and personal) and the four realms of

professional practice (personal, institutional, extra-institutional, and professional).
She then discussed how new student affairs professionals can experience and
navigate transition when these stages and realms merge.

Daly, C. J., & Dee, J. R. (2006). Greener pastures: Faculty turnover intent in urban public
universities. *The Journal of Higher Education, 77*(5), 776-803.

Daly and Dee examined structural, psychological, and environmental variables
that contribute to faculty departure at urban public universities. Structural
variables were found to be most impactful on faculty departure including
perceptions of autonomy, supportive communication networks, equity in rewards,
and congruent work expectations between faculty and departmental leaders.

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include limited job mobility, lack of opportunity for personal growth, lack of
autonomy, and lack of opportunity to use knowledge learned in graduate school.

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The authors examined the persistence of student affairs professionals to
determine whether factors such as job satisfaction and influence of a mentor were
related to attrition and retention. The authors found significant disparities in job
satisfaction between those new professionals who had a strong mentor (i.e.
supervisor) versus those who did not.

Jo, V. H. (2008). Voluntary turnover and women administrators in higher education. *Higher
Education, 56*(5), 565-582.

The author examined women administrators in higher education and factors for
voluntary turnover. According to results from in-depth interviews with ex-
administrators, there were three strong reasons administrators left: conflict with
supervisor, lack of opportunity for advancement, and an incompatible work
schedule.

Johnsrud, L. K., Heck, R. H., & Rosser, V. J. (2000). Morale matters: Midlevel administrators and their intent to leave. *The Journal of Higher Education, 71*(1), 34-59.

> The authors defined the construct of morale empirically and how morale affects midlevel administrators in higher education and their intent to depart their position. Worklife issues affecting morale included whether their work was considered meaningful, quality of supervision, fair treatment, and whether their opinions are valued.

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Johnsrud, L. K., & Rosser, V. J. (2002). Faculty members' morale and their intent to leave: A multilevel explanation. *The Journal of Higher Education, 73*(4), 518-542.

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Moynihan, D. P., & Landuyt, N. (2008). Explaining turnover in state government: Examining the roles of gender, life cycle, and loyalty. *Review of Public Personnel Administration, 28*, 120-143.

The authors studied state government employees and found that life cycle stability factors contributed to turnover. These factors included age, experience, and geographic preferences dictated by familial obligations. They also found two overlapping significant contributors to intent to depart, organizational loyalty and empowerment.

Price, W. H., Kiekbusch, R., & Theis, J. (2007). Causes of employee turnover in sheriff operated jails. *Public Personnel Management, 36,* 51-63.

The authors examined county jail employee turnover, long considered to be an issue. Five jails were surveyed to determine prominent predictors for turnover. The most significant, controllable influences on employee departure were opportunities for promotion, full use of employee skills, and a genuine interest in employee satisfaction and well being.

Renn, K. A., & Hodges, J. P. (2007). The first year on the job: Experiences of new professionals in student affairs. *NASPA Journal, 44*(2), 367- 391.

The authors conducted a longitudinal student of new student affairs professionals' first year of employment, asking them about challenges, experiences, and surprises. Three themes emerged: the importance of relationships (with

supervisor, colleagues, etc.); institutional and professional fit; and, issues of competence and confidence (having basic skills, job training, etc.)

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.

> The authors conducted a year-long study of new student affairs professionals, asking them what areas should master's programs in higher education and student affairs address to ease the transition from student to full-time professional. Four key themes emerged: creating a professional identity, navigating a cultural adjustment, maintaining a learning orientation, and seeking sage advice.

Rosser, V. J. (2004a). Faculty members' intention to leave: A national study on their worklife and satisfaction. *Research in Higher Education, 45*(3), 285-309.

> The author found that a combination of worklife perceptions and overall job satisfaction influenced intent to depart among faculty. Faculty worklife included administrative support, professional development, and committee obligations. These factors were all demonstrated as affecting job satisfaction and, therefore, intent to depart.

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> The authors found professional development opportunities, recognition for competence and expertise, work relationships, and work conditions all had a significant impact on level of satisfaction, morale, and intent to depart.

Strachota, E., Normandin, P., O'Brien, N., Clary, M., & Krukow, B. (2003). Reasons registered nurses leave or change employment status. *Journal of Nursing Administration, 33*, 111-117.

> The authors surveyed nurses who voluntarily changed their employment status (either departed or changed status to "as needed") within a nine-month period to

determine the most frequent reasons given for changes. Work hours, better job opportunities, familial responsibilities, and pay and benefits were the top predictors for job change.

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.

The author examined how supervision affects job satisfaction in student affairs professionals and how job satisfaction, in turn, affects intent to turnover. Using the Synergistic Supervision Scale (SSS) and the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (MOAQ), the author found a significant correlation between synergistic supervisor and job satisfaction.

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The authors examined how the socialization of new student affairs professionals may be a factor in determining why new professionals depart or persist within student affairs. They examined processes of socialization, contexts, strategies to enhance socialization, and discussed implications for the future.

Winston, R. B., Jr., & Creamer, D. G. (1997). *Improving staffing practices in student affairs*.

The authors examined staffing practices in student affairs and whether current practices are adequate. They examined these practices in the context of current staffing practices and suggested models for various aspects of staffing practices including the recruitment, orientation, and supervision of new staff as well as developing and evaluating staff.

Environmental Variables

Environmental variables play a role in employee departure through job opportunities, kinship responsibilities, and disillusionment with students. This section presents literature focusing on environmental variables that affect employee departure.

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. 129-151). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

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> The authors studied state government employees and found that life cycle stability factors contributed to turnover. These factors included age, experience, and geographic preferences dictated by familial obligations. They also found two

overlapping significant contributors to intent to depart, organizational loyalty and empowerment.

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Zhou, Y., & Volkwein, J. F. (2004). Examining the influences on faculty departure intentions: A comparison of tenured versus non-tenured faculty at research universities using NSOPF-99. *Research in Higher Education, 45*(2), 139-176.

> The authors explored internal and external variables that contribute to faculty departure, examining all classes of faculty. Seniority was the strongest predictor of departure for tenured and non-tenured faculty. External factors such as perceptions of higher salaries, better benefits, and opportunities for advancement at other institutions were also identified as contributing to departure.

Other Literature Related to Departure

Beyond literature exploring psychological, structural, and environmental variables, there is also literature that focuses on other aspects of departure, including the benefits and disadvantages of employee departure for both organizations and remaining employees. Additionally, there is literature that examines the departure of student affairs professionals from one student affairs position to another.

Allen, D. G., Bryant, P. C., & Vardaman, J. M. (2010). Retaining talent: Replacing misconceptions with evidence-based strategies. *Academy of Management Perspectives, 24*(2), 48-64.

> The authors attempted to fill a research void by exploring several misconceptions about turnover. They provide evidence-based strategies for dealing with turnover and conclude with suggestions for further research to build upon understanding triggers for turnover.

Farber, H. S. (2008). *Job loss and the decline of job security in the United States.* Retrieved
    from the Princeton University website:
    http://www.princeton.edu/~ceps/workingpapers/171farber.pdf

> The author explored the decline of long-term employment and job tenure,
> comparing the private sector with the public sector. The author found that while
> there is a decline in long-term employment, this decline is not reflected in the
> Displaced Workers Survey (DWS). The author attempts to explain this
> discrepancy.

Hansen, F. (2005, June 1). The turnover myth. *Workforce Management, 84*(6). Retrieved from
    http://www.trainutopia.com/Press/Retention/20060316%20Turnover%20Myth.pdf

> The author interviewed human resources executives with two corporations
> experiencing   increased turnover. The executives discuss different methods for
> addressing turnover.

Jones, C. B., & Gates, M. (2007). The costs and benefits of nurse turnover: A business case for
    nurse retention. *OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing, 12*(3), Manuscript 4.

> This article provided a cost-benefit analysis of nurse turnover, providing a
> foundation to include the costs and benefits of nurse turnover in an effort to
> estimate the economic value of nurses.

Kortegast, C. A., & Hamrick, F. A. (2009). Moving on: Voluntary staff departures at small
    colleges, *NASPA Journal, 46*(2), 183-207.

> The researchers examined voluntary departure of student affairs professionals
> from small colleges and universities and how those departures affect staff
> members who remain.

McGarvey, R. (1997, March 1). Employee turnover is good for your business. *Entrepreneur
    Magazine.* Retrieved from
    http://www.entrepreneur.com/magazine/entrepreneur/1997/march/13978.html

> The author discussed positive aspects of employee turnover and makes several
> conclusions regarding its benefits. He also provided a caveat, suggesting that
> turnover can be detrimental if one does not hire the best candidate to fill the
> vacant position.

Chapter Three

Methodology

As in all qualitative research, the positionality of the researcher was important in this study. Before I elaborate on the method I used to collect and analyze data, therefore, it is important to describe my own positionality *vis a vis* the study. I earned my master's degree in counseling and student personnel from a comprehensive, public university in the Northeast. At the time, the university had an enrollment of approximately 6,000 students. My first job in student affairs was at a large (35,000+ students), public research institution, also in the Northeast. By the end of my second year as a student affairs professional at this institution, I was ready to leave the field. I even interviewed and received offers for jobs outside of the field. My frustration was due mostly to a lack of autonomy on the job and the poor supervision I received.

Instead of leaving after three years in the field however, I accepted another position, this time at a mid-sized (11,000+ students), private institution in the Southeast. Again, due to a lack of autonomy and poor supervision, I left after one year. I applied to one student affairs job and multiple jobs outside of student affairs. I was offered the student affairs position in addition to other non-student affairs positions but decided to give the field one more try. I was desperately attempting to rekindle the passion that originally attracted me to the field. The third institution was a small (4500+ students), private institution in the Northeast. At this institution, my fervor for the field returned. I had a supervisor who encouraged autonomy and allowed me to be creative. We had regular discussions on how to build upon my experiences so I would be prepared for my next position. She was concerned about my growth and well-being as a professional and as an individual, something I had not experienced with previous supervisors.

By this time (five years after earning my master's), I had many friends and colleagues from my graduate program who had left the field. They often cited poor supervision, lack of mobility, long hours, and lack of autonomy as reasons for leaving. These were quality individuals who were once as excited about the field as I was. They moved on to jobs in corrections, business, government, consulting, and a variety of other occupations. I began to read literature on departure from the field and realized it was a serious issue. I decided, before I even started my doctoral program, that I wanted my research to focus upon this issue.

The design of my study and the focus of my questions are not only grounded in the literature but also upon my own experiences in student affairs as well as those of my former colleagues. Why did I stay as opposed to my colleagues who left with no intention of returning to student affairs? Anecdotally, I have heard rationales for leaving the field but I believe the question as to why people leave needs to be researched. I hope my findings paint a clearer picture of this topic.

My positionality potentially influenced my research in several ways. I had thought about what factors prompted student affairs practitioners to leave the profession for many years and discussed it with several former colleagues. This might have led to preconceptions regarding what I would encounter in my study. For example, it might have influenced what criteria I established for participation in the study. Likewise, the items I included in my survey or the questions I asked in my interviews might have been influenced by my own experience in the field. Finally, my own experiences or those of former colleagues might have colored the way I interpreted the data in the study. Although I attempted to be conscious of my positionality as I designed and conducted the study, as well as when I analyzed the data, it is important that the study be understood in light of the perspectives I brought to the project.

Method

The purpose of this study was to examine employee turnover in higher education. Specifically, I explored factors that contribute to student affairs professionals leaving the profession. The conceptual framework for this study was a modified version of Daly and Dee's (2006) model that described how psychological, structural, and environmental variables affect intent to stay with an organization. While Daly and Dee used these factors to focus on intent to stay, the same factors can be used to explain employee departure.

Participants in this study were former student affairs professionals who left the student affairs profession within five years of receiving a master's degree in student affairs, higher education, student personnel, or other related field. Participants had left the field no more than two years prior to the time of data collection. Data were collected via an online survey and telephone interviews during 2011.

Qualitative research is intended to provide an in depth understanding of the world in which we live and the people that live within it (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). I chose to conduct a qualitative study because I felt understanding the participants' experience in their own

words was key to understanding the phenomenon being studied. A qualitative study provided an in-depth exploration of the experiences of former student affairs professionals who made the decision to leave the profession. The former professionals described their experiences through phone interviews in their own voice. Themes emerged from the data that provided an understanding of the factors that precipitated departure from the profession. The central research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do psychological variables influence former student affairs professionals' decision to leave the student affairs profession?

2. How do structural variables influence former student affairs professionals' decision to leave the student affairs profession?

3. How do environmental variables influence former student affairs professionals' decision to leave the student affairs profession?

In the remainder of this chapter, I describe the design of the study. I explain sample selection, instrumentation, data collection and analysis procedures, and steps taken to ensure authenticity and trustworthiness.

Sample Selection

Qualitative research uses purposeful sampling to select participants who will provide the researcher with the information that will best enable him/her to address the research question(s) posed by the study (Creswell, 2003). One selection process was conducted for this study to identify a sample of former student affairs professionals.

Participants needed to meet three criteria. First, they needed to hold a master's degree in student affairs, higher education, student personnel, or a related field. Because my study focused specifically on former student affairs professionals, it was important to select participants who were socialized through their master's degree programs to work in higher education, particularly student affairs. A master's degree in student affairs, higher education, student personnel, or related field ensures that participants were socialized for a career in student affairs. Those socialized to a profession are more likely to understand the nuances of the profession, therefore making an effective candidate for my research.

Second, participants needed to have left student affairs within the two years prior to the time of data collection. Research has demonstrated that there is an inverse relationship between an event happening and the accuracy of recalling that event. Therefore it stands to reason that

the longer the period of time between an event and its recall, the less accurate the memory of that event (Clarke, Fiebig, & Gerdtham, 2008). I chose the two-year time period because I felt it allowed participants adequate time to process their experiences in student affairs but still produce sufficient recall of their rationale for their departure.

Third, I sought participants who had no intention of returning to the student affairs profession. Because the purpose of my research was to examine factors for departing student affairs, those who desired to return did not fit my criteria.

Sample selection was conducted through two groups of gatekeepers. The first included mid-level professionals who regularly supervise new professionals and might be able to connect me to former supervisees/professionals who had left the field and new professionals who might have former graduate school colleagues who had left the profession. I started by contacting staff at ACPA. ACPA is an international professional association comprised of student affairs administrators from a variety of functional areas (i.e., residence life, student activities, student advising). I asked staff for a list of mid-level managers currently working in student affairs. Mid-level managers consisted of those individuals with titles of Assistant Director to Assistant Dean. I selected this group because mid-level administrators were most likely to have supervised entry-level student affairs subordinates. I also asked ACPA for a list of members who identified as new professionals, the second group of gatekeepers in the study. I sought new professionals because they might have kept in touch with others who graduated from their masters programs but who were no longer in the profession. I believed that new professionals might be a rich source to tap for potential participants.

ACPA staff generated a list of 811 current, new student affairs professionals and 1,505 current, mid-level student affairs professionals. I initially selected 100 names randomly from each list. I randomly selected names to obtain a representative sample of former professionals that was manageable for purposes of this study. These mid-level managers and new professionals served as gatekeepers for purposes of my research.

I contacted these selected gatekeepers via email and provided them introductory information regarding my study. I created two versions of an introductory email, one for supervisors (see Appendix A) and one for new professionals (see Appendix B). In the email, I requested assistance in identifying potential participants. The email included a brief synopsis of my study, my methodology, and information on how to reach me via email or phone. I asked

gatekeepers to forward me the names of any individuals they believed matched the participant criteria.

When gatekeepers sent me names, I contacted those potential participants to schedule a pre-screening interview with them. During the interview, I used a protocol (see Appendix C) to determine whether potential participants met the criteria for participation in the study. I asked nine questions in the pre-screening interview. The first section contained five questions. Three of these questions covered study criteria – when they earned their degree, graduate degree concentration, and when they left the field. A fourth question asked the name of the master's institution from which they graduated. Finally, I asked potential participants if they thought they might return to the field in the future. At this point, I informed participants whether they met the initial criteria. If they did not, I thanked them for their willingness but told them they did not meet the primary selection criteria. If they did meet the criteria, I asked if they would be willing to continue with the pre-screening interview. Question six addressed their work history, including functional area. Finally, I addressed demographics. Question seven asked for gender; question eight addressed race; and, question nine addressed age. Questions six through nine were designed to assist in selecting a diverse sample to participate in my research. The pre-screening interview not only enabled me to verify suitable participants but also created an opportunity to establish rapport with them to facilitate their comfort during the interview required of study participants.

After conducting the remainder of the prescreening interview, I made a determination as to whether the participant fit the demographic criteria I needed to have a diverse sample. Again, I either thanked them for their willingness but informed them they did not meet selection criteria or that I selected them. For those participants selected, I explained the next steps and set up a future phone interview. I continued with the selection process until participants' responses were redundant and I reached data saturation (*N*=24).

Instrumentation

Two instruments were designed to collect data. The first was an online survey (see Appendix D) that contained a list of psychological, structural, and environmental factors contributing to student affairs departure that were identified in the literature. I asked participants to rank the five factors that contributed most to their decision to leave the student affairs sector.

I used factors that were not only identified in the research but also factors that seemed to be "common sense." Table 1 lists the categories in the Daly and Dee's (2006) model, factors in the survey associated with each category, and the literature base associated with each factor. I also included an "other" ranking on the survey to offer respondents an opportunity to name other factors they considered that were not on the list. The rationale for the survey was two-fold. First, it encouraged participants to begin thinking about issues related to work prior to the interview. Second, the survey allowed me to adapt a semi-structured qualitative interview protocol to include questions that were relevant to respondents' survey responses while being general enough to provide the data necessary to answer the research questions posed in the study.

The second instrument designed for the study was the interview protocol. I chose to conduct a semi-structured qualitative interview. A structured interview is carefully scripted and the interviewer is expected to behave consistently with each participant, solely asking questions to seek specific information (Yin, 2011). A qualitative interview is less scripted and more conversational. The interviewer also adopts behavior particular to the situation and/or the participant (Yin, 2011). With a semi-structured qualitative interview, I had scripted questions that I asked each participant but some questions were also adapted based upon participants' responses to interview questions and based upon their survey responses. Because my questions were tailored to each participant, I needed to conduct my interviews in a more conversational style rather than strictly as an interviewer.

There were 14 primary interview questions, divided into three sections (see Appendix E). For each interview, I reviewed the participant's responses to the survey and counted how many of the top five reasons they left the field were associated with each category in the Daly and Dee (2006) model. I also noted their first job(s) on the protocol. This enabled me to individualize the interview for each respondent. My first section on the protocol, the Introduction/Rapport section, asked questions regarding their experiences in student affairs. Questions one and two drew upon information obtained in the pre-screening interview regarding the specific position(s) they held as a student affairs professional and what drew them to that/those position(s). These questions were designed to connect our pre-screening conversation to the interview and provide an opportunity to continue to establish rapport. Question three asked what the participant liked or/and disliked about the field. This question was designed to encourage participants to think about their feelings regarding the field before engaging in our discussion regarding specific

Table 1

Environmental, Psychological, and Structural Factors Identified in the Literature

Category	Factor	Relevant Literature
Environmental	Disillusioned with students	
	Family Issues - children	Faculty, Student affairs
	Family Issues – spouse/partner	Faculty, Student affairs
	Family Issues - other	Faculty, Student affairs
	Job opportunity outside student affairs	Faculty, Student affairs
Psychological	Felt disconnected from institution	Faculty
	Felt work was not valued	Nursing, Non-educational government employee
	Lack of job security	Faculty
	Lack of managerial/supervisor support	Nursing, Non-educational government employee, Faculty, Student affairs
	Profession no longer challenging	
	Profession not what expected	Student affairs
Structural	Benefits package	Nursing, Faculty
	Communication issues	Faculty, Student affairs
	Hours worked (>40/week)	Nursing
	Lack of autonomy	Nursing, Non-educational government employee, Faculty, Student affairs
	Lack of resources	Faculty
	Lack of clarification in job expectations	Student affairs
	Lack of professional development opportunities	Non-educational government employee, Student affairs
	No opportunities for advancement	Non-educational government employee, Student affairs
	Organizational changes	
	Relationship with supervisor	Student affairs
	Salary	Non-educational government employee
	Workload	Non-educational government employee, Faculty

factors that contributed to leaving the profession. Question four also served as a prompt for reflecting on their experiences in the field by asking them about specific experiences that impacted them as a student affairs professional, either positively or negatively.

Section two addressed the specific factors gleaned from the survey in addition to soliciting information regarding their current situation and their life at the time of the interview. Questions five through nine spoke to the five factors ranked by the individuals as having the most effect on their decision to leave student affairs. These factors were covered in the order in which they were ranked with the number one factor (the number one reason for departure) discussed first (question five on the protocol) and the number five factor covered last (in question nine). I also asked participants to provide me an example of when each factor affected their work. I then followed up each response with prompt questions (see Table 2). The prompt questions allowed me to more fully explore how the relevant factor influenced the participant's departure from the profession.

Questions 10 and 11 inquired about current employment, if relevant, and whether respondents felt the skills obtained through their degree program and experience in student affairs were transferrable to their current position (if relevant). These questions were designed to address a concern identified in the literature about whether graduate programs are wasting energy and money educating student affairs professionals, only to have them leave (Evans, 1988). These interview questions offered an opportunity to investigate whether the skills obtained in graduate school and on the job are useful beyond the profession.

The last section of the protocol concluded the interview by asking for any parting information. Question 12 inquired whether anything could have prevented the participant from leaving student affairs. This question elicited information relevant to the factors identified and discussed earlier as well as suggestions for creating an environment that may help retain professionals. Question 13 asked for any wisdom the participant would be willing to share with recent graduates going into their first student affairs position. This question was also designed to provide information relevant to the factors and garner suggestions for preventing departure form the field among future professionals. Lastly, question 14 asked participants if there was anything else they wanted to add beyond what was discussed in the interview. At the conclusion of the interview, I thanked my participants and recapped their responses. I also indicated I would provide them a copy of the transcript within three weeks of the interview and requested they

Table 2

Interview Prompt Questions

Category	Factor	Potential Prompt Questions
Environmental	Disillusioned with students	• What encounters did you have that left you feeling disillusioned with students?
	Family Issues - children	• What kinds of options, if any, did your institution offer to assist any childcare issues? • How did your supervisor address your childcare needs? • What kinds of policies, if any, would have changed your mind about leaving the field because of issues with your children?
	Family Issues – spouse/partner	• What specific spouse/partner issues prompted your departure? • Describe any conflicts between your spouse's/partner's job and your own. • What kind of institutional policies, if any, addressed work/life balance, particularly with a spouse/partner? • What kinds of policies, if any, would have changed your mind about leaving the field?
	Family Issues – other	• What family issues prompted your departure? • How did you balance the demands of work with your relationship? • What kind of institutional policies addressed work/life balance, particularly with [insert person/relationship]? • What kinds of policies, if any, would have changed your mind about leaving the field?
	Job opportunity outside student affairs	• Were you actively seeking a position outside of student affairs? • What kind of position outside of student affairs you were seeking? • How did you find out about the position(s)? • What attracted you to those opportunities?

Psychological	Felt disconnected from institution	• What was going on at the (name of institution) that caused you to feel disconnected? • What was the culture of the institution like? • What could (name of institution) have done to make you feel more connected? • How did your disconnection affect your work?
	Felt work was not valued	• Describe a situation when you you're your work was not valued. • What types of things could have been done to make you feel your work was valued?
	Lack of job security	• Would you give me examples of times you felt your job was in danger? • Was the lack of job security specific to your area or to the institution as a whole?
	Lack of managerial/supervisor support	• What kinds of things make you feel supported by your supervisor? • How do these things make you feel supported?
	Profession no longer challenging	• Were there opportunities to add more challenging responsibilities to your job? • Were there opportunities to get involved outside of your specific position that might challenge you? • Was there an opportunity to discuss your lack of challenge with a supervisor?
	Profession not what expected	• What your expectations were of the profession? • How were these expectations different once you entered student affairs? • How do you feel your graduate program prepared you for the profession?
Structural	Benefits package	• What information about benefits did you seek out before taking the job?

		• What kinds of benefits were you seeking that were not included?
	Communication issues	• How would you describe the communication issues you encountered in your position? • What opportunities existed to address communication issues? • How did you feel when you expressed your concerns?
	Hours worked (>40/week)	• Please tell me about your average workweek in your last position? • What do you think are reasonable expectations of a work week in student affairs? • How did your institution and/or supervisor address work/life balance?
	Lack of autonomy	• What does autonomy mean to you? • What kinds of things can a supervisor do to support autonomy?
	Lack of resources	• What resources do you wish you had had that would have made your job more satisfactory? • What process was there for you to ask for more resources?
	Lack of clarification in job expectations	• How were you oriented to your position? • How did you learn about the expectations of your job, both formal and informal? • How often did you meet with your supervisor to discuss job expectations?
	Lack of professional development opportunities	• How do you define professional development? • What professional development opportunities were offered by your institution (whether on site or by providing funding to attend conferences, etc), if any? • How did your institution/supervisor address professional development?
	No opportunities for advancement	• What sorts of opportunities were you seeking in your next student affairs position?

	Organizational changes	• How did you find out about organizational changes within your department/institution? • What, if any, opportunities did you have to contribute to discussion regarding organizational changes?
	Relationship with supervisor	• How often did you meet with your supervisor? • Can you describe for me what happened during a typical meeting with your supervisor? • How did your supervisor communicate expectations with you? • How available was your supervisor? • How were you evaluated by your supervisor? • How would you describe your ideal supervisor relationship?
	Salary	• What were your salary expectations before beginning your career in student affairs? • How did your salary reflect the breadth and scope of your job? • How would you describe your salary compared to others in similar positions?
	Workload	• What were your workload expectations? • How could your workload have been adequately balanced? • How was your workload out of sync with others in your office/department?

please review and make changes, comments, and suggestions and return the transcript to me.

A panel of experts that included a professor of qualitative methods and three professors of student affairs and higher education administration reviewed a draft of the interview protocol. The protocol was also piloted on a small sample of former professionals who had left the student affairs sector to receive feedback on the format and clarity of questions. I revised the protocol based upon the feedback I received from the experts on the panel and on the pilot participants.

Data Collection

Prior to collecting data, I received approval from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) at my home institution. A copy of IRB approval is included in Appendix F.

Once qualified respondents agreed to participate in the research, I scheduled a phone interview with them to occur within one week of our pre-screening conversation. I sent each participant an Informed Consent form and the survey within 24 hours of the time they were selected to participate. I gave each participant 48 hours from the time of our pre-screening to complete the online survey so that I would have time to reflect upon their responses and tailor questions before conducting the phone interview with them.

All interviews were conducted in 2011. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and took place via phone at a time that was convenient for the participant. At the start of the interview, I engaged in casual conversation with the participant to establish rapport. I then reviewed the Informed Consent form. I confirmed with participants that I had received an electronic or faxed copy of the consent form with either their signature or an email from them specifically stating they had reviewed the consent form and agreed to participate in the study.

Next, I asked for participant permission to record our interview. I then conducted the interview using the interview protocol. At the end of the interview I recapped what respondents had said to ensure that I had captured the major points of the interview. I also asked if I could contact them later if I had other questions. Finally, I thanked them for their participation. Subsequently, I transcribed all interviews. I sent respondents a copy of their transcript and asked them to review it and offer any comments, corrections, or questions. Once I received comments from participants (or confirmation that they had no comments to make on their transcript), I initiated data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was driven by my questions and my theoretical framework. I used the constant comparative method of data analysis (Creswell, 2003). This approach entails analysis throughout the research process. Step one of this process calls for the organization and preparation of data for analysis; in this study data preparation involved transcribing interview tapes. During the transcription process, I reflected regularly in a journal, making notes of thoughts, feelings, and potential insights from the interview process. I also wrote analytical memos based upon my review of the transcripts to determine what the data might prompt me to ask about in future interviews or for follow-up questions with participants. This also allowed an opportunity for reflexivity. After transcripts were completed, I read each one at least twice prior to coding to gain a solid sense of the information and consider its meaning (Creswell, 2003).

Coding is a process in which one makes sense of the data by organizing them into categories (Creswell, 2003). For purposes of this study, I conducted two levels of coding. The first level, open coding, followed a less structured form of coding and focused on the thematic content and generating categories based upon that content (Yin, 2011). In open coding, my unit of analysis was the comment. A comment consisted of words, phrases, or sentences that addressed the same topic or sentiment. I read through each transcript and identified individual comments while also considering any analytical memos I wrote during the data collection process.

Once comments were identified, I used a deductive form of analysis for my second level of coding, choosing to use categories identified in the literature and in the conceptual framework rather than creating them organically (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I assigned each comment identified in the open coding process into one of four categories: comments regarding psychological factors, comments regarding structural factors, comments regarding environmental factors, and a miscellaneous category. Comments such as "I was burned out" or "I just wasn't satisfied with my position" were coded as psychological factors. Comments like "my supervisor and I didn't get along" or "there was no opportunity for advancement" were coded as structural factors. Comments such as "my spouse relocated" or "I was offered a better position somewhere else" were coded as environmental factors. If comments did not seem relevant to the psychological, structural, or environmental categories, they were placed in the miscellaneous category. Once the second level of coding was completed, I conducted a third level of coding,

identifying themes among the four categories of data. At least three participants had to mention a factor before it became a theme.

I coded three transcripts and then asked a professor in higher education and student affairs administration to review those transcripts and to code them using my coding scheme. I did this to ensure that my scheme made sense to others and that I was appropriately assigning data to categories and themes. We compared our results and discussed any discrepancies so that I ensured that all data were treated consistently in the analytical process. Prior to developing conclusions, I reviewed my data analysis with a faculty member familiar with my study to discuss similarities and differences regarding my initial coding and categorizing of data. Once the coding was completed and themes and categories were established, I was able to address the research questions posed in the study. The analysis produced a qualitative narrative with both researcher interpretation and direct quotes from participants addressing why new student affairs professionals depart the profession within five years of receiving their master's degree. These findings were presented in the context of established literature and the theoretical framework.

Accuracy of the Data

Accuracy of the data, for purposes of qualitative research, is a series of steps designed to ensure, as much as possible, that research findings are accurate from the perspective of the researcher, participant, and the reader (Creswell, 2003). To establish accuracy of the data, I used five methods. The first was peer review. Peer review refers to using peers and colleagues familiar with the research topic and/or methodology to provide comments, particularly critiques (Yin, 2011). In this study, I had a panel of four faculty members with experience in qualitative methods review the survey and interview protocol to make sure that the questions asked would provoke respondents to provide data relevant to my research questions and theoretical framework. Second, I conducted a pilot study using my survey and interview protocol with a small sample of former student affairs professionals who had departed the student affairs profession. The pilot study allowed an opportunity to review and refine various aspects of the study including questions, methodology, design and/or analysis (Yin, 2011). These are forms of peer review that helped to enhance the accuracy of my data.

During data collection and analysis, I engaged in four specific processes: member checking, clarifying researcher bias, peer debriefing, and triangulation. Member checking determines the accuracy of the research by sharing with participants any findings and asking for

feedback regarding those findings (Yin, 2011). In my study, I summarized for participants at the end of each phone interview my impressions of the conversation and any themes or consistencies I found in our discussion. I then asked them for confirmation or clarification of these issues. I sent participants a copy of the transcript and asked them to review their transcript and offer any clarification, comments, or questions. These are two forms of member checking that enhanced the accuracy of the study's findings.

By voicing my positionality in the introduction to this chapter, I was able to clarify any research bias I might have brought to the study (Creswell, 2003). I also used a reflexivity journal throughout the research to record any thoughts or feelings regarding the experience. These reflections, if relevant, were included in the applicable sections of the study.

I also engaged in peer debriefing. A faculty member reviewed a sample of my transcripts, my codes, and my themes. Engaging in peer debriefing enhances the accuracy of the data by engaging an individual who reviews the data and asks questions about the study so that individuals other than the researcher can make sense of the information (Creswell, 2003). Peer debriefers serve in this role throughout the research process, ensuring that each time one modifies designs and analyses, the information presented still resonates with a variety of audiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Triangulation refers to using multiple sources to conduct an analysis (Patton, 2002). In this particular case, I ensured that at least three participants discussed an element of departure before identifying that element as a theme. Triangulation ensures that the findings are not unduly influenced by a single source of information.

Conclusion

Many scholars have explored the extent of attrition from the student affairs profession and the challenges that new professionals face (Cilente et al., 2006; Evans, 1988; Holmes, et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). However, there is no information on why student affairs professionals actually leave the profession. My study helped fill this gap. Additionally, much of the general research on turnover has been conducted using quantitative methods. By using qualitative methods, this study provided a richer, more detailed description entailing psychological, structural, and environmental factors that influence departure from the student affairs profession.

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary of Findings

As noted previously, Virginia Tech offers the option for those writing a dissertation to truncate the results and discussion normally found in Chapters Five and Six and to replace those chapters with manuscripts to be submitted to a refereed journal for future publication. These manuscripts are based on the most compelling results of the study. Each has its own findings section that contains a detailed exploration of one segment of the results of the research. However, the findings presented in the two manuscripts may not include all the findings revealed in the analysis of the full dataset. Consequently, in this chapter, I present tables and figures that summarize my complete findings so that readers can see what the analysis revealed overall. Some of these tables and figures then may be modified or used in the manuscript chapters that follow. Others may be used for future publications.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

This qualitative inquiry elicited data from a purposeful sample of new administrators who departed the student affairs profession. Table 3 reports the demographic characteristics of the sample. Using snowball sampling, emails requesting names of potential participants meeting the study's selection criteria were sent out to 811 current, new student affairs professionals and 1,505 current, mid-level student affairs professionals. This process yielded 24 qualified participants. Participants self-identified as Caucasian (83%); African American/Black (13%); and Asian/Pacific Islander (4%). Both women (63%) and men (38%) were recruited and participated in this study. Participants all had five years or less of professional experience after earning their master's degree, with an average of 2.83 years in the field. All but 4 were 26-30 years old. The majority of participants came from backgrounds in residence life (67%) although other functional areas represented included student activities, academic advising, new student programs, multicultural affairs, organizational advising, and career services.

Results

Pre-Survey

Participants completed a pre-interview survey that was emailed to them along with a consent form. The survey contained a list of Psychological, Structural, and Environmental factors contributing to student affairs departure that were identified in the literature (see Appendix D). I asked participants to rank the five factors that contributed most to their decision

Table 3

Characteristics of Participants (N=24)

Participant	Ethnicity/Race	Gender	Age Range	Years in Field, After Masters	First Job/Second Job (if applicable)
Arnold	Caucasian	Male	31-35	3	Residence Life
Brynn	Caucasian	Female	26-30	3	Student Activities/Career Services
Cary	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	Student Activities
Chelsea	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	New Student Programs
Christina	Caucasian	Female	26-30	3	Residence Life
Clara	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	Residence Life
Dwight	Caucasian	Male	31-35	3	Academic Advising
Gabriella	Asian/Pacific Islander	Female	26-30	2.5	Multicultural Affairs
Grace	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	Residence Life
Greg	African American/Black	Male	26-30	5	Residence Life
Jack	Caucasian	Male	26-30	1	Residence Life
Jillian	African American/Black	Female	26-30	4	Residence Life/Office of Diversity
Julie	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	Residence Life
L.J.	African American/Black	Male	26-30	3.5	Student Activities
Lynn	Caucasian	Female	26-30	1	Residence Life
Mark	Caucasian	Male	26-30	3	Residence Life/Org. Advisor
Marlon	Caucasian	Male	26-30	4	Residence Life
Molly	Caucasian	Female	26-30	3	Residence Life
Rachel	Caucasian	Female	31-35	5	Residence Life
Rebecca	Caucasian	Female	26-30	1	Residence Life
Reid	Caucasian	Female	31-35	5	Academic Advising
Sal	Caucasian	Male	26-30	2	Residence Life
Ted	Caucasian	Male	26-30	3	F. Y. Programs/Program Coord.
Victoria	Caucasian	Female	26-30	3	Residence Life

Note: Participant selected pseudonyms

to leave the student affairs sector. Table 4 presents the results of those surveys. For example, Arnold's primary reason for leaving the field was to find more meaningful work. His other reasons related to salary (2), job security (3), the lack of mobility, (4) and the fact that he did not feel valued by his employer (5).

Findings from Interviews

The primary purpose of this qualitative research was to examine how Psychological, Structural, and Environmental variables contributed to the departure of new student affairs professionals. I sought to uncover themes and patterns that provide an understanding of why new student affairs professionals leave the profession.

I explored three primary research questions concerning departure:

1.   How do Psychological variables influence former student affairs professionals' decision to leave the student affairs profession?

2.   How do Structural variables influence former student affairs professionals' decision to leave the student affairs profession?

3.   How do Environmental variables influence former student affairs professionals' decision to leave the student affairs profession?

While the initial analysis focused on Psychological, Structural, and Environmental factors, it became evident during the analysis that findings also could be further combined as factors related to Institutional and Individual rationales for departure. Institutional factors were more closely tied with participants' professional experience and/or their identity as student affairs professionals. Individual factors were those that affected former new professionals on a more individual, personal basis regardless of their professional identity.

Research Question One: Psychological Variables

Overall, participants offered 225 comments that were related to the Psychological theme. These 225 comments were grouped into five themes. Figure 1 summarizes the number of comments associated with each theme. The five overarching themes were: (a) value as a professional, (b) supervision issues, (c) work/life balance, (d) fit, and (e) felt disconnected from the institution. The remaining comments were assigned to a Miscellaneous category. Further analysis revealed that the first five themes could be grouped into Institutional and Individual factors with (a) value as a professional and (b) supervision issues considered Institutional factors

Table 4

Pre-Interview Survey Responses-Factors Influencing Departure

Participant	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Arnold	More Mean Work	Salary	Job Sec	No Mobility	Not Valued
Brynn	Not Valued	Prof Not Expected	Org Change	Salary	Schedule
Cary	Job Opp	Org Change	Disconnected	Not Valued	Lack Prof Dev
Chelsea	Family Issues	Job for Spouse	No Mobility	Communication	Job Opp
Christina	Not Challenging	No Mobility	Salary	Not Valued	Prof Not Expected
Clara	Prof Not Expected	No Mobility	Hours	Salary	Not Valued
Dwight	Job Opp	Not Valued	Lack Prof Dev	No Mobility	Lack of Autonomy
Gabriella	No Jobs in Location	Salary	No Mobility	Job Opp	Need for Higher Degree
Grace	Job Opp	Hours	Job Stress	Communication	Unclear Expectations
Greg	Not Challenging	Salary	No Mobility	No Interest in Field	Job Opp
Jack	Job Opp	No Mobility	Supervisor	Hours	Salary
Jillian	No Mobility	Wanted Variety	Salary	Students	Disconnected
Julie	Org Change	Communication	Supervisor	No Mobility	Job Opp
L.J.	Lack of Autonomy	Supervisor	Health	Unclear Expectations	Lack Prof Dev
Lynn	Job Opp	Not Valued	Communication	Unclear Expectations	Org Change
Mark	Job Opp	Salary	Org Change	Lack of Autonomy	Not Challenging
Marlon	Prof Not Expected	Hours	Salary	Job Opp	No Mobility
Molly	Job Opp	Supervisor	Not Valued	No Mobility	Lack Prof Dev
Rachel	Family Issues	Supervisor	Hours	No Mobility	Not Valued
Rebecca	Communication	Students	No Mobility	Salary	Job Opp
Reid	Family Issues	Unhealthy Culture	Not Valued	Unclear Expectations	Org Change
Sal	Co-Workers	Org Change	Communication	Schedule	Disconnected
Ted	No Mobility	Salary	Job Opp	Lack of Autonomy	Disconnected
Victoria	Org Change	Unclear Expectations	Not Valued	Hours	Disconnected

and (c) work/life balance, (d) fit, and (e) feeling disconnected from the institution considered as Individual factors.
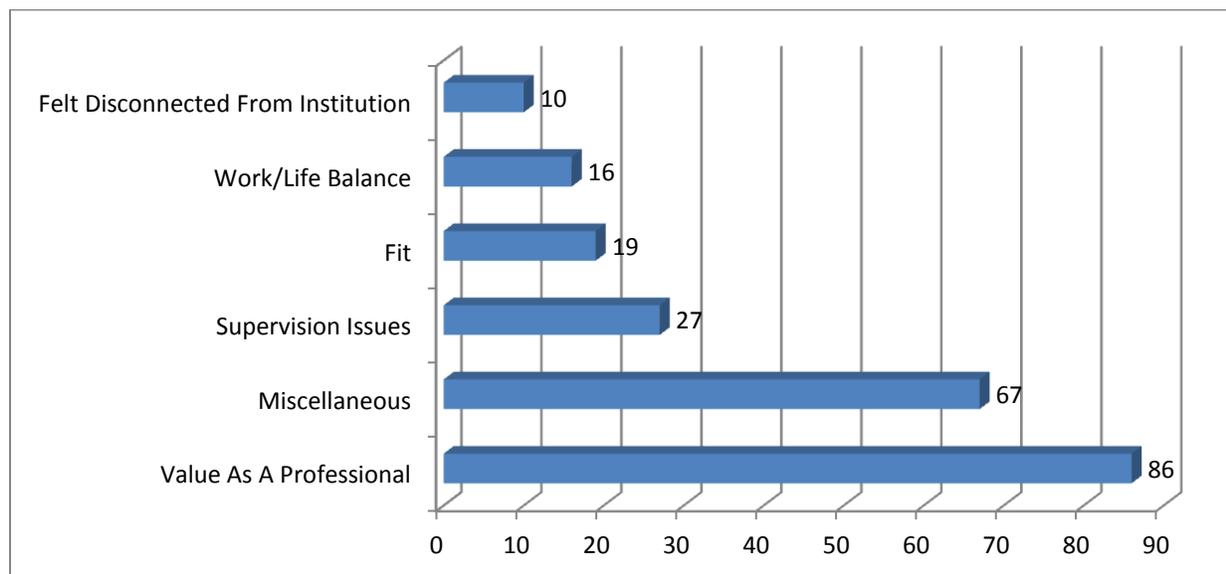

Figure 1

Comments in Psychological Category by Theme (N=225)

Value as a professional. References to not feeling valued, by far, outnumbered all other reasons for departure. Rachel said "Well, I guess you could say this is the part where I understand how people leave the profession not feeling appreciated, unrecognized, not supported." Participants felt undervalued because of the salary they earned. "One of the positive side effects of low pay is that you have people that actually care about what they are doing, even though we are undervalued." Participants also felt undervalued by those with whom they worked, either other colleagues or students. "Another thing that I don't like is feeling taken advantage of a lot of days." They wanted people to trust that they knew how to do their job: "Like what else can I do to build their trust or try to get them to realize that this is my job? Utilize me as a service." Some felt the hierarchy, overall, did not value their work and they wanted "…an understanding that [they were] good at what [they were] doing and [others] appreciated [their work]…"

Supervision issues. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research examining effective supervision and its relationship to new professional satisfaction (Cilente et al., 2006; Tull, 2006; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Unrealistic expectations, lack of support (in a

variety of ways), unprofessionalism, lack of transparency, poor communication, and poor decision-making all were expressed by multiple participants when talking about their experiences with supervisors. "My supervisor would espouse ridiculous and unrealistic expectations, but then not qualify them at any point – and then wonder why everyone is stressed out." Some described supervisors as "not able to separate friendships from professional relationships."

Work/life balance. Work/life balance was also cited as an issue. For some professionals "it's just really difficult to balance personal and professional life. It wore [them] down pretty quickly." New professionals seemed to need boundaries, particularly those who worked in residence life. Others mentioned balancing their family life with the expectations of student affairs: "I think Orientation is a hard field within student affairs to be in when you have a family."

Fit. Fit was discussed by eight participants. For some, fit referred to a particular job: "It just seemed nobody got [my frustrations]. And that made me feel kind of like I guess I don't really belong here." Others simply found that student affairs as a profession was not a good fit. "I always had this feeling that I felt like I was meant to do more." They saw "a disconnect between the field and what I'm really interested in and what I really want to do."

Felt disconnected from the institution. Feeling disconnected from the institution affected five participants. "I enjoy the institution but it's not something I feel like I have to be there…" Others talked about what they expected versus what they found in their jobs: "in our grad program, they talked a lot about making sure…that you and the institution are in line with one another…I mean, I definitely didn't feel connected at all."

Table 5 summarizes all the themes tied to Psychological factors and departure. Psychological factors were dominated by Institutional issues with 113 comments attributable to Value as a Professional and Supervision Issues. Individual factors only garnered 45 comments between Work/Life Balance, Fit, and Feeling Disconnected From the Institution. This suggests that Institutional issues play a much larger role in departure than Individual issues, at least as far as Psychological factors are concerned.

Research Question Two: Structural Variables.

The second research question in the study examined Structural factors that impact departure. Participants offered 215 comments related to Structural factors that were grouped into

Table 5

Code Mapping of Psychological Variables

RQ1: How do Psychological variables influence former student affairs professionals' decision to leave the student affairs profession?

Third Iteration: Data Application

New student affairs professionals depart the profession due to a variety of Psychological variables that can be characterized as Individual or Institutional. Departure was primarily driven by Institutional issues such as not feeling valued as a professional and supervision issues. However, Individual issues also played a role in departure including a lack of work/life balance, a lack of fit with the profession, and feeling disconnected from the institution.

Second Iteration: Themes

1. Individual	2. Institutional

First Iteration: Collapsed Codes/Surface Content Analysis

1A. Work/Life Balance	2A. Value as a Professional
1B. Fit	2B. Supervision Issues
1C. Felt Disconnected From the Institution	

Notes: To be read from bottom up

nine themes. Figure 2 summarizes the number of comments associated with each theme. The nine overarching Structural themes were: (a) communication issues, (b) no support for professional development, (c) no opportunities for advancement, (d) organizational politics, (e) unclear expectations, (f) organizational changes, (g) salary, (h) hours, and (i) lack of autonomy. All other comments were assigned to a Miscellaneous category. Unlike with the Psychological data, which was split among Individual and Institutional themes, all of the Structural themes fell into an Institutional theme.
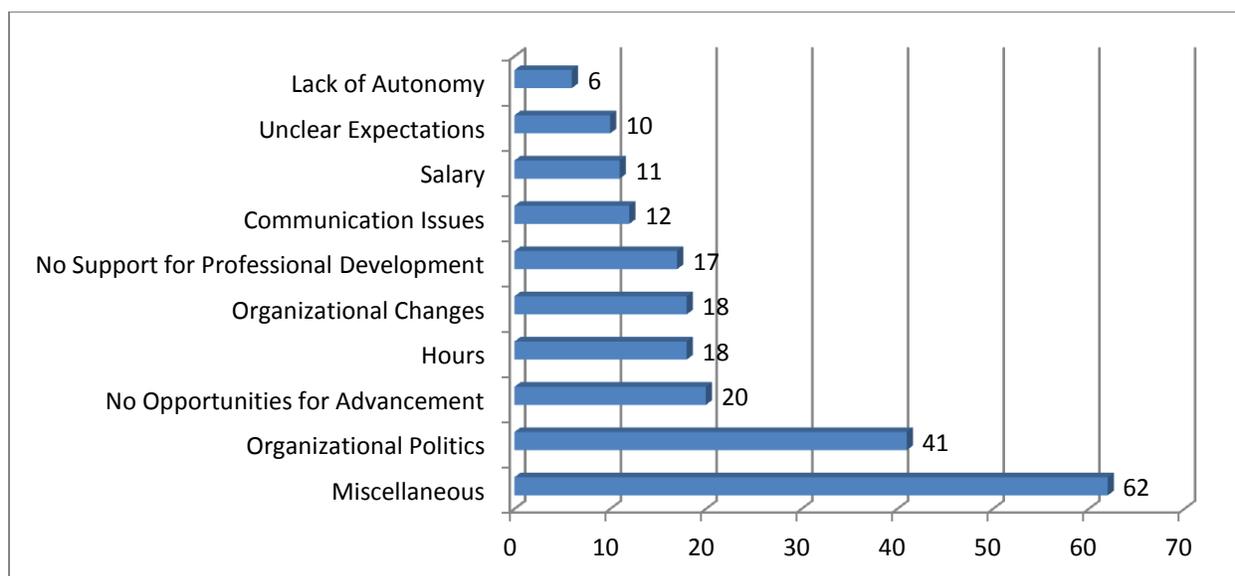
Figure 2
Comments in Structural Category by Theme (N=215)

Communication issues. Poor, or complete lack of, communication was cited as a factor contributing to departure. Transparency issues, passive aggressive communication, and "not being kept in the loop" were all brought up as barriers. "It didn't feel like we were included in some of the decisions that were happening." "Information was shared really sort of inefficiently."

No support for professional development. Lack of professional development also contributed to departure. For some this was due to lack of funds but for others lack of supervisor support for their professional development was an issue. "Professional development opportunity…what that really means for me is that my supervisor didn't have much of an interest in helping me find different resources than what I already knew." One respondent who was not

challenged by the profession and cited that as one reason she left student affairs, attributed this to lack of professional development: "And then it was no longer challenging because I wasn't expected to grow."

No opportunities for advancement. Limited or no opportunities for advancement is often a reason for departure (Cilente, et al., 2006; Evans, 1988; Rosser & Johnsrud, 2003) and my findings confirm that fact. Lack of mobility was often caused by a "bottleneck." "There are just not that many upper level positions to go into when you have so many entry level positions and because there isn't a promotion structure, you are pretty much just stuck doing what you are doing." This issue of having to switch institutions to move up was also discussed: "unless they created another opportunity, the only way I saw myself advancing was not to be there." New professionals felt that "And all of a sudden, this idea of having to move around all the time just stopped appealing to me." Individuals left because opportunities to advance were hard to find, particularly at the same institution.

Organizational politics. Top-down decision making and general bureaucracy were also factors contributing to departure. Decisions were being made without regard to actual circumstances and input was not valued. When talking about a newly implemented policy, respondents noted that they were "… asking a lot of questions…and [supervisors were] like this is how it is and you have to make it work." Decisions were "…basically handed down…our input didn't really matter because the decision had already been made." "Red tape" was an issue, whenever you made any decision: "everything seemed to be so bureaucratic that you couldn't really do anything…"

Unclear expectations. Lack of clarity in job expectations was a reason for leaving student affairs. This was expressed through a variety of contexts from confusion with "other duties as assigned" to role transitions that were occurring with little direction. "…Everybody's job was changing…it was really hard to figure out what everybody was supposed to be doing and who they were answering to." Unclear expectations made it difficult to make decisions and created general confusion, causing job dissatisfaction, and consequently departure.

Organizational changes. Organizational changes, either through restructuring or through replacement hires, were cited as factors in departure by some of the participants. The changes resulted in a glut of issues including problems with new supervisors, ambiguous or increased job responsibilities, and cultural shifts within the organization. "So they were trying to

restructure our office…they pushed people out…I thought this isn't really a place I want to be." "And then there were just a lot of shifts…I just started realizing the culture of our organization changed so much…that I was starting to think maybe this isn't congruent for me anymore."

Salary. Salary issues also led to departure. Some left student affairs because they were able to earn a higher salary elsewhere. "The impetus to move out of full time advising was…I could earn a greater level of income." Others were disappointed with not having received raises during their tenures at their institutions. "It was laughable that they almost never bumped up your salary more than the minimum just to match inflation."

Hours. While most acknowledged that student affairs professionals typically do not work "regular" hours, some participants cited feeling overworked or lack of flexibility in scheduling work hours as a factor in their departure. Five participants revealed that they just did not like working weekends, long days, and/or on-call hours. As one noted, "I had no idea that I would be working so much."

Lack of autonomy. Having more control over job responsibilities was brought up by multiple participants. They wanted allowances for mistakes made as part of their learning process. "I know I will make mistakes…in the things I am charged to do, I would like to have autonomy over that." One participant said lack of autonomy stifled his creativity.

Table 6 summarizes all factors tied to Structural factors related to the departure of new student affairs professionals. Unlike Psychological factors where Individual factors also came into consideration when examining departure, Structural factors were solely Institutional in nature. This suggests that Institutional issues must be addressed when trying to understand and/or combat departure.

Research Question Three: Environmental Variables.

The third question in the study focused on Environmental factors that influenced departure and participants offered 101 comments about these factors. These 101 comments were grouped into five themes. Figure 3 summarizes the number of comments associated with each theme. The five overarching themes were: (a) wanted closer to home, (b) dual career, (c) child issues, (d) could not find a job in student affairs, and (e) found a job opportunity outside of student affairs. All other comments were Miscellaneous in nature. Further analysis of my comments revealed that the five non-Miscellaneous themes were Individual in nature.

Table 6

Code Mapping of Structural Variables

RQ1: How do Structural variables influence former student affairs professionals' decision to leave the student affairs profession?
Third Iteration: Data Application
New student affairs professionals depart the profession due to a variety of Structural variables that can be characterized as Institutional in nature. These Institutional factors are sometimes part of the organizational culture and can be difficult to change or control such as organizational politics and organizational change. Some Institutional factors are more tangible, making them easier to manipulate, such as salary, hours worked, no opportunities for advancement, and no support for professional development. Other Institutional factors can be more vague, remedied through trainings and/or other methods of education, but there is no guarantee of an improved outcome. These include communication issues, unclear expectations, and lack of autonomy.
Second Iteration: Themes
1.   Institutional
First Iteration: Collapsed Codes/Surface Content Analysis
1A. Communication Issues 1B. No Support for Professional Development 1C. No Opportunities for Advancement 1D. Organizational Politics 1E. Unclear Expectations 1F. Organizational Changes 1G. Salary 1H. Hours Worked 1I. Lack of Autonomy

Notes: To be read from bottom up
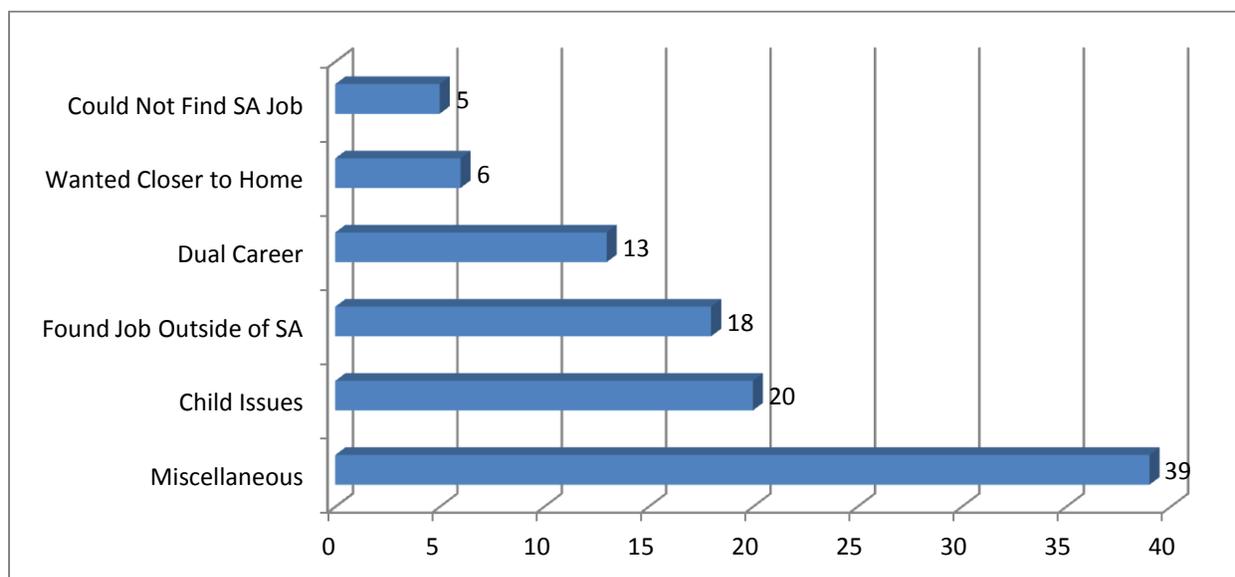
Figure 3
Comments in Environmental Category by Theme (N=101)

Wanted closer to home. Some participants simply wanted to be closer to home. "So the personal factors of an opportunity to be back home…was [sic] by far and above the main factor [for departure]." "I definitely knew I wanted to stay in Maine [to be closer to family]" stated Molly. Being away from family may be closely tied to other personal issues regarding spouses and/or children.

Dual career. A small number of participants left the profession because their spouse or partner found a job elsewhere and they found it difficult to find a student affairs job in the new location. "[My husband] really loves his job and he didn't feel he was done yet. So I think the way things went, I made the sacrifice for him [by moving]." Other participants were locationally-locked because their spouse or partner had a job they did not want to leave. For example, Rachel was working in Residence Life and was ready to leave due to a variety of reasons but her search was limited geographically due to her husband having a job he was invested in; hence, Rachel left student affairs but not the region in which she lived.

Child issues. It is evidently very difficult to raise a family when working in student affairs. For some new professionals, this was tied to future salary expectations. "If I ever want to have…a family or those sorts of things, it's just not realistic on a community director's salary."

Others wanted to be able to dedicate more time to their children, time that was difficult to find as a student affairs administrator. "The number one reason that I left…my kids are young…I still think [home] is where I need to be right now."

Could not find a student affairs job. Some participants were unable to find a student affairs job, typically due to geographical limitations. For the most part, had they found an administrative position they would still be in the profession. Once they realized they would be unable to find a job in student affairs, they expanded their job search to include positions outside of student affairs. For example, one respondent wanted to stay in her home state and had leads on several positions but nothing came to fruition within student affairs, leading her to expand her job search to include non-profit organizations.

Found job opportunity outside of student affairs. Two participants were sought out by employers outside of the field, mostly through contacts they made as student affairs professionals. "I had, in no way, intended or was considering leaving until I was 'headhunted' for lack of a better phrase." Other participants actively sought jobs outside of student affairs. "Opportunities in my current field came about and I just really decided to take a leap and go away from student affairs." Still others were not looking for jobs outside of the field until a specific opportunity became available. Lynn, who now works in consulting, said "I would have stayed in the field if this hadn't come up."

Table 7 summarizes all factors tied to Environmental issues related to the departure of new student affairs professionals. The relatively low number of comments attributable to Environmental factors suggests that Psychological and Structural factors play a much larger role in departure and should be given more weight when supervisors and/or senior student affairs officers address issues of departure. Also, the fact that Individual factors comprise all of the factors in the Environmental category suggests there may be little that senior student affairs staff can do when it comes to addressing Environmental factors for departure. Individual factors like spousal/partner career issues, geographic proximity to family, or opportunities outside the profession are more difficult to control than Institutional factors.

Miscellaneous Comments

Finally, I assigned miscellaneous comments to themes but did not conduct further analysis on them (see Figure 4). Miscellaneous comments were not tied directly to departure nor

Table 7

Code Mapping of Environmental Variables

RQ1: How do Environmental variables influence former student affairs professionals' decision to leave the student affairs profession?

Third Iteration: Data Application
New student affairs professionals depart the profession due to a variety of Environmental variables, all of which are Individual in nature. For the most part, family played a large role in determining departure, both immediate family and extended family. Job opportunities, or lack thereof, also play a role in departure. Many student affairs professionals were not intending on leaving the field but were unable to find a job in the field or were offered opportunities outside of the field.

Second Iteration: Themes
1.   Individual

First Iteration: Collapsed Codes/Surface Content Analysis
1A. Wanted Closer To Home
1B. Dual Career
1C. Child Issues
1D. Found Job Outside of Student Affairs
1E. Could Not Find Student Affairs Job

Notes: To be read from bottom up

to the Psychological, Structural, and Environmental categories. These comments were, for the most part, derived from interview questions that were designed to create a rapport with the participants. There is potential to use these comments for future research.
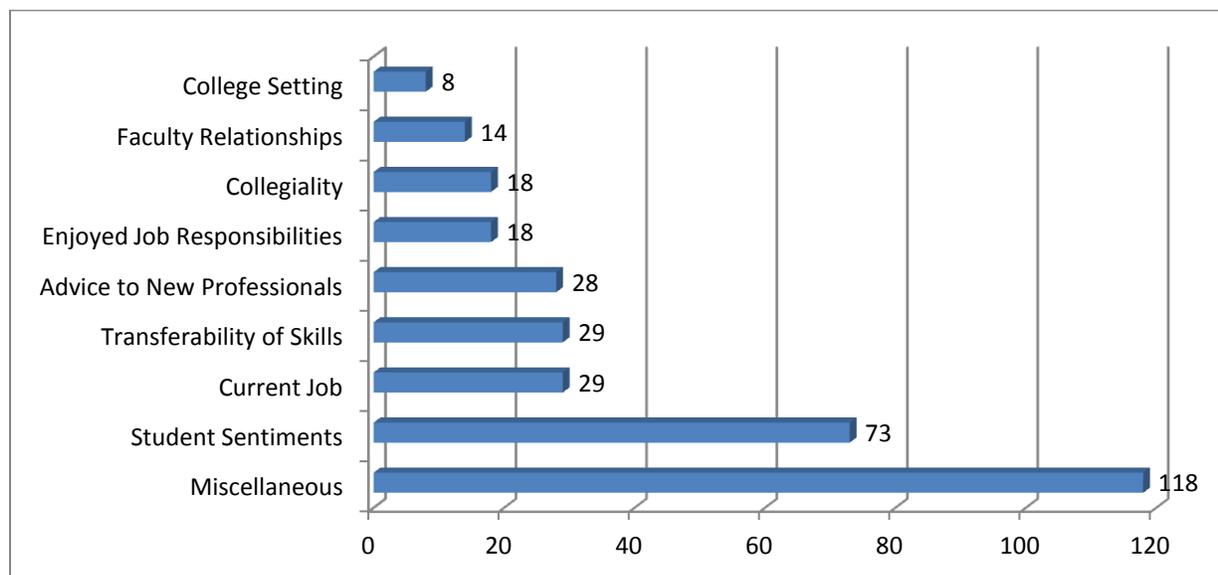
Figure 4
Comments in General Miscellaneous Category by Theme (N=335)

Overall, the results of the study provide a solid foundation for the manuscripts presented in Chapters 5 and 6. After analyzing all the data through the Daly and Dee (2006) frame of Psychological, Structural, and Environmental categories, a clear delineation appeared between Institutional factors and Individual factors. Institutional factors are defined as those factors directly attributable to the institutional environment, whether tangibly or intangibly. Individual factors are directly attributable to individual experiences and decisions, both from a personal and a professional perspective. Chapter 5 will explore these Institutional factors in departure while Chapter 6 will explore Individual factors.

CHAPTER FIVE

How Institutional Factors Influence New Student Affairs Professional Departure

The attrition of new professionals from student affairs has been an issue for decades (Burns, 1982; Evans, 1988; Holmes, Verrier, & Chisholm, 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). Rates of departure within the first five years of experience are estimated at 50% to 60% (Holmes, et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). Other data may help explain the attrition: 60.8% of recent graduates working in student affairs were optimistic about reaching their career goals but only 20.2% planned to be in student affairs for their entire careers (Holmes et al., 1983). Staff departure impacts institutions yet little research has been conducted on why people leave the field. Institutional leaders who are aware of factors contributing to departure may be better positioned to address staff attrition. This study sought to provide data about why former new professionals depart student affairs so that senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) can adequately address the needs of new professionals and retain that talent pool.

New professionals are defined as those full-time administrators with zero to five years of experience (Cilente, Henning, Skinner Jackson, Kennedy, & Sloan, 2006). Anywhere from 15% to 20% of the student affairs workforce is made up of new professionals, most having entered the field directly after earning master's degrees in higher education, student affairs, or college student personnel administration (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). College Student Educators International (ACPA), a national professional organization, estimates that 43% of its membership is comprised of new professionals. Arguably, this population makes up a substantial portion of student affairs administrators hence their success (or failure) influences the organizations in which they work.

Turnover in any organization is inevitable. Some turnover is functional and may even be beneficial (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010). When an employee leaves an organization, there can be financial benefits. Employers may elect not to replace the individual, choosing to save salary and other costs instead (Allen et al., 2010). In one cost/benefit analysis of turnover, financial benefits included savings on salaries and benefits for new hires as well as savings from bonuses not paid to more experienced staff (Jones & Gates, 2007). At times these salary differences are significant. The state may be able to cut wages by as much as 35% after an employee retires. For example a person earning $76,000 per year at the time of retirement may be replaced by a new employee making only $49,400 annually (Hansen, 2005).

Turnover can also provide benefits to an organization's environment. Employee departures give organizational leaders the opportunity to restructure the work place and set new goals (Allen, et al., 2010). New hires often infuse creativity and bring new knowledge and skills to the setting. They also may be more motivated to accomplish organizational goals than previous employees (Allen et al., 2010; Jones & Gates, 2007).

Benefits of turnover are not just relegated to the organization. Employees who remain with an organization also gain from changes in staff composition. Turnover can provide an avenue for upward mobility. Individuals in upper level positions may exit an organization creating advancement opportunities for those who remain (Allen et al., 2010; McGarvey, 1997). Additionally, new employees have the potential to boost the morale of other employees in the organization if the previous staff member was not liked (McGarvey, 1997). This is beneficial not only for employees but for the organization.

However, turnover does have significant costs and can lead to dysfunction in an organization. When employees depart it can cost administrators significant time and money (Allen et al., 2010). There is an array of direct and indirect costs associated with turnover (Allen et al., 2010). Direct costs clearly attributable to turnover are material, such as salaries, benefits, time, and/or hiring costs. Indirect costs refer to those that are not easily measured or visible to the organization including loss of institutional knowledge or decreased productivity (Jones & Gates, 2007).

Allen et al. (2010) described these expenditures as separation costs and replacement costs. Tangible separation costs include time spent in conducting exit interviews and processing departing employees' salaries and benefits. They also include paid time off and providing temporary coverage for the vacant position. Intangible separation costs incorporate a diminished quality of work or output in the vacant position, loss of organizational memory, lack of continuity in the team or department, or one employee's departure prompting others to depart (Allen et al., 2010).

Replacement costs refer to the efforts made in filling an open position with a new employee. These include the time it takes to find and train a new employee as well as the financial costs for advertising, recruiting and interviewing for an open position (Allen et al., 2010). The orientation and training of new employees is also costly in terms of both time and money. Additionally, productivity of new employees and their coworkers may be diminished as

new employees learn to navigate the organization, taking time to become socialized and efficient within their new environment (Allen et al., 2010).

Much of the literature regarding the costs, benefits, and causes of turnover has focused on the private sector or local and state government sectors, but turnover is also a concern in the higher education enterprise. In 2009, more than 3.5 million people were employed by universities and colleges (Chronicle Almanac, 2012). More than 2.2 million of these individuals were non-teaching, professional staff. More than 225,000 of these were executive, administrative, and managerial staff, making up just over 10% of the overall university employee population (Chronicle Almanac, 2012). Student affairs professionals are included within this group. The total number of student affairs professionals, however, is difficult to pinpoint due to variability across colleges and universities about what departments and services constitute student affairs. However, the two national professional student affairs organizations, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and ACPA report having approximately 20,000 members between them (Tull, Hirt, & Saunders, 2009). Additionally, many student affairs professionals belong to specific functional organizations such as the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA), National Orientation Directors Association (NODA), Association of College Unions International (ACUI), and a plethora of others so it is reasonable to assume that there are tens of thousands of student affairs professionals nationally (Tull, Hirt, & Saunders, 2009).

Research on student affairs departure has focused primarily on the detrimental effects of high departure rates on the profession (Evans, 1988; Holmes, et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). Evans (1988), in a review of student affairs departure research, argues that given the amount of time and energy invested in new professionals, the rate of attrition should be a concern. The departure of new professionals represents a loss of talent and training in the profession, both from a graduate program and institutional perspective (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Additionally, resources are impacted as institutions must conduct searches and train new individuals (Holmes et al., 1983).

New professionals depart the field for a variety of reasons (Tull, 2006). Transition from graduate school to professional life has been cited as a source of frustration, for example (Cilente et al., 2006). Graduate programs in student affairs, higher education, or college student personnel provide the foundation upon which new professionals formulate expectations and

ideals of the field (Renn & Hodges, 2007). Often, the reality of the one's first job does not reflect the experiences and learning that occurred in graduate school (Cilente et al., 2006). Reconciling the identity of a graduate student with a new identity as a professional can sometimes prove challenging for many inexperienced administrators (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008).

Socialization effectively assists new professionals in transitioning to their first position (Tull, 2009). This socialization often starts with the supervisor. The effectiveness of a supervisor in helping a new professional transition to the field can significantly impact the satisfaction of new professionals (Tull, 2006). Effective supervisors assist new professionals with adapting to the culture of an institution as well as the culture of student affairs. Newly minted administrators have noted that understanding campus culture and politics is crucial to their adjustment to the profession (Cilente, et al., 2006). When supervisors neglect this socialization process, new professionals can find themselves lost in their roles and disconnected from the institution (Tull, 2009).

Supervisors not only are instrumental in helping new professionals adjust to the culture of the institution but also can help new professionals define themselves in the context of their position (Tull, 2009). When supervisors neglect their roles and responsibilities as a supervisor, new professionals can be unclear on supervisor expectations and feel dissonance between overt and covert expectations (Cilente et al., 2006). This also negatively impacts satisfaction (Cilente et al., 2006; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

One of the most frequently cited reasons why new student affairs professionals leave the field is a perceived lack of opportunity for advancement (Evans, 1988). Recent research has confirmed lack of upward mobility as a key factor in practitioners' satisfaction (Cilente, et al., 2006; Rosser & Johnsrud, 2003). It is possible that some new practitioners decide whether to leave the field based upon the probability of moving up the ladder of success (Lorden, 1998). There is an exceptional number of entry-level positions in the field and a relatively limited number of mid-level positions. New professionals may elect to leave the field rather than wait for the possibility of a mid- or upper-level opening (Holmes et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998).

In general, then, the departure of new professionals from student affairs has an issue for at least 30 years (Burns, 1982; Evans, 1988; Holmes, Verrier, & Chisholm, 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). While some turnover is beneficial, it also can cost institutions significantly, both in

terms of financial resources and institutional productivity (Allen et al., 2010; Jones & Gates, 2007). Factors contributing to departure in student affairs have included inadequate socialization to the student affairs field, ineffective supervision, and lack of opportunities for advancement in the field (Cilente et al., 2006; Evans, 1998; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Tull, 2006).

Methodology

This qualitative study provided an in-depth exploration of the experiences of former student affairs professionals who made the decision to leave the profession. The former professionals described their experiences in their own voice through phone interviews. Themes emerged from the data that provided an understanding of the factors that precipitated departure from the profession.

Participants

Participants needed to meet three criteria. First, they were required to hold a master's degree in student affairs, higher education, student personnel, or a related field. This was important since I sought to inform the body of work on the student affairs profession and degrees in these areas were most closely associated with the profession. Second, respondents needed to have left the profession within the two years of the time of data collection. There is an inverse relationship between an event happening and the accuracy of recalling that event. The longer the period of time between an event and its recall, the less accurate the memory of that event (Clarke, Fiebig, & Gerdtham, 2008). I chose the two-year time period because I felt it allowed participants adequate time to process their experiences in student affairs but still produce sufficient recall of their rationale for departure. Third, I sought respondents who had no intention of returning to the profession. The purpose of my research was to examine factors for departing student affairs so those who desired to return would not fit that bill.

Participant selection was a three-stage process. First, staff at a national association of student affairs professionals generated one dataset containing contact information on 811 current, new student affairs professionals and another dataset yielding 1,505 current, mid-level student affairs professionals for a total of 2,316 names. These mid-level managers and new professionals served as gatekeepers for purposes of my research. Next, I contacted these gatekeepers via email. The email included a brief synopsis of the study, my methodology, and information on how to reach me via email or phone. I asked gatekeepers to forward me the names of any individuals they believed matched the participant selection criteria.

I phoned individuals whose names were forwarded to me by the gatekeepers. Those individuals indicating an interest in participating in the study were asked to complete a pre-screening phone conversation in which I asked questions that ensured they met selection criteria. I also asked about previous employment in addition to demographic questions. Only those who met the selection criteria were included in the study.

The final sample included 24 qualified participants who self-identified as Caucasian (83%); African American/Black (13%); and Asian/Pacific Islander (4%). Both women (63%) and men (38%) were recruited and participated in this study. All respondents had five or fewer years of professional experience after earning their masters degree, with an average of 2.83 years in the field. All but four were 26-30 years old. The majority came from backgrounds in residence life (67%) although other functional areas included student activities, academic advising, new student programs, multicultural affairs, organizational advising, and career services (see Table 8).

Instrumentation

Two instruments were designed to collect data. The first was an online survey that contained a list of factors contributing to student affairs departure identified in the literature. Items included factors like salary, benefits, degree of autonomy, and supervision. The survey was completed after the pre-screening conversation but before the phone interview. I asked participants to rank order the five factors that contributed most to their decision to leave the student affairs sector. I also included an item on the survey where respondents could identify other factors that influenced their decision to leave the field that were not on the list. The rationale for the survey was two-fold. First, it encouraged participants to begin thinking about issues related to student affairs work prior to the interview. Second, the survey allowed me to adapt the subsequent semi-structured qualitative interview to include questions that were relevant to respondents' survey responses while being general enough to provide the data necessary to answer the research questions posed in the study.

The second instrument was the interview protocol. I chose to conduct a semi-structured qualitative interview (Yin, 2011). I scripted some standard questions that I asked each participant but other questions were generated from participants' initial responses to interview questions and based upon their survey responses. There were 14 primary interview questions, divided into three sections. I started by asking about experiences in student affairs. These were

Table 8

Characteristics of Participants (N=24)

Participant	Ethnicity/Race	Gender	Age Range	Years in Field, After Masters	First Job/Second Job (if applicable)
Arnold	Caucasian	Male	31-35	3	Residence Life
Brynn	Caucasian	Female	26-30	3	Student Activities/Career Services
Cary	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	Student Activities
Chelsea	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	New Student Programs
Christina	Caucasian	Female	26-30	3	Residence Life
Clara	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	Residence Life
Dwight	Caucasian	Male	31-35	3	Academic Advising
Gabriella	Asian/Pacific Islander	Female	26-30	2.5	Multicultural Affairs
Grace	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	Residence Life
Greg	African American/Black	Male	26-30	5	Residence Life
Jack	Caucasian	Male	26-30	1	Residence Life
Jillian	African American/Black	Female	26-30	4	Residence Life/Office of Diversity
Julie	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	Residence Life
L.J.	African American/Black	Male	26-30	3.5	Student Activities
Lynn	Caucasian	Female	26-30	1	Residence Life
Mark	Caucasian	Male	26-30	3	Residence Life/Org. Advisor
Marlon	Caucasian	Male	26-30	4	Residence Life
Molly	Caucasian	Female	26-30	3	Residence Life
Rachel	Caucasian	Female	31-35	5	Residence Life
Rebecca	Caucasian	Female	26-30	1	Residence Life
Reid	Caucasian	Female	31-35	5	Academic Advising
Sal	Caucasian	Male	26-30	2	Residence Life
Ted	Caucasian	Male	26-30	3	F. Y. Programs/Program Coord.
Victoria	Caucasian	Female	26-30	3	Residence Life

Note: Participant selected pseudonyms

designed to connect the pre-screening conversation to the interview and to re-establish rapport.

I moved on to ask about factors that influenced the decision to leave student affairs that the respondent listed on the survey. I also asked participants to provide me an example of when each factor affected their work. Participants described their current situation and their life at the time of the interview. Finally, respondents talked about current employment, if relevant, and whether they felt the skills obtained through their degree program and experience in student affairs were transferrable to their current position. These interview questions offered an opportunity to investigate whether the skills obtained in graduate school and on the job are useful beyond the profession.

I closed the interview by asking for any parting information participants wished to share, such as whether anything could have prevented them from leaving student affairs or whether they had any advice for those entering the profession. At the conclusion, I thanked my participants and recapped their responses. I provided them a transcript of their interview and they made changes, comments, and suggestions to ensure that it adequately and accurately reflected their thoughts. Once they returned the transcript to me, I analyzed the data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was driven by my research questions. I used the constant comparative method of data analysis (Creswell, 2003) that entails analysis throughout the research process. Step one of this process calls for the organization and preparation of data for analysis; in this case, transcribing interview tapes. During the transcription process, I reflected regularly in a journal, making notes of thoughts, feelings, and potential insights from the interview process. I also wrote analytical memos based upon my review of the transcripts to determine what the data might prompt me to ask about in future interviews or for follow-up questions with participants. This also allowed an opportunity for reflexivity. After transcripts were completed, I read each one at least twice prior to coding to gain a solid sense of the information and consider its meaning (Creswell, 2003).

I conducted four levels of coding (Creswell, 2003). The first level, open coding, followed a less structured form and focused on the thematic content and generating categories based upon that content (Yin, 2011). In open coding, my unit of analysis was the comment. I read through each transcript and identified individual comments while also considering any analytical memos I wrote during the data collection process.

Once comments were identified, I used a deductive form of analysis for my second level of coding. I assigned each comment identified in the open coding process to one of two categories: comments regarding Intangible factors that led to departure and comments regarding Tangible factors contributing to departure. Once the second level of coding was completed, I conducted a third level, identifying themes within the two categories of data. A fourth level of coding further broke down these themes into subthemes.

I used four methods to enhance accuracy of the data. I had a group of experts review my survey and interview protocol before collecting data and I conducted a pilot study to refine the instruments. These are both forms of peer review (Yin, 2011). I also summarized key points at the end of each interview and had respondents review and amend their transcripts, both forms of member checking (Yin, 2011). As a third form of ensuring accuracy, I engaged in peer debriefing. A faculty member reviewed a sample of my transcripts, my codes, and my themes (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Lastly, I used triangulation. In this particular case, I ensured that at least three participants discussed an element of departure before identifying that element as a theme. Triangulation ensures that the findings are not unduly influenced by a single source of information (Patton, 2002).

Findings

The data suggest that factors related to the departure of new student affairs professionals are Institutional in nature. Further analysis led to two overarching categories: Intangible and Tangible factors. Intangible factors are less concrete, harder to control, and represented through three themes: Professional Worth, Management, and Organizational Culture. The first Intangible theme, Professional Worth, considered whether professionals felt valued. The second Intangible theme, Management, consisted of four subthemes: Supervision Issues, Unclear Expectations, No Support for Professional Development, and Lack of Autonomy. The last theme under Intangible factors, Organizational Culture, was made up of three subthemes: Organizational Politics, Communication Issues, and Organizational Changes (see Table 9).

The second overarching category found in the data was Tangible factors. Tangible factors have real value and can be driven by institutional policies or practices. Tangible factors were comprised of one theme, Concrete Job Issues, which consisted of three subthemes: Salary, Hours Worked, and No Opportunities for Advancement. Figure 5 illustrates the number of comments associated with each theme or subtheme.

Table 9

Code Mapping of Institutional Variables

RQ1: How do Institutional factors influence departure from the student affairs profession?

Fourth Iteration: Data Application

New student affairs professionals depart the profession due to a variety of Institutional factors. Some of these Institutional factors are Intangible, making them more difficult to control. Promoting professional worth, for example, may be challenging. Along those same lines, each person perceives organizational culture through his/her own eyes and efforts to either change the culture or a person's perception of culture is not an easy task. Additionally, Management involves a multitude of factors dependent on expertise and personality, which make it sometimes difficult to affect change. However, some factors are also Tangible and, thus, concrete. These Concrete Job Issues have real value and can be driven by institutional policies or practices like salary scales and work schedules. Others, like opportunities for advancement are more subtle.

Third Iteration: Broad Themes	
1. Intangible	2. Tangible

Second Iteration: Themes	
1A. Professional Worth	2A. Concrete Job Issues
1B. Management	
1C. Organizational Culture	

First Iteration: Collapsed Codes/Surface Content Analysis	
1B. Supervision Issues	2A. Salary
1B. Unclear Expectations	2A. Hours Worked
1B. No Support for Professional Development	2A. No Opportunities for Advancement
1B. Lack of Autonomy	
1C. Organizational Politics	
1C. Communication Issues	
1C. Organizational Changes	

Notes: To be read from bottom up
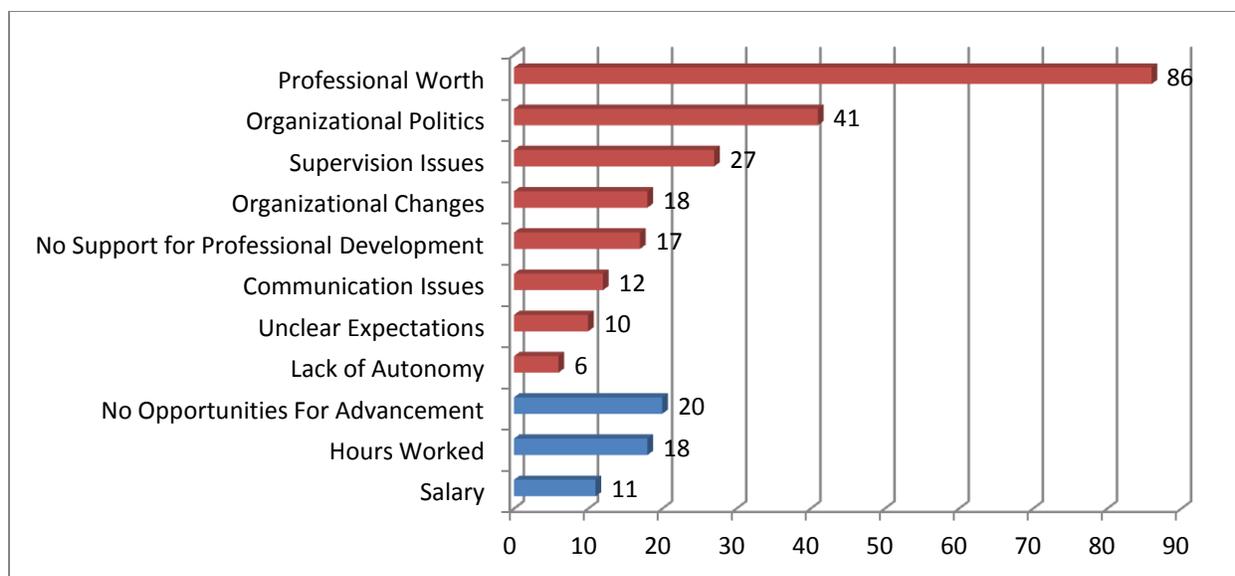
Red=Intangible Factors, Blue=Tangible Factors

Figure 5

Comments in Institutional Category by Subtheme (N=266)

Intangible Factors

Professional Worth. One's professional worth, or value as a professional, was, by far, the number one factor related to departure eliciting 86 (of 266) comments. Twenty participants talked in their interview about not feeling valued. As one participant mentioned, "this is the part where I can understand how people leave the profession feeling not appreciated, unrecognized, not supported."

Former student affairs administrators feel their work was not valued by their colleagues, supervisors, students, parents, and/or the institution suggesting that new professionals want their work to be meaningful to others. Without feeling that value, participants wondered whether their efforts were truly having an impact, whether what they were doing even mattered. Sal, when talking about his supervisor stated "I didn't feel valued or [that I] mattered." Chelsea felt she was "just a body in the position." Ted revealed that "the institution didn't really value what we were doing…you would probably think the institution considered us babysitters…that all of the real learning and real things that went on in the school were in the classrooms."

Value was also manifested in feeling that decisions were not supported and opinions did not matter. Rebecca might have stayed in the profession if she had felt support from her

department when she made decisions: "If I had really felt that my department had taken my back on a lot of things, if I'd felt supported, I wouldn't have feared making a wrong decision or something stupid like that." Brynn talked about creating new programs and initiatives only to be told they were not useful: "Why are you going to continue to put in a ton of work when no one recognizes that it was done and that it doesn't get utilized…" When Brynn questioned department practices, she was told her questions were offensive and she was not being a team player:

> And so that was a huge kind of final realization that if you can't ask questions and if you can't provide perspective on things that come from students and the things that we know are going to come up….if that's not possible and it's seen as being not a good member of the team, then that was kind of the last straw. Like, okay, I need to figure out something different.

Others felt undervalued monetarily. While most of the participants stressed that salary was not necessarily the issue, they just felt they were not being compensated for the amount of work they were doing. Mark stated that "One of the positive side effects of low pay is that you have people that actually care about what they are doing, even though we are undervalued." For others, compensation did not reflect effort:

> People say it doesn't matter how much you get paid if you love what you are doing. But it gets to a point where if I am working 16 hours per day, and I feel that I am being compensated for a third of the work I am doing, it does start to bother me and it does start to feel like I am not being valued as a staff member. [Clara]

However, all the participants who mentioned feeling undervalued from a compensation perspective also mentioned they knew student affairs was not a lucrative profession prior to entering the field. They just never connected how much work they would be doing or how many hours they would be working to the salary they earned.

Management. Management was characterized by four different subthemes: Supervision Issues, Unclear Expectations, No Support for Professional Development, and Lack of Autonomy. The first subtheme, Supervision Issues, ranged from feeling a lack of supervisor support to poor supervision in general including unprofessional behavior. Effective supervision has repeatedly been characterized in the literature as essential to employee satisfaction (Cilente et al., 2006;

Tull, 2006; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Results from this study confirmed that poor supervision does, in fact, affect employee satisfaction, hence retention.

Supervision Issues took a variety of forms. Some participants felt a lack of support from their supervisor for their decision-making process. Sometimes this made them feel as though their decisions were being undermined and that they did not matter. Mark stated that if he had a supervisor that backed him up and supported his decisions, his experience in student affairs might have been different.

At times supervisors were unprofessional. Greg had a supervisor who could not separate friendships from professional relationships. Molly's supervisor came in at 10:00 am and left by 3:00 pm many days. She stated "we're not really sure what he does because he pawns everything else on us." Jack's supervisor espoused "ridiculous and unrealistic" expectations, without qualifying them at any point, unnecessarily stressing out Jack and his colleagues:

> She really had high expectations for the sake of high expectations, not because they were effective expectations. And it really put undue stress on a lot of people, myself included, and so I think that was her biggest flaw as a supervisor was not being realistic with folks and wondering why people got upset.

Unclear Expectations fell under the second subtheme in the Management theme. Five participants discussed unclear expectations as a factor in their departure. Ambiguous "other duties as assigned" were discussed as well as a change in responsibilities, resulting in role confusion for some. Grace felt that expectations were "kind of contradictory at times. Like we would be told one thing one time, and the next time we were in a different situation, that [prior expectations] would be wrong." These unclear expectations created a disconnect with the job resulting in dissatisfaction on behalf of the participants. Rachel found herself frustrated:

> So I think that expectations about the job and what you're supposed to be doing or how you're supposed to be doing it – it's one of the more frustrating things I think I've heard, is giving someone the freedom to do something and then they come back and say 'Well, we really wanted you to do it this way.' Well, why didn't you tell me that in the first place?

The third subtheme under Management was Support for Professional Development. Respondents sought professional development not only with respect to their current positions; they also wanted supervisors to explore what the "next step" for them would be and how to get

there. Eight participants reported a lack of support for their professional development. Interestingly, professional development did not translate into funding. Rather, these participants were more concerned with the lack of supervisor or departmental support for their overall growth. Rachel described what she thought of as professional development:

> Professional development opportunity – what that really means for me is that my supervisor didn't have much of an interest in helping me find different resources than what I already knew. Even once in a while talking about a conference, a presentation, a symposium, a book, nothing. She wasn't interested in professional development enough…to help me develop and challenge me…or to help me advance by talking to me about opportunities to present or go to conferences.

Brynn also talked about professional development being an expectation: "I guess I had gone in thinking that professionals should be supported so that they can continue the best work possible with students and part of that is going to professional development opportunities." She followed up with noting that the profession ceased being challenging for her because she was not expected to grow.

The fourth subtheme under the Management theme was Lack of Autonomy. Participants wanted autonomy over decision-making processes, particularly those decisions directly tied to their job responsibilities. Cary felt micromanaged:

> And it just got to be really, really obvious micromanaging, having his hand in everything, not trusting us…So, I started really feeling that there was absolutely no trust in what I was doing, no trust in that I knew how to handle my job. And I don't feel as though I gave anybody any reason to feel that way…I have the education, I have the experience…why isn't there trust that I can handle a certain situation or a contract by myself?

Some participants felt the lack of autonomy stifled their creativity and limited their growth as a professional. Dwight stated that autonomy "is such an important factor for that fire of creativity. It's like the oxygen that allows things to just ignite and burn up. You have to have it."

Organizational Culture. Three subthemes made up Organizational Culture: Organizational Politics, Communication Issues, and Organizational Change. Organizational Politics was the most prolific subtheme under the Organizational Culture subtheme, eliciting 41 comments from 18 participants. Politics refers to the perception of bureaucratic decision-making

which manifested themselves in a variety of ways. Bureaucracy/red tape was mentioned by some. In many cases, participants felt bureaucracy prevented them from getting their jobs done effectively because so many steps needed to be taken when making any decision, from ordering office supplies to programming to students switching rooms in a residence hall. One participant also spoke about how bureaucracy contributes to burnout, often stifling new professionals' energy and ambition because of the time spent dealing with political issues or red tape.

Many participants talked about decisions being "handed down" to them without any opportunity for input. This led to what many believed were ineffective practices, out of touch with what students actually needed: "The politics have to happen, you have to learn how to work with them…but when the students ultimately lose, it kills me." This "barking down" of decisions also undermined new professionals' authority, contributing to their feelings of self-worth or lack thereof:

> You're learning in grad school about student development theory and doing what's best for the students and then you go to reality and you're like, oh wait, there's a lot more to this picture. There are donors and presidents and people who have no idea what student affairs is, really, dictating how you do your work. And I found that to be really frustrating. [Christina]

While politics were accepted as part of the job, most participants agreed they were exasperating and affected the work they did, particularly their work with students. If there was greater transparency in the decision-making process or if they were allowed to question decisions, tolerating the politics might have been easier. For those who did question decisions, however, they were told they were not being a "team player" or that they were questioning too much. One participant even went so far as to say he felt "blacklisted" after questioning several decisions that were handed to him.

Communication Issues, the second subtheme under Organizational Culture, was reported by other participants. Many ($n = 8$) discussed information being shared inefficiently or being "kept out of the loop." Often, information was leaked out in bits and pieces, making it harder to understand the big picture, particularly with any new policies or programmatic developments that affected professionals' work environment. Information also was not always distributed in a timely manner, which created anxiety for new professionals who felt they not only needed to understand the new information but that they also needed to immediately initiate any changes

dictated by that policy change. As Arnold reported, "our department was told quite a bit after the fact that [a new policy] had been in the works. So that was a bit frustrating because we…felt…here we are at the 11th hour, trying to make this work."

Nine participants talked about the last subtheme under Organizational Culture, Organizational Changes, and how those changes impacted their work and influenced their departure. Reorganization or restructuring often left new professionals feeling disconnected from their work environment. Participants felt their values no longer matched those of their office or department:

> And there were just a lot of shifts in my peer group and in our supervisors…I just started realizing the culture of our organization changed so much within our department. And it was really something that I was starting to think that okay, maybe this isn't congruent for me anymore. That I had really come in and been excited about the values of the department, the director of that department and all of that had really changed dramatically. [Arnold]

Participants reported having difficulty adjusting to new expectations, either from the department or from new supervisors. Organizational restructuring also led to unclear expectations as new positions were created and job responsibilities shifted or changed or, in some cases, were completely eliminated. Lynn stated "I think there was a lot of confusion because everybody was moving around…it was a mess organizationally."

Tangible Factors

Concrete Job Issues. Salary, Hours Worked, and No Opportunities for Advancement were factors in departure for participants. Several participants ($n = 5$) revealed that salary or lack of raises during their tenure influenced their decision to leave the profession. For some, job opportunities outside of the field presented an opportunity to earn more than their student affairs salary. It was difficult for them to justify staying in the field when they could increase their income outside of the profession; income they felt was more commensurate with their experience and/or education. The lack of raises was also frustrating, making participants question why they would stay at an institution with minimal to no increases in salary from year to year. Julie said "It was laughable that they almost never bumped up your salary to more than the minimum, just to match inflation."

Others talked about hours and/or lack of flexibility as a factor in their departure. Participants felt taken advantage of, as though they were working more hours than necessary. For some, the hours would not have been so bad if they were allowed more flexibility in their schedules. If they worked late one night, they wanted to be able to come in later the next day. Clara, for example, felt that if she worked through the weekend, she should get those days back somewhere by adjusting her hours during the week. Brynn felt it was ridiculous for her department to request that employees be in their office at 8:30 am when they stayed late to meet with students: "I think just that lack of understanding that hours can be flexible and that students didn't need us ever at 8:30 [in the morning]." This lack of flexibility in terms of work schedule and the number of hours worked led participants to find it difficult to find a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives.

The lack of opportunities for advancement was another Concrete Job issue. Participants talked about the "bottleneck," and several people who entered the profession at a coordinator or assistant director level had no room to move up because there were only one or two upper level positions on their campus. There just is not a lot of room for people to move up within the current structure of student affairs:

> So, with that, if I ever wanted to move, the people in the positions above me, they're not going anywhere. They're young, they like their job. It's harder for them to find a higher-level position, which means they're not leaving their positions…the only vertical move is a lateral move and I didn't want to do that. [Julie]

The lack of opportunity to move up was a more pressing matter for participants who wanted to stay at their current institution. Chelsea said "unless they created another opportunity, the only way I saw myself advancing was not to be there." Christina noted that "all of a sudden, this idea of having to move around all the time just stopped appealing to me." Several participants indicated that, had they been able to advance at their current institution, they would have stayed in student affairs. This, as well as all the other factors discussed, has implications for the student affairs profession.

Discussion and Implications

The most salient factors related to departure of new student affairs professionals are Intangible or Tangible and can be summarized in four key findings. Overall, Intangible factors play a much larger role in departure than Tangible factors. There are three key findings, directly

related to the Intangible subthemes discussed in my findings. First, participants generally felt undervalued and unappreciated. This lack of Professional Worth greatly impacts the quality of work and mental health of new student affairs professionals. When their efforts and initiatives go unnoticed, staff members feel as if their work lacks worth hence they are unworthy. This feeling creates dissonance with the work environment, making employees disconnected and unhappy.

There are ways to address professional worth in the workplace. To start, institutional leaders should actively seek opportunities to make their employees feel valued. One way to accomplish this is to create a tradition of recognition for employees. Some employees indicated, in their interviews, that a simple "thank you" would have gone a long way in making them feel they were valued. Using praise and recognition, whether in public or through private communications could be an effective tool in helping employees feel valued. Regularly offering feedback helps employees understand their role in the organization and may give them more ownership or confirm their role as a team member, making them feel more connected to the position and to the institution. Additionally, inviting new employees to be part of important activities such as search committees, policy teams, and/or event planning initiatives could symbolize that their input matters and they are a valued part of a department or division. Being valued, not just on an individual basis, but as a team member also fosters employee connectedness. One caveat should be noted about connectedness: the onus to feel connected and valued does not fall solely on the shoulders of institutional leaders. Employees also need to seek out opportunities that may help them feel more connected and, thus, valued as members of the organization or greater community.

My second key finding relates to Quality of Management. Quality of Management can often dictate whether or not employees enjoy their workplace environment. If individuals have issues with their supervisor or encounter conflicts and/or roadblocks, they will feel that they are exerting effort for naught. Inexperienced or inept supervision can also lead to staff not taking their supervisors seriously and result in lower productivity, quality of work, and/or insubordination. Transparency and honesty in supervision are crucial if new professionals are to feel connected to their job and their organization.

Adequate management skills are essential in retaining employees and allowing them to operate successfully as student affairs professionals. Supervisors should model the behaviors

they expect of their own employees to create an atmosphere of integrity. This atmosphere of integrity also should include support for employee decision-making, leading to greater autonomy, thus increased creativity. Increased creativity benefits all involved, from supervisors to employees to students who are advised by employees. I am not suggesting a completely "hands off " supervisory approach but rather creating and sustaining an atmosphere that spurs critical discussion and trust regarding decision making processes. This is an effective approach to fostering autonomy. Modeling effective supervision also includes providing professional development opportunities for employees. These opportunities do not always have to take the form of funding but could just be conversations about what employees want from their futures and discussions about how to get them there. Constructive communication between supervisors and employees about future goals not only creates an action plan but also implies to employees that supervisors are invested in their future: it is another way to make employees feel valued.

Employees must also play a role in supporting their supervisors. Supervisors cannot read minds. Establishing clear expectations about needs and wants at the outset of a professional relationship is necessary to create a mutually beneficial relationship. Effectively doing this opens the door for future communication and helps supervisors understand what their employees need in order to be successful in their roles.

Additionally, institutional leaders might want to evaluate the performance review process at their institution, particularly for supervisors with direct reports. An ideal performance review process for supervisors should include an evaluation of their supervision skills. One way of accomplishing this is through a 360-degree review process where supervisees and colleagues are given the opportunity to review one's performance, in addition to a direct supervisor. This feedback would allow for an open discussion of performance expectations on behalf of the supervisor and any supervisees and give at least one opportunity, yearly, to engage in a conversation regarding mutual expectations. Performance appraisals also provide an opportunity to plan for the future and should include discussions about how supervisors can continually refine their supervisorial skills through professional development opportunities and relevant research.

The third finding relates to Organizational Culture. The overall structure of a department or office has a tremendous impact on the quality of work performed and the overall satisfaction of employees. Politics within an institution or unit affect opinions and attitudes of those

attempting to be productive. Miscommunication and mismanaged dissemination of information can greatly disrupt the sense of cohesiveness for new professionals. In addition, changes to structure can leave employees confused or improperly aligned in terms of their strengths *vis a vis* their roles and responsibilities. Overall, this can cause feelings of resentment or apprehension.

Communication issues and politics can be resolved with greater transparency. I recommend that institutional leaders work to develop a culture of transparency that allows employees to feel more connected, both to their jobs and to the institution. Transparency in decision-making can lessen the appearance of organizational politics, may diminish the negative impact of organizational changes, and should create fewer communication issues. While I recognize not every decision can be transparent due to legal or confidentiality restrictions, there are many ways to promote transparency in organizations. Regular staff meetings, whether department-wide or institution-wide, can foster an atmosphere of inclusion. Communicating decisions electronically is an expression that supervisors want new professionals to get updates in a timely fashion. Soliciting feedback regularly for programmatic ideas, holding policy discussions, involving staff in hiring processes and other organizational activities also create an open atmosphere that encourages discussion. Explaining why decisions were made, even if input was not sought, may help generate employee buy-in. All of these practices also make employees feel more valued, particularly when they are included in the information chain. Employees can help maintain this culture of transparency by also being open in their communication and practices.

The fourth and final finding aligns itself with the Tangible subtheme, Concrete Job Issues. In theory, Concrete Job Issues and are controllable, though that may take a little creativity and effort. Salary, Hours Worked, and Opportunities for Advancement are all concrete areas that can be managed by senior student affairs officers in ways that can benefit new professionals directly. These are most effectively addressed through policy changes and implementation.

First, I recommend that senior student affairs officers evaluate their hiring policies for ways to generate funds that can be redirected to employee salaries. One option for generating salary savings is by filling some entry-level positions, for example resident directors, with holders of bachelor's degrees versus master's degrees. In fact, many campuses with student affairs or higher education graduate programs rely on graduate students to serve in entry-level

roles. There is no reason why campuses need to hire individuals with master's degrees to fill basic residence life positions. The same can be said about some entry-level advising and coordinator positions in other areas of student affairs. Many of these jobs can be fulfilled effectively with someone who has some experience, training, and a bachelor's degree. The salary savings generated by hiring employees with bachelor's degrees versus master's degrees can potentially be used to increase compensation for current higher-level employees or for professional development support.

The second policy suggestion is related to Hours Worked. For the most part, participants recognized that the hours in student affairs were long and included nights and weekends. However, what they desired most was a more flexible working schedule in which they were able to reconcile late nights with late mornings and/or other time off. Supervisors and other institutional leaders should work with employees to find a schedule that works for them and, at the same time, allows them to fulfill the responsibilities of their position and meet student needs. When a professional works through a weekend, flexibility in their work hours for the subsequent week should be considered. While I am not advocating for significant time off, I am recommending a balance be struck and compensatory time should be an option. In most cases, this does not cost an organization anything yet provides significant support for employees, making them more content with their job.

The last policy suggestion reflects my finding about Lack of Opportunities for Advancement. This is more difficult to address but not impossible. Policies can be created that make it easier for institutions to promote from within their ranks, allowing them to keep competent professionals. The practice of promoting from within can also save money on searches and minimize the disruption of the organization's culture. This is, however, an easier task at private than at public institutions. Private institutions have more flexibility in hiring and do not necessarily need to advertise open positions to the public and can easily fill them from qualified individuals within the institution. Public institutions, with exception of emergency hires, must advertise all open positions to the public, which increases the chance of finding someone from outside of the institution rather than promoting from within.

These findings not only serve as impetus for practice and policy but can also inspire further research. First, I explored former student affairs professionals using qualitative methods. A future study may explore the same population but use a larger sample and quantitative

methods to determine the degree to which these factors influence departure of new professionals. Future work may also focus on the rate of departure among new student affairs professionals compared to the rate of departure found in other professions. This could help determine whether the departure rate from the profession is abnormally high or low. Lastly, work might focus on the departure of student affairs professionals who are in midlevel or cabinet positions. Are factors contributing to their departure similar to those of new professionals? Some research has already been conducted on intent to leave with mid-level managers and SSAOs (Anderson, Guido-DiBrito, & Morrell, 2000; Rosser, 2004b: Rosser & Javinar, 2003) but those studies have not compared rates of departure to those of new professionals.

As with all research, there were limitations to this study. The first related to the sample. I focused on the experiences of new student affairs professionals. This is a unique population with regards to departure and, as a result, respondents may have encountered unique experiences. Because of this, their experiences may not be generalizable to other populations within student affairs. Second, the qualitative nature of the study and the relatively small sample size of 24 also limited the transferability of the findings. Third, my data were collected via telephone interviews. Face-to-face interviewing is thought to be more effective because the researcher can note both verbal and nonverbal cues creating a fuller interpretation of participant interviews. Face-to-face interactions also are thought to be more effective in establishing rapport with participants, creating a more relaxed atmosphere conducive for conducting qualitative research (Novick, 2008). The nature of my study, which included former professionals across the country, prohibited face-to-face interviews, however.

In closing, the attrition of new professionals from student affairs has been an issue for decades (Burns, 1982; Evans, 1988; Holmes, et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). Both Intangible and Tangible factors are responsible for this departure. Understanding why new professionals depart can be instrumental in creating changes in institutional policies and practices that may encourage new student affairs professionals to remain in the field.

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CHAPTER SIX

How Individual Factors Influence New Student Affairs Professional Departure

The concept of long-term employment in the United States has changed significantly over the past three decades (Farber, 2008). Instead of dedicating an entire career to one organization, people now expect to change jobs frequently. In fact, Americans change their jobs an average of seven times throughout their careers (Jo, 2008). The ease of movement from one job to another has created a culture in which turnover has become the norm.

Employees voluntarily leave positions for a variety of reasons. In nursing, for example, a sector that experiences significant turnover, those new to the profession are more likely to leave (Strachata, Normandin, O'Brien, Clary, & Krukow, 2008). Additionally, long hours due to understaffing and lack of management support prompt departure (Strachata et al., 2008). Other research has found that control over practice, adequate respect for their work (particularly between nurses and physicians), and perceiving their work makes a difference in patient care or hospital operations are associated with job satisfaction and intent to leave. (Larrabbee, Janney, Ostrow, Withrow, Hobbs, Jr., & Burant, 2003).

In the governmental sector there are four significant predictors of intent to leave: length of time on the job, administrative support for future career plans, opportunity for advancement, and opportunities for challenge and creativity in the position (Price, Kiekbusch, & Theis, 2007). Researchers examining state employee turnover found that older employees with a longer record of service were less likely to quit than younger workers (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008). Additionally, workload, salary rewards for those with seniority, educational background (those with a degree are more likely to leave), autonomy, and ability to voice opinions of the organization all influenced turnover (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008).

Turnover is also a concern in the higher education enterprise. In 2009, more than 3.5 million people were employed by colleges and universities (Chronicle Almanac, 2012). Faculty represented more than 1.3 million of those employees (Chronicle Almanac, 2012). Turnover is inevitable as faculty members search for institutions that best match their interests (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002; Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). Most higher education institutions view faculty turnover as costly because the search and hiring processes often come with significant expenses (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). Additionally, those who leave institutions are often the very faculty

members that institutions would most like to keep due to their national or international reputation (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002).

Faculty members leave their positions for a variety of reasons. Factors can vary depending on the classification of the faculty member (tenured, non-tenured, or instructor). Zhou and Volkwein (2004) explored variables that contribute to departure in all faculty categories and identified internal variables such as individual (e.g., gender, ethnicity, age, educational attainment) and family characteristics (e.g., marital status, family socioeconomic status), organizational characteristics (institutional demographics), and work experience (e.g., rank, tenure, workload). They then investigated how these internal variables contribute to job satisfaction (autonomy, compensation, resources, etc.). External variables were defined as family needs, job market, research opportunities, teaching opportunities, and extrinsic rewards. All of these variables, both internal, external, and job satisfaction can be used to predict faculty members' intent to leave (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004).

For example, seniority was the strongest predictor of intent to depart among tenured faculty, having both direct and indirect effects (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). Tenured faculty who were satisfied with compensation, job security, and available resources - all internal factors - were most satisfied with their positions. The most significant external factor affecting intent to depart was extrinsic rewards, including perceptions about higher salaries, better benefits, and opportunities for advancement at other institutions (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004).

Non-tenured faculty and instructional staff were more concerned with whether they had a doctorate, seniority, and job security (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). Unlike tenured faculty, senior non-tenured faculty were more likely to depart the institution unless they carried high teaching loads, in which case they were more likely to stay. This research confirmed earlier studies (e.g., Rosser, 2004) on satisfaction and its effect on intent to leave.

Other scholars have used a combination of demographic, individual, and organizational variables (both perceptual and structural) to study faculty morale and intent to leave (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). Perceptual variables included professional rewards, administrative support, and quality of benefits. Structural variables were defined as sum of campus resources, size of institution, and institution type. However, rather than examine these variables' effect on job satisfaction, the authors examined how they affect morale and what effect morale has on intent to leave. Morale was defined as "a state of mind regarding one's job, including satisfaction,

commitment, loyalty, and sense of common purpose with respect to one's work" (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999, p. 3). Morale was further characterized as faculty members' regard for their institution, dedication to their work, and overall sense of satisfaction (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). Faculty members' perceptions of professional benefits, administrative support, and the quality of benefits and services enhance their morale, impacting their intent to depart.

Beyond faculty, there are other groups of employees on college and university campuses, however. More than 2.2 million non-teaching, professional staff are employed by American postsecondary institutions (Chronicle Almanac, 2012). More than 225,000 of these staff are in executive, administrative, and managerial positions (Chronicle Almanac, 2012). Within this group are student affairs professionals. The precise number of student affairs professionals is difficult to isolate due to the variability in definitions of what constitutes "student affairs" across colleges and universities. The two national professional student affairs organizations, the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and ACPA College Student Education International (ACPA), report having approximately 20,000 members between them (Tull, Hirt, & Saunders, 2009). There are also many specific functional organizations such as the Association of College Unions International (ACUI), National Association of Campus Activities (NACA), National Orientation Directors Association (NODA), and a profusion of others so it is likely that student affairs professionals number in the tens of thousands.

The turnover culture evidence in other sectors has certainly impacted the student affairs profession as well. The literature on student affairs departure primarily hones in on the detrimental effects of high departure rates on the profession, particularly departure among new professionals (Evans, 1988; Holmes, et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). Perhaps most interesting about the literature on departure among student affairs professionals is the source of the information. Very little of the literature regarding turnover is based on data from employees who have actually left the profession. For the most part, studies have focused on dissatisfaction or intent to leave (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1997; Johnsrud, Heck, & Rosser, 2000; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). One reason for this gap in the literature is that those who have departed the profession are difficult to locate (Johnsrud & Rosser, 1997). Additionally, they may no longer feel tied to the profession and, therefore, may be reluctant to participate in research. My study sought to fill this gap by exploring the experiences of former student affairs professionals who left the field.

Specifically, I sought to answer what factors influence new professionals' departure from student affairs.

Evans (1988), upon reviewing the research on departure from the profession, argues that given the amount of time and energy invested in educating and training new professionals, the rate of attrition is troublesome. The departure of new professionals represents a loss of talent in the profession, both from a graduate program and institutional perspective (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Additionally, resources are impacted as institutions must conduct searches and train new individuals (Holmes et al., 1983).

The issue of attrition among new professionals in student affairs is not a new one (Burns, 1982; Evans, 1988; Holmes, et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). Rates of departure within the first five years of experience are estimated at 50% to 60% (Holmes, et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998; Tull, 2006). Some researchers have questioned whether such attrition rates are simply natural extensions of the current culture of mobility (Jo, 2008; Lorden, 1998; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Others argue the rate of departure may just be endemic within the field and should be accepted as inevitable (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008).

Researchers estimate that the student affairs workforce is made up of approximately 15% to 20% new professionals, many having come directly from earning master's degrees in student affairs, college student personnel administration, or higher education (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). ACPA estimates that 43% of its membership is comprised of new professionals, defined as those full-time administrators with zero to five years of experience (Cilente, Henning, Skinner Jackson, Kennedy, & Sloan, 2006). This population, therefore, comprises a substantial portion of student affairs administrators.

There are a variety of reasons why new professionals leave the student affairs profession (Tull, 2006). Transition from graduate school to professional life has been cited as a source of frustration, for example (Cilente et al., 2006). Graduate programs in student affairs, higher education, or college student personnel provide the foundation upon which new professionals formulate expectations and ideals of the field (Renn & Hodges, 2007). Often, the reality of one's first job does not reflect the experiences and learning that occurred in graduate school (Cilente et al., 2006). Reconciling the identity of a graduate student with a new identity as a professional can prove challenging for many inexperienced administrators (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008).

Establishing an identity as a student affairs professional requires the ability to navigate the personal realm successfully. The personal realm includes those factors of professional life that impact the daily lives of administrators including career mobility, familial responsibilities and opportunities, and quality of life (Hirt & Creamer, 1998). The personal realm is different for every professional, but all are affected by these factors (Hirt & Creamer, 1998).

Work/life balance is often a source of difficulty for student affairs professionals (Cilente et al., 2006; Hirt & Creamer, 1998). Professionals in residence life, in particular, find it difficult to balance work and life because they lack physical separation between where they work and where they live (Cilente et al., 2006). New professionals often look to their organization for cues on expectations of work/life balance, particularly their supervisors (Cilente et al., 2006). Finding balance between work and personal life can influence an employee's morale and satisfaction with their position that, in turn, can affect whether they leave the profession (Rosser & Javinar, 2003).

One of the most frequently cited reasons why new student affairs professionals abandon the field is a perceived lack of opportunity for advancement (Evans, 1988; Hirt & Creamer, 1998). Much of the student affairs literature in recent years has confirmed lack of upward mobility as a key factor in practitioners' satisfaction (Cilente, et al., 2006; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). It is possible that some student affairs administrators decide whether to leave the field based upon the probability of obtaining higher-level positions (Lorden, 1998). There are an exceptional number of entry-level positions in the field and a relatively limited number of mid-level positions. New professionals may elect to leave the field rather than wait for of an upper-level position to open up (Holmes et al., 1983; Lorden, 1998).

The notion of advancing one's career becomes especially poignant when family obligations are involved. Due to limited opportunities for advancement, particularly within the same institution, moving up in student affairs typically requires relocation (Evans, 1988; Hirt & Creamer, 1998) and that is difficult when a dual career situation and/or other familial ties are present (Evans, 1988).

Methodology

This qualitative study explored the experiences of former student affairs administrators who departed the profession within five years of earning their masters degree in student affairs,

higher education, student personnel, or a related field. Upon data analysis, themes emerged that provided an understanding of factors that precipitated their departure from the profession.

Participants

I used three criteria to select participants. The first had to do with education. I wanted only those who held a master's degree in student affairs, higher education, student personnel, or a related field. This was important since I wanted to inform the literature on student affairs professionals. A second criterion related to how recently participants had worked in the field. I wanted participants who had left the field no longer than two years prior to the time of data collection. This was a precautionary measure to ensure participants could recollect their experiences as accurately as possible. Lastly, since the focus of my research was on departure from the field entirely, I asked that participants have no desire to return to the profession.

To gather potential participants, staff at a national association of student affairs professionals was asked to generate a usable dataset containing contact information on 811 new student affairs professionals and another dataset yielding 1,505 mid-level student affairs professionals for a total of 2,316 names that could serve as gatekeepers. I then contacted these gatekeepers via email, 100 at a time, until I had a sufficient, representative sample. The email included details about my study, my methodology, and my contact information. I asked these gatekeepers to forward to me the names of individuals they believed fit my selection criteria for respondents.

I called potential participants to inform them of my study and gauge their interest in participating. Interested parties participated in a pre-screening phone interview. I used the pre-screening call to establish rapport with respondents and garner information regarding their eligibility to participate in the study. Only those who met the selection criteria were included in the sample.

This process yielded 24 qualified participants. The majority came from backgrounds in residence life (67%) although other functional areas represented included student activities, academic advising, career services, multicultural affairs, new student programs, and organizational advising. Participants self-identified as Caucasian (83%); African-American/Black (13%); and Asian/Pacific Islander (4%). They all had five years or fewer of post-master's professional experience, with an average of 2.83 years in the field (See Table 10).

Table 10

Characteristics of Participants (N=24)

Participant	Ethnicity/Race	Gender	Age Range	Years in Field, After Masters	First Job/Second Job (if applicable)
Arnold	Caucasian	Male	31-35	3	Residence Life
Brynn	Caucasian	Female	26-30	3	Student Activities/Career Services
Cary	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	Student Activities
Chelsea	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	New Student Programs
Christina	Caucasian	Female	26-30	3	Residence Life
Clara	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	Residence Life
Dwight	Caucasian	Male	31-35	3	Academic Advising
Gabriella	Asian/Pacific Islander	Female	26-30	2.5	Multicultural Affairs
Grace	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	Residence Life
Greg	African American/Black	Male	26-30	5	Residence Life
Jack	Caucasian	Male	26-30	1	Residence Life
Jillian	African American/Black	Female	26-30	4	Residence Life/Office of Diversity
Julie	Caucasian	Female	26-30	2	Residence Life
L.J.	African American/Black	Male	26-30	3.5	Student Activities
Lynn	Caucasian	Female	26-30	1	Residence Life
Mark	Caucasian	Male	26-30	3	Residence Life/Org. Advisor
Marlon	Caucasian	Male	26-30	4	Residence Life
Molly	Caucasian	Female	26-30	3	Residence Life
Rachel	Caucasian	Female	31-35	5	Residence Life
Rebecca	Caucasian	Female	26-30	1	Residence Life
Reid	Caucasian	Female	31-35	5	Academic Advising
Sal	Caucasian	Male	26-30	2	Residence Life
Ted	Caucasian	Male	26-30	3	F. Y. Programs/Program Coord.
Victoria	Caucasian	Female	26-30	3	Residence Life

Note: Participant selected pseudonyms

Instrumentation

Data were collected using two instruments. First, I emailed an online survey containing a list of factors that might contribute to student affairs departure to each participant. The list included many of those factors identified in the literature: feeling valued as a professional, feeling connected to the institution, family issues, and finding a job outside the field, among others. Participants ranked the five factors that most contributed to their decision to leave the profession. Using the survey not only helped spur participants to begin considering the reasons for their departure, it also provided an opportunity for me to adapt an interview protocol that included questions directly relevant to the respondents' survey responses.

A semi-structured, qualitative interview protocol served as the second instrument in the study (Yin, 2011). While I asked standard questions of each participant, the bulk of the interview was built upon their responses to the survey instrument. There were 14 primary interview questions, grouped into three sections. I started by asking questions regarding experiences in student affairs. These were designed to connect the pre-screening conversation to the interview and to re-establish rapport. The second section focused on the factors that each participant indicated on their survey influenced them to leave the profession. The last section explored current employment, if relevant, and whether/how the skills they learned in their student affairs work, both in graduate school and in their professional positions, transferred to their new sector of employment.

At the close of each interview, I asked participants for any advice they might want to share with future student affairs professionals or if there was anything that could have kept them from leaving the profession. Upon conclusion of the interview, I thanked participants and recapped their responses. I also sent all participants a copy of their transcript and encouraged them to make any changes, comments, or suggestions to ensure that it adequately and accurately reflected their thoughts and feelings. I analyzed the data after each transcript was returned to me.

Data Analysis

My research question guided data analysis. I used the constant comparative method that entails data analysis throughout the research process (Creswell, 2003). First, I used my transcription of interviews as a way of organizing and preparing my data for analysis. During this process, I kept notes of thoughts, potential insights, and feelings from the interview process in a journal. I also used the journal to keep track of analytical memos written during the review

of transcripts. These memos served as prompts for future interviews or follow-up questions with participants. Memos also offered an opportunity for reflexivity. Once transcripts were completed, I read each one at least twice prior to coding to thoroughly gain a sense of the data and consider its meaning (Creswell, 2003).

I used three forms of coding to analyze the data (Creswell, 2003). First, I looked for themes in general categories, using comments as my unit of analysis, a form of open coding (Yin, 2011). Individual comments were analyzed while also considering any analytical memos I composed during the data collection process. This analysis revealed that, in general, the reasons for departure were Individual in nature. That is, new professionals left the field because of issues that were related to their individual situation. Next, I used a deductive form of analysis once comments were identified, resulting in comments being assigned to one of two categories: comments regarding Personal factors that led to departure and comments regarding Professional factors contributing to departure. Third, I identified themes within the two categories of data.

Four methods were used to enhance accuracy of the data. Experts in qualitative research reviewed the research instruments prior to data collection. These instruments were then refined through a pilot study. Both of these are forms of peer review (Yin, 2011). At the end of each interview, participants were sent a transcript and asked to verify and/or amend it, a form of member checking (Yin, 2011). Peer debriefing was a third form of ensuring accuracy. A colleague with expertise in student affairs professional issues reviewed a sample of my transcripts, my codes, and my themes (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Lastly, I ensured that at least three participants discussed a factor of departure before identifying that factor as a theme, a form of triangulation (Patton, 2002).

Findings

The data suggest that factors related to the departure of new student affairs professionals can be Individual in nature. That is, departure is predominantly attributed to thoughts, feelings, and actions of the individual who left the field rather than any institutional factors though, admittedly, the institution does play a role in departure; however, that is not the focus of this article. Further analysis led to two overarching categories: Personal and Professional factors. The first category, Personal, were those factors that affected individuals directly and impacted their well-being and/or work/life balance as a professional. Personal factors were represented through two themes: Connectivity and Balance, each with relevant subthemes. The second

category, Professional, were those factors related to, at the most basic level, job status. These Professional factors were represented through one theme, Job Opportunity. Figure 6 illustrates the number of comments associated with each subtheme. See Table 11 for a complete listing of themes and subthemes.
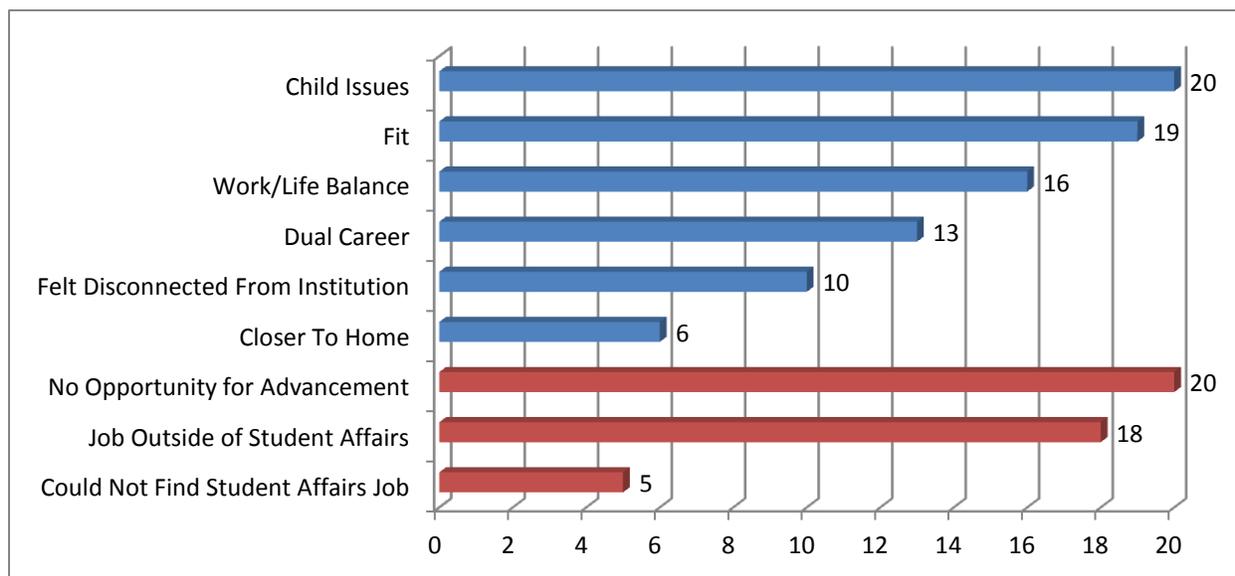
Blue = Personal Factors, Red=Professional Factors

Figure 6

Comments by Type of Factor and Subtheme (N=127)

Personal Factors

Connectivity. Connectivity was the first theme under Personal Factors and referred to quality and/or strength of the connection, or bond, to the institution, the students, and/or student affairs. Connectivity was characterized by two subthemes. Seven participants discussed the first subtheme, Feeling Disconnected From the Institution, and the importance of feeling a bond to the institution at which they worked rather than just feeling like they had a job. Some found it difficult to connect with the students, which led them to feeling detached from the institution. "I didn't maybe feel as needed as I liked to be, which is good and bad. It's okay that they [students] weren't having that many issues, but I didn't get as many visitors in my office or just people stopping by and saying hi…I think that's why I didn't feel as connected," stated Cary, who worked on a campus with a large, nontraditional student population. As a product of a state institution for both his undergraduate and graduate education, Ted found it hard to connect to the

Table 11

Code Mapping of Individual Variables

RQ1: How do Individual factors influence departure from the student affairs profession?

Fourth Iteration: Data Application

New student affairs professionals depart the profession due to a variety of Individual factors.
Some of these Individual factors are Personal and some are Professional. From the Personal
perspective, new professionals feel they do not fit into their institution and, sometimes, the
profession, leaving them feeling disconnected. They also want a better balance between work
and personal life so they leave the profession in order to be closer to home, to balance their
career with their spouse/partner, and/or to address issues with their children. From the
Professional perspective, some are unable to find jobs in student affairs or are unable to advance
in the profession, particularly if they are limited geographically. Others left because they simply
found a job outside of student affairs, either purposefully or because they were headhunted.

Third Iteration: Broad Themes

1. Personal	2. Professional

Second Iteration: Themes

1A. Connectivity	2A. Job Opportunity
1B. Balance	

First Iteration: Collapsed Codes/Surface Content Analysis

1A. Felt Disconnected from the Institution	2A. Job Outside of Student Affairs
1A. Fit	2A. Could Not Find Student Affairs Job
1B. Work/Life Balance	2A. No Opportunity for Advancement
1B. Closer to Home	
1B. Dual Career	
1B. Child Issues	

Note: To be read from bottom up

private university students with whom he worked: "The private students were more like 'this doesn't make sense to me, what you do.'"

Other respondents discussed feeling disengaged from the institutional administration. Victoria felt that her colleagues could not grasp what her work [residence life] involved, which made her feel disconnected from campus. Chelsea experienced significant organizational changes during her tenure at one institution and, consequently, she felt less and less connected from the institution as time elapsed. In all cases, participants simply felt they needed a bond to their institution, students, and/or student affairs in order to feel fulfilled in their job.

The second subtheme, Fit, was discussed by other participants. Fit referred to congruence between wants and needs, whether professional or personal, and the reality of working in student affairs. For these individuals, student affairs work was simply not a good fit. Julie saw her coworkers get excited about working with students and being in student affairs but she just was not enthused: "I just didn't get the excitement out of it the way I saw my colleagues getting out of it…it just wasn't right for me…When I saw that I didn't share that same kind of excitement, it had me question the fit." Marlon started questioning whether student affairs was right for him during his graduate program: "So, as I was going through the program, I'm already thinking like 'Wow, I'm seeing a disconnect between the field and what I'm really interested in and what I really want to do.'" When Marlon started his first position in student affairs, he began taking classes in financial planning and realized he was much more interested in those courses than his job, leading him to follow those interests after leaving the field.

Feeling connected to the profession, the institution, and the students was important to participants, particularly those who sought fulfillment from their jobs. For most student affairs practitioners, jobs are very much a part of identity, particularly due to the hours they are expected to work and the emotional connection they often have with students. Participants who lacked this Connectivity felt unbalanced in their lives and, as a result, endeavored to find balance via other job opportunities. They often sought opportunities that offered a sense of fulfillment and provided the linkages to work or colleagues they were seeking. This urge was particularly strong among those who discovered, after working in student affairs, that the profession was not a good Fit. For these participants, it was important, once that discovery was made, that they find a career path more in line with their needs and wants.

Balance. Balance was characterized by four subthemes: Work/Life Balance, Closer to Home, Dual Career, and Child Issues. The first subtheme, Work/Life Balance, was a factor for half of the participants interviewed ($n = 12$). Balance between work and professional life was difficult for many professionals, from a variety of perspectives. For residence life professionals, the separation of work from home could be difficult, particularly living on campus and being on-call.

> So, when you're on call, you just get a lot less sleep and you're up in the middle of the night but, either way, it's over a 40-hour week between the office…like 9:00 to 5:00 and there's always meetings at night and then there's just always commitments on the weekends. So, it's really difficult to balance personal and professional life. It wore me down pretty quickly. [Grace]

For Julie, it was hard to work in the profession and have a spouse who did not work in student affairs because "they don't get it." She felt her work schedule as a residence life administrator put a strain on her relationship, which lessened some of the passion she had for student affairs compared to when she first started in the profession and was not married.

Issues of Balance crossed functional areas, however. Brynn, who worked in career services, served as an on-call professional and found it really important to establish boundaries with her students so that she could lead a life that was not "100% tied" to her institution. Balance was also tied to personality traits. Lynn, who worked in residence life, talked about balancing her personality with expectations of her position, being an introvert in a job that required energy to interact with students: "…so, by the end of the day, you're just exhausted because you've been giving just non-stop throughout the day…and so, at the end of the day, I used to go home and just not talk to anybody for a couple of hours." Clearly, establishing boundaries between work obligations and personal needs can be difficult to navigate for many new professionals. Student affairs work tends to require long hours and an emotional commitment to students, which can be taxing on one's psyche when these boundaries are blurred and balance is uneven.

The second subtheme was Closer to Home. Some participants left the profession simply to be closer to their extended families and found work opportunities outside of student affairs so that they could move closer to home. Jack said "it wasn't a lack of satisfaction with student affairs; it wasn't really a lack of satisfaction with [the institution]…probably 75% of my decision

[to leave the profession] goes back to the opportunity to be home." Others were like Molly, who had been job searching for a year knowing that she wanted to stay in her home state to be closer to family. Her job search, however, resulted in no offers for jobs in student affairs so she accepted a job outside the field so that she could remain near family. Cary also sought to be near family, which ultimately resulted in leaving the profession. Clearly, family matters to former professionals. Perhaps this is not surprising; after all, most practitioners regularly work with students and families so seeking closer relationships with their own families would seem like a natural extension of their work. However, not all families are proximate to professional opportunities and, when pressed, former professionals chose family over professional aspirations.

Dual Career, the third subtheme, revolved around the dual career job search and the difficulty of finding a student affairs position in the same geographic area as a spouse or partner. Chelsea and her fiancé (now husband), both in student affairs, took jobs in separate states immediately upon graduation. Eventually, living apart became stressful and she decided to move to be closer to him, even though she did not have a job to move to: "So, I think the way things went, I made the sacrifice for him." Julie was tied to her geographic region for a variety of reasons, including having a fiancé who "wasn't interested in moving." Rachel was also locationally locked because of her husband and family. Molly found a job but, after a year of searching, her husband was unable to find anything so they moved closer to family so that he could find a job. Balancing the professional needs and desires of a dual career couple is difficult in student affairs. Often, student affairs professionals must move to where the job is located, particularly when seeking professional advancement. When spouses or partners are successfully (and firmly) entrenched in their career, uprooting and starting over somewhere else is not always a viable option. This frequently results in former professionals seeking jobs outside of student affairs in order to stay near their partner or spouse's career.

The last subtheme under Balance was Child Issues. Six participants spoke about children or having a family as a factor in their departure. Several felt the salaries in student affairs were too low to start a family. "…The issue of compensation was more long term-seeing what it would look like having a family, trying to live the lifestyle I wanted to live on the salary level in higher ed…there's no room for family in that picture," said Julie. Christina stated "if I ever wanted to have more or have a family or those sorts of things, it's just not realistic on a

community director's salary." Rebecca added "I just didn't see a future only making $32,000 a year, especially if I want to get married and have children." Many new professionals are at an age when starting a family becomes a more relevant issue in their lives. Considering the financial impact of starting a family on a student affairs salary can become a primary concern and influence their decision whether to remain in the profession. For some former professionals, the opportunity to make enough money to support a family overrules the desire to stay in the profession.

For participants who had children, it was difficult to balance the needs of their jobs with the needs of their children. Reid said the number one reason she left the profession was because her kids were still young. She felt she needed to be there for her children, where she thought she could have the greatest impact: "I went into the field thinking I wanted to make a difference and who am I really going to have more impact on? Yeah, I could have a great impact on my students but I don't think anyone can ever have as great an impact as a parent." Rachel also left primarily because of her children. For her, it was more about logistics. She was a live-on residence life professional, with two children and a husband; the family simply outgrew her apartment. While there were larger apartments on campus, she was never reassigned to another building: "And I asked for an advance there and I had asked for another opportunity but I never expected them to move me because I had two kids…I would have loved to move into a bigger building, a better building, with a better apartment, but it didn't happen." While outgrowing the apartment was an impetus for leaving, ultimately, Rachel decided to leave the profession and focus more on her family. Student affairs administration can be unkind to parents, particularly those with young children, because professionals are often expected to work long and/or irregular hours. This results in limited time with family. Parents struggling to balance their responsibilities as a parent with their obligations as a professional may choose to parent full-time or choose a position outside of student affairs that allows them to spend more time with their children.

Overall, Balance was one of the most cited reasons that participants left student affairs. The issue of Balance manifested itself in a variety of ways, whether establishing boundaries between work and personal life and/or balancing family obligations and desires. Participants left because they could not find Balance within student affairs and thought there were other, more viable options that might provide the equilibrium they were seeking.

Professional Factors

  Job Opportunity. The Job Opportunity theme was about opportunities outside the student affairs profession that offered participants an impetus to leave the profession. The Job Opportunity theme was characterized by three subthemes: Job Outside of Student Affairs, Could Not Find a Student Affairs Job, and No Opportunities for Advancement. The first subtheme, Job Outside of Student Affairs, was discussed by 11 participants. Three spoke of being "headhunted" or having job opportunities open up. None were looking to leave the profession until they were approached with job offers. "Like I said, I had, in no way, intended or was considering leaving until I was 'headhunted' for lack of a better phrase," said Jack. "So really, I wasn't looking, I wasn't searching; I fully intended to still be at [name of institution] at this point. In fact, I had picked up a lot of additional responsibilities." Ted also was not seeking to leave the profession but was pursued by a company that did business with his institution. After a few conversations and meetings with company officials, he found himself with a job offer that was hard to refuse. Cary had been conducting a student affairs job search but then ended up with an opportunity that "just fell into my lap…I just thought how can I pass up this opportunity and let's just see how it goes."

  Other participants found jobs that seemed to be a much better fit than their current student affairs position. Lynn found a job with an organization she had been following for a while: "And to me, it was an ideal fit for me. And I talked with my supervisor and said 'I don't know if I can just let this come and go and not at least try... because this is as close to my dream job as I've ever seen." Mark had been working part-time at a corporate job, in addition to his student affairs job when he was offered a full-time corporate opportunity and jumped at the chance to work there. Both Arnold and Greg also talked about opportunities they were offered outside of the profession that were too difficult to resist. Occasionally, no matter what, senior administrators just are not going to be able retain on to new professionals because personal interests or exciting opportunities trump working in student affairs.

  Could Not Find a Job in Student Affairs referred to those who would have stayed in the field if they had found a job in the profession. While they were content with their current positions outside of student affairs, their initial desire was to work in the profession. For instance, Julie was looking at new opportunities in student affairs but very selectively. When a student affairs job did not materialize, she found an exciting opportunity outside of the

profession and took it. Chelsea applied for multiple student affairs jobs near her husband but was unable to find anything. Gabriella desired to return to the East Coast:

> From October to December, my job search was only in higher education and it was only on the East Coast…I was moving back home….So what prompted me to ultimately look outside of the field, somewhere close to Christmas I was getting depressed…so, in January, after the holidays…I stopped applying for jobs in higher education.

Gabriella ultimately went on to find a job in the corporate sector. Obviously, not all former professionals leave student affairs on their own volition. For some, leaving the profession is a last resort and not done with any intention. After exhausting the student affairs job search, some former professionals are often limited to pursuing options outside the profession because they need a job - any job.

The final subtheme under Job Opportunity was No Opportunity for Advancement. Some participants left the profession simply because there were not opportunities to move up within their institution or within any nearby institutions. Mark became bored with his position and was looking for an opportunity to move up but found nothing. Christina ran into the same situation:

> I think I was hoping it would be a little bit easier to navigate the ranks a little bit. Like if I wanted to stay at [name of institution] and move up, that there would have been an opportunity or an option. And the more time I spent at [name of institution], the clearer it became that wasn't an option.

Jillian talked about the bottleneck that occurs when entry-level professionals seek to move up within the profession:

> It's very much of a bottleneck because you have 10 people who come in at the assistant director level and then there is one position that supervises them so if you really want to progress, something has to happen to your supervisor or you have to go to a different school…There just are not that many upper level positions to go into when you have so many entry level positions. And because there isn't a promotion structure, you are pretty much just stuck doing what you are doing.

These former professionals would have stayed in the profession had there been opportunities to move up within their institution. Because those opportunities were non-existent at their current campus, they were reluctant to move to another institution. Christina indicated that the idea of

having to move around all the time in order to move up was unappealing. This, as well as all the other factors discussed, has implications for the student affairs profession.

Discussion and Implications

The findings suggest that the most salient factors in departure are both Personal and Professional though Personal factors seem to have a greater impact, as indicated by the sheer number and variety of comments and subthemes under the Personal category. The analysis revealed three key findings. First, Connectivity and Fit with one's work environment is an important aspect to consider when evaluating new professional satisfaction. Connectivity gives a sense of purpose to employees, helping them adapt to the culture of an institution and to the roles they play within that institution. When that connection or fit is not established, professionals feel a sense of defeat, leading them to seek opportunities outside of student affairs work that may be more in line with their needs and expectations.

There are ways that supervisors and new professionals can work together to address issues of Connectivity. First, identifying actions through which new professionals can connect to the institution is important. Joining campus-wide committees is one way to promote connectivity since this type of assignment often requires new staff to work with employees from other areas of the institution, helping new professionals to broaden their campus connections. Collaboration on projects, programming, and other initiatives can also foster linkages with administrators in other offices on campus. Collaboration not only offers opportunities to learn about other functional areas but also may offer opportunities to work with students one might not otherwise have access to, increasing a connection to the student body at the institution. Lastly, supervisors can provide opportunities for departmental staffs to get together, informally, for end-of-year gatherings, celebrations, and/or awards banquets. These gatherings might also help new professionals to feel more connected to the institution.

Addressing professional Fit is more challenging. Although supervisors can work with new professionals to offer opportunities that might be more aligned with their goals, assessing Fit should really take place before the new professional has even accepted a position. Granted, nobody is ever completely prepared for a new position, a new institution, and/or a new geographic location but there are several ways one can minimize the risk of a bad Fit with a job. First, new professionals should have a clear idea of with what they will and will not compromise. They should not only focus on the job description but should also take into consideration the type

of institution, size, typical student population, and geographic location when evaluating a job opportunity. Second, new professionals should realize that on-site interviews are not only about the institutional staff finding the right person for the job but also about applicants determining whether they see themselves operating successfully and happily at the institution. Candidates should ask how students and administrators would describe the culture of the institution and, more specifically, the office with which they are interviewing. They should discuss advising philosophies with their potential colleagues and supervisor. Asking the potential supervisor about their expectations for the position is prudent. Lastly, candidates should not accept a position with an institution purely because they have been offered a job. While it is nice to be selected as the best candidate for a position, it is important that new professionals be honest with themselves about whether the position is actually a good fit. Does the position give them most of what they need to succeed, not just professionally, but also personally? If not, will they be able to compensate for what is missing? Answering these questions will be helpful in assessing Fit when contemplating an offer for a student affairs position.

The second key finding relates to Balance, an element that is notoriously difficult to achieve in student affairs but not impossible. Work/Life Balance was identified by half of participants as problematic. Establishing Balance in student affairs lessens the probability of burnout, particularly for new professionals. Supervisors can be crucial in assisting new professionals to juggle personal and professional obligations. First, supervisors can model appropriate behaviors for employees. Sometimes Work/Balance issues can be tied directly to organizational culture. If leaders of an organization work excessively and do not demonstrate a balance between their personal and professional lives, supervisees are likely to interpret that behavior as an expectation and mimic it. When supervisors model Balance, the organizational culture tends to reflect those expectations and, therefore, supervisees are likely to adopt behaviors that support Balance.

Work/Life Balance can further be supported through flexible work schedules for employees. The student affairs profession often requires work during nights and weekends, particularly for entry-level positions held by most new professionals. Offering compensatory time to employees when they work late nights or on weekends is an easy way to encourage employees to balance their personal and professional time and obligations. There are some issues of Balance that are more difficult for institutional leaders to address and should be the

responsibility of the new professional. For example, finding employment Closer to Home should be included in the basics of the job search. As mentioned previously, being aware of wants and needs prior to the job search is essential and this includes consideration of familial support. If familial support is essential to the happiness and/or success of a new professional, that person should plan accordingly in the job search and limit the search to those opportunities within a short radius of family and/or home.

Dual Career job searches are another factor under Balance that may be difficult for employers to address. Institutional leaders can certainly help employees identify potential employment options for partners and/or spouses but sometimes job opportunities for the trailing partner are simply not available. Searching in metropolitan areas may be one answer, as those areas provide more opportunities for employment. However, for those who wish to live in suburban or rural settings or who are tied to a specific geographic region, accommodating the Dual Career search may be more difficult. Having honest conversations with one's spouse or partner about what a dual career search will look like prior to embarking on that search may establish a foundation from which to move forward.

Finding Balance when one has children also is difficult. For those who do not have a family yet but are considering it, concerns about whether a student affairs salary is sufficient to raise a family may be an issue. Institutional leaders are often limited when it comes to offering increased salaries, particularly to new professionals. However, there are other concerns that can be addressed when it comes to financing family obligations. For example, creating policies that promote flexible work schedules may offer new professionals who have families some relief. Flexible work schedules can alleviate or reduce the need for child care by allowing employees to control their schedules so that less money is spent on child care providers. This could result in significant savings. Flexible work schedules can also offer professionals an opportunity to spend more time with their child or children, increasing their ability to balance their work responsibilities with their family obligations.

The third and final finding relates to Job Opportunity. Job opportunities, or, sometimes, lack thereof, can be an impetus for new professionals to depart the profession. For some employees, the student affairs profession is simply not a good Fit and they may find their passion leading them elsewhere. However, for those who do want to continue their careers in the profession, opportunities beyond entry-level positions can be difficult to find, particularly in

specific geographic areas or in certain functional areas. For those hoping to advance in the profession, the expectation is often that they move on in order to move up. This is problematic for professionals tied to a geographic region or an institution who, consequently, are forced to leave the profession purely due to a lack of advancement opportunity. The issue of limited opportunity is more difficult, though not impossible, to address. Policies can be created that make it easier for institutions to promote from within, allowing them to retain competent professionals. The practice of promoting from within can also save money on searches and minimize the disruption to the organization's culture. This, however, may be an easier task at private institutions than at public campuses. Private institutions have more flexibility in hiring and do not necessarily need to advertise open positions to the public that can easily be filled by qualified individuals within the institution. Public institutions, with exception of emergency hires, often must advertise all open positions to the public, which increases the chance of finding someone from outside of the institution, not to mention sending signals to internal candidates about how they are (or are not) valued by the institution.

These findings not only serve as an impetus for practice and policy but also can promote future research. First, I used demographic information solely as a descriptor for the participants in my research. Future research could incorporate demographic information in informing the research narrative; for example, how were departure experiences different for African Americans? How were they different for LGBTQ professionals? These kinds of studies could provide more complex and nuanced information about departure. Second, 67% of participants in my study left residence life. Future research might examine what characteristics of residence life, as a functional area, influence new professionals' departure as opposed to other functional areas in student affairs.

As with all research, there were limitations to my study. The first related to the sample. The demographic characteristics of my participants are relatively limited and may not be representative of new student affairs professionals as a whole. Transferability of results should be considered with caution. Second, while I sought data only from participants who had left the field no more than two years prior to the date of our interview, distance from the departure experience can affect memory. Participants may have been unable to accurately recall details and feelings regarding their departure from the profession and, as a consequence, some material may have been improvised and/or overlooked. Third, I used a survey prior to each interview to

spur participants to think about why they left the profession. It is possible that the available responses on the survey influenced their responses during the interview process.

In closing, new professionals depart the student affairs profession for a variety of reasons. Both Personal and Professional factors are responsible for this departure. Being proactive in the job search, including clearly defining needs and desires before searching, may help alleviate some of the issues that confront new professionals. However, the departure of new student affairs professionals is an institutional issue also.   When employees depart it can cost administrators significant time and money to replace them (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010; Holmes et al., 1983). Tangible costs include monies spent in filling an open position in addition to intangible costs such as a loss of institutional knowledge and/or organizational memory. It also causes a disruption to a team or department and, occasionally, can influence others to leave also (Allen et al., 2010). Therefore, institutions and new professionals alike should be aware of factors that increase chances of separation from the institution and work together to alleviate those matters.

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Appendix A

Introductory Email to Mid-level Supervisors

Good afternoon-

My name is Tara Frank and I am a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech in the Department of
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. I am currently working on my dissertation that
focuses on why new professionals leave the field of student affairs. Specifically, I am looking at
former administrators who earned their masters in student affairs, student personnel, higher
education, or a related field between 2004 and 2010 and who left the field between 2009 and
2011. The study has been approved via the IRB process at Virginia Tech.

I have contacted you in hopes that you may know former student affairs professionals who meet
these criteria. I would like to interview potential participants regarding factors in their decision
to leave the student affairs profession. These interviews would occur via the phone and should
last no more than 60 minutes.

If you know of former professionals who might be interested in participating, could you please
forward this email to them? Additionally, if you have colleagues on campus that might know
former professionals, I would appreciate it if you would forward this message to them, as well. I
can be contacted via email at tara@vt.edu or phone at (540) 449-1088. I am more than willing to
discuss further details of the research with you or any potential participants. In the meantime, I
appreciate your time and assistance with my research!

Tara E. Frank

Appendix B

Introductory Email to New Professionals

Good afternoon-

My name is Tara Frank and I am a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. I am currently working on my dissertation that focuses on why new professionals leave the field of student affairs. Specifically, I am looking at former administrators who earned their masters in student affairs, student personnel, higher education, or a related field between 2004 and 2010 and who left the field between 2009 and 2011. The study has been approved via the IRB process at Virginia Tech.

I have contacted you in hopes that you may know former classmates from your master's program who have left the field and who meet these requirements. I would like to interview them about why they left the student affairs profession. These interviews would occur via the phone and should last no more than 60 minutes.

If you know of friends or colleagues who might be interested in participating, could you please forward this email to them? I can be contacted via email at tara@vt.edu or phone at (540) 449-1088. I am more than willing to discuss further details of the research with you or any potential participants. In the meantime, I appreciate your time and assistance with my research!

Tara E. Frank

Appendix C

Pre-Screening Protocol

Name: Date/Time:

Phone Number:

Script:

Thanks for agreeing to speak with me today. As you read in my email, the purpose of my study is to understand why professionals leave the student affairs field. The study is a requirement for my doctoral degree.

I hope I can include you in the study but I need to ask you a few questions to find out whether you are eligible to participate. The questions are relatively short and this conversation should not take too much of your time. After we finish chatting, I can determine whether you are eligible to continue with the study and, if so, whether you want to participate.

Pre-Screening Questions:

I have three primary criteria for this study so I am going to start out asking you about the things I need to know in order to determine whether your experiences relate to my study. If they do, then I just have a few more questions for you   Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

1)   What month and year did you finish your masters degree?

        Month: _____   Year: _____

        Met criteria:

            ☐   Yes (between 2004 and 2010)

            ☐   No

2)   What field is your masters in?

            ☐   Higher education

            ☐   Student Affairs

☐   Student Personnel

☐   Other: _____

Met criteria:

    ☐   Yes

    ☐   No

3)   Where did you earn your master's degree?_____

4)   What month and year did you leave the profession?

    Month _____   Year: _____

    Met criteria:

    ☐   Yes (between 2009 and 2011)

    ☐   No

5)   Do you have any plans to return to the profession in the future?

    ☐   Yes

    ☐   No

*If participant does not meet initial criteria…*I'm sorry but I am trying to include only former professionals who (fill in criteria the person did not meet). I appreciate your time and willingness to speak with me today but this means I cannot include you in my study. I hope you understand and, again, thanks for taking the time to talk with me today.

If participant does meet initial criteria, continue with pre-screen.

6)   Would you tell me about the positions you held after receiving your masters degree?

    Job held: _____

    Dates held: _____ Month _____ Year

    Job held: _____

    Dates held: _____ Month _____ Year

Job held: _____

Dates held: _____ Month _____ Year

Now, I want to ask a few demographic questions to make sure I include a wide array of people in my study.

7)   What is your gender?

   ☐   Male

   ☐   Female

   ☐   Transgender

8)   How do you identify racially?

   ☐   American Indian/Alaskan Native

   ☐   Asian

   ☐   Bi/Multiracial

   ☐   Black/African American

   ☐   Hispanic

   ☐   White

   ☐   Other: _____

9)   What is your age bracket?

   ☐   22 - 25

   ☐   26 – 30

   ☐   31 – 35

   ☐   36 – 40

   ☐   40 and older

I really appreciate your time and willingness to help me with my research. It has been great chatting with you. (Inform of status)

Selected to Participate:

- ☐ Yes
-    No

If accepted… I'd like to include you in my study. If you agree to participate, I will send you a consent form via email as well as a link to a short survey asking you to choose from a menu of choices five issues that might have influenced your decision to leave the student affairs profession. I would as that you get the survey back to me by (date). Then, I would like to schedule a phone interview with you by (date). May we schedule that interview now?

Interview scheduled for: (Date, time)

Phone number for interview:

If not accepted after demographic criteria….. I'm sorry, I am afraid you don't meet the demographic criteria I need in order to have a representative group of participants for the study. I have really enjoyed chatting with you though and I appreciate your time and willingness to assist me. I hope you understand and, again, thanks for taking time to talk with me today.

Appendix D

Online Survey

Factors Affecting Departure from Student Affairs

Below is a list of reasons that might have influenced your decision to leave the student affairs profession. Please review the list and identify 5 factors that you considered (there may be more, but please select only the 5 that were most important to you). Place a "1" next to the factor that most influenced your decision, a "2" next to the factor that had the second most influence, and so on until you have placed a "5" next to the fifth most important factor that led to your departure from the field. If there are other factors that influenced your decision but are not listed here please feel free to put a number next to "Other" below and briefly identify that factor.

_____   Benefits package

_____   Communication issues (with supervisor, co-workers, etc.)

_____   Sentiments about students

_____   Family issues – children

_____   Family issues – spouse/partner

_____   Family issues – with other family members

_____   Connectedness with institution

_____   Felt work was not valued

_____   Hours worked (i.e., more than 40 hours/week)

_____   Lack of flexibility in work schedule

_____   Job opportunity outside of student affairs

_____   Lack of autonomy

_____   Lack of campus resources

_____   Lack of clarification in job expectations

_____   Lack of job security

_____   Lack of professional development opportunities

_____   Limited opportunities for advancement

_____   Organizational changes (i.e., change in reporting structure of

               institution/department, change in mission, change in responsibilities, etc.)

_____   Relationship with supervisor

_____   Profession no longer challenging

_____   Profession not what expected

_____   Salary

_____   Other (please identify): _____

Appendix E

Interview Protocol

Name: Phone Number:

Pseudonym: Date/Time:

Summary of Factors (from online survey):

__#___ Environmental   __#___ Psychological   __#___ Structural

__#___ Other

Script:

Hi again! Thanks for agreeing to speak with me today and for participating in my study.   After our last conversation, I emailed you an informed consent document.   I appreciate your getting that back to me. Did you have any questions about the consent form?

I also asked you to complete an online survey asking you what kinds of things contributed to you leaving the student affairs profession. Thanks for doing that, too. I am hoping the survey will help get our conversation started today. Our conversation will help me understand why you left the profession. Our chat should last no more than an hour. Do you have any other questions before we begin? Also, is it ok if I record our conversation?

Script:

I.   Introduction/Rapport

1)   In our first conversation, you talked a little bit about your first job in the profession at [insert relevant job info here]. What drew you to that particular position?

2)   What about your other position(s)? (if applicable)

3)   What were some of the things, if anything, that you really liked/did not like about working in student affairs?

4)   Can you tell me about an experience from when you worked in student affairs that positively impacted you? Conversely, can you tell me about an experience from when you worked that negatively impacted you?

II.   Reasons for departure

Thanks! Now, I want to shift gears and spend some time chatting about the online survey you completed prior to this interview. In the survey, I noticed you rated (name #1 reason) as contributing most to your departure:

5)   Factor one: _____

  ☐ Environmental

  ☐ Psychological

  ☐ Structural

  ☐ Other _____

Can you tell me about a time when [insert factor] affected your work?

[insert relevant prompt questions for this factor]

6)   You listed (name #2 reason) next.

  Factor two: _____

  ☐ Environmental

  ☐ Psychological

  ☐ Structural

  ☐ Other _____

Can you tell me about a time when [insert factor] affected your work?

[insert relevant prompt questions for this factor]

7)   At number three, you listed (name #3 reason).

Factor three: _____

☐ Environmental

☐ Psychological

☐ Structural

☐ Other _____

Can you tell me about a time when [insert factor] affected your work?

[insert relevant prompt questions]

8)   You rated (insert #4 reason) at number four.

Factor four: _____

☐ Environmental

☐ Psychological

☐ Structural

☐ Other _____

Can you tell me about a time when [insert factor] affected your work?

[insert relevant prompt questions]

9)   For your last reason, you put (insert #5 reason).

Factor five: _____

☐ Environmental

☐ Psychological

☐ Structural

☐ Other _____

Can you tell me about a time when [insert factor] affected your work?

[insert relevant prompt questions]

10)   What have you done since you left student affairs?

(If working, where, doing what, and for how long)

(If not working, doing what and for how long, and any plans to work again)

11)   Do you find that any of your student affairs skills have transferred to your experiences in your current position? (if applicable)

III.   Conclusion

Just a few more questions before we wrap-up.

12)   Do you think anything might have changed your decision to leave student affairs?

13)   What is one lesson you learned about student affairs that you might pass onto someone just graduating from their masters program and going into their first job?

14)   Is there anything else you would like to add?

Script:

Thanks for taking the time to chat with me today. I want to recap some of the points I heard you mention today to make sure I have captured your thoughts accurately [recap responses].

Also, in the next three weeks, I would like to email you a transcript of this interview for your review. I would appreciate any feedback you might have after reading the transcript, particularly if you have anything to add, correct, or change. I want to make sure the transcript represents your comments fully and accurately.

If I have any further questions or need further clarification, is it okay for me to call you again? I really do appreciate your time today and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Have a great day.

Appendix F

IRB Approval Letter

VirginiaTech

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 20, 2011

TO: Joan B. Hirt, Tara Frank

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires October 26, 2013)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Why Do They Leave? Departure of New Student Affairs Professionals

IRB NUMBER: 11-450

Effective May 20, 2011, the Virginia Tech IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore, approved the new protocol for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm (please review before the commencement of your research).

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:
Approved as: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6, 7**
Protocol Approval Date: **5/20/2011**
Protocol Expiration Date: **5/19/2012**
Continuing Review Due Date*: **5/5/2012**
*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:
Per federally regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals / work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future