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# Transformational learning for organizational change: exploring employee experiences with a student affairs workplace professional development program

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

# TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: EXPLORING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES WITH A STUDENT AFFAIRS WORKPLACE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Katherine Erin Vahey

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Department of Leadership, Policy and Development
Higher Education and P-12 Education

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This Dissertation by: Katherine Erin Vahey

Entitled: Transformational learning for organizational change: Exploring employee experiences with a student affairs workplace professional development program

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Department of Leadership, Policy and Development, Program of Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership

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Date of Dissertation Defense _______September 26, 2011____________________

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## ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this dissertation is to explore a professional development curriculum in an institution of higher education. This case study advocates that all student affairs employees undergo continuous professional development training to provide collective understanding of essential workplace concepts necessary for effective organizational development. The research question-- *How do student affairs employees experience workplace training as it contributes to organizational development?*-- addresses the confluence of two areas of higher education literature: transformative learning for education practitioner's professional growth and best practices for higher education organizational development. Using a constructivist, case study-narrative design, this research explores employee experiences with a professional development program, especially in how they view the evolving culture of their workplace as it contributes to organizational change. Data collected through three years of site observation and training involvement included in-depth interviews and focus groups with 12 diverse student affairs employees engaged in progressive program entitled The Leadership Center.

Through exploring employees personal and professional experiences, themes found include a glimpse into the organization's culture, longstanding issues considered, and how staff felt invested in through their program participation. Likewise, employees

described their learning experience from the training as it affected their view of the workplace, and issues they desired to still be addressed as it contributes to the organization's effectiveness.  Implications of this research include, in addition to the power of human contact, how workplace training serves as an opportunity for organizational development, how systemic learning brings to life higher education values, and what the challenges are when social justice is used out of context.  Finally, the value of supporting theory for practice is addressed, as well as recommendations for future research.  With the intended audience of higher education administrators, the goal of this research is that, the more that is known about how student affairs employees experience professional development opportunities, the more institutions can establish environments conducive to effective systemic development.

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For my social circle, I am eternally thankful for the essential distractions. I'm so excited for our ongoing celebration of life. KJ and Gobbler, this wouldn't be possible without you. In the spirit of Grey Cat and as One with Honey Badger, let's get this saga continued!

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**TABLES**

## FIGURE

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

*"In times of change, learners inherit the earth*
*while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped*
*to deal with a world that no longer exists" –Eric Hoffer*

*Arriving a few minutes before 1pm, I enter a conference room in the new Community Center building on the second floor where the University Housing department is located. "Hel-lo" I say cheerfully to Liam and drop off my belongings at the end of the long conference table. In this narrow room with large windows at either end, I take a seat furthest from the projector screen and close to the door. "How's the week going for you so far?" I ask Liam, who is at the other end of the room setting up to deliver his power point presentation. Always busy and a perpetual procrastinator, Liam's smiling retort of "the usual" informs me he was up late the night before completing today's presentation. The first class of the new academic year, the beginning of the second year delivery of the Leadership Center's professional development training series, I know by now Liam is confident in his class delivery methods which will go over well with his audience, even though it has been four months since we had talked through the course content.*

*As we wait for the training participants to arrive, expecting 15 employees who pre-enrolled in today's workshop from various units among the Housing department, we exchange comments on the beautiful September weather and our recent weekend outdoor excursions. We report and commend each other's extracurricular activities as we wait for class participants to arrive. The conference room is held a few steps behind the Housing department's main reception desk, in the center of tangential hallways where many training participants have their offices. By five minutes after 1pm, most participants for that day have found their seats and commenced chatting with colleagues sitting around them about a recent department wide decision or implications in their unit area over accommodating a large campus event. Liam raises his hand and asks for everyone's attention to get the class started. Attendance (which is mandatory) is taken, and Liam starts the first few slides to lay ground rules for the class.*

*The Strengthsquest (Rath & Conchie, 2009) assessment was taken by all participants prior to the first class, and the beginning of each module section starts with completing a Strengths map of everyone in the room. Strengths provides a common*

*language to recognize employees positive characteristics, and demographic recap is done since each module has a different roster of participants. Some colleagues who meet in this workshop may have similarly worked for Housing for many years, yet most likely have never met face to face even if they have conducted work together over email. In this way, recounting Strengths gives employees a chance to get to know other colleagues in the room.*

*The first module topic for year two is "The Art of Effective Delegation," and after the quick recap of class rules and Strengths, Liam energetically presents a cartoon and quote to provide a lighthearted frame for how participants can consider the class discussion and activities that day. "'No person will make a great business by doing it all himself or taking all the credit', said Andrew Carnegie" read Liam. After going over a definition of delegation, Liam asks questions of his audience to engage discussion of why delegation is needed and expected in the workplace. At a half hour into the class time, I assist Liam in passing out a plastic plate and a stack of post-it notes to every class member. "Write each of your job responsibilities on a post-it, and stick it according to priority from the top to the bottom of your plate. You want to use this to literally see, what all is on my plate that I have to do for my job?" Participants dutifully engage in this activity, joking with each other how there is more than they can typically remember that endlessly seems to need to be accomplished. After about 15 minutes the class reconvenes under Liam's attention, and participants briefly share their lists of responsibilities on plates so covered with post-it notes it is difficult to discern where is the plate. Collegial joking ensues, even though employees are clearly stressed at the number of their tasks that need to be accomplished, the mood is lighthearted with cohort empathy. Upon discussion of what tasks are currently most imperative in different Housing units, and possible implications to other collaborating units, Liam brings up a 5 minute countdown slide on the power point, and dismisses class for a short break. "How do you think it's going so far?" Liam asks me as we convene in the corner of the conference room. "Great job for not having looked at your content notes in four months" I jokingly reply, Liam knows I believe he is a strong presenter. "Participants appear receptive to the message, now we can only hope they take direction and put these ideas into action."*

In recent decades, institutions of higher learning have been influenced by social and political issues, including concerns for multiculturalism, personal responsibility, and equal opportunity (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2005; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Sandeen & Barr, 2006). Similarly, student affairs offices have been challenged by modern issues such as new technologies, changing student demographics, demands for greater accountability, increasing costs, reduced state funding, and criticism of the moral and ethical climate on campuses (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, Stephens & Shulman, 2010).

The way that employees respond to these challenges shapes the role of student affairs in higher education, and student affairs work will demand more creativity and flexibility as these challenges increase in complexity (Carpenter, 2001; Shaffer, 1993). Student affairs practitioners should develop professional skills that allow them to serve as "environmental scanner, milieu manager, market analyst, legal adviser, development officer, researcher, and quality assurance specialist" (Garland & Grace, 1994, p. 4). Achieving a level of professionalism necessary for practitioners to perform these varied tasks requires knowledge and skill reflecting advances in the field. Likewise, various types of institutions exist and handle these challenges differently based on how their student affairs structures are organized (Manning, Kinzie & Schuh, 2006). The purpose of this dissertation is to explore a professional development curriculum in an institution of higher education. This case study advocates that all student affairs employees need continuous professional development training to provide collective understanding of the essential workplace concepts necessary for effective organizational development.

Higher education exists to provide undergraduate, graduate and continuing education as professional development to young and older adults with a wide range of social demographic characteristics (Thelin, 2004). All higher education institutions are faced with similar social and political challenges, regardless whether the type of institution is a large public university, a community college, or a small liberal arts college (Birnbaum, 1988). Over the course of an institution's history, how its administrators balance providing an institution's purpose with the needs of its people, interpret student affairs philosophy in practice, and manage the social and political issues of current events directly shapes the structure of an organization and the culture of that community. The

differences between institutions directly affect the varying ways student affairs handles social and political challenges (Manning, et al., 2006). A student affairs workplace is therefore as diverse and dynamic as the members invested in an organization.

As the field of student affairs has grown over the past 20 years, qualified by more complete literature and more clearly defined practitioner roles, student affairs work is different based on institution type (Manning, et al., 2006). Regardless, some practitioners believe student affairs remains a “grassroots field” (p. viii) with little need for theory to organize practice, and common sense is the best practitioner guide (Manning, et al., 2006). From this perspective, current models of student affairs are often hybrid varieties of common sense and administrative legacies, as foundational field concepts in practice are left to individual interpretation. Fortunately as research and administrative development reflects advances in the field that show the “commonsense approach [as] obsolete” (Manning, et al., 2006, p. ix), it can no longer be assumed that one style of student affairs practice will be congruent with the mission and ways of operating for a particular institution. This does not mean foundational principles of student affairs change for different types of institutions, but those principles can manifest differently based on individual interpretation and how an organization is structured to handle social and political challenges. The variety of hybrid student affairs models in existence presents a dynamic challenge to administrators interested in providing professional development for their staff. As student affairs manifests differently based on institution, likewise one type of professional development for student affairs employees will not meet the needs of all organizations.

While demand is high for knowledgeable practitioners, unlike other professions, student affairs has no licensure or certification requirement to ensure professional standards (Fried, 2002). Likewise, as there are various avenues to enter student affairs work including professional preparation programs, related degree programs, unrelated degree programs, and administrative support positions that require no formal academic training, some of the entry points require no previous exposure to working in a higher education setting (Creamer, 1997). While professional preparation or related degree programs may provide exposure to general understanding of student affairs, not all members of an organization will understand student affairs principles (Manning, et al., 2006). An employee who has not had previous experience working in a student affairs organization, or understands its philosophy but is unfamiliar institution’s unique structure and culture, may struggle to see how these principles apply in their work environment. This disconnect between field theory and practice (Fried, 2002) confirms that student affairs will remain an “emerging profession” (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007, p. 269; Winston, Creamer, & Miller, 2001, p. 21), and a higher education organization cannot ensure it is operating most effectively. As employees join an organization from varied backgrounds, workplace professional development training is important to ensure staff are equipped to meet the challenges of their particular institution (Winston & Creamer, 2002). The purpose of professional development is to increase organizational effectiveness and employee quality and satisfaction (Nottingham, 1998; Scott, 2000). Therefore, professional development training that aims to connect theory and practice, and speaks to how theory can be maintained in practice according to an organization’s

structural model and subsequent culture, provides needed support for student affairs employees in how they handle the challenges with which they are faced.

## Significance of the Problem

Professional development is a term that appears frequently throughout student affairs literature (Barr & Keating, 1985; Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Delworth & Hanson, 1989; Dirkx, Gilley, & Gilley, 2004; Komives & Woodard, 2003). The value of providing professional development for student affairs employees is rooted in the field philosophy of continual learning for personal growth (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010), as well as the impact individual learning can have on organizational development (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Cooper & Miller, 1998). Therefore the goal of training employees should be to provide transformative learning opportunities as support for developing workplaces practices according to an organization's mission. There is widespread agreement about the value and need for professional development in student affairs, however there is less consensus on how to accomplish it (Carpenter & Stimpson; Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). Despite evidence in literature calling for the need of continual training as development in student affairs, a number of factors have made this a difficult goal for administrators to actualize.

Senior student affairs officers recognize the importance of staff development programs, but institutional competition for resources diminishes development opportunities (Sandeen & Barr, 2006). A 1997 review of staff development practices (Winston & Creamer) found that most student affairs divisions had inadequate workplace resources including financial allocation, senior staff that had time and skill to provide in-house training. Similarly, there is need for orientations the socialize staff and connected

scholarship to practice (Komives, 1998). Higher education institutions are notably different as student affairs manifestation varies according to institutional structure and a practitioner's individual interpretation of field concepts in practice (Harrison, 2010; Manning, et al., 2006). Therefore professional development needs, which must be identified by skilled administrators, will vary according to an institution. Compounding the problem is the perception among mid-level administrators that there is little need for professional development to address relevant skill areas (Fey & Carpenter, 1996; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Young, 1990). In addition, increasingly competitive job markets have made advanced level employees, whose primary experiences are outside of student affairs, eligible for student service positions. Pragmatically, workplace professional development opportunities that address expectations to apply student affairs concepts in practice according to an institution's unique culture provides transparency and direction for an organization's members regardless of varied skill levels and the ever changing challenges faced by higher education. Without an institutional demonstration of care through investing in human capital provided by continual professional development training, there is no assurance that a model exists for employees to emulate the value of relationships prioritized in student affairs philosophy. The complexity of these challenges is one reason professional development is a concept that appears frequently in student affairs literature. Yet how workplace training is experienced as a gauge for participant's professional growth and an organization's development remains a question.

Student affairs professional development literature has thus far focused on the reasons practitioner's need professional development, since this is what connects student affairs field theory and practice (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007). In addition to its

demonstrated purpose, literature has highlighted what constitutes good professional development (Winston & Creamer, 2002), and the positive organizational impact of having developed employees (Cooper & Miller, 1998). Likewise, literature has articulated the personal responsibility of the individual practitioner to attain professional development (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007), and why institutions should encourage it in the primary forms of graduate education and professional association involvement (Bryan & Schwartz, 1998). Yet only recently have student affairs structural differences been outlined, accounting for why field theory manifests differently in practice based on an institution's unique culture and structure, demonstrating the discontinuity across student affairs (Manning, et al., 2006). Similarly, only recently has empirical research explored practitioner understanding of the central field concept of advocacy, demonstrating how core field philosophical concepts are often left to individual interpretation (Harrison, 2010). While literature asserts professional development should focus on the central ethic of the profession (Winston & Creamer, 2002), namely care for learning to promote personal growth (Evans, et al, 2010), professional development delivery must account for institutional differences and individual interpretation, including for employees that have not had concept exposure. Once an institution acknowledges why professional development for staff is needed, what remains is to address how training can be delivered as effective support for employees to work in accord with to the unique mission of an institutional setting. Participant's description of training experiences therefore serves to gauge a program's effectiveness as contribution toward organizational development. Researchers have yet to explore this complex phenomenon, and only through an attempt to design and execute professional development training according to the needs of a

particular institutional culture and assessing qualitative feedback on participants' experiences can we begin to entertain possible solutions.

## Statement of the Problem

Changing social and political trends faced by higher education, and how student affairs offices respond to these trends, demonstrates numerous challenges that affect continuous development for employees. Increasing challenges in higher education require student affairs departments to be creative and flexible. Even as research demonstrates student affairs is an emerging profession (Winston, et al., 2001), the requisite connection between field theory and practice remains deficient (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007). This suggests a need for institution leaders to consider implementing development programs as an investment in organization employees. A workplace professional development training program that supports staff in understanding student affairs concepts according to an institution's culture provides transparency, articulates expectations, and contributes to systemic organizational development.

Professional development opportunities should focus on the value of relationships, articulate expectations for practice according to an organization's mission, highlight the meaning and purpose of practitioner's daily work activity, and acknowledge practitioners where they are at in their development as well as their life outside of work (Winston & Creamer, 2002). The essential elements for effective staff development are the same regardless of the role a practitioner contributes to the field (Winston & Creamer, 2002). Although areas in need of professional and personal growth may differ for a frontline staff and an upper-level administrator, the student affairs principles of valuing relationships to provide learning for personal growth remains constant (Evans, et al.,

2010). While the aim of transformative learning in professional development training can be the same for all employees (Cranton, 1996), the effect an opportunity can have on individuals will vary. Descriptions of training participants' experience then serves to gauge a program's effectiveness in contributing to employee transformative practice according to an organization's mission.

Practitioners with whom student affairs principles resonate as personal values may become more engaged in professional development activity since learning and relationship building, both inherit in any training program, are central components of the student affairs field (Cranton, 1996; Evans, et al., 2010). Regardless, not all employees will value participating in a training program. As people learn and view their work life differently, some individuals might see their position as less student or relationship oriented, and some people will just not want to be away from the job they need to accomplish. Depending on the role an employee serves to a community, some people might prioritize the specific service they offer (Manning, et al, 2006) and will not see the purpose for engaging in a workplace program teaching the relationship-oriented principles of student affairs. Professional development training then must account for how an institution's culture is ingrained in its employees, which necessitates accounting for diversity of participant perspectives and varying degrees of openness to professional development training. While not all program participants will engage in transformative learning, required training participation may lead to some learning even for resistant employees in a way that impacts their daily work activity. Therefore descriptions of employee experiences provide insight to program effectiveness for supporting personal

growth for employees with diverse demographics as it contributes to organizational development.

The goal with this research is to explore the experience of workplace training participants, and whether they report that their experience supports behavior transformation for more effective and efficient organizational practice. Therefore, I seek to understand how practitioners characterize their training experience, as well as the workplace culture and their professional role within it, as determining factors for the program's effectiveness in contribution toward organizational development. Previous research has focused on the benefits of transformational learning as professional development for education employees, not addressing how professional development training is experienced as an effectiveness indicator for organizational change in a student affairs workplace. In addition, much of the research focuses on why professional development is needed for student affairs employees and the value of transformative learning for educators, but a void exists in exploring how these factors impact employee work in contribution to organizational development. Understanding employee experiences in this context will promote workplace specific training as a mode to support employee growth and student affairs organizational development. The more that is known about how student affairs employees experience professional development opportunities, the more higher education institutions can establish environments conducive to systemic development.

## Purpose of Study

This research exploring employee experiences with workplace professional development training addresses the confluence of two areas of higher education

literature: transformative learning opportunity as investment in staff personal growth, and best practices for student affairs organizational development. This topic is addressed through a case study of 12 individuals engaged in a workplace training program and explores how their learning experience contributes to their view of their student affairs department. These participants include the program facilitator, who co-designed the program (along with the researcher) and delivered the curriculum to 135 program participants. Additionally, 11 program participants were recommended by the facilitator as having consistently been present throughout the program, and are of varied social demographics and work histories. Using a constructivist, case study design and applying narrative techniques, this study explores employee's experiences from workplace professional development training. The central concept of learning from workplace training as it impacts employee practices in support for student affairs organizational development will be explored through the experience of the participants. The research question that guides this inquiry is:

Q 1 How do student affairs employees experience workplace training as it contributes to organizational development?

An exploration of participant experiences with workplace professional development training will create understanding of how to build a program that contributes to student affairs organizational change.

## Researcher Perspective

As the researcher of this study, I became involved with this project when I was offered an experiential learning opportunity in being hired as the graduate student intern to co-develop a workplace training program curriculum. At the time I was hired, the intention of this program or the impact of my involvement could not have been known by

anyone, and evolved in ways unexpected. The program's evolution and my experience throughout it is intrinsically connected, but the way that the pieces fit in retrospect seems inexplicable. I was personally challenged in ways I never would have imagined upon accepting this assignment. Yet if it were not for feeling responsible to finish what I had started, and being able to critically consider how I felt during these challenges and potential solutions for what I experienced, this program and my dissertation may have looked different.

Like traveling through a tunnel with an unknown end, I had no idea I would spend three years on this case study, what would result, or what experiences I would have insight to throughout. During this experience I was challenged by the ambiguity of what results this program might produce, but now that I can see the end result I believe I was meant to complete this test as it positively impacted this community. While I cannot predict how my efforts will be received by leaders among this organization, I see value in how I have been able to give voice to employees among this community that I hope will support the quality of their work life experience and the effectiveness of the organization in delivering holistic service to students.

My contributions to this project stemmed from what I knew of this institution prior to my assignment, and my professional development experiences before and concurrent during these three years. The following section is therefore organized mostly chronologically, peppered with what I have learned in retrospect, and includes a brief synopsis of my professional development in student affairs work paralleling my program contribution. Additionally, I offer some insight gained on implication of working among a constantly evolving higher education organization as it relates to this topic.

My interest in higher education as a social institution developed while I earned my master's degree in Religious Studies, a subject premised on the exploration of belief and values among the cultures of organizational systems. After two years as a Teaching Assistant in this department, I took a job at this same institution managing the multifaceted operations of a graduate student services office. For three years I coordinated programs, built campus wide relationships for collaboration, counseled students on personal and professional development matters, supported navigation for this large campus system, and presented at regional and national conferences. This experience led me to want to continue supporting the particular demographic needs of graduate and professional students. In conjunction with working in this capacity at my master's institution, I served in an executive capacity with a national professional development organization whose mission aligned with this same purpose. Through these avenues I met people and gained insight to best practices in working with graduate students at institutions across the country. I found purpose in being able to provide support for advanced education and non-traditional student populations, and liked knowing I could contribute to aiding others in their development journey. During this time, I knew that to support the needs of this particular student demographic I could provide the greatest impact if I myself held a doctoral degree. In exploring where to pursue my doctoral degree, I became acquainted with the administrative leaders for the site of this study. Upon joining the institution of my doctoral pursuit, I maintained close relations with the graduate student support offices where I had worked and with some administrators who had been influential in my decision to pursue student affairs doctoral education. It was those administrators that initially connected me to this project.

The summer of 2008 after my first year as a doctoral student in a Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership (HESAL) program, I was offered an internship at another institution by the then Executive Director of a large student services department with nearly 500 professional staff members. I accepted this offer because it provided secure summer work and I was excited to gain field experience in training and development to build my resume. When I started my internship, I had not considered this experience to be a potential dissertation topic or how it might relate to my overall professional development as a doctoral student. At that time, I had a role in creating a staff professional development program, while I was pursuing professional development through advanced education. Yet I had yet to think deeply about how these experiences were intertwined and affected me. This dissertation serves as my reflection, and my aim was to likewise support my participants in consideration of their professional development experience.

At the beginning of my internship, reflections on my own professional development related primarily to my post-graduate interest in pursuing what I originally saw as practitioner work, which focused on program development and relationship building for advocacy and aid to students in their professional development journey. I viewed this internship opportunity as a way to demonstrate my program development experience as proof of my competence as a student affairs professional to potentially lead to a full-time position, not necessarily as a way to apply the research skills I was learning in my Ph.D. pursuit. Even though I knew the research skills central to the HESAL curriculum supported my professional development in how I viewed the world around me, my value of the degree reflected how I saw it applied by the practitioners among my

work communities. What I had come to understand through the practitioners I had interacted with at three different higher education institutions where I had been employed was a Ph.D. was considered a way into positions that could support an increasing number of students, to avoid a glass ceiling, and assessment was used periodically and informally for programmatic improvement purposes not as research for publication. At the time, I viewed my Ph.D. intention as practitioner rather than faculty oriented, and adopted this mindset as a way to further assimilate into the student affairs field.

At the end of my internship summer in August 2008, I presented my curriculum design project at a meeting of department managers to provide an argument for their approval in hiring a full-time Training and Development Specialist to facilitate and further guide this program. While my full time student schedule was busy, I believed in the impact this program could offer so I remained involved on a part-time basis while also working elsewhere in a half-time Graduate Assistant position. The following December a program facilitator was hired and over the next four months in preparation of the program pilot launch we interacted regularly. The new facilitator and I meet frequently in-person and exchanged email almost daily. The program planning was a process I enjoyed; the facilitator and I got along well in our collaboration and the first set of focus groups I conducted in May 2009 yielded positive feedback. That spring term was eventful as I balanced a graduate assistantship, my contribution to support the workplace program, and a full load of doctoral classes. Yet I was motivated because I believed this innovative program would make a difference among this workplace, and potentially the field of student affairs work.

It was not until a year after I was hired that I considered my internship experience a possible dissertation topic. By this time due to budget constraints the financial support of this position was eliminated, yet I maintained involvement because I felt it was worthwhile. As I dove into field literature on the concept of professional development, I began to realize what was written on best practices sometimes seemed contradictory to what I had observed within some of the practitioner communities around me. For example, doing “student development work” was applied to professional responsibilities that did not necessarily relate to supporting students in their development. Also, decisions were often made without considering implications, often creating additional problems. This sent confusing messages to employees and students alike, and seemed to dilute the meaning of important student affairs concepts. Because of my experience with now a different assistantship position, where department priorities and behavior that I witnessed did not seem consistent, this made me think deeper about professional development among practitioner communities. To me, what I saw demonstrated the depth of disconnect between higher education and student affairs theory and practice that I had not previously realized.

Additionally, when the new facilitator was hired I wanted to respect his new position and allow him space to make the program his own. While I believe he in turn respected what I had accomplished prior to his hire and that he valued my input, he took the lead and consequently I felt disconnected from other members of this community. Into my second year there were a number of administrative turnovers, including the individuals I first worked with when I was hired. I believed the new directors did not understand my contribution as a doctoral student intern, given that I was now a volunteer

and not I was not subject to typically annual reviews or other measures of exchanging communication on expectations, I felt disconnected from the community at large. In my view this disconnect I perceived, especially with community leaders, is symptomatic of two pervasive field trends of disconnected theory from practice in student affairs work, as well as how student service leaders recognize the need to support advanced education students in their professional development.

My ongoing reflection in how I felt about my role among the community of my internship as well as my tangential graduate assistantship proved insightful experiences for my research and what I positively contributed as an intern. Yet at the same time, I was frustrated when I considered my own professional trajectory. The more I considered my experiences and reviewed student affairs literature, the more I realized what I was frustrated about in my assistantships was a norm. While I was excited that in my internship capacity I could provide a perspective to support this program as a best practice, at times I questioned how I got into these para-professional roles when it seemed there was not more intentionality to use theory in practice to generally provide organizational direction. Now in writing my researcher perspective, I believe every aspect of this experience has turned out the way it was supposed to. Although the pervasive irony is that while I was committed to supporting the professional development of others, I felt frustrated in the development of my own professional trajectory.

At the time of these challenges, I did not see how I felt about those experiences as essential to my research or the program's development. Later upon deeper reflection, data collection, further literature review, and implications consideration, I believe communication essentially serves as validation for all employees (including graduate

assistants and volunteers) that their role among an organization is valued. Inconsistent communication, which includes relying on a trickle-down modality, inhibits frontline employees from feeling recognized in their contribution to their workplace. In turn this directly affects morale as well as efficient and effective fulfillment of an organization's mission. What I recognize now about the disconnect that I felt as an intern was that like many employees among this organization, I did not feel validated in the role I provided to this organization. Likewise given the simultaneous variety of my challenges, at that time I was not able to validate my role for myself. I know now the role I served based on Birnbaum's (1988) cybernetic model was the "sensing unit" (p.192), which monitors whether the program fulfills the organizational development intention. This model will be further explored in my implications chapter.

My professional development experiences allowed me to reflect and understand how my experience shaped my point of view in order to create the theoretical framework of this dissertation. In this process, I learned to focus my energy on deeper reflection of my professional development experiences to support my contribution to this workplace program. My personal reflection comprises my transformative learning about student affairs professional development, and wholly makes this dissertation a constructivist experience. The best practice characteristics I identified through literature and processing my observations guided the framework construction of this project. This dissertation served as reconciliation for my experiences on what best supports student affairs employee professional development, and provided outlet for making meaning of my own graduate education professional development experience. What I have come to understand as best practices for student affairs professional development contributed to

how the research agenda was built, with my aim to explore employee experiences in a workplace training program as it contributes to effective organizational development. The following sections in this chapter review what constitutes student affairs professional development and the necessary role of engaging employees in a transformative learning experience to enact organizational change.

## Historical Evolution of Student Affairs Professional Development

The term *professional* has many meanings, but typically implies competency including a level of understanding and confidence that must be reached to perform a job at a mastery level (Carpenter, 2003). From the sociology of occupations viewpoint, a profession is a special kind of work beyond primarily doing a job well or for pay (Brint, 1993). Carpenter (2003), applying Pavalko's 1971 occupational-professional model, asserts that occupations become professions to the extent they move along a number of continua. These criteria include requiring a high degree of specialized knowledge and skill, using service as a motivating agent, requiring extended preparation, and performing crucial societal tasks. The term *profession* rests on three central themes including; that members of a profession possess shared goals, that a community exists to support its members, and that attention is given to socialization and regeneration of its associates (Carpenter, 1991, 2003).

Throughout the 1990s, a number of important documents were released by student affairs professional associations that helped refocus the field and reminded members of essential student affairs philosophies that had been established decades prior to this time (Manning, et al., 2006). Included in these publications were *The Student Learning Imperative* (American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 1996) and *Powerful*

*Partnerships* (American Association for Higher Education [AAHE], the American College Personnel Association [ACPA], & the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 1998). The former advocated a renewed emphasis on student learning as a focus of student affairs practice. The latter suggested ways that various units of higher education could work together to enrich the student experience (Manning, et al., 2006).

The central point of the joint document *Powerful Partnerships* (AAHE, ACPA, & NASPA, 1998) was to extend a call for the shared responsibility of learning as a way to improve field professionalism to the memberships of these associations. This call acknowledged that as professionals of institutions of higher learning, the field of student affairs had come a long way in applying what is known about learning from a variety of disciplinary viewpoints to support the holistic development of students. It also asserted that improvements can be made by building relationships, particularly between areas of student and academic affairs, on all university and college campuses. As a central argument, it insisted that

> the reason to work collaboratively is to deepen student learning. Learning is a social activity, and modeling is one of the most powerful learning tools. As participants in organizations dedicated to learning, we have a responsibility to model for students how to work together on behalf of our shared mission and to learn from each other. (AAHE, et al., 1998, p. 1)

The value of holistic learning for students and staff has been a philosophical cornerstone of the student affairs profession since the last three decades of the 19th century, as long as college has been an American institution (ACE, 1937). *The Student Personnel Point of View of 1937* and *1949*, (ACE, 1937/1949), two foundational documents for shaping the core values of the profession (Manning, et al., 2006; Nuss, 2003), provided framework

for the profession but was less specific on how coordinated efforts to support learning should be practiced. Although advances in practice have certainly happened in the past 80 years, reasons for the disconnect between theory and practice of the field are still debated today (Fried, 2002).

Whether student affairs work is a profession has been debated for some time. As early as 1949, under the then current criteria for a profession, the field was found deficient (Wrenn, 1949). In the late 1960s, others reported similar findings (Shoben, 1967; Penney, 1969). However in 1980, student affairs was called an “emerging profession” (Carpenter, Miller, & Winston, 1980, p. 21). In 2001, an updated analysis arrived at the same conclusion (Winston, et al., 2001). More recently, leaders in the field acknowledged that if practitioners act professionally, think professionally, and hold themselves out to be professionals, it is then that “they will go a long way toward making their preferred social constructions ‘actual’” (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007, p. 269). While these assessments reveal undeniable progress for the field, student affairs is still an emerging profession. This demonstrates practitioners need their institution’s support in making student affairs work the social construction of a profession actual. As an emerging profession, the exploration here uses the terms professional, practitioner, employee, and staff synonymously. This exploration addresses how workplace specific training assists to bridge the link between theory and practice in a particular institutional setting so practitioners are supported in the goal transition of becoming student affairs professionals.

**Contributions to Field and Institutional Growth**

Expectations for continuous professional development are key elements of a thriving profession (Kruger, 2000). The growth of the student affairs field into an emerging profession has been rooted in the expansion of professional associations and academic graduate programs. Since the first academic program for student personnel workers in 1916 at Teachers College, Columbia University, the field has acknowledged the complexity of managing student service resources concurrently with contributing to the cognitive, moral, and psychosocial development of students (Nuss, 2000). Today, student affairs programs serve alongside a variety of higher education institutional services, all which strive to emphasize the importance of educating the whole student (NASPA, 1987). Likewise, growing research on the field of student affairs has identified its purpose as having scholarship and practice work in tandem (Evans, et al, 2010). In fact, "scholarship can and should provide leadership" for practice (Allen, 2002, p. 155). As such, if student affairs is to be a profession, focus must be on the role of "practitioner scholar" (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007, p. 270). A renewed sense of activism on campus helps serve the values of the profession by connecting theory and practice (Evans & Reason, 2001).

While the increasing complexity of concurrently managing student development and service resources provides understandable reasons for field growth, this development has come with debate over what constitutes student affairs and questions that demonstrate student affairs "struggles with its professional identity" (Manning, et al., 2006, p. 4). A brief chronological examination of the last half of the $20^{th}$ century to show how higher education institutions grew according to historical events provides reason for field

growth, the variety of student affairs models, and why there is continued debate over what constitutes student affairs (Manning, et al.; Thelin, 2004). In light of events over time that led to campus differences, the historical purpose of higher education as a center for professional development maintains institutional similarity (Thelin, 2004). Likewise, the student affairs foundation of advocacy remains salient throughout the field even though practice is primarily left to individual interpretation (Harrison, 2010). Given the evolution of historical events which impacted higher education and the individualized response of how institutions and practitioners handled these challenges, there is no surprise at the variety and differences of structural models and modes of practice under the current umbrella of student affairs.

**History.** Growth in the 1950s for student affairs as a professional field was influenced by the ACE publication *The Student Personnel Point of View of 1949.* While this document recommended coordinated efforts to support student learning, it was not specific on how that should be provided, so interpretation was left to individuals and institutions. Following documents recommended centralization of some services, such as social activities, student government and disciplinary action, and student records, to provide organizational order. Although for the most part, decentralization was recommended of services including orientation, counseling, health, placement, and admissions, to “distribute the responsibilities and to reach the largest number of students directly” (Muller, 1961, as cited in Manning, et al., 2006, p. 8). Student affairs work grew in complexity in the 1960s as issues of the time included civil rights, questions of free speech, the Vietnam War, and a series of court cases that challenged the law of *in loco parentis.* Practitioners at this time had the primary charge of maintaining campus

order while preserving free speech, as well as attempting to increase efficiency to maintain pace with the growing demand of people who sought higher education (Thelin, 2004). The 1970s through the 1990s have been characterized as an era of "adjustment and accountability" for higher education (Thelin, 2004, p. 16). Need for adjustment was required when federal legislation made accounts for people with disabilities to be accommodated on campuses and to ensure women had equal opportunities to men, both of which were new challenges institutions served directly to student affairs. Questions of budget accountability arose across the field first during the 1970s inflation period and again during the 1980s recession (Thelin, 2004). As the 1990s unfolded, professional associations provided tangible recommendations to refocus student affairs on institutional collaboration and student learning (AAHE, et al., 1998). Characteristic throughout these decades, institutional differences developed based on how individual practitioners interpreted how to best handle these challenges with what resources they had available.

Although history had similar effects on all higher education institutions, factors that affected the differences in student affairs organizational models include an institution's mission and culture, location, and student characteristics; the professional background of student affairs staff, presidents, and senior academic officers; academic organization, financial resources, technology, legislation, and court decisions (Sandeen, 2001). Evidently, there is no standard structure that can fit institutions equally, and even an organizational model that may have worked for an institution 10 years prior may need realignment to be effective today (Sandeen, 2001). Manning, Kinzie, and Schuh (2006) explore three traditional models and the types of structures found under these models, and propose two additional innovative models, based on their qualitative case study research

of 20 high-performing institutions with the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) project. Identification of various types of student affairs models is innovative in itself in that their research shows why traditional ideals of student affairs manifest differently based on how a model is structured to serve its institutional purpose. A brief outline of their findings assists to identify what kind of models form the missions found in different types of institutions and how different missions affect how student affairs ideas manifest. To extend their findings, this research proposes workplace training that demonstrates how an institution's mission, as informed by its structure, can connect practitioner understanding of student affairs ideals to the unique way these ideals manifest in a particular workplace. This kind of workplace specific training can provide practitioners with empowering support to understand their environment and apply resources accordingly for their own development toward becoming more effective field professionals.

**Structures.** Based on research with the DEEP project, Manning, Kinzie, and Schuh (2006) identify three traditional student affairs models, which are outlined below for recognition of current structures in practice, and two additional recommended innovative models of how student affairs structures operate. The first traditional model is out-of-classroom-centered, which can be found in institutions that promote an extracurricular structure of student affairs. By this structure, academic and student affairs are clearly divided where cognitive development was a function for the classroom and social, emotional, and noncognitive development was allocated to out-of-classroom activities. The advantage for this split was it allowed growth for functional expertise in areas delegated student services, discrete budgeting was encouraged, faculty could focus

on teaching, research and service, and it gave reason to define the work of student affairs practitioners. The extracurricular model rests on a foundation of psychosocial student development, as student leadership is linked to the young adult development of democratic values, citizenship, and community commitment. The role of student affairs staff in this model is to be responsible for the choices made about the services, program, and environment that advance students' engagement. The strength of this model lies in that some administrative areas, such as student activities and residence life, thrive in this environment as community building and social programming have been connected to retention, student satisfaction with the institution, and academic gains. Adversely, departments that more closely align with academics, including orientation, advising, service learning and career development, may be sidelined on account of the lack of integration of the student affairs and academic missions. This lack of integration leaves an institution challenged by the philosophy of supporting the whole student, and likewise, "when the extracurricular becomes more important than the curricular, the purpose of college is lost… for students as much as student affairs professionals" (p. 55). This model has led to confusion of the purpose of student affairs theory, and likewise, what purpose faculty of traditional academic disciplines serve outside their classroom.

The second traditional model is administrative-centered, which is found primarily in large institutions and stemmed from balancing the twin goals of providing student guidance and managing student resources among growing institutional systems. Two types of structures emerged from the question of how to balance these goals, a student services approach favored supporting administrative need, and a functioning silos approach favored student development. A student services structure differs from a

functioning silo in that from a services perspective, student development is not seen as the purpose of student affairs so a developmental approach to the provision of service is not assumed. Similarly, a services model does not fit with all areas of student affairs, as a customer service approach conflicts with intentional learning and community development areas such as student activities, disciplinary affairs, and service learning. Institutional size typically dictated which approach was taken, where large institutions were more administratively oriented and smaller organizations could accommodate to be more student oriented, but both structures mirror similar characteristics in their bureaucratic specialization rather than the integration of resources.

An administrative-centered model is characterized by 1) allegiance to the specific role of a particular functioning area; 2) autonomy by function, space and resources; 3) decentralization of supervision, professional development, and goals; 4) possible competition among departments for resources; 5) philosophical assumption that students require different programs, services, and environments that are best offered by distinct offices; and 6) organizational assumption that services, programs, and policies can be adequately delivered without division level coordination. Its strengths are that convenience is provided for students to navigate available resources among a large system, staff are often experts in the area of the resource they provide so students receive a high level of service, and space is created for those who teach and conduct research to focus on their specialty. Because the division of specialization is clear, administrative and organizational clarity is possible, and stand-alone budgeting makes individual offices often responsible for their own income and expenses. In an administrative-centered model, the priority is to provide many resources and disciplines to as many people as

possible as a broad breath of a higher education experience. The reverse side of this is the depth of a higher education experience, advocated for in student affairs literature and typically found in building relationships with staff for the purpose of holistic systemic learning, tends to fall by the wayside. Students are viewed as consumers who access resources on a periodic basis as need arises, so customer-service oriented management borrowed from the corporate sector is applied to student services to promote "one-stop-shopping" (p. 70). In this model, individual relationships between staff and students are not as important as the overall reputation of an office. Attempts to build collaboration to increase collegiality and familiarity among resource offices may seem artificial as relationship building is not a cultural norm for an administrative-centered model.

The third traditional model is learning-centered, which is a foundational element of contemporary student affairs literature. This approach to the student experience suggests that student and academic affairs share similar philosophies. While complementary goals may be for students to have a holistic learning experience, the approach taken can differ significantly. First, in a competitive-adversarial structure, academic and student affairs agree on what students learn and how they develop, but might not see how a coordinated complimentary learning experience for students should be implemented. The competitive dimension of this model reflects the unintended, but often real, competition for students' time and energy between academics and student affairs, and adversarial tensions result from different points of view between philosophical goals and coordinated practice. The strength of this structure is in its learning intention, the weakness occurs in the lack of coordinated delivery to follow through with this intention. Second, in a co-curricular structure, student affairs

practitioners know development occurs for students outside the classroom, so an approach for providing learning is mapped as separate from formal academic curriculum. The philosophical features for this structure are that learning is acknowledged as possible to happen anywhere, and student and academic affairs missions are created as distinct but complementary in accordance to provide for this learning approach. Practitioners are committed to student learning, but maintain to do so within their own sphere of influence. These boundaries characterize the campus environment, and student and academic affairs cross only in rare situations. Third, in a seamless-learning structure the institution acknowledges learning potential is possible in every student experience, and collaboration between student and academic affairs leaders often occurs. Collaborative missions and efforts can be found across campus, where everyone contributes to student learning, and in- and out-of-classroom learning boundaries are indistinguishable. A seamless-learning model has been argued as most closely aligning, of all traditional models, with the goal intention to provide learning throughout higher education as directed by student affairs literature and professional associations.

The three models presented here are categorical representations of the varied institutions examined in Manning, Kinzie, and Schuh's (2006) research; because of history and diversity of administrators, every institution will maintain its own identity. The value of viewing structural models as categories aids understanding in how structures generally affect institutional culture. Recognizing how different structural models form the distinct missions and subsequent cultures found in various types of institutions opens the door for reflection on how student affairs ideals manifest differently in separate

higher education environments and how professional development for staff can be implemented accordingly.

Because a large public university maintains an administrative-centered student services structure reflective in its customer service mission does not necessarily mean there is no space for student affairs relationship-oriented philosophy to be put into practice. In order for this to happen though, institutional leaders must identify and direct how these ideals ought to manifest throughout an organization, and workplace training serves to support employees in considering these expectations and their role in practicing such ideals. The goals of student affairs do not change based on institutional differences, but how these goals are practiced is often left to the interpretation of individual practitioners. For practitioners affiliated with major field professional associations, ACPA and NASPA both make frequent reference to the key function for effective student affairs practice is "advocating for student welfare and concerns" (Harrison, 2010, p. 198). Advocacy then speaks to the common binding agent among all institutions: to serve to the historical purpose of higher education as centers of learning for student professional development (Harrison, 2010; Thelin, 2004). The ways advocacy is individually interpreted provides reason for why student affairs employees, arguably in particular for those within an administrative-centered structure, need support in the form of tailored training to connect student affairs principles to their position in the unique environment of their workplace

**Advocacy agents.** While institutions have taken relatively unique paths in developing their campus cultures based on individual administrator decisions for handling historical challenges, higher education in the United States has maintained the

common purpose of providing professional development for students (Birnbaum, 1988). During the middle of the 19th century, the American society class system was restructuring according to the concept of career, and a redefined middle class emerged with professionalism as the goal for this new social stratum (Bledstein, 1976). Higher education and its growing number of institutions at this time provided the necessary matrix for development of professionalism, forming to new attitudes about authority, mobility, merit, and success that has come to characterize modern American society (Bledstein, 1976). The institutions that contributed to a new professionally conscious society in this 19th century phenomenon became quintessential to middle class thought and action about professional development that many Americans today continue to view the college experience as a critical milestone for development into adulthood (Thelin, 2004). While the cost of attending a college or university maintains this experience as a privilege, the purpose that continues to bind the phenomenon of desire for higher education should remind educators and administrators of the responsibility to student learning through professional development.

The social desire for professionalism acquired through higher education has grown, reflected in the number of institutions that have grown to maintain pace with demand (Zernike, 2009). While the social value for advanced degrees is clearly evident, legislative policy to support higher education in fulfilling this social value has not maintained pace. In 1910 an American public university on average received 75% of its institutional operating budget from state support, and accounting for inflation, by 2000 that amount had fallen to less than 20% (Thelin, 2004). Due to demand and institutional competition for students in particular over the past half century, the characterization of

modern institutions as "multiversity," first described in 1963 by then chancellor of the University of California, Clark Kerr, is a term still relevant and used in higher education literature today (Birnbaum, 1988; Harrison, 2010; Thelin, 2004). A "multiversity," which is a complex organization defined by competing constituencies and disparate goals, interests, and demands for human and financial resources (Harrison, 2010), is depicted in how contemporary theorists argue that the source of this competition can be found in the conflation of corporate and educational purposes (Bousquet, 2008; Giroux, 2007; Washburn, 2005). As competition among institutions to provide foremost customer service turns traditional institutions of professional development into commodity for degrees, systemic learning for students must compete for resources allocated to appease students as customers paying for degree receipt. This notion of colleges and universities as sites ripe for role conflict forms the conceptual framework for understanding why students, who attend leaning centers to obtain professional development, need advocates in institutions that ostensibly exist to serve them (Harrison, 2010).

Experts argue that with degree commoditization, universities have lost their clarity of purpose to serve the student among the host of other constituencies to which they are beholden (Bok, 2003; Hersh & Merrow, 2005; Kirp, 2003). This results in an institutional situation that positions student affairs professionals in conflicting dual roles as advocates for students and upholders of university systems not necessarily operating with students' best interest for learning in mind. Literature articulating student affairs principles (Barr & Keating, 1979) acknowledged the profession historically has positioned itself as an organizational entity that exists as a corrective to the shift of

institutional attention away from students, as such practitioners must play a political role on campus. Even so, given that employees come from many backgrounds (Bryan & Schwartz, 1998), some practitioners may not realized their need to take a political role in their position, and additionally some types of institutional cultures are supported when staff do not assume advocacy roles (Birnbaum, 1988). Empirical research found that mid-level practitioners who took an advocacy role in their position felt they had to self-navigate and interpret the political climate of their workplace, and felt ill equipped in their graduate education and professional association involvement for how to do so in order to support student learning through their practice (Harrison, 2010). Without training tailored for employees to connect field principles to the unique environment of their workplace, student affairs values including reasons for relationship building and systemic advocacy are left to individual interpretation. The following sections focus on student affairs philosophical foundations that outline the goals of the profession and recommendations for professional development.

## Goals of Student Affairs<br>Professional Development

Divisions of student affairs "constitutes all activities undertaken or sponsored by the educational institution, aside from [or in collaboration with] curricular instruction, in which the student's personal development is the primary concern" (Cowley, 1983, p. 65). As the field of student affairs has grown, professionals have recognized holistic education systematically affects areas beyond just cognitive development. This understanding positions the role of student affairs members as advocates and care agents for students in a way that addresses their personal and professional development, to prepare students for diverse social and occupational environments (Carpenter, 1979). Employees therefore

also need to be their own care agent by engaging in continuous professional growth to stay abreast of the dynamic nature and increasing expectations of student affairs work. Under services that foster an environment that promotes individual learning, students can grow in their intellectual, cultural, social, physical, emotional, and spiritual development (Carpenter, 1979). The philosophy of student affairs practice, for student as well as staff, has been summarized as "concern for the development of the whole person" (Rodgers, 1990c, p. 27). Professional development contributes to support practitioners holistically.

Professional development is a process that leads to the growth of quality staff and, in turn, to organizational effectiveness (Bryan & Schwartz, 1998). As such, the goals of professional development are to increase organization effectiveness as well as employee quality and satisfaction (Nottingham, 1998; Scott, 2000). These goals are illustrated by the statement that "on one hand, professional development refines an individual's skills; on the other hand it serves the purpose of furthering the cause of the organization" (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007, p. 277).

Within a higher education setting, professional development is complex due to its occurrence on different levels, in different settings, and among relationships with individuals and national associations. Professional development at various levels can include individual support such as tuition deferment and mentoring, cluster programs such as brown bag lunches, department wide workshops, divisional gatherings, or professional association affiliation (Bryan and Schwartz, 1998). In student affairs, graduate education and professional associations are two primary ways practitioners gain common knowledge and understanding about the field (Bryan and Schwartz, 1998), although neither form of professional development is consistently requisite for practice

by institutions across the field. Exposure to graduate education or professional association activity are experiences that commonly elicit transformative learning for adult educators because they provide opportunity to reflect on and more deeply understand what the purpose of their work serves (Cranton, 1996). For individuals who have not engaged in this opportunity because it is not requisite for practice at their particular institution, how does a practitioner "grow and learn about the purpose of their practice?" (Cranton, 1996, xii). Workplace professional development training can aim to fill this need.

Due to the diverse and dynamic nature of student affairs work, employees should be engaged in continuous professional development. Effective staff development is an important institutional investment in human capital, and without this investment there is no assurance of individual or organizational competence, professionalism, retention, or personal development (Scott, 2000). To provide staff with the tools and skills required for successful student affairs work, administrators at all levels need to openly discuss the varied types of work relationships and corresponding opportunities for professional development as a demonstration of institutional care for practitioners so they can most aptly provide care to students. Similarly, administrators must articulate clear definitions of staff roles, expectations, goals, norms, and opportunities for personal and professional development (Amey, 1990, 2002; Carpenter, Torres & Winston, 2001; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Schneider, 2002; Scott, 2000).

**Transformative learning as professional development.** Professional development is an essential tool for success because it provides student affairs practitioners a community forum to constructively discuss challenges, learn new ideas

about field foundations, and recognize achievements. While assessment reveals progress for defining student affairs as a profession (Winston, et al., 2001), there is work that can still be done to understand what constitutes effective professional development (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007). Additionally, professional development should connect to field theory so meaningful practice can follow (Allen, 2002; Evans, et al., 2010). When employees have a supportive social network that demonstrates community care and helps its members connect their daily activity to a workplace mission, a transformative learning environment is created that can simultaneously contribute to learning and growth for a practitioner and can strengthen student affairs as a profession for an institution.

Transformative learning occurs when an individual reflects on assumptions or expectations, has found these assumptions to be faulty, and has revised them (Cranton, 1996; Mezirow, 1991). The value of transformative learning as professional development is that as practitioners have the opportunity through training to think about their workplace structure and its subsequent culture, they can reflect on how their own philosophical approach to their job fits within their community. When an employee evaluates their own assumptions about the institution where they work, and considers that their assumptions and an institution's culture may not align, that is an opportunity for staff to reflect on how their professional philosophy and expectations can be reconsidered as a way to support their own best practice. There are a variety of outcomes possible from this growth opportunity, but the ultimate goal in professional development that aims for participant transformative learning is for practitioners to reflect on the premise by which their values are determined (Cranton, 1996). If a practitioner realizes their

personal assumptions about their workplace are premised as such because of an institution's structure, recognition can be made of how their own values project where this assumption stems. This becomes an opportunity that can lead to "transformed meaning perspectives" (Cranton, 1996, p. 2) or a changed way of seeing the world.

The purpose of professional development is to increase organizational effectiveness and employee quality and satisfaction (Nottingham, 1998; Scott, 2000). Transformative learning, defined as a changed way of seeing the world (Cranton, 1996), should then be a goal in provided professional development opportunity. Certainly not every employee who participates in workplace professional development training will experience transformative learning; a guarantee that the goals of professional development will be achieved for every member of an organization is not possible. An institution will certainly have employees who have not had previous exposure to student affairs, or have understanding of field philosophy but are unfamiliar with how it is approached differently based on an institution's structure. These employees may struggle through the process of transformative learning, or may not be open to learning at all, as a way to see how foundational principles apply in their work environment. Yet if administrators believe their organization is not as effective as it could be and employee quality and satisfaction suffers, organizational change is essential. Organizational change can be stimulated through formalized continuous workplace professional development training for employees. While transformative learning is an ideal training program goal, how participants experience learning can vary. While general learning may result from training, how participants describe their experience and whether it supports a changed way of seeing the world can only be revealed through qualitative assessment. In the

context of this research, exploring the experience of employees determines initial benchmarks for whether a workplace training program has been effective in transforming staff behavior in contribution to organizational development.

**Summary and Proposal Overview**

Student affairs principles manifest differently based on how an institution is structured to handle social and political challenges. It can no longer be assumed that one style of student affairs practice is congruent with the mission and ways of operating for different types of institutions. Accordingly, workplace professional development training can support employees in understanding how to align their practice with the mission of the organization and manage the social and political challenges with which they are faced. The purpose of this research explores student affairs employee experiences with workplace training as a gauge for the program's initial effectiveness in transforming its member's behavior for continued organizational development.

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter one focuses on the significance and issues of student affairs professional development, my experience with professional development, and what purpose my research serves. I include my perspective in chapter one because this research is both personal and professional. I bring my whole self into this project and co-construct meaning about student affairs professional development through my interactions with the participants. As the theoretical paradigm for this research is constructivist in nature, it is important for the reader to know what I bring to this study, as a way to distinguish my voice from the participants whom I represent. Likewise, reflection on my own professional development

experience in accord with reviewing field discourse on this topic provided insight for this literature review construction.

Chapter two provides an overview of relevant discourses, including establishment of practitioner standards, transformative learning as a development gauge, perpetuates of the development continuum, the role of relationships in achieving development goals, and what professional development contributes to building an institutional culture of support for systemic development. Chapter three includes discussion of paradigms, methodology, and methods for this research, as well as what constitutes the context of this case study, a workplace professional development program titled The Leadership Center (LC). Likewise, data collection terms, criteria to achieve goodness, and data analysis are outlined to demonstrate what encapsulates researching employee experiences with a workplace professional development training program.

In chapter four, I provide narratives on the 12 participants of my case study. In conducting interviews, I focused on the social backgrounds and work history of my participants to frame their experience with the program. I used a sociological narrative analysis technique to gather data for this case study because I aimed to gather points of view of many types of people in different roles among this organization to gauge diverse perspectives on employee's program experience. This chapter therefore reflects the broad diversity of who is served through this workplace training program.

Chapter five shows the themes I found through my participant's stories. I report how the workplace culture is depicted by employees, as it provides insight to longstanding issues employees experience. While most employees I spoke with were initially unsure of what could be gained from engaging in a workplace training program,

all my participants felt invested in from their experience. Similarly, everyone reported they learned something that helped them understand the bigger picture of their department's operations, in a way that helped them consider ways to work more effectively and efficiently in their work roles. While organizational transparency was valued, some additional support was requested and is outlined here.

Implications of this research draws conclusion in chapter six. In this chapter, suggestions to further develop the LC program as it may support the overall organization are offered, as well as recommendations and thoughts to consider for practitioners and scholars interested in further contributing to this body of literature. This research raises practical awareness of a dynamic problem mostly addressed in literature, and provides theory to practice direction for implementing employee support to motivate efficient and effective student affairs organizational development.

# CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

*"On one hand, professional development refines an individual's skills;*
*on the other hand it serves the purpose of furthering the cause of the organization"*
*-Carpenter & Stimpson*

Empirical research on student affairs professional development has explored its meaning and value, and demonstrated its purpose as a way to address ever increasing challenges for higher education (Altbach, et al., 2005; Sandeen & Barr, 2006). Literature has also demonstrated the need for professional associations (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998), development activity appropriate to employees' growth level and an organization's culture (Miller & Carpenter, 1980; Winston & Creamer, 2002), academic graduate programs that connect scholarship and practice (Komives & Taub, 2000), and social networking to build relationships (Harned & Murphy, 1998). Since the largest portion of organizational budgets is typically allocated to staff salaries, several studies have identified the ethical responsibility of supporting human capital as a way to promote mentorship and reduce turnover (Nicholls, 2001; Woodard & von Destinon, 2000). Additionally, the goal of student affairs to deepen learning as a demonstration of care for the student as a whole person (Rodgers, 1990c) should also be a goal in supporting student affairs employees (AAHE, et al., 1998).

To date, little research has delved into the experience of student affairs staff who undergo formalized continuous professional development training that aims to support employee practice in accord with an organization's mission. This literature review

section includes standards for practice as a way to measure growth experiences in student affairs, as well as how adult transformative learning serves to indicate personal growth through the continuum of field professional development. Additionally, research about the professional growth continuum for individuals is explored, as is the purpose for building workplace relationships to reinforce individual and organizational growth. Finally, literature discourse on institutional culture and a recommendation of student affairs structures conducive to systemic learning is reviewed. Supporting best practices through professional growth opportunity that contribute to continual staff learning also provides reason for relationship building across department wide co-workers and motivates continued organizational development. The theories examined guide empirical research on employee experiences with workplace training as support for their transformed behavior toward continual organizational development.

## Standards for Field Practice

Many modern professions have a standardized path of professional development training. Carpentry, electrical work, public accounting, law, medicine, and classroom teaching all require strict guidelines for the development of critical skills and often accompany designations that identify professional accomplishments and serve as guidelines for compensation. These skill levels are governed by satisfactory completion of formal coursework, supervised apprenticeships, association memberships, and final written examinations (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). Often recertification or license renewal is requisite to maintain this professional standing (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). Many current expectations for professional standards stem from Abraham Flexner's 1910 criteria (as cited in Schwartz & Bryan, 1998) for medical education a century ago. At

that time, physicians typically were trained through apprenticeships and limited education. That model changed when Flexner asserted professional training should include formal education, professional standards, professional associations, and ethics. Other fields that emerged since then have similarly defined professional standards by these same principles of professional education and practice (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998).

In student affairs, there is not a specialized license-to-practice and field specific advanced education is typically preferred but not required for most positions. Although not required for professional practice, graduate education and professional associations are two primary ways practitioners gain the common knowledge and understanding of theory for practice across such a diverse and dynamic discipline. Bryan and Schwartz (1998) note professional development at various levels can include individual support such as tuition deferment and mentoring, cluster programs such as brown bag lunches, department wide workshops, divisional gatherings, or professional association affiliation. Of these examples, tuition deferment benefits to support graduate education and encouragement to affiliate with professional associations are most common (Bryan & Schwartz, 1998). Through the educational process, new practitioners become familiar with field literature and acquire the basics of professional knowledge and skills, and are exposed to the general expectations of professional standards of practice (Komives & Taub, 2000). The current challenge is that while graduate education and professional association involvement exposes practitioners to the field as it is generally known, institutional operational differences manifests student affairs ideals differently leaving the interpretation of theory to practice up to an individual (Harrison, 2010; Manning, et al., 2006). Without workplace training to discuss expectations for principles in practice,

there is no guarantee employees are equipped to consistently and systemically support the learning purpose of a higher education organization. The following section outlines advocacy as a key concept student affairs professional associations consider quintessential, and research on how practitioners interpret this concept, as well as primary forms of professional development including graduate education and field association participation for how these concepts are introduced.

**Practitioners as Advocates**

In 1987, to mark the 50th anniversary of the initial *The Student Personnel Point of View* publication which continues to serve as a student affairs foundational document, a reestablished version was published. This document states the traditional purposes of higher education are to promote learning to “preserve, transmit, and create knowledge; to encourage personal development; and to serve society” (NASPA, 1987). These purposes are complicated with the additional charge of providing programs to help students cope with significant life transitions in light of escalating rates of social change. This document acknowledges student affairs assumes the role within higher education of establishing open methods of campus decision making regarding social challenges with students best interest in mind, and provides expectations and responsibilities of student service employees as guidance for higher education leaders. While this bulleted list of expectations is extensive, it is void of recommendation for practice to allow for individual interpretation. Relevant summary can be found in the mission statements of both major professional associations, NASPA and ACPA. NASPA aims to “provide professional development and advocacy for student affairs educators and administrators who share the responsibility for a campus-wide focus on the student learning experience”

(NASPA, n.d.). Similarly, ACPA aims to "lead the student affairs profession and the higher education community in providing outreach, advocacy, research, and professional development to foster college student learning" (ACPA, n.d.). A key function of student affairs work can therefore be summarized as "advocating for student welfare and concerns" (Harrison, 2010, p. 197).

While ethical standards of the field call employees to advocate on behalf of students, Harrison's (2010) empirical research identified that practitioners defined and practiced their role as advocate according to their individual interpretation and faced significant challenges in fulfilling this role. Harrison conducted multiple in-depth interviews with six participants of different personal demographic characteristics, areas of responsibility, and institutions with student populations that ranged from 4,000 to 50,000. Participants had the commonality of being mid-level administrators (primarily area directors), with field related advanced degrees, affiliated with at least one professional association, and located in the state of California. Her purpose was to explore and identify strategies and consequences that influenced mid-level employees in navigating the political landmines they faced in their efforts to support student learning.

Harrison (2010) collected data under a participatory action research agenda, through transcribed and member-checked individual interviews and researcher journaling. Participants were invited to engage in a collective conference call, but all individually declined, uniformly citing reservations toward anything that would compromise the confidentiality of their identities including meeting as a group. The student affairs profession highly regards group communication and collaboration (Lovell & Kosten, 2000), and Harrison noted these participants were no exception as they all

talked frequently and consistently about the value of teamwork as part of successful advocacy. Meaningfully, Harrison highlighted the complexity of advocacy in student affairs is additionally complicated when practitioners felt the need to not discuss their role as advocate even among similarly-minded company for fear their identity would be compromised. While this presented a challenge in the data analysis, individual contributions did yield rich, thick description of what became distinguishing characteristics of advocacy interpretations among participants. Advocacy was primarily determined by individual interpretation but generally was defined as aiming to provide wide-spread support for students' learning in their college experience. By individual interpretation through personal experience, participants' qualified advocacy as support for learning in terms of either a systems challenge or as resource accumulation.

Results showed that participants experienced conflict between their loyalties to students and upper-level administrators. Participants equally spoke of needing to individually interpret advocacy practice on their own, and likewise regretfully about having to learn such strategies by the "seat of the pants" (p. 207). Multiple participants felt their education and training as student affairs professionals actually set them up to fail by encouraging them to advocate for students without greater clarity about potential consequences. Differences in advocacy interpretation stemmed from how participants experienced what was commonly referred to as challenging "the system" (p. 207) for change. Some participants faced political fallout through either being labeled a "non-team player" (p. 208), or in one case the employee lost their job. Real and projected consequences posed danger sufficient enough to influence participants' choices in how and whether to practice advocacy in their future field positions. Alternatively, some

participants who had experienced consequences for challenging power structures in their previous institutions continued to identify advocacy as a significant purpose to their work. Their discourse showed a pattern of learning from experience and reframing their understanding of advocacy in terms of “garnering resources” (p. 205). These particular participants saw their revised interpretation of advocacy as a compromise between what they all referred to as “selling out” and what one participant called “martyring yourself” (p. 206). All participants articulated a keen awareness of facing political landmines in practicing advocacy in student affairs work, and developed strategies throughout the course of their careers to navigate them.

Harrison’s research found that advocacy strategies differed based on participants’ individual interpretation, and consequences to practicing advocacy among all participants included job loss, failure to secure promotion opportunities, low morale, and stress. Findings suggest that student affairs professionals are not adequately prepared for consequences that can occur when they attempt to practice advocacy efforts that are central to the student affairs profession. This study demonstrated that while advocacy is a central student affairs concept, it is often left to the individual employee to define core concepts in the context of their practice, in some cases to their own professional detriment. The following sections explore the primary forms of professional development for teaching practitioners field concepts, academic graduate programs and field associations.

## Academic Graduate Programs

Student affairs master’s level education provides exposure to field scholarship and offers opportunities beyond undergraduate student leadership. Field specific doctoral

education offers formal opportunities for building additional competencies with the goal to empower educational leadership, provide perspectives that enable the role of change agent, and stimulate research inquiry (Komives & Taub, 2000). Although important, success in student affairs should not be judged by degrees earned (Paine, 2004), or advanced education becomes a status symbol rather than a tool for personal and community transformative learning. Fortunately as the field matures, there has been increased recognition by field leaders in the value of student affairs post-baccalaureate education (Komives & Taub, 2000). While doctoral education becomes increasingly required for top administrative position eligibility (Winston, et al., 2001), it becomes difficult to discern practitioners who seek advanced education for the purpose of social status compared to those looking to invest in their own learning as support for their communities. Field literature does not explore differences in practitioner pursuit of advanced education. Therefore assumptions must rest on existing literature which promotes field specific graduate education as professional development for practitioners seeking personal investment to empower their communities with the transformative learning decree of student affairs philosophy.

Educated and motivated management and support staff who believe in the learning purpose of higher education is central to the delivery of quality learning opportunities and services for students (Byron & Schwartz, 1998). Therefore practitioners familiar with the scope of higher education scholarship can be more readily in tune with a campus milieu and can better connect theory to daily practice (Allen, 2002). Since the first academic program for student personnel workers in 1916 at Teachers College, Columbia University, more than 100 master’s and doctoral programs

in or related to student affairs have been established (Komives & Taub, 2000). A primary reason for the increased number of student affairs programs stems from a growing acknowledgement that formally trained university staff can better understand the complexity of managing student service resources while concurrently contributing to the cognitive, moral, and psychosocial development of students (Nuss, 2000). Particularly for employees new to a professional student affairs environment, academic training ensures a basic understanding of the language, history, traditions, symbols, and tools of the profession. With escalating higher education challenges stemming from social and political issues, formal student affairs graduate education is a central part of professional development as it supports practitioner preparedness for the modern expectations of holistically supporting student development.

Demonstrating the growing value of student affairs graduate education, reports in recent years have shown an increasing percentage of top higher education administrators with student affairs or closely related doctoral degrees. Under the Carnegie classification system with the NASPA membership database, doctorates are typically the highest degree earned by Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) at all types of institutions other than community and two-year colleges (Kruger, 1998). Although this report did not include the length of tenure in a particular position, doctorates are common at public universities and the expectation of the degree increases with institutional size (Kruger, 1998). In 1981, Moore reported that at four-year institutions, 13% of all higher education administrators with doctorates held degrees in higher education or a closely related field. Further in 1987, Paterson found that 25% of SSAOs held doctorates in higher education or student personnel administration, and 63% of SSAOs held any type of doctorate at all.

Eleven years later, in Kruger's (1998) survey of 1,045 NASPA affiliated SSAOs showed 56% held a doctorate in higher education or a closely related field (Komives & Taub, 2000). While the student affairs field needs more definitive information on degrees held by department heads and SSAOs, this evidence represents growing recognition of the value of advanced student affairs education for professional development and career advancement. The following section recognizes the role of professional associations in furthering employee professional development.

**Professional Associations**

Student affairs has a long tradition of providing educational opportunities through broadly encompassing or department specific professional associations at state, regional, and national levels. Seven out of ten staff members in higher education belong to at least one professional association and one in four belongs to four or more (Maurer & Sheets, 1998). There are more than 25 national student affairs and higher education associations, many with regional and local affiliates (Nuss, 2000). As these associations have grown, more task-specific and institution type-specific associations have developed and each association has provided new tracks for practitioner orientation and education (Nuss, 2000).

Professional associations serve multiple objectives including advancement of understanding, recognition, and knowledge of the field; development and dissemination of practice standards; signaling the public to key issues; stimulation and organization of volunteerism; and providing practitioners with peer groups that promote identity (Fisher, 1997; Maurer & Sheets, 1998; Nuss, 2000). Individuals and their institutions both derive advantages from participation in professional associations because of the social

networking and field information acquisition that helps practitioners strategize ways to acquire or improve professional and administrative skills (Nuss, 2000). Even so, common barriers to association involvement include time investment, that an institution may not support involvement with released time or reimbursement costs, and staff may not be encouraged or supported by their supervisor in taking association leadership roles (Gallemore & Ming, 1997).

Aside from the possibility of student affairs practice requisites such as academic graduate education and professional association involvement, other standards for practice (if any) deemed necessary as a way for institutional leaders to measure practitioner quality growth through learning will vary according to institution. Additional required or optional forms of professional development may include cluster, department, or divisional programs such as brownbag lunch discussions, panel workshops, or formal workplace training (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). Regardless, the central purpose of any form of professional development is to provide learning for adults relevant to salient field and campus concerns as support for practitioners to conduct their job according to their organization's mission. The following section investigates how constructs of adult and transformative learning can serve to indicate an individual's growth through the continuum of field professional development.

## Adult Transformative Learning

Entry into student affairs work is typically facilitated by practitioners influential in the learning and development of student leaders interested in reciprocating the support they received (Richman & Sherman, 1991). The attractiveness of working for higher education as a vocation often stems from the personal value of supporting continued

learning for one's self and others (Bash, 2005; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). While learning is continuous through adulthood (Hoare, 2006), transformative learning is characterized as the experience within adult learning where a point of view is transformed (Cranton, 1996; Kegan, 2000). Therefore the goal of a student affairs professional development opportunity is for employees to engage in learning about their philosophy in practice as a way to encourage transformed behavior. Research on employee experiences with workplace professional development training gauges program effectiveness as it impacts staff practices toward continued organizational development. The following subsections explore the concept of adult transformative learning and how it can offer insight indicate workplace training effectiveness.

**Adult Learning Goals**

An adult is commonly defined as a person old enough to be held responsible for their actions (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2006; Mezirow, 2000). Even partial autonomy requires communicative competence, and a sense of agency implies perceptive understanding of personal experience (Merriam, et al., 2006). The power to control and determine personal actions in the context of desires and intentions is a definition of free will, and transformative learning for adults includes this cognitive dimension (Mezirow, 2000).

In the late 1960s, the European concept of andragogy was applied to American education and defined as "the art and science of helping adults learn", as a contrast with pedagogy, to distinguish adult learning from preadult schooling (Merriam, 2001). Through the 1980s debate persisted, and an andragogy versus pedagogy position reformed to a continuum model ranging from teacher-directed to student-directed

learning (Knowles, 1989). Knowles (1989) acknowledged with this model that both learning approaches were appropriate with children and adults, depending on the situation.

The five assumptions underlying andragogy describe the adult learner as someone who 1) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning; 2) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning; 3) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles; 4) is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge; and 5) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors (Knowles, 1980; Merriam, 2001). From these assumptions, Knowles (1980) proposed a program planning model for designing, implementing, and evaluating educational experiences with adults. For example, with regard to the first assumption that as adults mature they become more independent and self-directing, Knowles suggested that the classroom climate should be one of "adultness" (1980). Because adults typically manage most aspects of their own lives, they are capable of directing, or at least assisting in planning, their own learning. In an "adult" classroom, adults "feel accepted, respected, and supported"; further, there exists "a spirit of mutuality between teachers and students as joint inquirers" (Knowles, 1980, p. 47). It is this experience of mutuality that supports learning development in adulthood (Merriam, 2001). Similarly, seeing a shared learning experience as meaningful is often a transformative process that becomes clarified through "expansive awareness, critical reflection, validating discourse, and reflective action" as a learner moves toward a fuller realization of agency (Mezirow, 2000). Ultimately, to support adult transformative

learning, a spirit of mutual respect elicits reciprocal learning. The following section outlines goals of transformative learning in adults.

**Transformative Learning**

The transformation theory of learning identifies the essential principles of how people learn to change their frame of reference as it affects praxis (Kegan, 2000). Related to the concepts of paradigm shifts and critical theory rooted in self-reflection, transformative learning theory is derived from democratic societies where adult education is a vocation and liberal viewpoints depend on informed free human choice and desire for social justice (Mezirow, 1991). Transformative learning has a natural home in student affairs, as the field of student affairs has a history of philosophical commitment to social justice dating from the second *Student Personnel Point of View* (ACE, 1949) and reflected in the current mission statements of ACPA and NASPA (Evans & Reason, 2001). Similarly, there exists evidence of student affairs workers' addressing prominent issues of prejudice as early as the 1920s (Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, Tuttle, Ward, & Gaston-Gayles, 2004). An example of transformative learning demonstrated in a relevant social justice movement includes Mezirow's 1978 grounded theory study (as cited in Mezirow, 1991) on women returning to higher education. This research showed how the women's movement pioneered transformative learning through highlighting personal empowerment and consciousness raising as characteristic of social justice activity (Mezirow, 1991).

Transformative theory focuses on the way that individuals learn to negotiate and act on their purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those assimilated from others, "to gain greater control over [their] lives as socially responsible, clear thinking

decision makers" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8). To be able to do this is an indication of personal development, considered to be a "positive growth process in which the individual becomes increasingly able to integrate and act on many different experiences and influences" (Evans, et al., 2010). Values associated with social justice like freedom, empathy, self-awareness, equality, tolerance, and rationality create a normative foundation on which to gauge transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). The ultimate goal of transformative learning is for a developed individual to be able to live the daily activity of their personal and professional life in accordance with demonstrating these principles for the good of the communities around them (Reason, Broido, Davis & Evans, 2005).

Transformative theory inherently builds on previous modes of meaning making because it focuses on becoming critically aware of personal and other's assumptions and expectations and "assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (Bruner, 1996; Mezirow, 2000, p. 4). As the term *transform* suggests, transformative learning is different from informational learning as the former changes "not only *what* we know but *how* we know" something, and meaningful association with this new point of view is recognized (Kegan, 2000, p. 49). Learning is the process of using prior interpretation to construct a new or revised meaning of personal experience as a guide for future action (Mezirow, 1991). Additionally, justification for personal beliefs, values, and feelings depends on biographical, historical, and cultural context, and learning requires intentional consciousness of these variables. Although individuals process meaning differently (Kegan, 1994), in a transformative theory context, communication building occurs when

discourse is devoted to searching for interpretation and a common understanding of social or political action.

**Professional Development as Transformative Learning**

Through a literature analysis of adult and transformative learning theories, Cranton (1996) applied these ideas in accrual of her own theory of adult educator professional development. While Cranton applies her position to adult educators generally, the context of this research addressing student affairs practitioners as young adult educators fits her criterion. Her position is that an effective education practitioner necessarily reflects on personal practice in a way that leads to transformational learning in order to grow and develop professionally. The concern is that adult educators tend to focus their expertise on developing learners yet fail to consider and cultivate their personal growth and development. Further, she asserts that while most adult educators receive initial graduate education and are encouraged to join professional development associations, professional development offerings may be inappropriate or inaccessible for an individual to formally continue their own learning. Therefore, Cranton asks, how can adult educators “go beyond the acquisition of simple techniques to a deeper reflection on and understanding of their work?” (p. xii). Professional development that encourages personal reflection on employee skill development alongside presented expectations for workplace practice aids staff understanding toward transformative learning of the meaning and purpose their work holds in accordance to their organization’s mission.

The human condition can be best understood as a continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings (Cranton, 1996). As such, transformative learning for adults needs to emphasize contextual understanding and critical reflection on assumptions, as well as

validate meaning by assessing the context of decisions (Cranton, 1996). Reflection is "the practice or act of analyzing our actions, decisions, or products by focusing on our process of achieving them" (Killion & Todnem, 1991, p. 15). In adult learning relationships, reflection on both sides of the relationship is critical to ensure reciprocal learning since for educators, "learning feeds into our practice" (Cranton, p. 5). Reciprocity or "mutual exchange between more than one person" (Pak, 2008), is central in the adult learner-educator relationship. In student affairs work, the reciprocal learning of personal and professional development can be seen in the way building relationships are a core foundation of the field (Evans, et al., 2010).

Reflection as the key to learning from experience is "the process of transformative learning" (Cranton, 1996; Nottingham, 1998). No matter the setting or type of professional development activity, a core benefit is its transformative value (Gouillart & Kelly, 1995; Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). The process of "renewal and growth essential for human development is most likely to be found in professional development activity" than any other type of activity (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998, p. 11). Cranton provides a theory of professional development in which "the complexity of self-directed learning is recognized, critical reflection is emphasized, and transformative learning is seen to be a goal" (p. xi). The use of personality, learning, and behavioral style inventories, in conjunction with personal critical analysis, supports this theory of professional development.

Transformative learning, as a product of reciprocity and reflection, is then inherently part of student affairs work and is critical to the professional development process. Transformative learning occurs when an individual reflects on assumptions or

expectations, has found these assumptions to be faulty, and has revised them (Cranton 1996; Mezirow 1991). When reflection questions the premise on which value is determined, it can lead to "transformed meaning perspectives" (Cranton, 1996) or a changed way of seeing the world. Transformative learning should be considered an integral part of student affairs professional development effort since personal-professional growth is served by understanding an individual's own personality, learning and behavioral styles as well as considering differing attitudes, beliefs, cultures, ethics, values, and life experiences of individuals who work together (Cranton; Hoare, 2006). While transformative learning for educator development is self-directed through reflection, having a supportive network of knowledgeable colleagues to process learning experiences such as through workplace professional development training, sustains and adds the value of building relationships for transformative growth.

Professional development training is an essential tool for success because it provides student affairs staff a supportive forum to constructively discuss diverse and dynamic challenges and learn new ideas about field foundations as it applies to their workplace organization. While assessment reveals progress for defining student affairs as a profession (Winston, et al., 2001), there is work that can still be done to understand what constitutes effective professional development (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007) in particular organizational settings. Additionally, professional development must be connected to theory so meaningful practice can follow (Allen, 2002; Evans, et al., 2010). When employees have a supportive social network that provides facilitated assistance to connect daily activity to the workplace mission, an environment is created for potential transformative learning that can significantly contribute to strengthening student affairs

within that organization. While not all training participants will experience transformative learning, there is potential that required participation will lead some employees to experience learning that transforms their practice worldview and that some other employees will learn something that supports their practice effectiveness. The possibility of widespread transformative learning as stimulation of organizational change aimed for with workplace professional development activity provides reason for why learning described by participants serves to gauge training effectiveness. Outlined below are literature highlights on the practitioner professional growth continuum, which demonstrates the role relationship building serves in reinforcing individual practitioner and organizational growth. Community professional development training that promotes staff learning and sets a foundation for holistic relationship building serves the purpose of working toward an organizational culture that effectively advances development of learning skills throughout an institution.

## Professional Development Continuum

The purpose of student affairs is to holistically support students (Evans, et al., 2010), and this philosophy applies to student affairs staff (NASPA, 1987). Entry into the field is typically facilitated by practitioners who were influential in the development of student leaders interested in reciprocating the support they received (Richmond & Sherman, 1991). Thus, student affairs has been characterized as a "hidden profession" (Richmond & Sherman, 1991, p. 8). Current student affairs professionals are seen as principal players in the selection and socialization of new professionals to student affairs administration (Hunter, 1992).

Being an effective student affairs professional requires the ability to care for and understand the human development of students, and similarly to reflect on personal practice to grow professionally in support of student learning (Cranton, 1996; Evans, et al., 2010). As development indicates "increasingly higher, more integrated levels of functioning" (Clark & Caffarella, 1999, p. 4), practitioner growth involves improved understanding of student development theories, which likewise supports the reciprocal learning of a practitioner's own personal development (Carrington, 2004; Evans, et al., 2010; Pak, 2008). Theory helps explain an underlying purpose of something, therefore when student development and concepts are used as a guide, both institution wide program planning and policy developments are enhanced (Evans, et al., 2010). Likewise to support staff development, adult learning in professional development constructs can be applied to support organizational effectiveness and growth of quality staff to achieve institutional missions.

In 1998, a nationwide survey was conducted of student affairs practitioners concerning primary factors that influenced their professional development (Cooper & Miller, 1998). The research project collected both qualitative and quantitative data, and was funded by a grant from NASPA Foundation. Surveys were distributed to randomly selected 25 percent of the NASPA membership (*N* = 921), excluding graduate students and new professionals. A total of 382 surveys were returned (41.48 percent). Of those, 365 (39.63 percent) were usable for the study.

Quantitative data collected included demographic variables including advanced degree in student affairs, position level, type of institution, and primary area of responsibility. Qualitative data collected asked participants to identify three individuals

who served as a personal influencer, defined as someone who personally and professionally assisted to develop how the practitioner views their sense of self in their student affairs work capacity. Individuals most often identified were employment supervisors (55%), faculty members (18%), internship supervisors from graduate school (14%), colleagues or co-workers (8%), and professional association colleagues (4%). Participants were asked to list the words or phrases that best described the personal characteristics, work styles, ways of working with others, methods of modeling, and personal philosophy of each personal influencer. The purpose to collecting qualitative data in this way was to identify what component made the influencer relationship significant to the practitioner, and what it was the influencer actually did or said that made an important impact on the practitioner's professional and personal development. Most significantly, 93 (25.6 percent) respondents used the term *mentor* to describe the nature of their relationship with the personal influencer. Qualitative data requested personal influencer personality traits (spiritual, balanced, optimistic, empathic, passionate, honest, focused, flexible, ethical, intuitive, carefree, resilient, patient, nonjudgmental, and humble, p. 63); interpersonal behavior (challenging, friend, direct, allowed mistakes, great teacher, gave responsibility, encouraging, accepting, unconditional support, empowering, and mentor, p. 64); leadership qualities (policy setting, networker, financially astute, motivator, knowledgeable, problem solver, intentional, understands organizations, excellent supervisor, work ethic, politically aware, visionary, leader, and consensus builder, p. 65); and the specific traits of individuals who had a negative impact on a practitioner's development (unorganized, not sharing credit,

disrespectful, sexist, sarcastic, used people, liar, disruptive, controlling, dysfunctional, chemically dependent, difficult, and co-dependent, p. 66).

Four primary issues evolved from the data: gender issues in the influencer-practitioner relationship, role of negative mentor traits, caveats for the term mentor, and the influence of formal programs. First, the area of concern for both mentor and protégé in cross-gender relationships regards perceived public image difficulties. This should not be a reason to avoid building cross-gender workplace relationships, but survey feedback results showed men were most influential in mentoring men, and the same applied for women, even though men dominated the percentage of mentors since men more commonly served in senior level positions. Second, the number of the respondents who identified negative influencers indicated that learning what *not* to do by example was just as substantial as observing behaviors to emulate. It was not articulated how junior level employees can understand the differences in behavior, just that it is important that they do. Third, based on the volume and way respondents used the term *mentor*, participants most likely used the term to mean teacher, advisor, or sponsor, since mentoring is typically not the term of a formal role but describes the character of a relationship and the function it serves. Lastly, the findings in this study and previous research suggest that the most important role taken by personal influencers is to provide career guidance and psychological support to junior employees. Formal professional development programs, as a critical part of a staff development plan, "ensure that all employees have the opportunity to benefit from an ongoing relationship with a staff member who is positioned and qualified to provide this type of guidance" (p. 68). While Cooper and Miller's research focused on what factors of a relationship contributed to a practitioner's

professional development, it is clear personal relationships built out of staff development programs were highly influential.

Community workplace training that aims to connect field foundations with an institution's mission directly follows Cooper and Miller's recommendation that employees' personal and professional development continuum is best supported through building caring relationships. The following sections present synthesized student affairs research that show how personal psychological inventories support professional advancement, how advancement through the stages of professional development occurs, and how learning that aims to be transformative necessarily shapes practitioner skills for success. Workplace training that incorporates inventory tools for employee personal development reflection, is applicable to a workplace culture, meets practitioners where they are at in their personal development, and highlights necessary practitioner skills in support of community learning are demonstrated through existing research as essential ingredients for student affairs professional development.

**Professional is Personal**

While formal academic education in student affairs provides an excellent foundation on which to build a professional career, learning through professional development does not end with formal academic training. The fundamental knowledge, philosophy, application, and skills that undergird formal education are clearly influential to student affairs practitioners (Cooper & Miller, 1998). Additionally, practitioners' personal, affective development and cognitive, conceptual development, which are cornerstones to professional practice, are largely influenced by those with whom the

developing student affairs practitioner works, learns, feels cared for by, and otherwise associates (Cooper & Miller).

The definition of ‘profession’ has been proposed to “suggest continuous professional development” (Kruger, 2000, p. 536). Further, the fundamental practice and philosophy of student affairs “implies on-going, lifelong professional development” (Kruger, p. 536), and learning occurs throughout the journey. If professional development programs are to build a “continuum of professional practice” (Knox, 2000, p. 16) there must be coordinated efforts supported by administrators, learners, and policy makers that focus on goals, learning activities, resources, and context concerned with professional improvement. The practice development continuum has multiple milestones, thus guided professional development activities should be application focused and pick up where professional preparation programs leave off (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007). NASPA’s Standards of Professional Practice (n.d.) included a statement about members’ responsibility for continued growth. Specifically, the 17th standard, “Professional Development” stated members should strive to “continue personal professional growth and to contribute to the development of the profession by enhancing personal knowledge and skills, sharing ideas and information, improving professional practices, conducting and reporting research, and participating in association activities” (NASPA, n.d.). As articulated in research by Miller and Carpenter (1980) and Cooper and Miller (1998), among others, continual professional growth progresses in tandem with personal human development.

Professional development exists parallel to personal development, and it is the relationships and interactions that foster growth for this simultaneous development

(Miller & Carpenter, 1980). Self-development has been framed as the educator's own reflection on reciprocal learning and teaching experiences as central to the growth needed for transformative learning in professional practice (Cranton, 1996). Reciprocal learning is a cooperative, collegial method in which there is mutual interaction, assistance, and benefits between students, faculty, and/or student affairs practitioners (Carrington, 2004; Pak, 2008), and the tools of personality, learning, and behavior style inventories can assist community members in personal and reciprocal learning.

Building on Cranton's (1996) articulation of professional development as transformative learning, Nottingham (1998) argues that self-reflection should be considered an enhancement of previous professional development efforts for student affairs practitioners. Through a brief review of personality, learning, and behavioral style inventory instruments, the influence of self-reflection tools on the effectiveness of student affairs practitioners is explored. Effectiveness in student affairs, as defined by Nottingham, can be measured by how well programs and services are received. Effectiveness is therefore dependent on the relationship between a specific department and the people served by that department. This indicates the importance of practitioner understanding of how their practice influences students, by what a practitioner represent in their job role as much as how they interact with other people.

Nottingham (1998) described three inventory tools developed through extensive psychological research which measures specific personality, learning, and behavioral style preferences and provides definition for how an individual interactions with other people. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) measures personality type preference (Consulting Psychologists Press, 1988, as cited in Nottingham, 1998). MBTI offers

detailed explanations of sixteen personality types based on the combination of the strengths of four personality types: *Extroversion–Introversion (EI)* measures a preference for interest in people, things, ideas and concepts; *Sensing–Intuition (SN)* measures a preference for using facts when considering possible meanings and relationships in examining information; *Thinking–Feeling (TF)* measures a preference for using judgment that relies on objectivity versus personal feelings, values, and subjectivity; and *Judgment–Perception (JP)* measures a preference for systematic planning and organization or for curiosity, flexibility, and spontaneity. The use of the MBTI by student affairs employees supports increased self-awareness for individuals and community dialogue over information processing preferences as way to encourage relationship development among colleagues.

The second self-reflective instrument is the Learning Style Inventory/Productivity Environmental Preference Survey (LSI/PEPS) model of adult learning styles (Dunn, 1990, as cited in Nottingham, 1998). LSI/PEPS offers explanation of how learners concentrate, process, and retain new and difficult information. The LSI/PEPS model measures the degree to which learners are affected by the factors of their immediate environment (sound, light, temperature, furniture and seating designs); their own emotionality (motivation, persistence, responsibility—conformity vs. nonconformity—and the need for either externally imposed structure or the opportunity to do things their own way); sociological preferences (learning alone, in a pair, in a small group, as part of a team, or with an authoritative or collegial adult and wanting variety as opposed to patterns and routines); physiological characteristics (perceptual strengths, time-of-day energy levels, and the need for intake or mobility while learning); and processing

inclinations (global/analytic, right/left, and impulsive/reflective). A better understanding of learning styles allows student affairs employees to capitalize on their personal strengths when learning something new or providing instruction for others. The nature of the LSI/PEPS model allows for the examination of individual multidimensional characteristics as a holistic and comprehensive way of understanding a personal inclination toward learning.

The third self-reflective instrument is the Personal Profile System (PPS) of behavioral styles (Carlson Learning Company, 1996, as cited in Nottingham). The PPS offers explanation of how an individual's behavior shapes their environment. The PPS instrument is a relevant and valid means to measure the impact of an environment on the behavior student affairs employees. Dimensions of the PPS include *Dominance (D)* which emphasizes shaping an environment by overcoming opposition to accomplish results; *Influence (I)* which emphasizes shaping the environment by influencing or persuading others; *Steadiness (S)* which emphasizes cooperating with others to carry out the task; and *Conscientiousness (C)* which emphasizes working conscientiously within existing circumstances to ensure quality and accuracy. An understanding of PPS behavioral styles allows student affairs practitioners to understand how an environment is impacted by their behavioral strengths. Each of the aforementioned inventories serves the common goals of improved self-understanding and serves as a mode for discussing group dynamics through using the shared language of the inventory.

While three types of inventory tools are profiled in Nottingham's (1998) research, many such tools exist and are applicable for self-reflection on personality, learning, and behavior styles in a work environment. As support for Cranton's (1996) research,

Nottingham notes these inventories assist to answer professional development as transformational learning questions, such as how does an adult educator learn about their practice, continue to grow in their practice, and apply reflection for learning affirmation. In this way, self-reflection links personal understanding and professional growth. The following section explores research which establishes that principles of personal development have direct application to stages of professional development.

**Stages of Professional Development**

Miller and Carpenter (1980) derive five propositions and four stages of professional development in student affairs work from the idea that "principles of human development have direct application to professional development" (p. 3). Propositions refer to a course of action or essential ideas that form a concept, whereas stages demonstrate a concept continuum. In this concept, propositions define what professional development is and its stages define how professional development occurs. Professional development propositions are 1) continuous and move from simpler to more complex stages of behavior, 2) result from interaction between a person striving for conscious growth and having a supportive environment, 3) combine a growing body of knowledge paired with practical skill development, 4) recognize practice excellence is dependent on professional preparation, and that 5) professional preparation is a life-long learning process. Professional development stages include formative, application, additive, and generativity. The formative stage is graduate and/or paraprofessional preparation, while the application stage is in reference to beginning to intermediate practice including preparation. The additive stage means intermediate-to-upper level practice with policy making responsibility. Finally, the generative stage includes upper level practice through

retirement from active practice and involves mentoring and influence on the profession as a whole.  Understanding these professional development propositions and stages helps practitioners support their colleagues and supervisees.

Carpenter and Miller (1981) developed the Student Affairs Professional Development Inventory (SAPDI).  The survey was sent to 600 randomly selected student affairs professional association members; 200 each from NASPA, ACPA, and the National Association of Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors (NAWDAC). Of the 600 surveys, 427 (71.2%) were subsequently accounted for, with 347 (57.8%) usable. 201 women and 145 men were accounted for; 111 participants made up the majority age range of 20-29, followed closely by 106 participants age 30-39, 67 participants age 40-49, 44 participants age 50-59, and 14 participants 60-plus years of age.  For the highest degree attained, 44 participants had an earned bachelor's, 201 had an earned master's, 7 had an earned specialist degree, and 97 had an earned doctorate.  A series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed to determine the factors effects of age, highest degree, job function, professional association affiliation, and identified personal development to professional development stage.  A series of two-way ANOVA was computed to determine the effect of the interaction of gender and marital status on professional development factors and stages.

Carpenter and Miller's (1981) research concluded the professional developmental stage of an individual can be identified "based upon a specified (albeit flexible) set of criteria" (p. 10), and that professional growth can be at least partially measured.  Their results show that job function positively effects professional development, as does age, marital status, and gender.  The professional organization with which an individual has

primary affiliation has no effect upon professional development. Human development theory definitely provides an efficacious model for examining professional development in student affairs. Since development principles can be applied to professional growth, this growth can be recognized as continuous and cumulative, and is best facilitated if it takes place in an environment where change is planned and intentional. For supervisors and employees, not being able to recognize stages of development has significant implications as responsibilities that are “too much, too soon” (p. 9) can lead to mediocrity of performance, and similarly failure to advance to a position of greater responsibility can hinder growth. Care must be taken by supervisors and individuals themselves to be conscious of developmental stages and to identify when career moves are or are not appropriate so corresponding position responsibilities can support active engagement of a practitioner’s professional development. The next subsection explores how workplace professional development activity that aims to elicit transformative learning supports practitioner’s best practice skills evolution for growth through the stages of professional development.

**Transformative Learning Supports Best Practice Skills**

Through a literature review meta-analysis, Lovell and Kosten (2000) provide a checklist of individually focused success characteristics for student affairs administrators, many of which reflect the goals of preparation programs and current efforts of professional associations. Central to this list is the practitioner’s responsibility to understand and support student learning in order to accomplish the organization’s goals (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007). Transformative learning as professional development supports practitioner understanding of the purpose their job serves for this learning cause.

Institutions that provide professional development opportunity that makes field foundations clear can therefore be assured student affairs employees are aware of skill characteristics necessary for practitioners to support systemic and student learning.

Lovell and Kosten (2000) conducted a meta-analysis on 30 years of student affairs literature to answer the question, "what characteristics are necessary for success as a student affairs administrator?" (p. 553). A meta-analysis is an appropriate research approach when there is a body of research already published on a particular topic, as the required techniques allow researchers to summarize the findings of empirically based studies and to draw more general conclusions. The outcomes of this study are important to the field as a way to direct future research on characteristics for practitioner success and provide a consolidated account to identify what makes student affairs professionals successful. Appling a set of keywords to guide a literature search, the initial pool of publications included 106 studies. Since a meta-analysis criterion requires literature to be empirically based studies, the researchers reviewed each publication to ensure two required standards were met. First, publications had to be related to the topics of competencies, skills, or knowledge bases required of student affairs professionals. Second, the study had to be quantitative or qualitative in design that tested and/or answered a research question(s). Subsequently, the publication pool was reduced to 23.

The characteristics for student affairs practitioner success explored in the reviewed studies included specific skills, knowledge, and personal traits. Skills for success as a student affairs administrator were discussed in 91% of the articles, the most critical skills being administration and management (83%) and human facilitation (78%) (defined as relationship building skills, such as counseling and staff supervision).

Assessment and evaluation followed closely behind at 57%, with communication (48%) and leadership (43%) also commonly listed as salient skills. More than two-thirds (70%) of the studies referred to necessary knowledge bases, with student development theory (22%) listed most commonly. Knowledge of functional unit responsibilities and academic background were noted in 13% of the studies, with organizational development and behavior mentioned in 9% of the studies. Personal traits and qualities as success characteristics were listed in 48% of studies, with qualities such as works cooperatively listed in 35% and individual traits such as enthusiasm listed in 26% of the studies examined (p. 562).

This 30-year literature synthesis indicated that to be successful as a student affairs administrator, well-developed administration, management, and human facilitation skills are key. Knowledge bases and personal traits that allow a practitioner to work cooperatively and display integrity are essential. Support for student learning requires student affairs employees to be familiar with the skills necessary to make their practice successful. While practitioners across the field have many different points of view regarding working with students, administrators who determine what skills make for best practice within their particular institution as well as role-model and encourage training on these skills accordingly, can help practitioners focus on what successful support for learning looks like. Professional development training that aims to teach skills for success necessarily intends to transform practitioners through learning as a way to affect their practice toward universally promoting learning for all students. As learning for practitioners is significant to support student learning, a systemic learning mission with subsequent goals and measurements for achievement across all areas of an organizational

setting is wholly appropriate. Likewise, practitioners who receive skills training in a way that is learner-centered can replicate and teach these learning skills to students. This way, systemic learning permeates throughout a higher education setting.

A learner-centered approach that encourages active sharing in a community setting is an ideal way professional development training can support the development process of student affairs employees (Manning, et al., 2006; Paris & Combs, 2006). Human developmental theory constructs affirm this value of learning, as it is especially in times of life transition that individuals are motivated to change and maintain relationships that support learning and sense making about the challenges of growth from life transition (Cooper & Miller, 1998). Student affairs leaders that highlight the value of relationships in their actions and mission statements, and provide professional development training which serves as a vehicle for building interdepartmental relationships, necessarily supports staff in their transformative learning toward skill improvement. Since holistic relationship building supports the promotion of effective higher education culture that advances learning development, the following section reviews literature on building professional relationships as reinforcement for individual practitioner and organizational growth.

## Achieving Goals with Relationships

Since the inception of the student affairs field, its foundation has been built on building relationships (Manning, et al., 2006)**.** The values of individuation, community, equity, justice, and caring that are central to building relationships are the values at the core of the student affairs profession (Young, 2003). Building relationships contributes to the transformative experience of human development, which is a "process of people's

changing participation in the sociocultural activities of their communities" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 52). In Lovell and Kosten's (2000) 30-year span literature analysis of necessary skills, knowledge, and traits for student affairs professionals, 78% focused on "human facilitation" or skills by which to build relationships (p. 562). The following sections explore the purpose of investing in human capital, mentorship, and multilateral organizational relationships as a way to achieve organizational and professional development goals.

**Investing in Human Capital**

Since the largest portion of organizational budgets is typically allocated to staff salaries, several studies have identified the ethical responsibility of supporting human capital through promoting collegial relationship building as a way to reduce turnover (Nicholls, 2001; Woodard & von Destinon, 2000). Training and staff development programs for student affairs practitioners constitute a human capital investment by an institution to enhance and develop personnel skills, such as relationship building and cultural understanding, to meet institutional goals (Grace-Odeleye, 1998). The investment of providing employees with professional development signifies an institutional attempt (as decided by its leaders) to build a relationship with employees by making its mission and culture transparent as support for improved employee understanding about their work environment.

Supporting human capital through recruitment, retention, and formalized development is critical to the success of a higher education organization. Colleges and universities are heavily dependent on human capital, so investment in human resources is time and money spent to assist staff in their personal learning as improved support for

student learning (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). Through having workplace training involve curriculum on the components of building workplace relationships, and to connect these ideas to the essential purpose of systemic learning for the institution, professional development also serves to help staff understand the importance of and their role in supporting student retention (Cavalier, Hantman, Waechter, & Yamakawa, 1994). Literature has noted that student retention activities for staff, presented as professional development, should focus on staff interactions and relationship building with students (Cavalier, et al., 1994). Therefore, professional development training that aims for employee transformative learning so their practice can in turn supports systemic student learning serves as a prerequisite to implementing an effective program of student development for retention (Grace-Odeleye, 1998). From a management perspective, investing in human capital through staff development is imperative because it directly affects student welfare and retention (Cavalier, et al., 1994).

A personal form of investing in human capital for employee development can be found in mentorship relationships. In student affairs, a mentor-protégé relationship is significant because this is the space where reciprocal adult educator-learner partnerships among practitioners can occur (Schmidt & Wolfe, 2009). While mentorship can be found in various types of supportive and reciprocal learning relationship, including among peers, colleagues, and cohort members, the benefits of a mentorship-protégé relationship are most salient when a more experienced practitioner provides guidance to a younger member of the field, such as in a supervisory relationship (Schmidt & Wolfe, 2009). The following sections define the purpose and value of mentorship, and then specifically for the value potential in a supervisory capacity.

**Mentorship Benefits**

Schmidt and Wolfe (2009) assert their publication on the mentor partnership fills a void where student personnel literature fails to emphasize and define the functions and significance of the mentor-protégé relationship. While chief student personnel officers have the responsibility to address issues such as restricted budgets, personal accountability, and increased government regulations, their investment to support learning in younger staff who also work on these priorities contributes to the growth and development of future field leaders and the profession at large. Student affair practitioners at any stage of professional development are advantaged by having a mentor who provides guidance, support, and opportunities for learning. Likewise, through providing explanation of their experience with issues of the profession, mentors stand to benefit personal rejuvenation for field work and in knowing they made a personal contribution to regenerating skilled field associates.

A potential mentor is someone who may be a chief personnel administrator, a faculty member, or a counselor; the protégé is typically a new or mid-level practitioner in student affairs. Schmidt and Wolfe (2009) provide a guideline for protégés when seeking a mentor with whom to build a mutual meaningful relationship. A mentor is necessarily someone who has interest in a protégés' professional development, can provide exposure to knowledge and learning about the protégés' area of interest, has a shared value system, and has a willingness to provide personal time and attention to a protégé. The function of mentorship is threefold; a mentor serves as a role model by demonstrating a highly skilled level of performance that is considered by the protégé worthy of imitation, as a consultant/advisor by providing information from a variety of professional experiences

that can benefit the protégé facing a situation for the first time, and as a sponsor through providing connections with others in the field to promote the professional development of the protégé. Through acting as an advocate for a protégé, a mentor assists a younger professional in making connections with the profession's informal network of influence and ideas.

A mentor's role serves specifically to help their protégés learn a method of objective evaluation that can be applied to personal activities as well as professional and institutional decision-making. A mentor can also offer an alternative frame of reference for interpreting a protégé's learning experience, and can offer personally tested suggestions to guide a practitioner's personal or programmatic reform. Assisting a protégé gain an awareness of the political ropes of an institution and helping them to set and meet professional standards are two ways that mentors actualize the function of mentorship. Mentor support and encouragement also supports the protégé in learning to maintain a personal sense of self in relation to a professional self-image. Ultimately, the mentor's goal is to establish optimal conditions through which a protégé can learn to recognize the characteristics that produce quality in professional performance. The greatest asset of a mentor-protégé relationship is therefore its long term benefit where the profession too is enhanced because a competent new professional, the result of the mentorship process, is the mentor material of the future.

Mertz, Welch, and Henderson (1990) are more specific in articulating the benefits for mentors, protégés, and organizations that encourage these relationships. Six benefits for the mentor are particularly worth noting. Mentors benefit personally and professionally because mentoring gleans satisfaction from helping others, contributes to

the mentor's credibility in being able to help others, and supports the mentor's image as a visionary. Further, the process of mentoring demonstrates that the mentor values quality performance, builds networks that provide support, loyalty, and access to information, and establishes an open relationship with others to ultimately create an upward flow of communication.

Organizational revitalization is another result of the mentoring process (Mertz, Welch, & Henderson, 1990). Mentoring builds a positive organizational climate because staff members learn about the organizational milieu, expectations, and work ethic in a personal way. It rewards staff for choosing to become socially engaged, and builds a pool of talented staff members who have been recognized and tested prior to consideration for possible promotion. These findings provide rationale for encouraging and establishing mentoring programs for new staff members as well as those in transition situations. Finally, mentoring benefits organizations by ensuring staff are knowledgeable and confident in their ability to carry out tasks, efficiently in accord with institutional missions, and that they have access to knowledgeable and supportive colleagues.
While mentorship potential can manifest any supportive learning relationship and benefits a collegial organization regardless, the benefits of a mentorship-protégé relationship are most prevalent when an experienced professional provides guidance with a specific area of student affairs interest to a younger member of the field, such as in a supervisory relationship.

**Mentoring and Supervision**

Under human developmental theory constructs, times of life transition contribute to a worldview change for individuals and thus a need for support from mentors

(Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Principles of human development are directly applicable to professional development, and in particular the "mentoring process can and does facilitate the character of that development" (Cooper & Miller, 1998, p. 56). While many types of relationships are necessary for professional development, mentoring is central to influencing the behavior and character of evolving professionals in any type of professional relationship (Cooper & Miller, 1998). Mentoring serves as the "relationships established from interactions resulting from professional concern and desire to [support] others" (Cooper & Miller, 1998, p. 55).

Mentoring in student affairs is a professional development process important to the maturity of character and quality of student affairs professionals (Cooper and Miller, 1998). Although "a supervisor may be viewed as a mentor" (Bryan and Schwartz, 1998, p. 96) supervising and mentoring are not synonymous, because the former lacks the latter's affinity for building relationships (Schneider, 2002). Regardless, "no relationship holds greater natural potential to influence self-image, career satisfaction, and professional development than the relationship with a supervisor," (Harned & Murphy, 1998, p. 43). Therefore, student affairs practitioners who are not engaged with their supervisor as a mentor will have difficulty growing as a successful staff member among their work community (Tull, 2006). Since an employee's developmental status is significant to establishing productive working relationships among student affairs professionals, supervisors should utilize appropriate strategies to determine their employee's status and work with them accordingly (Dalton, 1996).

Mentorship has been shown to be a primary influence on all four stages of professional development: formative, application, additive, and generativity (Miller &

Carpenter, 1980). Each stage represents a functioning level of professional activity and behavior achieved through accomplishing relevant developmental tasks, and mentoring has been found to be valuable at every stage. On several occasions, this continuum model was tested (Carpenter, et al., 1980; Carpenter & Miller, 1981; Carpenter, 1991) and found to explain the nature of professional development, including the value mentorship has on professional development among student affairs practitioners. Different developmental needs exist for employees at different career stages, but all types should have appropriate relationships with a supervisor (Janosik & Creamer, 2003). The ensuing section explores the benefits for organizations in supporting systemic multilateral relationships among student affairs employees, and how professional development training can provide a vehicle by which organizational relationships can be built.

**Multilateral Organizational Relationships**

Building multilateral relationships involves creating opportunities for individual and organizational interactions among a whole workforce (Levin, 2002). Harned and Murphy (1998) argue creating a culture of development in a student affairs organization requires interconnected essential actors and critical relationships drawn from all aspects of a workforce. Their research creates a foundational model which provides the purpose and necessity of various types of organizational actor relationships. They identify the essential organizational actors to be the institution, the profession, the supervisor, and the new professional. Harned and Murphy assert healthy actor relationships are necessary to achieve the purpose of professional development as organizational effectiveness and employee quality and satisfaction. The better these actors work together, the larger the

field of commonality will be, thereby enabling new professionals to understand and experience the purpose of student affairs.

Among these actors are relationships where vision can be shared, barriers and enablers can be acknowledged, and strategies on which to build relationships can be identified. The relationships are the profession-institution, the profession-new professional, the profession-supervisor, the institution-supervisor, the institution-new professional, and the supervisor-new professional. Of these, the new professional-supervisor relationship is most critical. Since typically new professionals have the most direct contact and influence with students, each actor in the new professional-supervisor relationship is obligated to create student growth opportunities as well as professional development for each other, through clear expectations and frequent contact. Social support within an organization is an important adjustment factor for all student affairs practitioners. New members to an organization benefit in particular since they often enter a workplace with little support from colleagues and tend to need the most support during this initial period of adjustment. Positive psychological and emotional adjustments to the work environment are found to exist in the presence of social support systems.

Harned and Murphy (1998) assert that fostering an environment where relationship building takes place throughout an organization sets a culture of collaboration for the institution and the profession. Foundational ingredients for success among all types of professional relationships include a "shared vision, mutual respect, commitment to the welfare of others, personal responsibility, risk taking, hard work, integrity, efficiency, and open communication" (Harned & Murphy, p. 52). Workplace professional development training that presents skills for success as an interactive

experience in the context of an institution's particular culture creates a natural environment for relationship building among employees and likewise provides space for colleagues to learn from each other.

Relationship building, inherently present in workplace training and a foundational component of student affairs, reinforces the connection between employee learning and the learning purpose of higher education. The experience of engaging in professional relationships that contributes to personal growth supports continual development for student affairs employees in how they are able to in turn support students in their learning development. Understanding the purpose of reciprocal adult relationships reinforces the value of life-long learning for individuals throughout a higher education community. The remaining section of this literature review pulls together the importance of field standards to perpetuate adult learning as professional development through building relationships in support of an institutional culture that advances systemic learning throughout a higher education setting. Finally, research recommending student affairs structures conducive to systemic learning is outlined, demonstrating the critical role an organizational model serves in providing a foundation for workplace professional development to contribute toward a culture of learning.

## Institutional Culture

As the scope of this study is focused on exploring the learning experience of workplace professional development program participants in support of aligning their practice in accord with the organization's mission, this literature review would not be complete without discussion of research on higher education institutional culture. The culture of an organization is socially constructed and is reflected in its shared knowledge,

values, and daily routines and rituals (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Colleges and university cultures are inventions that rise from the interaction of social norms, hierarchical structures, contending preferences, and the limits and biases of the people among a community (Birnbaum, 1988). Institutions are identified by the "emphasis placed on their processes and the characteristic patterns in which their elements are tightly or loosely coupled" (Birnbaum, p. 176). Academic organizations are different from other industries because they typically have goals that are more diverse, serve clients instead of processing materials, have highly professionalized employees, and typically have "fluid participation with amateur decision makers who wander in and out of the decision process" (p. 28). Likewise, leaders of academic institutions are subject to internal and external constraints of social and political challenges that limit their effectiveness and "may make their roles more symbolic than instrumental" (p. 29). For these reasons, management and leadership literature and corresponding practice intended for corporate and non-academic industries are not necessarily applicable for best practice in settings of higher education. Similarly, these reasons demonstrate why research on workplace specific professional development training for student affairs employees in promotion of an institutional culture of systemic learning is crucial.

Birnbaum (1988) provides insight to the varied processes and characteristic patterns that define a higher education institutional culture. His publication offers guidance on organizational theory including management, leadership, and governance for models of higher education through the outline of four case study types of higher education institutions and an additional fifth recommended model. While a culture is primarily reflected according to the type of an institution, there is no college or university

that maintains a cultural model in pure form. As such, any institution may manifest pieces of the individual models described. Although as a general rule, if a college or university is to be effective in its support of systemic learning, the more an institution is dynamic in its research and teaching core, there must be looser links to management and "tighter linkages to the environment," particularly learning and student support (Birnbaum, p. 46). Therefore, a research and teaching focused institution that promotes the role of student affairs on its campus and provides provisions for practitioner success directly supports this rule of institutional effectiveness.

The first institutional cultural model of higher education is collegial, defined as sharing power and values among a community of equals. The case institution by which this model is presented is a small private liberal arts college. Collegiality, in this case, has been suggested to have a sense of mutual respect for the opinions of others, agreement about the canons of good scholarship, and a willingness to receive constructive criticism by peers. Much of what happens within this model on a daily basis can be understood by considering it as a self-governing body, where members interact and influence each other through a network of continuous personal exchange based on social attraction, value consensus, and reciprocity. Within a collegial system its values of autonomy and academic freedom dictate a tight link between administrative and instructional functions, but these same values lead to lose links among administrative services, since directive processes challenge the assumption of equality on which a collegial system is based. Aspects of lose links can make an institution look inefficient, but the collegial emphasis on thoroughness and deliberation makes it likely that a problem will be explored in depth and with attention to strengthening its social ties as a

means of coordination. An important condition for a collegial culture is that it must be relatively small in order to maintain its tradition, which is characteristic of the roots for many private liberal arts colleges. The strength and clarity of collegial social norms are directly related to the frequency with which group members interact, which in a small community maintains opportunity for systemic relationship building.

The second institutional cultural model is bureaucratic, which applies rationalization to its structure and decision making. The case institution by which this model is presented is a two-year public community college. Bureaucratic structures are established to efficiently relate organizational programs to the achievement of specified goals. When behavior for a culture is standardized in the form of a clear organizational chart with rules for interaction, its activities and processes become predictable so that the organization promotes a manifestation of efficiency and effectiveness. Bureaucratic organizational structures often have many levels of hierarchy which dictate how often offices interact; offices that are less interactive can be considered less influential, making the value of administrative authority supreme. Offices are codified by rules and regulations and officers are expected to respond to each other in terms of their roles, not their personalities or building workplace relationships. This formal division of labor makes it possible for people to develop high levels of expertise and specialization, also known as a silo effect. Administrative promotions are based on merit and serves to reinforce the willingness of subordinates to accept the directives of supervisors by associating rank by expertise. While the red tape associated with bureaucratic procedures can create frustration among employees, the social legitimacy of institutions depends on "the appearance of regularity and stability" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 114) in its effective and

efficient performance, providing job stability for essential employees. Tight links among offices maintain organizational efficiency, but politics typically determines which organizational elements are essential by a community's structural design. The most effective bureaucratic organizations develop processes where attempted coordination among department leadership is accepted as legitimate by employees. In this way, "authority is no longer defined by the power of the person directing an order but instead by the willingness of the person receiving it to accept it" (p. 126). Bureaucratic organizations then benefit by having less professionalized community members who do not engage in relationship building as a way to maintain institutional control in coordinating employee behavior.

The third institutional cultural model is political, identified by its competition for power and resources. The case institution by which this model is presented is a regional state university. Political structures are identified through community member interaction, where power generated through a promoted perspective stems not from social norms but is negotiated. Over time as a regional institution grows, it becomes increasingly diverse with added missions, increased resources from external agencies who become new stakeholders, and younger staff appointed with competing values to older staff members. Through this growth resources become decentralized, decision making is diffused, and the organization grows in complexity so its activities cannot be controlled such as in a bureaucratic format. The idea that political systems have no place in academic institutions reflects the misunderstanding that an institution's best interest is knowable, rather than that different people have competing ideas on what promoting an institution's welfare means and how that should be accomplished. The disadvantage in a

political system is that some groups control information as a way to achieve their own agendas, so often no one knows the totality of what is going on within the community. Like a bureaucracy, the advantage of inefficiency is that it provides institutional stability; since office activities can resemble random movements within a culture that essentially cancel each other out, it appears as if institutional goals are being accomplished when in actually members appear busy as to create their own job security. Also like a bureaucracy, tight links among offices are determined by political will in the way a structure is designed. A politically oriented campus most likely has many leaders and their success is dependent on a coordinated effort to "practice the art of the possible" (p. 148) in seeking consent of those who are governed.

The fourth institutional cultural model is anarchical, where meaning can be found in a community of autonomous actors. The case institution by which this model is presented is a flagship university. Anarchical structures can be referred to as "organized anarchy", where the decisions of a system are "consequently produced by the system but intended by no one and controlled by no one" (p. 153). This description depicts a setting that may manifest chaos in that people appear to do what they feel like doing, but there is a structural method to the madness. Because institutional roles are specified, participants can make sense of what is happening but also must constantly deal with issues of mattering and marginalization. Where a political or bureaucratic organizational chart has a directive of power, in an anarchical institution independent streams consisting respectively of problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities can flow throughout a system. How these stream components interweave to become tight or loosely linked is typically occurs at random but is supported by relationship building, as

the observed patterns of attachment for how a problem is solved, with whom, and what opportunity is presented accordingly, is not necessarily logical. Since it is possible for almost any problem, any solution, and any participant to become tightly linked with any decision, it is difficult to predict with accuracy how decisions are made in an anarchical system. As this can make management difficult particularly when dealing with external stakeholders, problems are often resolved by avoidance and substituting symbolic rather than instrumental administrative activity. Anarchical institutional leadership can then seem most effective by a leader's ability to project a sense of competence, integrity, and dedication to many audiences, while "emphasizing intuition and…avoiding quantitative data" (p. 167). This discrepancy between what institutional leaders are presumed to do and how they actually behave is therefore often determined by the needs of the led community.

Through four explored models of higher education culture, institutional systems can be viewed as invented social constructs to "make sense" of organizational processes (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 175). As the author asserted colleges and universities are nonlinear therefore any system can take on aspect of the presented models, a recommended fifth model integrating the best elements of the examined models is proposed for institutional leaders aiming to reform their community cultures. A cybernetic institution is characterized by how direction is provided through self-regulation. In a cybernetic model, systems of feedback detect and correct errors in organizational function so that when something moves the organization in an undesirable direction, something else automatically brings it back on course. This way, coordination is provided not by one omnipresent leadership agent but by the spontaneous corrective action of an institution's

parts. In a cybernetic system, organization subsystems respond to a limited number of inputs (e.g. alumni feedback) to monitor their operation and make corrections and adjustments as necessary; organizational responses are not based on measuring or improving their output (e.g. attrition rates). Activities in a cybernetic institution are operated by two types of controls: structural and social. Structural controls consist of explicit rules and regulation (e.g. budget balance), and corrective measures are enacted if a rule is broken. Social controls are developed through the interaction of individuals in groups that lead them toward shared attitudes and concern for group cohesion. Political and symbolic processes influence which controls are given precedence when there is conflict between them, allowing community members to self-regulate how these controls are connected under different circumstances.

The goal of a cybernetic organizational culture is to establish boundaries that guide interpretations of reality (e.g. a subsystem unit) and to give preference to groups and individuals within these boundaries to establish norms which serve as social constraints. When empowered subunits can establish standard procedures to stabilize social norms and regularize activities, allowance is made to for predictable, peaceful subunit interactions. Coordination between subunits is provided primarily by constraints established by higher organizational levels, by the cultural context in which these subunits interact, and by the training and expertise of community participants. Organizational coordination problems can result by the fact that the output of each subsystem is part of the input for others, so in the process of adjusting to support one subsystem can have consequences that may negatively affect another subsystem. Fortunately, leaders who understand natural ecosystem balance through institutional

monitoring provides care needed for the continual process of maintaining correction for community balance. This makes the role of self-analysis in cybernetic systems eminently important, as does recognition that a good administrator intervenes successfully in a way that echoes the physician creed "first, do no harm" (p. 199). Leaders of cybernetic cultures then recognize the care and maintenance needed for an organization of humans is no different as the care needed for any individual human body.

Although student affairs specifically is not mentioned in Birnbaum's assessment of higher education culture, his advocacy of an institutional model that maintains leadership provisions for a caring ethic directed at the people that make up an organization's culture is an echo of the foundational ethic of care on which the student affairs profession stands. The following sections align Birnbaum's recommended model for institutional culture with Manning, Kinzie, and Schuh's recommended structures for student affairs organization, which provides guidance for leaders motivated to shape their community's culture with workplace professional development training for employees. These recommendations are linked by a brief outline of discourse on professional development goals according to institutional culture and the importance of orientation and socialization for professional development. These final segments round out this literature review supporting workplace specific training for student affairs staff.

**Cultures and Corresponding Goals**

Organizations have been described as socially invented establishments, in which, so long as a predictable and routine atmosphere is created, many cultures can coexist within a single organization (Kanter, 1993). As an example of the many possible types of cultures, Birnbaum (1988) identified five institutional cultures in higher education.

Similarly Kuh and Whitt (1988), identified three subcultures in higher education, particularly enhancing, where members enthusiastically adhere to dominant organizational culture values; orthogonal, where members both embrace the dominant cultures' values but also hold their own set of distinct, but not conflicting, values; and counterculture which includes members who disagree with the core values of the dominant culture and hold values that directly conflict with core organizational values. Kuh and Whitt also explain that the characteristics of an institution are important to the culture of an organization. Such characteristics include: internal and external influences such as social and political concerns, curriculum, the personnel core, social environment, architecture, ceremonies, and rites and rituals.

Schwartz and Bryan (1998) asserted that the purpose and direction of a professional development program should align with the organizational culture and mission of an institution, because "professional development [can] take on many different forms" (p. 9). Workplace training curriculum that connects an organization's mission to the daily activity of student affairs employees is essential for shaping an organizational culture that support systemic learning. Bergquist (1992) identified four cultures of higher education as collegial, managerial, developmental, and negotiation. Based on this description, Schwartz and Bryan (1998) explained how professional development comes to be a part of an organizational culture;

> in a collegial culture, professional development is an individual responsibility. In the managerial culture, a good manager assumes the paternal task of ensuring that professional development occurs and that employees participate. In a negotiation culture, professional development is a negotiated opportunity or right. In a developmental culture, enlightened leaders or managers may expect that individuals want staff development and help to provide it. (p. 10)

Parts of an organization can exhibit different cultural personalities, while still sharing much in common (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). New practitioners observe cultural characteristics as they learn the patterns of interactions and make meaning of the language, images, and themes present in daily routines (Morgan, 1986). It is up to an institution's leaders to formally decide, practice, and teach the desired culture for their organization, and to openly discuss these cultural characteristics as it supports the socialization and orientation for all organization members.

**Socialization and Orientation**

In higher education, student affairs administrators often follow a variety of paths into and through the field. While varied experience can provide rich outlooks on institutional operations, socialization and orientation across different levels and settings is key to understanding the many individualized viewpoints that comprise higher education administration (McDade, 1987). By facilitating multilateral socialization in building relationships across a workforce (Levin, 2002), orientations can be a vehicle to define shared purpose across many points of view (Amey, 2002). Continual orientations supplement professional development training in support of staff learning for increased organizational effectiveness.

Socialization is central to demonstrating a social support network within an organization. Socialization can be defined as the introduction and assimilation into student affairs work, and should include a "focus on appropriate behaviors, values, and relationships that are judged to be an intrinsic part of the professional culture" (Tull, 2006, p. 465). Particularly, a new or mid-level professional's perceived lack of a social support system can affect their decision to leave an organization (Johnsrud, Heck, &

Rosser, 2000; Klenke-Hamel & Mathieu, 1990; Ward, 1995). As studies show 26% to 27% of mid-level managers and 24% to 40% of new professionals leave the field of student affairs annually, the likelihood of those who remain is influenced by their personal and professional development through being socialized into a community (Scott, 2000). Organizations and supervisors should not overlook the value of social support, as increased turnover means increased time and resources that must be spent in rehiring processes rather than in supporting development for current staff.

Similarly, orientation is part of the overall integration of employees into an organization, and "helps employees adapt to a [changing] work environment and their jobs," (Hicks, 2000, p. 59). Orientation has been described as a process more than an event (Saunders & Cooper, 2003). Carpenter, Torres, and Winston (2001) explained that, "orienting staff to new positions involves attention to operative philosophies and procedures, organizational cultures, and personal and professional expectations" (p. 4). Winston, Torres, Carpenter, McIntire and Peterson (2001) have called attention to the lack of orientation provided employees in student affairs organizations, and have suggested current staff practices are not congruent with the espoused value of orienting undergraduates.

Workplace professional development training provides space to orient and socialize staff that are new or longstanding to an organization. Particularly for organizations with a newly redeveloped mission or structure, all student affairs employees need assistance to understand and readjust how their practice can meet goals of the identified desired campus culture. The section below presents research of

innovative organizational structures most conducive to support a campus culture of systemic learning.

**Recommended Structures that Support Learning**

Manning, Kinzie, and Schuh (2006), in their case study research of high-performing institutions with the DEEP project, propose two innovative student affairs organizational models that support systemic institutional learning. Their recommended models outlined below aim to refocus learning as the purpose of higher education at the center of student affairs practice. The first innovative model is student-centered, which originates in early field history of focusing on holistic student education, but expands on previous models in its emphasis on practitioner responsibility in student involvement in a way that promote student success. The difference in a student-centered model compared to previous models explored is that student-centered approaches aim to enhance student engagement for success. This evidence stems from institutions that have developed hand-on practitioner developmental support services in response to identified student needs, and employed students as paraprofessionals in ways that empowered them to lead campus initiates with limited intervention from administrators. The following three structures under a student-centered model maintain a view of students as core to the institutional purpose while enhancing community aspects to promote systemic learning for student success.

First, in an ethic of care structure, relationship building and care for students is central as marked by a fundamental response to student needs, services geared toward facilitating student success, and integrated services, policies, and programs centered on the ethic of care. The ethic of care model acknowledges many students are admitted to

college deficient of social and learning skills, so attention focused on students' development emphasizes that colleges and universities have a moral obligation to provide learning support. The strength in this model is the level of service available to students in need of development, although Manning, Kinzie and Schuh are clear to note the intention here with the term *service* is not the same as service in an administrative-centered model described here in chapter one. While the latter is based on administrative procedure and expediency, the ethic of care model premises service provision on the ability of practitioners to devote time to students and contribute to a culture where every member of the community is valued. When professionals earn a reputation for caring, trust seeps throughout the campus environment. The weakness of this model is its' time consuming and there is risk that practitioners may interpret their practice to look more like parenting, which is adversary to the goals of this model.

The second student-centered model is student-driven. This model promotes a belief that students can be empowered, and assumes trust in students' ability to manage college functions and to understand the potential of college environments in teaching leadership skills. In this model, the focus is on developing students' capacity as leaders and valuing them as integral members of the campus community. This model strategically builds student involvement into salient campus activities typically reserved for professional staff, with examples such as building design and planning, program management and delivery, and committee leadership. Strengths of this model include enriched student learning outside of the classroom and meaningful connections that supports their institutional investment, and the institution benefits with increased retention and enriched quality of student life. Weakness of this model includes

employing students in this capacity requires increased training and supervision because of paraprofessional turnover, as well the power of tradition among a student body may hinder the involvement of marginalized student populations.

The third structure in this model is student-agency. In this students are completely responsible for student life and perform as equal partners with faculty and staff in these efforts. The core feature of agency enables students to play a critical role in their self-development and learning through being conscious agents of their actions. Because campus professional leaders create structures that intentionally empower rather than limit, students take ownership for, and become invested in creating, learning and sharing knowledge. The strength of this model is that when students share in the movement and direction of an institution, they are responsible for the quality of their educational experience and are likely to feel invested in their learning and success. The weakness of this model is that it is antithetical to the long-standing task-oriented perspective of many student affairs practitioners. Likewise it can be incongruent on campuses with high involvement of external stakeholders such as parents and legislators who have become accustomed to professionalism and customer service efficiency not prioritized in an agency model focused on student learning through experience.

The final innovative models outlined by Manning, Kinzie and Schuh (2006) are collaboration and academic-centered in structure. Both of these models highlight the collaboration between academic and student affairs that has received considerable encouragement since the publication of *Powerful Partnerships* (AAHE, et al., 1998). Institutions that exemplify these linked divisions place student learning in the center of their enterprise and create systemic coherence in determining student success. The

difference in these models compared to the aforementioned models is that in this case mutual territory and combined efforts between academic and student affairs are emphasized to provoke engagement and success.

In a collaboration model, significant interaction between student and academic affairs staff is emphasized as reciprocal in promotion of student learning. For the collaborative model to be effective, leaders in both areas frequently come together to form structural bridges in area missions and language reflective of a shared concern for student learning. The strength of this model is this interdependence shapes a high quality learning environment that is team-oriented, creative, and both areas share costs and resources. While this model was prevalent in organizations deemed successful in the DEEP project, the weakness noted by administrators at these institutions was that student affairs often assumed a greater burden of responsibility in partnering with academic affairs. The researchers reference this tension as due to a larger issue that lack of understanding and appreciation by faculty and academic administrators for differences among student affairs and academic cultures.

In an academic-centered model, students take responsibility for the development of intellectually stimulating programs as a way to tackle complex social and political issues. In this type of environment, classroom experiences, field and internship experiences, and international and diversity experiences within and off campus are interwoven into a learning intense environment. Student affairs is involved with guiding and advising students in a way that the culture exemplifies the institution's academic mission. Several strengths of the academic-centered model include organizing student affairs around promoting an educational mission clarifies the growing importance of

academics in student affairs practice. This model provides a unique opportunity for practitioners to showcase their talents as educators, as well pooling resources around an academic mission to support students reduces compartmentalization making it more cost effective than other models. Alternatively, as reported in collaboration models, its weakness include faculty did not seem to understand or appreciate student affairs work.

These models are recommended as innovative approaches to student affairs structural organization since they all aim to promote a systemic learning paradigm throughout an institutional culture. Different structural models are appropriate based on institutional type, so administrators must analyze their community culture to identify which model is most conducive to supporting student success in their particular setting. Workplace professional development training then serves to support student affairs employees in understanding the organization's mission and how their practice can align accordingly in promotion of systemic learning.

## Summary

Current social and political challenges higher education is faced with require student affairs practitioners to work with creativity and flexibility, and this requisite will only increase as society grows in complexity. Practitioners who commit to student affairs work contribute to the continued learning and development of citizens preparing for diverse social and occupational environments. Student affairs work necessitates employee responsibility in continued learning to balance navigating available resources with refining student development skills. Graduate education and professional associations serve to support practitioners in this capacity, but desire for and access to these resources are left up to individual choice. Similarly, because of the variety of

avenues into working in a student affairs department, there is no guarantee that an employee who influences an organizational culture and understands core principles in practice.

Because of the extended debate on student affairs professionalism, there is no surprise that research demonstrates the field as an emerging profession and that disconnect continues to exist between theory and practice. Due to the changing demands and opportunities to support student learning, there is a need for student affairs departments to implement support programs for the development of quality staff. Aware of this need, student affairs leaders face the challenge of offering professional development opportunities, ideally in ways that supports their practice transformation toward continued organizational development. Workplace training that promotes inter-organizational relationship building and self-reflection serves as an essential resource for employees to understand how their practice affects essential objectives of an effective student affairs culture.

A review of the literature on student affairs professional development includes standards for practice as the way to identify how growth through learning is measured, and how adult learning experiences serve to indicate personal growth through the continuum of field professional development. Likewise, literature review about the professional growth continuum defines the purpose for encouraging workplace relationships in reinforcement of practitioner and organizational learning growth. Finally a synthesis on institutional culture and variations of student affairs structures serves to guide an organization's professional development efforts in linking organizational intentions and employee practice toward development of a more effectives and efficient

organization. Yet missing from the literature is a model which demonstrates support for institutional leaders faced with having recognized the need for employee professional development but challenged with actualizing a workplace program. The context of this research presents a workplace program model and explores its initial effectiveness in supporting employee learning in contribution for organizational development.

This empirical research aims to support student affairs leaders in promoting investment for employee learning through workplace training as it can impact staff practices and contribute to organizational development. A sociological narrative approach to data collected among the bounded case of select program participants serves to explore employee experiences based on their diverse backgrounds as a gauge for program effectiveness in promoting systemic leaning and subsequent organizational improvements. The more student affairs organizations implement programs to invest in employee professional development, the more systemic learning can be valued toward fulfillment of the learning purpose higher education serves to society.

# CHAPTER III

# RESEARCH APPROACH

*"Focus on the lived experience of an individual" -Reissman*

Just as student affairs practitioners apply what is known about learning from a variety of disciplinary viewpoints to support the holistic development of learners (Manning, et al., 2006), qualitative research crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matters to create an interconnected picture of a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research is a "situated activity that locates the observer in the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). What is novel about qualitative research is that it aims to connect the hopes, needs, goals and promises of an individual involved with a phenomenon, and applies interpretive practices to make the worldview of the participants and researcher connected to that phenomenon visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This form of inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires data collection that is sensitive to underlying meaning (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research involves a variety of empirical methods, which serve to describe the moments and meanings of individuals' lives with the goal of better understanding the phenomenon at hand. Empirical methods for qualitative methodology include case study, narrative exploration, individual interviews, focus groups, artifacts, observations, and historical documents (Crotty, 1998), all of which are applied here to understand employee experiences within a workplace professional development program.

The following discussion highlights the constructivist theoretical paradigm and epistemology in which this research is grounded, as well as the case study methodology and methods framework designed to provide rich descriptions of practitioner perceptions of their experience. Additionally, assurances for goodness through trustworthiness criteria and data analysis considerations for this study are examined. The research question that guided this inquiry is: How do student affairs employees experience workplace training as it contributes to organizational development?

## Theoretical Paradigm

Based on a constructivist paradigm (Crotty, 1998; Guido, Chavez & Lincoln, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 2000), in this case study (Stake, 2000; Merriam, 1998), I sought to understand the experiences of employees engaged in continuous workplace professional development training as it contributes to the organization's development. The paradigm, or framework, of a research design provides "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Creswell, 2007, p. 19). More encompassing than a theory, a paradigm offers a way to think about the world and how to gain and interpret knowledge about it (Guido, et al., 2010). The paradigm defines for its holder "the nature of the world and the individual's place in it" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107), and acts as the foundational net for all other assumptions. The core of a research paradigm includes the essential philosophical elements of epistemology, a study of knowledge which examines "what is true"; ontology, a study of reality which explores "what is real"; and axiology, a study of the role of values which asks "what is good" (English, 1994, p. 3). These elements are essential in a constructivist case study research design.

In constructivist research, the researcher is influenced or connected to the participants of the phenomenon studied (Guido, et al., 2010). Because of the epistemology the researcher examines what is the relationship between the researcher and what is being researched (Creswell, 2007), and provides understanding for "how we know what we know" (Crotty, 1998, p. 5). The epistemological perspective is what gives insight to the ontology, defining what is real in a researcher's philosophical viewpoint (Crotty; English, 1994). This perspective answers why a certain philosophical approach to research is taken, and provides context for the research process. The axiology, which defines what is good about a philosophical viewpoint, acknowledges that at its foundation this research is value-bound; the researcher and that being studied are interrelated therefore values and biases are present throughout the research process (Creswell, 2007; Mertens, 1998; Guido, et al., 2010). Engaging in qualitative research makes values explicit for both participants and the researcher, so it is the "axiological assumption that characterizes qualitative research" (Creswell, p. 18). In qualitative research, the researcher's presence as a voice for participants is apparent in the text, therefore the researcher's voice, as distinct from participants, is first established through the acknowledged epistemology, ontology, and axiology (Creswell).

Constructivism offers a tool for insight into how the "participants construct their reality and understand the meaning they make of it" (Schwartz, et al., 2008, p. 7), since different people construct meaning in different ways even in relation to the same phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In the constructivist view, meanings are constructed by human beings as they are engaged with the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998; Guido, et al., 2010). Broido and Manning (2002) assert the constructivist paradigm is

natural in educational practice, including higher education and student affairs, since "theory and practice inform one another in a mutually shaping manner" (p. 436). They outline four essential elements of the constructivist paradigm:

> (1) the researcher-respondent relationship is subjective, interactive, and interdependent; (2) reality is multiple, complex, and not easily quantifiable; (3) the values of the researcher, respondents, research site, and underlying theory cannot help but undergird all aspects of the research; and (4) the research product (e.g. interpretations) is context specific. (p. 436)

Since the constructivist framework views knowledge as relative emerging through each individual's subjective understanding, this study embraces the notion of multiple truths and seeks to create a forum through which individual participant voices can be heard (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Evans, et al., 2010).

A constructivist theoretical framework represents how I view the world and my approach to inquiry and understanding. A constructivist research design is appropriate in this case since I have been involved in the co-creation of the program being researched; I am invested to explore initial benchmarks in determining participant's experiences and its effectiveness in perpetuating organizational development. Findings from this research will be utilized to support continual improvements for the curriculum design of this workplace professional development program and to understand how the organization's structure and culture is ingrained in employees as it affects program outcome goals. In line with a constructivist paradigm, this program will utilize participant feedback to support evolving employee professional growth to motivate organizational development, which includes building inter-organizational relationships to reinforce systemic learning.

# Methodology

Partnered with a constructivist paradigm, I employ a case study methodology and use sociological narrative techniques to depict this picture of assessment. The methodology is the strategic plan of action and gives reason to the researcher's choice for using particular inquiry methods (Crotty, 1998). In a case study, a specific case is examined with the intent of exploring an issue with the case illustrating the complexity of this issue (Creswell, 2007). A narrative exploration focuses on the lived experience of an individual (Reissman, 2008), and a sociological model of narrative exploration emphasizes "the structure of the narrative and its relationship to the social context" (Merriam, 1998, p. 158). While the primary methodology of this research design is a case study, narrative techniques fit this application since "narrative analysis is case-centered" (Reissman, 2008, p. 13). The pairing of these approaches work in tandem in that while a case study is an intense description of a "bounded system" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19), a narrative application "shifts attention to the details" (Riessman, p. 12). Therefore, this case study highlights the experiences of individual participants in context of their diverse backgrounds and unique roles within their workplace.

## Case Study-Narrative

Aligned with a constructivist paradigm, case study methodology enhances the potential to uncover significant elements characteristic of a single phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Case study methodology is appropriate to pair with a constructivist paradigm as this type of research relies on discussing a participant's view within the context of what is studied, and knowledge is co-constructed by participants and researchers (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). A case study involves the "study of an

issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Case study researchers examine a specific case with the intent of exploring an issue with the case illustrating the complexity of the issue (Creswell, 2007).

The principle difference between case studies and other methodological research forms is the focus is on understanding a particular case, in what is common and pervasive in its idiosyncrasy and complexity within the particular case (Stake, 2000). Cases can be intrinsic or instrumental studies (Stake, 2000). Instrumental case studies seek to understand something beyond the case itself and the case is a means to that understanding. In contrast, intrinsic case studies are concerned with specific problems, issues, programs or situations encapsulated in a particular case. A case study is intrinsic because "in all its particularity *and* ordinariness, this case is itself of interest" (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 55). Since the focus of intrinsic case study is on an unusual or unique situation, "it resembles the focus of narrative research" (Creswell, 2007, p. 74), reinforcing narrative as a case study technique.

Narrative analysis applied to this case study inquiry illustrates co-constructed learning experiences that demonstrate, socially and individually, humans live storied lives (Reissman, 2008). The study of narrative is the "study of the ways humans experience the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Narrative researchers collect and tell stories through describing human lives as a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience (Creswell, 2007). Storytelling by research participants is an opportunity for the teller to reflect and learn from their experience, as much as those who encounter the story can have insight to and learn from the experience of the teller (Reissman, 2008). A sociological model of narrative analysis supports a constructivist

paradigm through emphasis on how the structure of a narrative relates to the social context of the participant's life (Merriam, 1998). Researchers who employ narrative analysis, as a primary recipient of a story, therefore have a responsibility in caring for how the storyteller's voice is represented (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000).

A central component of this research design was my flexibility to pursue emerging questions and understanding throughout the inquiry. Listening and adaptability to participants' experiences allowed me to develop a "deeper understanding of the nature and meaning" (Patton, 2002, p. 104) of how professional development program participation affects student affairs employees daily work life given their background and work area specialty. As the researcher, I maintained responsibility in accurately representing storyteller's voices and further support their learning because of my personal investment in the program's effectiveness within this community. In line with a constructivist paradigm, the theoretical framework of this study is a reflection on my own professional development in being an advocate of employee development among this particular organizational setting. My contribution to developing this program stemmed from my belief that workplace professional development, which inherently builds inter-organizational relationships, promotes personal growth for employees through learning about their colleagues perspectives, perpetuating organizational development as it strengthens social justice understanding as an element of student affairs. With this research I continue my contribution by engaging with select participants to co-construct the meaning of their professional development experience, and offer suggestions based

on this insight to further evolve this program as it contributes to the organization's development.

The centrality of relationships among the program curriculum and design makes this topic a social phenomenon of interest and a natural fit as an intrinsic case study supported with a narrative approach (Creswell, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). As a constructivist case study, the focus here is on the experiences of student affairs employees who participate in a professional development training program named The Leadership Center (LC) in the Housing department at a Western state flagship institution. The following sections depict the context of this case study through descriptions of the organizational setting and culture, program design and delivery evolution, and curriculum content. Subsequent sections will outline data collection and analysis methods, as well as criteria to ensure goodness which encapsulates the phenomenon explored.

## Context: The Leadership Center

The Leadership Center (LC) is a professional development training program for all supervisory and leadership staff members in the Housing department at a Large 4-year, primarily Nonresidential, Research Universities (with Very High research activity) (L4/NR RU/VH) state supported institution. The pseudonym for this institution will be Fielding State University (FSU). The purpose of the LC is to provide training as support for department supervisory staff in their understanding of leadership and management concepts within a cross-cultural context. Its intention has consistently maintained,

> To build multilateral department wide relationships; to develop community; to assist staff to become better leaders/managers; to address feedback received by frontline staff; to help staff distinguish between management, leadership, and social justice; to show the Housing organization is invested in contributing to professional development of employees; and to help employees connect their

> daily work activity to the long term vision of Housing, so it is more meaningful and fulfilling. (Personal communication, August 1, 2008)

The rationale for the program included,

> To assist supervisors in advancing professional and personal development using a common skill set based on the Housing vision. To provide support and training for supervisors to assist employees in finding meaning and connection between their daily activity and the purpose of the organization. (Personal communication, August 1, 2008)

The idea for a workplace professional development training program was first discussed among the then Housing Executive Director, the Director of Residence Life, and a Hall Director, after a series of department wide focus groups was conducted in 2005 with primarily frontline staff. Although the focus group topic explored employee thoughts on social justice in the workplace, the evaluation of these focus groups provided insight that many employees did not know what was social justice. The conclusion was drawn that many of the staff interviewed did not understand the difference between management, leadership, or social justice, nor what these concepts might look like in practice, even though these were terms regularly and interchangeably used throughout the workplace.

The inception of the idea for a workplace professional development program was prefaced with growing interest department-wide in the concept of social justice, which gained notable momentum sometime around the mid-1990s. Regular discussions among Housing employees were noted as taking place on what social justice was and when was it not happening in particular for lower-level and frontline staff. To respond to this growing cultural norm, and to better understand what was being perceived by staff as social justice practices, department executive managers decided to hire two facilitators from the Social Justice Foundation (SJF) to facilitate a series of focus groups. In July 2005, the SJF facilitators submitted their findings from 11 focus groups conducted with

approximately 75 staff members, where the participants were primarily frontline staff and some of their supervisors from diverse cultural backgrounds. What upper-level management concluded by this report was that 1) social justice was a primary concern to staff included in these focus groups and perceptions of discriminatory practices were revealed, and 2) the department Executive Director felt a strong personal responsibility to ensure people were not discriminated against in their job experience.

Hiring the SJF trainers for an annual all-staff program was considered, but since more consistent training was a preferred format, it was decided an in-house trainer position would be developed to support this growing aspect of the department on a regular basis. Over the course of the following three years, a committee of five department members representing the department units of Residence Life, Human Resources, Facilities, and the Executive Director convened to discuss how to handle the focus group results through brainstorming an initial model for a workplace professional development program. A three year, three tiered model was decided upon, engaging all members of the Housing department in workshops to distinguish the differences between management, leadership, and social justice, and progressing over time from concrete to abstract concepts as it related to their job practice.

In April 2008, I was hired as a graduate intern charged with continuing to shape the committee's brainstorm as a way to accelerate the program launch. My job that summer involved researching program content and protocol activities, and organizing the content into a three year program outline presented to Department Advisory Board (DAB) in August 2008 as a foundational argument for hiring an in-house program trainer. From here, the trainer's job description was developed and a search began to hire this

new staff position based in the Housing Human Resources office. The Training and Development Specialist was hired in December 2008, and over the following months this person and I met regularly to materialize the program model into a detailed year one curriculum, as well we created various surveys by which to measure the program's initial effectiveness. The Leadership Center year one pilot launched on March 22, 2009.

The inception and evolution of this program is due to the unique cultural formula of this community. The institutional setting and culture, paired with the creativity and resource investment by Housing administrators, along with the openness of the program facilitator and community members to provide transparency of their work, provide critical components that compound this unique environment as a site ripe for developing an innovative student affairs program and assessing it with empirical research. The subsequent sections sketch the institutional setting and organizational culture, as well as the program design, delivery, content.

**Setting**

This United States higher education institution, identified by the pseudonym Fielding State University (FSU), is a L4/NR, RU/VH research institution that received more than $266 million in sponsored research awards for the 2007 fiscal year. This university offers more than 3,400 courses each year in approximately 150 areas of study, and has 85 majors at the bachelor's level, 70 at the master's level and 50 at the doctoral level. In fall 2006, 28,942 on-campus degree-seeking students were enrolled at this university. Another 1,459 included students on study abroad, faculty and staff taking classes on tuition waiver benefits, non-degree seeking students, students enrolled in the campus evening program or in correspondence courses and students from other affiliate

campuses taking courses at this institution. Of the regular on-campus degree-seeking students, 46.9 percent (13,565) are women, 53.1 percent (15,377) are men; 84.6 percent (24,484) are undergraduates, 15.4 percent (4,458) are graduate students; 68.6 percent (19,856) are in-state residents, 31.4 percent (9,086) are nonresidents; and 14.4 percent (4,177) are minorities.

In the state where FSU is located, the budget for education has been a contentious matter. State funding allocation for higher education has been a debated issue with the legislature for over a decade, but a failed referendum on the 2006 ballot recently led state supported higher education employees to notice the significant budget crunch. During my data collection participants talked openly about their frustration in not having received a pay raise in a number of years, as well as the pressure of needing to be creative to “do more with less.” While the purpose of this research was not to investigate the reasons or implications of reduced funding and legislative efforts was not a topic discussed directly, while participants shared their frustrations I could not help but think about this referendum initiative from a few years prior. I wondered how many members of this community had understood the implications of the referendum legislation from 2006 that would have increased taxes to maintain the state’s higher education budget support. Voting patterns were not a part of my inquiry, and I cannot speculate on how or whether members of this community voted. Yet this referendum had failed, so I wondered if in 2006 had higher education employees in this state understood the impact of that failure, would they have more readily exercised their vote toward its passing? Higher education funding continues to be a heated issue with this state’s legislature, which impact the tone and culture of this higher education workplace. Therefore state

funding for this flagship institution will likely continue to impact this setting, as new ballot initiatives on this matter are expected in the near future.

The Housing department at this institution is an auxiliary of the Division of Student Affairs that employs approximately 500 full-time, and nearly 700 part-time and student employees. The demographic breakdown for Housing full-time employees as of November 2008 is: Total: 477; Male: 236; Female: 241; White: 259; Latino: 168; Asian: 33; Laotian: 4; African American: 7; Other: 6. It is comprised of nine main units: Administration; Family and Apartment Life; Finance; Conferences; Dining; Facilities; Human Resources; Information Technology; and Residence Life. The Leadership Center is based in the Human Resources office, and is managed by a full time Training and Development Specialist. As the program is at this time recently completed its second year of delivery, for manageability purposes it is currently intended for 135 full-time leadership and supervisory staff.

During winter 2009, the DAB group revised the Housing mission statement and created a strategic plan that directly involved the LC, as accompaniment to the Housing Diversity and Social Justice mission statement that had been established the year prior. The Housing strategic plan included the primary outcome goal of the LC to be integrated learning. To achieve this goal, Housing aimed to create an exceptional environment for staff development with the objective to create career path development opportunities through supporting, recognizing, and rewarding knowledge acquisition and experience. The LC serves to support leadership and supervisory staff in understanding the department mission statements, and assist program participants in supporting all

department employees to work in accord with these missions. The Housing mission statement reads,

> The Housing department is an innovative and transformative organization that creates dynamic residential living and learning communities, using practices that are socially just and sustainable. We are characterized by our dedicated, knowledgeable, and caring staff; our attractive facilities; exceptional dining experiences; state-of-the-art technology; and quality conference services. We promote experiences to support and challenge students to create the tools to build their lives and achieve academic success.

The Housing diversity and social justice mission statement includes,

> Each individual brings uniqueness to our community and is valued and respected for who they are and their skills and contributions. We actively invite and support diversity, and we work to provide an affirming environment for staff and students. By working together, we will create and promote a working and living environment in which no individual is advantaged over another based on differences, and where everyone has the opportunity to develop their potential and contribute fully to our community.

The setting of Housing, and the department mission statements, provides direction and purpose for the LC. The LC serves as a vehicle to support department leadership and supervisory staff in recognizing how their workplace practice and that of the teams they lead can be aligned in stronger accord with the Housing mission statements. The next section describes the unique organizational culture of Housing at FSU.

**Organizational Culture**

According to Birnbaum's (1988) descriptions of institutional culture, FSU qualifies as an anarchical culture defined by its foundational characteristics as a flagship university with a research core that due to its size displays bureaucratic and political tendencies. As a large and seemingly disjointed system, independent streams consisting respectively of problems, solutions, participants, and choice opportunities seem to flow in

no consistent order throughout its system (p. 154). The development of how the LC came to be is an example of Birnbaum's assertion.

Through a qualitative case study conducted in 2005 on staff perceptions of social justice, it became clear to department executives that social justice language that had become a cultural norm was often used out of context. Since existing field literature did not define a solution to this problem, department executives considered a possible solution to be a workplace professional development training program that helped employees throughout the organization understand how cross-cultural leadership could be incorporated into their daily work activity. With a curriculum that incorporates discussion on expected skills for task accomplishment and tools to understanding cross-cultural differences in human interaction, the goal of this training is to improve employee understanding of the concept of social justice as a way to reform the effectiveness and efficiency of the organizational culture.

From the outset, this could seem to be a disjointed pairing of a problem with an opportunity to find a possible solution for initially different people than the original study identified. Yet as Birnbaum (1988) identifies, how these stream components interweave to become tight or loosely linked typically occurs at random, as the observed patterns of attachment for how a problem is solved, with whom, and what opportunity is presented accordingly, is not necessarily logical but is supported by relationship building. Flagship institutions produce a lot of garbage among its processes and procedures, so a garbage container where varied problems and opportunities have time to affect each other can actually produce a viable solution (Birnbaum, 1988). In this case, the time allotted for staff involvement in the LC contributes to its primary intention of interdepartmental

relationship building. Discussion of cross-cultural differences in interpersonal interaction paired with interdepartmental discussion of unit priorities in task accomplishment can lead to organization-wide empathic relationship building for understanding social justice in practice, in effect promoting efficiency and effectiveness among a student affairs workplace.

While the inception of the LC program is one example of how FSU displays an anarchical institutional identity, its bureaucratic and political tendencies can be understood through Manning, Kinzie and Schuh's (2006) articulation of an administrative-centered student affairs organization. Their administrative-centered model stemmed from balancing the twin goals of providing student guidance and managing student resources. To balance these goals, institutional size typically dictated how balance was managed, where a large institution such as flagship FSU was organized with a student services approach to be more administratively oriented for resource management compared to a smaller institution that could accommodate to be more student oriented. An administrative-centered model is characterized by bureaucratic specialization rather than the integration of resources, which is reflected in how FSU as an institution, and Housing as a subsystem, is organized. On one hand, individuals who teach and conduct research can focus on their specialty, and this model provides convenience for students needing to navigate available resources such as clustering all aspects of the Housing department. On the other hand, attempts to build collaboration among units organized by this model as a way to increase collegiality may seem artificial as relationship building is not a cultural norm characteristic, making bureaucracy and politics in service management, and its corresponding lack of community trust, seem

normal. While the anarchical aspect of this organizational culture provided space for the inception of the LC and to promote relationships among employees, the bureaucratic and political tendencies pervasive in an administrative-centered structure presented a challenge for a program that aimed for relationship building as support for systemic learning.

In an anarchical system where problems and solutions randomly flow throughout the institution, it is possible for a cultural norm to take root anywhere and manifest in any direction (Birnbaum, 1988). Alternatively, with the bureaucratic nature of an administrative-centered structure, organizational change can be difficult since cultural norms develop primarily from a downward flow of precedent set from institutional governors to frontline staff (Birnbaum, 1988; Manning, et al., 2006). This provides rationale for primarily training department supervisors so that cross cultural understanding through building relationships flows downward to frontline staff, yet to have the training lessons become a cultural norm requires the buy-in of supervisors. Likewise, since Housing represents a single subset of this large higher education system and cultural norms flow throughout an institution, and the administrative-centered characteristic of distrust could continue to make relationship building difficult among this community. For this reason, attempt at social change within this type of organizational culture will be slow and continuous assessment is needed to gauge how change occurs (Birnbaum, 1988). This empirical research aims to explore the learning experience of training participants, providing insight to program effectiveness in perpetuating systemic learning for transforming employee work practice according to an organization's mission.

The following section provides summary of the program design development and delivery methods, as well as the curriculum content outline.

**Program Description**

The LC is a three-year program, organized with three topic modules per year, as well as introductory (prior to module one) and final application-based (after module nine) classes. As the graduate intern, I aimed to respect the original intentions and rationale of the program planning committee, but some of the content first considered changed over the course of my summer project. Similarly, the model I had proposed to the DAB group made allowance for the newly hired Training and Development Specialist to add their personal stamp. The Training and Development Specialist respected the model I created, yet over the first three months of our collaboration as the curriculum materialized, we mutually agreed on content and structural changes that made sense for more efficient delivery. While the early program rationale and intentions were consistently maintained, the format morphed into something different from the original form. Table 1 represents the program's original model, while table two represents the current model:

Table 1 includes ten workshops delivered each year in small groups to all supervising department members, meeting for two hours every other week for 20 weeks. Each workshop focused on a delegated topic of workplace practice. Each year for three consecutive years, the topics repeat in the listed order but would evolve from involving concrete to abstract examples.

*Table 1*

Original Curriculum Design

| Workshop | Topic of workplace practice |
|---|---|
| 1 | Introduction and Strengths assessment |
| 2 | Interpersonal communication |
| 3 | Team & meeting management |
| 4 | Problem solving & analysis |
| 5 | Decision making |
| 6 | Self-management |
| 7 | Human resources |
| 8 | Resource management & development |
| 9 | Organizational culture, climate, & politics |
| 10 | Reflection: Preparing for the future |

Table 2 includes three workshops modules, with two class sections each module, delivered each year. Each module had eight sections, with introductory and final application classes based on unit cohorts. Module group attendance varied according to class time signup to allow for department-wide member interaction. Each module group met for four hours per topic, divided in two hours segments, meeting on consecutive weeks. The first half of each class focused on topic content and a corresponding activity, while the second half focused on cross-cultural implications and group discussion.

*Table 2*

Current Curriculum Design

| | Year 1 Building the Team | Year 2 Developing the Individual | Year 3 Maintaining the Task |
|---|---|---|---|
| Program introduction (prior to class 1) | Introduction: ACL and Strengths | | |
| Module 1 (class 1-2) | Interpersonal Communication | Delegation | Practical Performance Management |
| Module 2 (class 3-4) | Team Development | Mentorship | Productive Collaboration |
| Module 3 (class 5-6) | Conflict Resolution | Career Planning | Organizational Culture, Climate & Politics |
| Class 7 | Ongoing application meetings with individual unit cohorts | | |

In year one of the Leadership Center, module topics included interpersonal communication, team building, and conflict management. In the second year, module topics included delegation, mentorship, and career planning. The third year topics involved practical performance management, productive collaboration, and organizational culture, climate and politics. One hundred and thirty five department supervisory and leadership staff are required to participate, as their annual reviews corresponds to their practice of the module concepts. There are eight sections of small groups per module; each class of the module sections are taught at the same time on consecutive weeks, and all sections vary the time when classes are taught (e.g. Module 1: section 2 taught Mondays from 9-11:00am the first and second week of the month; Mod 1:4 taught Tuesdays 1-3:00pm the second and third week of the month). Participants attend two classes per module section; there are two parts per topic, each part focused in a two-hour class on either the general topic concept or the cultural context of the topic. There are 16 classes per module delivered according to an established schedule, since all classes are facilitated by the single Training and Development Specialist.

One of the eight sections was delegated to the DAB group, which compartmentalized the Housing Executive Director and the directors of each of the nine department units. The rationale for compartmentalization was to prevent the possible threat against non-unit director level supervisory staff feeling like they could not be honest in their participation in front of the unit directors. This reason reinforced the cultural sensitivity to social justice concerns within this community, and the general low levels of trust for authority (reflecting its administrative-centered orientation) among staff members that had to be accounted for in the delivery planning of this program.

All other staff registered separately in one of the six open option times to take each of the three modules delegated for a particular year. The final session of the eight sections taught for each module was for make-up in case a staff member missed their originally registered class time. Topic modules cohorts were based on online registration, like students registering for academic classes, so colleagues across the department had the chance in interact and discuss the topic related to their unit area with department members in other work areas. This opportunity for multilateral organization relationship building provided space for employees to discuss how interacting units can support the presented ideas for best practices to ensure department-wide application. Additionally, an introductory class prior to module one and final application-based class after module nine, each class scheduled for two hours, was taught to program participants based on unit cohorts. Bringing units together by cohort to discuss the overall program plan and content in application to their area allows colleagues to plan strategically how the LC material will be integrated into the unit's every day practice toward realigning the department's culture with progressive amalgamation of the Housing mission.

**Program Content**

Each module curriculum followed a general format for delivery. Two classes are taught for each module, separated by a week time span. Each class is two hours, (4 hours total with each module), and there is a five minute break at the end of the first hour breaking the class into two halves. The first class for each module (e.g. Mod 2:1) is delegated to the topic presentation, while the second class (e.g. Mod 2:2) intends cross-cultural discussion of the topic at hand. The first hour of each class is primarily reserved for the facilitator's lecture, either on the general topic concept or cross-cultural dynamics

on the topic, presented through power point slides and incorporating popular theory as it relates to expectations for Housing workplace practice. After a short break, the second half of each class involves at least one protocol activity and group discussion on how the topic relates among unit areas and individual's daily work activity. Between the first and second week of each module there is a homework assignment, typically a worksheet that requiring reflection participant's personal work behavior or environment, reviewed among the group during the second class of each module. All protocol activities and homework assignments, while mainly created from existing personal and group dynamic inventory tools, are modified to be relatable to the Housing workplace and often for shortened completion time. All power point slides are detailed and animated, peppered with relatable diagrams, quotes, and cartoons. The Training and Development Specialist, who demonstrates experienced skills as a facilitator, balances attention to the serious nature of topic concept understanding while interjecting humor wherever possible, as he aimed to create a personable environment where relationship building among module cohorts were encouraged.

Foundational to the program content are the leadership model tools of Action Centered Leadership (ACL) (Adaire, 1973), and Strengths Based Leadership (Rath & Conchie, 2009). The ACL model is an approach to understanding leadership in practice based on balancing task accomplishment with developing individuals and maintaining team dynamics. Each cluster of three modules taught within a given year is themed on an aspect of the ACL model; year one focused on skills to accomplish tasks, year two focused on skills to support individual development, and year three focuses on skills to maintain team dynamics. While module topics are organized according to an aspect of

the leadership model, the ACL premise is on balancing the three interconnected aspects of the model in promotion of effective and efficient work production, so the entire model is related to each module topic. The ACL model provides a common way for department supervisors to think about leadership skills in their everyday work practice and to encourage these same skills in coaching their supervisees so all department employees may interpret leadership in the workplace similarly.

Likewise, the book *Strengths based leadership: Great leaders, teams, and why people follow* (Rath & Conchie, 2009) was distributed to all participants with the direction to take the Strengths online assessment and bring the results to the introductory class. Based on the assessment tool, each person identified their five most prominent Strengths from 34 types qualified among four categories. Strengths served as a behavioral inventory with the purpose of providing a common language for employees to consider their similarities and differences, as individuals and among unit areas. During the first class, each unit cohort mapped their Strengths and discussed what this map meant for the unit workplace culture and norms for how members interact with each other. Knowing one's own Strengths supports a person in understanding why they have particular values and how they interact with other people accordingly. Similarly, knowing the Strengths of colleagues who work closely together assists employee understanding of prominent work group characteristics and how the group can best work together accordingly to accomplish its objectives. With no surprise, some unit areas depicted particularly dominant strengths within a categorical area; the Residence Life unit dominantly displayed *relationship building* Strengths, where the DAB group results showed primarily *strategic planning* Strengths. Discussion about employee

commonalities and differences using the language of Strengths also opened the door for discussion about practice of social consciousness in the workplace prior to directly talking about issues of social justice.

The first class of each module began with review of program guidelines including: to participate; to create a safe space; to use confidentiality and respect for what others share; to speak from personal experience using "I" statements; to listen carefully and speak truthfully as there is a "no discount" policy; to seek first to understand, then be understood; to make space in the room for multiple truths; to take risks: have courage to feel uncomfortable and talk about uncomfortable feelings; to stay open to new ideas and be willing to "try things on"; to be honest; and to have fun. If a cohort remained static throughout the training (i.e. the DAB group), a recap of the cohort Strengths map was reviewed; if the class was a new cohort dynamic, a Strengths map of all training participants was reviewed with attention given to the predominant Strength characteristics of the members of that particular class. Similarly, a review of the ACL model as it relates to the module topic occurred thereafter, then the facilitator would launch into his presentation on the topic concept. The summary and agendas for the introductory module and modules one through six are listed in appendix A.

The introductory module, and modules one through six, provide overview of years one and two of The Leadership Center curriculum content. The goal of completing the LC is to assist department leadership and supervisory staff in supporting their team members toward aligning workplace practice with the mission of the organization. The following section outlines characteristics of program participants were purposefully sought to participant in this case study.

## Participants

Study participants from the LC were intentionally sought using purposeful techniques to obtain diverse sample characteristic (Merriam, 1998). Since this research goal was to explore the experience of LC participants as it contributes to organizational development, diversity in participant sampling contributed to a broad understanding of the issue (Patton, 2002). Eleven research participants, in addition to the facilitator, were purposefully chosen from the 135 total individuals involved in the program. Participants for this study were chosen on recommendation from the facilitator as having engaged with the program (i.e. regular attendance, participation) and who represented a diverse sample of department demographics. Research participant selection criteria included individuals who represented diverse personal characteristics regarding gender, ethnicity, postsecondary education level; department area and department work history longevity; and self-identified as having learned something that supported their work after their first year of program participation. Using a purposeful sample ensured a diverse array of participants were chosen to represent The Leadership Center. As the Training and Development Specialist also was a research participant and his recommendations for research participants were solicited, below is a biographical work history sketch of the program facilitator.

Liam (a pseudonym) was hired as the facilitator for the LC in December 2008 with the position title "Training and Development Specialist." At the beginning of this study he was forty years in age, and ethnically identifies as mixed race Irish-Asian American. Originally from Delaware, he traveled globally for work during his mid-20s.

His travels, which occurred prior to his master's pursuit at FSU and working for student affairs contributed significantly to developing his interest in cross-cultural leadership.

Although this was an open nationwide search, Liam had been employed in a mid-level Residence Life position at FSU for the previous year and a half, so he was an internal hire. Liam identified as a student affairs practitioner for 11 years prior to starting this position. In his late 20s, Liam began a master's degree in Education (not with any specific concentration, and this program does not offer classes related to student affairs) in fall 1997 at FSU, and graduated in May 1998. During this time he worked as a Hall Director for four consecutive years (during his master's work and thereafter). He then left and worked in three different Student Affairs positions (two of which were in Residence Life) at a Southwest flagship university for six years, and returned to FSU in his mid-level Residence Life position. In his time at this southwest university, he had gained experience as an in-house trainer specifically in social justice and diversity training. While he knew he liked teaching, and enjoyed working in student affairs, he did not have a clear idea of a progressive career path in this field. He had no interest in being the Dean of Students "never have, never would, not even interested in being a Director of Housing, anywhere." (personal communication, Feb 17, 2009). He had a lot of interest in learning, but similarly no interest in working toward a Ph.D. or becoming a faculty.

Liam believed that his extensive background in working for social justice concerns and facilitating trainings, as his experience related to the advertised job description's focus on leadership and social justice training, is why he was hired for this position. In addition to co-designing the LI curriculum and facilitating classes for the Center, Liam is the committee chair for the department's Advisory Board for Social

Justice (ABSJ) and counsels department employees on any human resource concerns related to social justice. From the time he began working for Housing in 1997, he noticed talk about social justice was growing as a cultural norm throughout the department. With administrator encouragement for this growing department interest, at least two members of Housing (typically people from Residence Life as they could most saliently apply this experience to working with undergraduate students) attended the national Social Justice Foundation (SJF) since it started in 1998, and Liam had been a part of the second class. Similarly, experts on various concepts of identity privilege visited FSU annually for department speaking engagements, including Resident Assistant training, and these presentations typically drew a lot of attention from Housing members. These initial interactions with the concepts of social justice and diversity led Liam to pursue student affairs positions that significantly involved facilitating discussion on concepts of social justice including cross-cultural leadership.

In December 2008, Liam was hired to continue the program development as Training and Development Specialist through the Housing Human Resources office. Liam was a natural fit for the position because of his personal understanding of the Housing community and culture, and his extensive experience facilitating student affairs training workshops on leadership and social justice concepts. As Liam and I have built a collaborative working relationship, his assistance as a gatekeeper in identifying research participants was critical, and their biographical sketches comprise chapter four. The following section illustrates data collection methods for this empirical research.

## Data Collection Methods

Case study methodology that uses sociological narrative techniques rely upon emergent themes derived from how participants describe their experience considering their biographical and cultural background (Creswell, 2007). In this case, employee experience within workplace professional development training as it contributes to organizational development is explored. As the sole researcher involved with this program I maintained responsibility to accurately portray participant perspectives (Reissman, 2008), since this research contributes to ongoing program development intended to support cultural change among the Housing organization. Congruent with a constructivist paradigm, I am "an advocate and partner in the study" (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 696). The following section outlines my data collection methods, including Institutional Review Board approval process, site access, artifacts, and journaling, and interview formats and questions, for exploring how participants experienced a workplace professional development training program.

## Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

Toward the end of my first year as an intern among this community I committed to conducting my dissertation project on this program. During the spring semester I took a course on Qualitative Narrative Research, and within the context of that course a required assignment was to draft an IRB proposal. With the support of my faculty in that course, who was also involved with the IRB proposal review process, knowing I would use my research in that course for my dissertation I submitted my research proposal which was beyond the required assignment for the course. My proposal at that time was only for work conducted in that course, since at that time I had not yet done my

comprehensive exams and was not eligible to apply that IRB approval to my official dissertation work. My proposal was approved, and I proceeded to conduct work that was later applied to my dissertation. Upon completing my comprehensive exams and prospectus over the following year, I thereafter submitted a revised IRB proposal, and upon approval, conducted the interviews and collect data reflected in this dissertation (IRB approval letter comprised Appendix A).

**Site Access**

Gaining access to an organization, research site, and individual participants is considered to have its own challenges (Creswell, 2007). While I believe this is generally true, I benefited in this situation as I co-created the training curriculum, and have spent extensive time building relationships among people connected to this program. In the three years prior to data collection that I had been involved with the LC, I built a collaborative working relationship with the program facilitator through regular interactions to construct the program; during some periods we emailed almost daily and met in person two to three times per week for two to five hours at a time. During our meetings we continued to plan and develop curriculum materials, and I was present to observe, take notes, collect program artifacts, and assist with the program pilots conducted for years one and two.

**Artifacts.** In preparation for this research, I chronicled the program development, and maintained a collection of documents, drafts of presentation outlines, power point slides, handout worksheets, class surveys and participant feedback that exhibited how the program evolved. Included in my journals are program workshop observation notes and "self-reflective memos" (Creswell, 2007, p. 131) of each pilot class that supported Liam

and my ongoing discussion of curriculum content and ideas for improvement. My longstanding experience with this program contributed to how I was able to conduct constructivist case study research of the LC program.

**Observation and journaling.** Persistent observation in the field is one method to learning the culture of a community (Creswell, 2007). Researcher access to making critical observations is an opportunity to "see things that escape [the people of a community] and to learn without asking" (Patton, 2002, p. 262). The three years I spent among this community provided me the opportunity to observe this organizational culture, depict unwritten rules for cultural behavior, build relationships with community members, and collect department and program documents. I have observed 13, two hour pilot classes for the curriculum delivery for three consecutive years (in total 39 classes), and conducted six, one hour focus groups (two focus groups each of the three years), which collectively informed themes explored in this literature review. Through the time of my data collection, the years I spent immersed among the Housing community proved a critical component of this research in my understanding of program participant's experiences and how this has affected their daily lives (Patton, 2002).

Throughout my experience involved with the LC, I kept a journal to record my thoughts, reflections, questions, insights, goals and personal-professional development associated with my observations of the Housing community. Reviewing my written account of my experience supported how this empirical research is structured. Continuing to journal my observations served as "self-reflective memos" (Creswell, 2007, p. 131) for interview notes, enriching this research process through supporting the narrative analysis. As well, journaling provided a research audit trail documenting my

thoughts, decisions, and actions for formulating a critical constructivist case study (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2007).

Central to ensure quality research, the concept of goodness requires an audit trail, thick rich description, and researcher reflection of observations through journaling as methods of documenting trustworthiness and authenticity (Jones, et al., 2006). Journaling my observations of this program and the workplace environment provided space for me to process what themes I noticed, as well as to track my research process. Goodness in qualitative research, as the equivalent to rigor in quantitative research, extends beyond data collection and analysis to include philosophical framework, methodology, interpretations and implications. Goodness is applied to the entire research process and requires researchers to make analysis decisions consistent with determined epistemological foundations and the overarching conceptual frame (Jones, et al., 2006). My observations and journaling contributed to how I ensure goodness in the meaning construction of employee experiences through the LC as support for their transformed practice in accord with the organization's mission.

**Documents and participant objects of meaning.** My collection of documents, drafts of presentation outlines, power point slides, handout worksheets, class surveys, and participant feedback, chronicles my experience with the LC. All program members received a binder to collect their worksheets and personal notes on class concepts, as these documents demonstrate tools employees can refer to in support of their ongoing practice development. Some of the research participants referred to these documents as we discussed their experience from the program. Many participants referenced that they

kept their binder in their workspace as a way to easily reference training concepts as needed. Salient documents will be included in the appendix section of this research.

When I had identified 10 potential research participants, I sent individualized email inquiries that outlined my research topic, the time commitment, and noted that all responses would be kept anonymous. Some participants responded immediately that they would be interested, and a few mentioned they would be too busy that term to participate. For the employees who had agreed to participate, consent letters were sent and collected, and first interviews were scheduled. I worked with Liam to identify a few more participants, and upon sending inquiries and reviewing my demographics list to ensure diversity I found 11 employees interested in serving as research participants. At the beginning of my first meeting with each participant, I reviewed the consent form with them, addressed any questions they had, and asked them to choose a pseudonym. A few participants did not have a pseudonym in mind, in which case I chose a name for them and asked whether they agreed to the use of that name.

Thereafter during the first meeting, I inquired about objects that were meaningful to research participants as a way to provide a vehicle for exploring a participant's personal history. Photographs, drawings, letters, statues, or gadgets offer visual depictions (Reissman, 2008) for employees to reflect on their personal beliefs, values, and feelings (Kegan, 1994) about their employment and experience as an LC participant. Eliciting personal stories that depict an employee's cultural background, education and work history, perceptions on the Housing work environment, and the meaning and purpose they identify in their professional role, for our first interview I asked each participant to show and tell about an item that typically resides on their workplace and

reminds them why their work is important (Reissman, 2008). My aim was to understand how participants characterized their training experiences, in context of their perceptions of how the LC affected their workplace culture and their professional role, with consideration to their sociological background. Most participants shared with me something that had been made or given to them by a student, colleague, supervisor, or family member, and held sentimental value. A few participants did not seem to understand my request, or instead jokingly showed me piles of papers or resource samples that had accumulated on their desk.

Similar to a single meaningful object, an employee's office will often reflect their beliefs, values, and feelings, therefore I asked each participant's permission to conduct personal interviews in their office. While I had access to the workspace of most participants, a few employees preferred our meeting to be held in a neutral space such as a conference room. For those employees who chose to share with me their object of meaning, that item provided context for our first individual interview, and serve as a method for relationship building between each participant and myself. For those participants who chose not to share with me a specific item, our first meeting progressed similarly to all my interviews and I do not believe this inhibited themes I could identify of their training experience, but those meetings were less personal and we met for a shorter period of time. The subsequent sections will outline the format and purpose of each stage of interviews and the open-ended questions which framed each meeting.

## Interviews and Focus Group Format

I sought both the ordinary and unique in this intrinsic case study (Stake, 2005) by eliciting descriptions of daily life experiences from participants with varied biographical,

historical, and cultural contexts as it affected their point of view of their workplace training experience. Although I used several open-ended questions prepared to focus the purpose of each interview, a semi-structured interview format allowed me to deviate from a set of pre-determined questions to explore more in depth participants' initial responses (Jones, et al., 2006). This way I documented participant voices and stories to enrich understanding of workplace training experiences as it contributes to organizational development. To provide space for participant stories, I maintained a listening stance throughout the interviews (Creswell, 2007; Reissman, 2008).

After a diverse sample of program participants for this study was identified, they read and signed a consent form outlining the voluntary nature of their participation, and the expected time commitment (Creswell, 2007). Each participant was assured the confidentiality of their identities through use of pseudonyms, as they were asked to choose a pseudonym or I suggested a name for their approval (Creswell). Each person participated in two individual interviews lasting approximately one hour each, with a one hour focus group thereafter. The second interview was scheduled within a month of the first meeting, so time was allowed for the participant to reflect on our first conversation. Additionally, allowing reflection time between meetings provided participants space to consider and offer additional thoughts on foundational questions which were discussed in our second meeting (Reissman, 2008).

As there are 12 participants, for manageability purposes, three different focus groups took place with clusters determined by participant availability. The focus groups served as a member check and follow-up to the individual interviews, allowing research participants to uncover similarities and differences in their experiences, as well as to

communally brainstorm feedback for improving program developments. Although rich data were obtained from individual interviews, the use of a focus group in this study provided an opportunity for participants to interact with each other and use the guided communal discussion to further explore the meaning of their experience (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Participants were initially contacted via email to schedule individual interviews, and later to provide time for focus group availability. I coordinated schedules to identify three communal meeting times. All meetings took place on the FSU campus, were conducted preferably in the participant's office or a location of the participant's choosing, and occurred during a time within the employee's standard work schedule. Interviews and focus groups were digitally audio-recorded, with permission, and transcribed for use in the data analysis research stage.

The first six sets (each set included interview one and two) of individual interview transcripts completed were sent to those participants for approval. I asked for an email reply within two weeks, and none of those 6 participants responded even though those were individuals who had been most enthusiastic to participate in this case study. Later upon running into two of these participants on the FSU campus, those employees reported being overwhelmed when they read their interviews in transcript form. Therefore neither employee had completed review of their transcript, which explained why they had not replied to my request for transcript approval. Therefore instead of seeking transcript approval, once I had written each participants' biography (comprising chapter four) I requested consent and received eight authorizing replies. Two of the eight replies requested I make minor edits and questioned who else may review these

documents, of which I complied to edit requests and answered all questions thoroughly. The other four participants were individuals who I did not hear back from even after multiple attempts at contact. When biographies were approved, I replied each participant was welcomed to have access to their interview transcripts as well as the themes and implications where I used participant quotes. I received no further inquiries from participants to review additional materials.

**Questions.** Each research participant was involved with two, one hour individual interviews and a one hour focus group. The first interview focused on exploring the employee's cultural background, education and Housing work history, whether they identified as a student affairs practitioner, perceptions on their work environment, and what meaning they identified in their professional role. Recognizing a participant's background provides sociological context for understanding how they account their experience. To elicit narrative stories depicting the participant's background, I asked each person to describe an item that resided in their work space and reminded them why their employment with Housing and their professional position fit their life (Reissman, 2008). This object of meaning for the participant provided context and structure for the first interview. For the few participants who chose not to share an object with me or show me their office, I asked them to recount a meaningful moment to me in their work history with Housing. Toward the end of our first meeting, I asked each participant for their general thoughts and impressions on their LC experience. At this time, I let them know the purpose of our second interview was to explore their experience as an LC participant, in their opinion whether their experience contributed to shaping their current

workplace practice, and whether they thought their personal background contributed to how they thought about the LC.

The first interview agenda included:

1) Tell me about your education and work history? What is your personal cultural background?
2) What has been your experience working in student affairs generally and Housing specifically? Do you identify as a student affairs professional?
3) What are your thoughts about the Housing work environment?
4) Show and tell me about a personally meaningful item that typically resides on your workplace desk and reminds you why your work is important to you.

The second individual interview took place on average a month after the first meeting. A short time laps between interviews offered space for the participant to reflect on our first conversation and I asked them to consider if they had additional thoughts or feedback from the first interview for our second meeting (Reissman, 2008). The purpose for the second individual interview was to explore the participant's perceptions of their experience with the LC, and whether they qualified their experience as transformative based on having impacted how they viewed or performed their work responsibilities, particularly with interacting with co-workers across the department. I asked, what aspects of the LC were most significant to you and how do you use what you learned? Also, in what ways do you view the LC as having impacted your work environment? The context of this interview maintained focus on the participant's learning experience as it affected their work practice, what value they associated with learning through workplace training, and how they perceive the LC content as having impacted their work environment.

The second interview agenda included:

1) Describe your learning experience with the LC. Has your participation with the LC been transformative in how you think about or do your work?
2) What aspects of the LC were most significant to you? How do you use what you learned?
3) What are your thoughts on being involved with workplace professional development training?
4) How do you think the LC has impacted the Housing work environment in the past year since the program has started?

The focus groups took place after all participants had a second individual interview. To ensure small focus group size for participant engagement, three different one hour sessions took place with clusters determined by participant availability. To build on the previous individual interviews, I opened the focus groups by asking for discussion among the participants on how they view the LC as having impacted the Housing work environment.

The focus group interviews included:

1) How do you think the LC has impacted the Housing work environment?
2) Has the LC contributed to your understanding of Housing under the division of student affairs, specifically on workplace relationship building and valuing individual differences?
3) Any final suggestions on how the LC may be further developed to support employee understanding of working for student affairs and specifically within the Housing culture?

The purpose of the focus groups was to have employees discuss their perceptions of working for a student affairs department and whether the LC curriculum content aided their understanding of student affairs work, including concepts of relationship building and valuing individual differences. Toward the end of the focus groups, I asked participants if they had suggestions for how the LC may be further developed to support the impact the program can have on Housing’s culture and its organizational development.

## Ensuring Goodness through Trustworthiness Criteria

Trustworthiness is recognized by how congruence and consistency are impacted in the way researchers establish confidence in the research findings (Jones, et al., 2006). It is the believability in the integrity of a study, and how the quality of research is determined. Therefore I aimed to support the believability of my research quality through ensuring its goodness, in how the theoretical frame, epistemology, methodology and methods congruently aligned. The concept of goodness encompasses the entire research process and serves as internal assessment for how congruence and consistency is fulfilled (Jones, et al., 2006). Goodness requires an audit trail, thick rich description, and researcher reflection on decisions, processes, and interpretation as methods of documenting trustworthiness. This was achieved through my extensive time commitment to my field site, observations, journaling, document collection, and aim to get to know my research participants. Several theoretical criteria support research trustworthiness including credibility, transferability, confirmability, and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent that reliable conclusions can be derived from a research study, and is one of the most significant factors in establishing researcher trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) define credibility as “whether the researcher’s judgment is reasonable given the nature of the topic and circumstances” (p. 130). Two techniques contribute to credibility: prolonged engagement and triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Prolonged engagement, also known as long-term observation, is determined by spending a significant amount of time among a field site, allowing for relationship building and rapport for participants to develop trust with a researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Through the time of my data collection, I spent three years engaged with the Housing community. Since I was not an employee of the Housing community, I did not have reason outside of my research commitment to engage in regular interactions with Housing members at large. Even so, some LC program participants were familiar that a doctoral student assisted Liam in the program implementation, and having access through the program facilitator, a reliable gatekeeper (Creswell, 2007) was critical. My prolonged engagement and investment to support the success of this program within this organization contributes to the credibility of the research.

The most critical aspect of congruence in this research includes how I aimed to authenticate findings with participants through member checking, also known as triangulation (Jones, et al., 2006). Triangulation involves using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm emerging findings (Merriam, 1998). Member checks provide opportunity to elicit more data regarding specific examples to illustrate themes emerging from the analysis (Jones, et al.). This technique is especially important when there are social identity differences between the researcher and participants, as this process relies on reciprocal, holistic understanding to construct plausible explanation about the phenomena (Merriam, 1998), and the story of a case study is explored with account for many social perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Through this technique, I was able to complete the circle of authentication with participants by allowing them to provide input on the research process (Jones, et al.).

This technique was demonstrated in my research process through conducting multiple interviews in varied formats with each of the 12 participants, where I had opportunity to review emerging themes with participants through our multiple meetings. I provided transcripts for participant review, although no participants replied to my requests for transcript approval because as two participants reported, the process of reviewing transcripts was overwhelming. Subsequently, I requested all participants' approval of their biographical sketch and selected quotes. In that request, eight of my 12 participants approved how they were portrayed, and I did not receive a reply from the other four participants after multiple attempts at contact. My aim throughout the research was to maintain accuracy in portraying each participant's story for holistically understanding this phenomenon. This aim provided support for ongoing program development for its success among the organization, and for validation of the study's trustworthiness (Merriam, 1998).

**Transferability**

A second measure of trustworthiness to ensure research goodness is the transferability of a study's processes and findings. Considered to be a parallel to the quantitative (and some types of qualitative) research process of generalizability (Merriam, 1998), transferability is essential for an intrinsic study that explores the uniqueness of a single case (Creswell, 2007). Transferability relies on thick descriptions of the context, research processes, interpretations, and findings to provide framework for readers to determine the extent by which this study can be applied to different settings

and participants. While this method places responsibility for knowledge application on the reader (Creswell, 2007), the as the researcher I take responsibility "to provide sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork to enable the reader to make such a transfer" (Shenton, 2004, p. 70).

Contextual information is provided for readers through describing the context of the LC, including the organizational setting and culture, the evolution of the program development, delivery design, and curriculum content. As well the cultural background and work history stories of participants as it affects their perception of their training experience is explored. Thick, rich description of research processes and interpretations supports reader understanding of the phenomenon for their transferability application to other settings. Trustworthiness is reinforced through credibility and transferability methods, and additionally so when confirmability and authenticity are similarly applied to a research study.

**Confirmability**

To achieve confirmability, researchers must take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions (Shenton, 2004). Prolonged field engagement, closely following research procedures and establishing solid documentation, employing alternative perspectives within the research context, and accurately representing participant perspectives encompass how confirmability is recognized. Likewise, an audit trail documenting actions, decisions, and interpretations ensures findings are data driven (Patton, 2002). My researcher journal served as an audit trail for confirmability, as do interview transcripts. Likewise, my ethical stance to ensure this program is in the best interest of employees support that themes have emerged from

participant's voices and mot my own predisposition.  Once transcripts were completed, data were first dissected based on thematic categories, then reassembled based on coding and analyzed to synthesize meaning.  I continually referenced my notes to ensure I followed my research plan, which further reinforced confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

**Authenticity**

The way holistic student affairs philosophy recognizes self-understanding as fundamental to a person's capacity to understand others, and field practice involves supporting the self-understanding of others accordingly, the process of qualitative research must reflect the researcher's self-understanding of what purpose and impact their research serves.  The authenticity of qualitative research, involving five criteria including fairness, and ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 2000), demonstrates the researcher's understanding of how they bring their whole self into a study and what impact the research aims to produce.  Authenticity also contributes to a study's congruence as assurance for its goodness.

The five criteria of authenticity includes fairness, and ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical authenticity.  Fairness is demonstrated through the researcher's effort to "act affirmatively with respect to inclusion" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 180) in a way that participant voices are respectfully represented.  I demonstrate fairness in the research process through inclusion of diverse participant perspectives and incorporating a variety of opportunities and methods to listen and document participant stories. Ontological authenticity is ensured since research participants had opportunity to discuss and reflect on their experience providing a "raised level of awareness" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 180).  The educative authenticity of the research is measured to the degree in

which participants “become aware of the social constructions of others” (Lincoln, 2001, p. 45), an opportunity offered through open discussion in the focus groups, in the research context of exploring the training experience of diverse participants. The degree to which participants and readers seek to make change in their own and other’s lives as a response to the research process and findings demonstrates catalytic authenticity (Jones, et al., 2006). Tactical authenticity is represented through demonstrating that participants have thoroughly considered their learning experience and can provide thoughtful feedback accordingly, and likewise in the goal of the research to share findings with higher education members through publication (Jones, et al., 2006). The impact of this research is considered throughout the process to ensure that it is appropriate in terms of its recommendations (Shank, 2006).

My commitment in this case study has required that I bring my whole self into this research. My investment included over three years of time, finding additional employment to support myself, and recognizing I was my only advocate for ensuring this research served the purpose it intended. The cost of personal investment must be weighed according to the value of what purpose a piece of research serves, and I believe my research supports considerations for the effectiveness and efficiency of an increasingly fragmented higher education system. Being my authentic self within the role of researcher is foundational within qualitative research, and I could not have produced this research without recognition that my personal experience with student affairs professional development wholly affected my researcher viewpoint on the topic.

Being authentic means “what I believe, what I say, and what I do are consistent” (Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006, p. 8). This authenticity section serves as my

signature on this research contract that I have assessed my own values and biases to distinguish my perspective from my participants in a way that represents their voice in their own best interest. The subsequent sections review analysis techniques and ethics considered for this research.

## Data Analysis

My recorded interviews were transcribed, as was my observations, field artifacts, and journal coded for on-going and thorough analysis of the multiple data sources. Remaining consistent with emergent constructivist research and case study methodology, triangulation through participant and peer review occurred throughout the process (Merriam, 1998). In working with individual participants, each set of transcripts and field notes was approached in a holistic manner to discover emergent themes for further exploration in ongoing discussions.

I transcribed the recorded interviews and highlighted sections most pertinent to this study. Highlighted sections were synthesized through coding and three-dimensional inquiry to characterize meaning, and were organized into categories of primary and secondary themes. As themed emerged, participants were asked to review selected quotes and verify the meaning and themes I derived from their words fit their intention. If the meaning identified is not what the participant meant, the participant and I worked together to clarify their statements so that the assigned meaning was what the participant intended. Once the assigned meaning to interview statements is verified, I analyzed all themes to give meaning to the overall phenomenon as experienced by the participants involved (Merriam, 1998). The meaning assessed from these themes was then used to

determine whether the training in total impacted organizational development, and to offer recommendations for how these themes could impact further LC program development.

**Coding and Three-Dimensional Inquiry**

The analysis techniques I employed involve coding and three-dimensional inquiry of my data. These processes involved breaking down the data into manageable chunks and assigning tentative categories for further exploration with consideration to individual participant's backgrounds. The three levels of coding include open, axial, and selective stages (Jones, et al., 2006). Open coding is the initial stage of data analysis and involved careful examination of the words used by participants to describe or convey experiences, understandings, or meaning of the phenomenon explored. Further, open coding involved the process of grouping emerging ideas into categories as a way to examine the relationship between concepts, and the categories generated reflect the complexity of the phenomenon. The next stage of axial coding involved refiguring the data into higher order categories to represent theoretical constructs and make explicit the relationships among categories. The third and final stage of selective coding involved the process of selecting the core category. This process involved systemically relating the core thematic category to other categories in a way that validates those relationships and generates a story line to capture the essence of what happened in the researched phenomenon (Jones, et al., 2006). Since qualitative research calls for an on-going, organic process of working with data to discover emerging themes, coding and three-dimensional inquiry took place throughout the research process.

To uphold the organic nature of narrative techniques applied to this case study design, coding was applied in a way that keeps the "story intact by theorizing from the

case rather than component themes (categories) across cases" (Reissman, 2008, p. 53). For example, while varied themes were uncovered among the stories of all participants, the thematic analysis maintained focus on participant's training experiences as it affected development of their work practice. Within the context of this case, three-dimensional inquiry was also applied as a way to highlight the depth that narrative techniques bring to case study research.

Three-dimensional inquiry involves composing a text that "at once looks backward and forward, looks inward and outward, and situates the experiences within place" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 140). This means close consideration is necessary of each participant's experience in the LC regarding their personal history, sociological identity, and environment. Similarly, this inquiry process gives rationale for researcher reflexivity, and provides validation for how my perspective contributes to themes and implications of this study. The need for close attention to participant individuation creates a researcher challenge in maintaining transferability with assisting an audience to understand how to apply what was learned from this case study (Reissman, 2008). To address this challenge, narrative technique must balance the unique voices of participants and the researcher while considering the audience who cares to reflect on and apply what was assessed from the empirical research.

Considering this challenge, I acknowledge who is my audience for this research and what aspects from my text that might be valuable for them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). My audience is comprised of student affairs leaders interested in actualizing a workplace professional development training program for their staff and looking for an effective model to follow and adapt to their particular institution. Therefore, the analysis

of my case study must demonstrate a transferable value to this audience. While I highlight the individual stories of my participants in chapter four to let their voices be heard and provide an example of who makes up this community, I also portray my results in a way that assists my audience in reflecting what to consider in developing their own workplace training program. Acknowledging my audience in my writing reinforces the thematic analysis focus on participant training experiences for development their work practices and the organization at large.

**Ethical Considerations**

Analyzing and interpreting data carries significant ethical responsibility to tell the story of the research in a way that participants themselves recognize as their story. As Stake (2005) observed, “qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict” (p. 244). Interviewing carries both risks and benefits to the informants, and the researcher must be consistently cognizant of all aspects of impact a study can have on participants. Since the researcher’s job is first “to gather data, not to change people” (Patton, 2002, p. 354), ethical considerations include researcher preparedness to offer referrals to resources for assisting participants with their personal issues that may be exposed through exploration of the research topic.

I am both an insider and outsider among this community, which supports my ethical considerations (Jones, et al., 2006). I am an outsider in this community in that I am not a formally employed member of this workplace. Yet I am an insider because for over three years I was immersed in this community, and through my observations I became familiar with this organizational culture and its unwritten rules for norms and

behavior. I have been transparent about my investment as the program co-creator and my goal to understand how the LC can best contribute to student affairs organizational development; therefore my observations and inquiry were limited in scope, so my research could not be construed as "spying" (Merriam, 1998, p. 215). I maintained a positive working relationship with the program facilitator, who serves as my gatekeeper and was also a participant. By my authenticity, I aimed to support and respectfully represent my research participants, to whom I held foremost ethical responsibility.

My ethical responsibility as a researcher concerned first to protect the potentially sensitive disclosure of participant's responses about their views of their workplace. During the first interview with each participant, I initiated discussion on this matter, and asked if they had any questions or concerns, which for some individuals we did discuss my intention at length. All participants were assured pseudonyms would be used for them, and they had the opportunity to review how they were profiled, since they were informed as an intrinsic case study the potential existed that they could be identified. Throughout our interviews I maintained upmost respect for my participant's viewpoints, and assured they understood their perspective would be used to depict how the LC's contributed to the organization's ongoing development.

As a co-creator of the LC, my research outcome intention is to "first, do no harm" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 199), by systemically supporting the program and Housing community development while simultaneously conducting high quality research. Therefore, my ethical challenge was to maintain balance between valuing the stories told to me by participants yet to consider their viewpoint in context with the organization. I understood my mandate to set aside personal biases in my ownership as a LC co-creator,

while honoring my relationships with research participants, to maintain the goodness of a qualitative research design. I fulfilled this balance of ethics by positioning myself foremost as a listener of participant stories, and to ask questions directly related to their training experiences.

Data sought from participants primarily involved their perception and experience with professional development training in their workplace, and participant identities remained anonymous through the use of pseudonyms. Participants knew in advance that I would ask questions about their personal cultural background, which was not an unusual request considering social justice discussion had been common among this community for over the past decade. Questions participants were asked regarding their personal backgrounds pertained to the public record of their education and work history. Since I aimed to explore participant's experiences with a workplace professional development training program, there was a low possibility of participants divulging pain or suffering from this experience (Merriam, 1998). My priority for this research was that results were congruent, believable, and met all trustworthiness criteria. As such, I maintained research goodness through maintaining ethical considerations and honesty in data collection and analysis.

## Summary

Qualitative research involves a variety of empirical methods, which serve to describe the moments and meanings of individuals' lives with the goal of better understanding the phenomenon at hand. Constructivist paradigms and case study methods as discussed in this chapter were applied to understand the experience of student affairs employees engaged in a workplace professional development program as it

contributed to organizational development. Through descriptions of the LC program context, the participants, data collection methods, assurance for goodness, and analysis procedures, this inquiry focused in depth on meaning in context (Merriam, 1998) within an intrinsic case example.

Through the narrative stories of a purposeful sample of diverse employees, the experience of participants from the LC was explored in context with their cultural background. This narrative approach to case study research required me to listen and be adaptable to participant experiences. This approach allowed me to develop a "deeper understanding of the nature and meaning" (Patton, 2002, p. 104) of how learning through training participation affects student affairs employees daily work life and organizational development. In line with a constructivist paradigm, the theoretical framework of this study is a reflection on my own professional development to be an advocate of employee development among this particular higher education organizational setting.

My experience as co-creator of the LC and my investment to make this program effective in stimulating organizational development supports the goodness of this empirical study. My contribution to developing this program stemmed from my belief that workplace professional development, which inherently builds inter-organizational relationships and promotes learning among people from varied perspectives, contributes to strengthening the student affairs foundation of social justice understanding. My belief undergirds the structure of this study, which supports the congruence among the trustworthiness criteria including the credibility, transferability, confirmability, and authenticity. Likewise, data collection and analysis techniques employed demonstrate my ethical commitment to accurately represent participant perspectives. With this

research I continue my program contribution through having engaged in relationships with select participants to co-construct the meaning of their training experiences and to further develop the program.

# CHAPTER IV

## INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPANTS

In this chapter, I introduce the stories of 11 Housing employees engaged in the Leadership Center (LC), as well as the point of view on the program development from the facilitator, Liam. At the time I sought my research participants, the 135 Housing supervisory staff involved in the LC were beginning the sixth module, the final course for the second year. In order to identify a diverse range of staff who had consistently participated in the LC, I relied on Liam to serve as gatekeeper and he proved invaluable in assisting me to reach out to members of this complex community. In the three years I was involved in this intrinsic case study, I contributed significantly to the curriculum design and provided feedback through conducting focus groups with the program's 15 pilot participants. Nonetheless, I believe I maintained an outsider status among this workplace, as the scope with whom I interacted with was limited primarily to individuals involved in creating the LC. Given my perspective, my aim in this research is to provide guidance to simultaneously support best practices of this program as it contributes to employee's professional growth and affects this organization's development, while honoring the perspectives of individuals who shared with me their stories.

The following narratives demonstrate individuals with broad personal backgrounds, viewpoints, and work histories. Collectively these narratives provide a case study about a particular student affairs workplace and employee experiences with a programmatic effort to motivate organizational development through investing in its

member's professional growth. Since sociological narrative exploration "shifts attention to the details" (Reissman, 2008, p. 12) of the experience of an individual and their relationship to the social context (Merriam, 1998), the lived history of each participant gives insight to their learning experience and viewpoint on the program's impact in their workplace. Following these narratives, I interweave the common threads to comprise the "bounded system" (Merriam, p. 19) of this case study to demonstrate how an investment in employee learning shapes a student affairs organization's development.

*Table 3*

Participant data

| | Gender | Self-identified Race | Education | Unit Area of Work | Time at FSU | Work History |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mustafa | M | Latino/ White | B.S., M.B.A. | Family & Apt Life | 2-5 yrs | 20-25 yrs Family Life, 3 yrs Study Abroad |
| Julie | F | White | B.A., M.S. | Res Life | 10-12 yrs | 10-15 yrs Res Life |
| Anna | F | White | A.A., B.A., M.Ed. | Conference Services | 8-10 yrs | 10-15 yrs Res Life, 1 yr Conferences |
| Keith | M | White | High School | Facilities | 25-30 yrs | 5 yrs Military, 8-10 yrs Construction, 25-30 yrs Facilities |
| Alex | M | White | A.A., B.A. | Dining | 10-12 yrs | 10-15 yrs Chef, 10-15 yrs Dining mngmt |
| Amy | F | Asian | B.A. | Family & Apt Life | 10-12 yrs | 15-20 yrs Childcare |
| James | M | White | High School | Facilities | 10-12 yrs | 10 yrs Military 20 yrs Electrician |
| Clay | M | White | B.S., M.A., Ph.D. pursuit | Res Life | 10-12 yrs | 15-20 yrs Res Life |
| Jeffrey | M | Black/ Asian | GED | Dining | 15-18 yrs | 25-30 yrs Chef |
| Leah | F | Middle Eastern | B.A., B.A. | Finance | 2-5 yrs | 15-20 yrs Accountant |
| Ron | M | Middle Eastern | B.S., M.A. | Facilities | 5-8 yrs | 25-30 yrs Business mngmt |
| Liam | M | Asian/ White | B.A., M.A. | Human Resources | 10-12 yrs | 10-15 yrs Res Life, 2 yrs Human Resources |

G.E.D.: General Education Degree; A.A.: Associate of Arts; B.A.: Bachelors of Arts; B.S.: Bachelors of Science; M.A.: Masters of Arts; M.S.: Masters of Science; M.Ed.: Masters of Education; M.B.A.: Masters of Business Administration; Ph.D.: Doctorate of Philosophy

**Mustafa**

*"If your only tool is a hammer every problem looks like a nail"*

Mustafa was hired into his position as Assistant Director of Family Housing and Apartment Life, "the same day President Obama went into office." While that day was a few years prior to our first meeting, Mustafa had identified as a student affairs professional for over 25 years. The three years prior to his FSU appointment had been spent as a founding member of a now disbanded program called Scholar-Ship. While this program was similar to the idea of Semester-at-Sea in so far as students traveled and learned by boat, its similarities ended there. In the first five minutes of initially meeting Mustafa, he eagerly recounted the two successful voyages he executed and the unique opportunity for students that came from "building a trans-national, transformational education experience from about 50 nations coming together on a ship that went around the world." Mustafa explained for me the difference between Semester-at-Sea's philosophy of being a more mono-cultural experience that supported multiculturalism when students were able to venture out at port, where his interest with the Scholar-Ship was "in bringing many cultural perspectives together for the whole haul."

Initially Mustafa had seen his future in living out this philosophy, but unfortunately the corporate cruise ship sponsor had some administrative turnover after the second voyage, and the Scholar-Ship disbanded. While Mustafa was involved with this project for only three years, this experience was impactful for him. I asked all my participants to share an item with me that typically resides in their workspace and reminds them why their work is meaningful, and Mustafa shared three items with me, two of which related to his time with the Scholar-Ship.

The items Mustafa shared with me demonstrated his value for bringing together young adults of many nationalities, having them share their cultural perspectives as a way to inspire multicultural learning, and supporting self-reflection for personal and community growth.  The two items from the Scholar-Ship included a triangular flag that was set out at each voyage port, which was now framed on the wall opposite to his desk. The second item was a photo book of the first voyage, with over 50 pages of students in groups of approximately 20 people, delegated by their themed living-learning communities.  Each page showed groups of smiling young adults representing an inter-mix of various cultures, with their arms around each other, mirroring their collective influence on each other through the impact of this experience.  The third item resided on a small round meeting table next to his desk where our interviews were conducted.  As Mustafa explained to me, the round glass paperweight encasing the white aged dandelion with its seeds displayed ready to disperse "is the symbol for the military brat, which I am."  He went on to say "it was chosen by this online community because it gets blown by the wind very easily and goes where ever and grows anywhere it lands. It grows up between the sidewalk cracks where nothing else will grow."  This symbol represents how Mustafa describes himself, what he has identified from research literature as the "global nomad" or "3rd culture kid", since "even though I carry a U.S. passport, I sort of see myself as a citizen of the world."

Mustafa is the oldest of three male siblings in a close knit military family.  He identified his father as Catholic Latino from northern New Mexico, and his mother as Southern Baptist northern European English, who met in California.  While he has always held U.S. citizenship, he lived abroad significantly in his formative years and that

thoroughly shaped how he views his identity as an adult. The longest place they lived was when he was in high school in Japan for four years, the second longest location was Taiwan for two years, stateside they moved every year. While Mustafa is still close with this family, his career trajectory and politics are different from his brothers who are two and three years apart from him in age. They both currently work in the military, and while at one time he too was close to accepting a pilot's slot in the U.S. Air Force, he was the only one in his family to attend college.

As a first generation college student and product of the early TRIOs (named for the original 3, and now 8, U.S. federal programs to increase access to higher education for economically disadvantaged students) program at a southwest regional state university, Mustafa initially struggled until he found the academic support program. As an environmental and resource economics major he thought he would work for the Unites States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and did for a few years after college until that was no longer a good fit. Initially he went to college right out of high school even though he had not been sure of what he wanted to do. Since school absorbed his savings after the first year, he needed a job and ended up in a resident assistant position. Describing himself as an introvert, he said that position was good because it made him talk to people. After his first semester, he was promoted to an assistant head resident position, and that experience helped him get through his undergrad years. After deciding that working for the USDA was not a right fit, he moved west to the Rocky Mountain region to pursue an MBA. He was hired for a graduate assistant position in family housing with the help of a friend who worked in Residence Life. This institution had a strong Student Affairs

master's program, and Mustafa took a number of those courses as electives toward his degree. By his account,

> that's where I sort of developed an appreciation for student development theory and putting those ideas into practice. So I didn't have a degree in Student Affairs, but I have the theoretical background for sure, so I feel informed. So I just moved up [at that school] and ultimately led the family housing program there.

In 20 years there, he felt mentored by faculty from that program to "create assistantships that were meaningful for the grad students that I inherited." Whether students were sent to him from the Student Affairs program faculty chair, or were people living in family housing that he shepherd toward a this master's degree (most of whom were international students), from that experience he grew a "belief in true co-creational learning." In that time, Mustafa saw many ah-ha moments in the grad students that worked for him, particularly with the international students. Many had not had previous exposure to the philosophy of student affairs, particularly in thinking about their own identity development but,

> when you have a community of 60-70% from different nations, you want a staff that mirrors your population…I wanted to cultivate candidate pools, and one way was to identify students who were passionate at a core level. I saw their batteries were charged by this, so that's what I wanted…so to that degree we were successful at hiring diverse international staff was the degree that we were better at what we were doing.

When Mustafa was in that position, "the theory to practice leap was a constant discussion." The master's degree program there supported "keeping things in perspective," yet since FSU does not have that type of academic program, initially he felt that difference in the types of discussions he has had in the workplace.

When asked about his thoughts on the Housing work environment, Mustafa states that knowing its history, he understands they "really need to pay attention to finance and

look at the bricks and mortar issues." While he characterized the current environment as business minded, he additionally states how important that mentality is because "we have to be good operators in order to develop the financial resources so we can do the educational piece." When he first entered his position prior to starting the LC, he accounted that he sometimes wondered if Housing was the kind of environment where "if your only tool is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail." That development component was missing then, and in his belief learning those tools through staff development training is significant. Through learning some of the history of Housing he had begun to understand where the philosophical rationale for decision making had come from, and expressed excitement to have entered Housing at a time when staff can acquire tools and learn how to use them through participating in the LC.

Mustafa currently oversees three programs, family housing, the childcare center, and an apartment complex, and due to inherited construction issues approximately a million dollars in revenue was lost in the past year. In the same breathe he notes how challenged he feels, because he knows since the financial piece is not there, he has yet to develop the kind of staffing and programmatic part that he feels is essential and has not been there before. While admitting he has been frustrated, he is patient and wants to honor the trajectory of the program he oversees, and is still trying to figure out the politics and strategy to get what he needs. That is where he believes the LC has most helped him.

As the researcher entering this interview, I was not sure what I would hear as far as impact on program participants, but I felt I could remain open to all kinds of feedback. While my initial questions were not about the LC as I wanted to get to know people first,

many people jumped right in to tell me about their experience, and Mustafa was no exception. He seemed most appreciative that the timing for his involvement seemed perfect, for him it was all a part of his orientation because,

> I'm getting this, and I would otherwise be looking for clues on how we operate as a university. So I would have been scanning for…the things that this theoretical framework addresses, how do we work with each other, what are our values, how do we make things move and make progress and so forth, I'm always trying to figure out what is the larger culture and I have a sense of what I want to bring to the table, but how does it fit…The timing was impeccable for me because we're becoming conscious of a number of these things, we're actually having conversations about it. I would be trying to find ways to gather information from a wide range of places, but now I don't have to because we're getting a baseline on things I would otherwise look for but this inherently addresses, things that we don't otherwise have overt language for…so it's a number of issues coming together in a way that makes things more efficient for me.

While he has been a part of student affairs community for most of his professional life, he had participated in many workplace trainings, "but there was never a comprehensive holistic, we're all gonna get this together."

As representation of the LC's impact, he has heard Housing staff mention some of the concepts in cross-unit meetings, as well as his staff has mentioned the LC in their unit meetings. While he has not yet begun to integrate LC concepts into his unit meetings, through our conversations he considered how he would like to move forward with having those deeper conversations with his staff. Ironically, in considering other piecemeal trainings he has been a part of, he remembered a recent speaker presentation he had attended. The speaker, who was also a key figure with the Social Justice Foundation (SJF) that Liam had been a part of in 1998, spoke in his presentation about "building the foundation and capacity for institutional transformation." Mustafa recounted "I wrote that quote from his talk, and I thought that's what we have here, we're building both a

foundation and capacity for organizational transformation, so yeah, definitely, with the LC, we're looking at it."

**Julie**

*"I feel like I've been here long enough… I've been the critical one and I've had the chance to question things, now I'm at the point where I want to make things better"*

In recounting the aspects of her identity that Julie most closely associates, she answers as someone who has considered this question many times before. As a White woman, Catholic, able-bodied, and middle-class, her care giver role is salient to her core as she describes work and family as most important and what she constantly maintains to balance. Work-life balance for her and how she helps other members of the Housing community with that balance is where our conversations flow naturally. After more than a dozen years with the office of Residence Life, Julie is proud to be a part of a department where "the things I'm good at are rewarded here," such as allowing her to focus on her administrative strengths in projects she develops, and being a good communicator.

Through a few unit reorganizations, Julie started as a Hall Director and has been promoted into two advancing professional exempt positions, and currently serves as one of five Assistant Directors. Projects she has engaged with primarily allow her to support staff development, and growth for Housing as a whole. During her employment at FSU she has also balanced caring for her family, including having three children who are now ages five, three, and two. After having her second child, she proposed working 60% to balance family responsibilities, which "was a really hard decision for me because I am really tied to my work identity." While her responsibilities and appointment percentage since then have varied (she is currently at 80% time), because of that experience she

"then automatically felt more loyal [to Housing]." The projects she works on now and how she aims to support other members of the Housing community directly stem from the support she feels she has received to balance her family and job.

Julie is a local native, and is a part of a large family. For her bachelor's degree she attended a religious based university within an hour from her home where she majored in Sociology and Education, and was involved with student life as a Resident Assistant. Attending a Student Affairs master's program in a neighboring state while working as a graduate assistant Hall Director allowed her to do deliberate critical thinking about student affairs situations, which is what she has carried most into her career from her master's education. Since student affairs work is in many ways development oriented, she knows a lot of people who are ambitious and often think about moving up, but she is happy where she is at, aims to live in the present, and enjoys "feeling like I contribute to a lot to people, and I'm always thinking of new ideas."

Identifying strongly as a student affairs professional crosses over into every area of Julie's life, especially in being with her family, and for her that has been a catch-22. In her first professional role as a Hall Director, she worked all the time. Growing up in her job and adult responsibilities has meant consciously balancing her time. For a lot of student affairs work,

> the bad part is never turning it off…at least in housing, cause stuff happens all the time and you still need to do it. The good part is the people I work with are truly caring, and striving to be better, and trying to be socially just, and I feel like that carries over to my kids, like giving back to community.

Julie feels her career here fits her strengths; "I think I keep pretty good relationships, and so that's one thing I really like about this job and this field, I think the people are really unique, and most of my best friends I've met while working here." For her "it's hard not

to value a place that gives me this much, and I think I give it back two-fold… I think it's pretty unheard of how flexible we are here, so family oriented."

Contributing to that flexibility and family oriented feel through staff development is clearly a theme as Julie accounts projects she has most valued. Using her administrative strengths of future planning and attention to details, the projects she has been most invested in during her time at FSU have included Residence Life trainings and recruitment, recognition and staff appreciation events, and building a staff alumni network. Currently she is involved with the reapplication process to fill two newly built residence halls, and is working with the Human Resources unit to create a flexible work options program for Housing employees. As one of the two Assistant Directors who directly supervise the unit's five Area Coordinators, her day to day is often spent managing email, mostly answering questions, guiding the supervision of Hall Directors, and working with students. One thing she is most excited about is an optional professional development support group that she put together last summer, and the primary resources for this group is what she shows me as her object that reminds her why her work is meaningful.

Generally called the "where do I want to be in a year" group, nine Hall Directors and Area Coordinators gather once per month and talk about their job search processes. Considering how many people consistently showed up for this optional meeting, she feels like she has hit a need and that it is refreshing for people to talk honestly about their job search process. The object she shows me is a colorful 8x11 laminated map of the U.S., with each state listing which staff in the Residence Life unit has job connections to that state. It is useful for someone in a job search, if they want to move to a particular

location this map can be used to identify who might know someone connected to a particular job. When this group gathers, they review resumes, share job descriptions, and talk about how to gain experience to move forward with their job planning. For Julie this group helps her serve as a mentor to younger staff, to contribute to that family feel in helping people grow personally and making job connections. This group also directly connects to what Liam does in the LC, most specifically how she can put into action what she has learned in her favorite Module six on Career Planning.

When asked if she had any ah-ha moments with her involvement with the LC, Julie easily recounted that she got something out of every class as “it was all just such a benefit.” Initially she did not think it would be anything new, particularly as Residence Life training had been a responsibility in the role she held a few years prior. Nevertheless, “there was always something, like I left every class…I was surprised how much was easy to take back and apply, versus just theory that you learned about. And Liam did it in a way that always connected the dots.”

When asked to give examples of her ah-ha moments, she quickly listed concepts and tools used in the LI that she regularly applied in her every day. Particularly, it made her think about how decisions she contributed to affected the whole department. What Julie seemed most surprised by was that even though she thought she knew a lot about department politics, “you can see how we’re more dependent on each other than people realize.” She went on to say “there is this domino effect… cause everyone’s so busy that there’s not a lot of get to know you time, so you’re thrown into it, so this was good for that time.” When asked if she felt any transformation had happened because of this experience,

> I don't know how you could walk out of there and not have learned something about another unit… I think it's all stuff that can make any job easier cause we can give, just knowing little things that are easy to change you can just change, because oh, I didn't realize that before.

**Anna**

*"It's so important to get out and know who people are, and you can get so much more done if people know who you are and where you're coming from"*

Prior to joining FSU's Residence Life unit as a Hall Director in 2002, Anna spent six years working in student affairs roles at a loosely religiously affiliated college of 1000 students in Iowa. For her, initially learning student affairs work at a small college provided the lesson of being a "jack-of-all-trades," which served her well through a couple of new and evolving roles with Housing, and has shaped her view of networking as a key to success after 10 years at FSU. After a couple of years directing two residence halls at FSU, Anna spent three years in a joint position between Residence Life and the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs (VCSA) office, where she developed the current residential college model, and collaborated with offices across campus to build its buy in and implementation. After administrative turnover in the VCSA office, she reintegrated as a Program Coordinator for Housing, working mostly out of Residence Life and primarily on student engagement, assessment, and academic support projects. Serving as a liaison across the division of Student Affairs, she utilized the same networking skills that aided her well in Iowa and for her master's degree in Education with a concentration in Higher Education Student Services.

Anna's graduate degree work focused on service learning, where she created a model of civic engagement still used at her former Iowa college. Since much of her research involved the moral and ethical development of young adults, her graduate

degree provided a solid foundation for projects she has contributed to, and offices across FSU that she has partnered with in the past decade. Anna identifies strongly as a student affairs practitioner; for her, "I grew up in student affairs in such a way that everyone was equal players and everyone came to the table and helped each other out and you made it your business to know what was happening across campus." Similarly for Anna, "student development feels like a natural thing after this long," which she viewed as being centered in building relationships to foster personal and professional growth. Nonetheless, "intention is huge, cause we all get so busy," so when the opportunity to mentor a student rises she has to consciously carve out the time. Mentorship, while not as much a part of her day to day now, is something she strongly values, as she recounted in a recent conversation she was able to have with one of her student employees who was handling stress.

When I first met Anna, she was 10 months into her current position as Assistant Director for Conference Services. Still being in the first year cycle of a new position had been a challenge in some ways, but she recounted it was an exciting opportunity and a good transition for her personal and professional growth. As a longtime member of Housing, Anna's past positions gave her excellent context for her job coordinating operations details for 150 annual conferences (120 during the summer months), including overseeing the summer staff of 14 Hall Directors, five Area Coordinators, and approximately 50 students. While during the year she directly supervises only 1 professional staff, her attention to detail and priority in supporting individual development as a part of good customer service made her feel the Conference Services unit was an excellent fit. While her initial transition into Conference Services had some

difficult moments since her new role began at the beginning of a summer season, she was supported by having had a positive relationship with her current supervisor (who previously held her role) for a number of years and the timing of her involvement with the LC provided perspective that aided her transition.

Anna completed year one of the LC in her previous position, and had been in her Conference Services position for four months when she started year two. She believed the timing of the second year classes were "perfect" for her; after she experienced the busy conference operations season, moving forward she could now use what she was learning to consider planning the following year. The class activities and action plans from the second year curriculum provided talking points to gather the information she needed to establish expectations with her supervisor and staff in a way that a year later she believes set her on a good path. For example, Anna shared in the first class of year two, the class members each received a plate and used post-it notes to arrange their works tasks as a way to consider what responsibilities they could delegate. At that time Anna had not been sure what all responsibilities during the academic year she should have on her plate, so that activity helped her have a better conversation with her supervisor about what was expected. Similarly, Anna and her supervisor used material on "treating employees as volunteers" received from module five on Mentorship and presented at a national conference. Together they have also made staff development for their unit's employees a higher priority, intentionally carving out time each month and using resources from the LC to guide these meetings. In leading these meetings Anna felt she primarily used her Residence Life background, especially in context of supporting

individual's development, since she believes her staff can be more successful if they understand the work they are doing in context with their environment.

While Anna felt she knew a lot about FSU and her workplace culture prior to being a part of the LC, she feels her involvement has helped her observe some particularities about Housing. She feels privileged for where she sits at the table among this organization, but Anna feels like she has put in a lot of effort to build relationship to be a part of particular conversations that gives her that privilege. Anna's first thought when asked about the culture of the environment,

> It's hard for people to move up. There's different variables why that happens, language barriers, education levels… I think we're in a culture where you're constantly asked to do more with less, and for some people that causes resentment, others use it as a reason for opportunity. I tend to find it more as an opportunity to get creative, not that that doesn't get tiring sometimes. I think that communication has been a constant issue thread throughout everything cause we're such a big place, and I don't know how to break that down to make it better.

In her opinion the LC has contributed to improved communication across Housing. In addition to knowing more about how to accomplish aspects of being a supervisor, it has helped staff put together faces with names, gives some context of who people are to their job, and gives people space to discuss issues going on in their unit. By providing a safe venue for people to discuss issues they face, it gives an idea of how a decision made in one unit affects other units, such as for facility services assistance on conference set up. When and how decisions are made are not regularly communicated to frontline staff or mid-level managers, and that leads to some staff not necessarily feeling heard in how a decision affects them. From Anna's observation,

> If people voice something and it doesn't change, does that mean they're not valued? Not necessarily, we're a big system and that's hard to understand… but that totally affects people's behavior… feeling like it's unfair, you know just

> trying to understand the hierarchy, what people are doing, and how those decisions effect everyone below them kinds of stuff.

Hearing stories as a participant of the LC made Anna think about the privilege of her position, and generally who has privilege within Housing. Regarding her position in the organization, she knows that,

> I have access to a lot of people other people don't have access to, so I have more information a lot of times more so than other people do… so I worry about others that might feel like they don't come from that same place of privilege… so I try to make myself aware that others might not have the same information.

This realization was a learning experience for Anna; while she had been a part of conversations on social justice before, considering access to information as a way for staff to understand the organization and how that made them feel and behave added a factor to considering social equity in the workplace.

Anna finds a lot of meaning in her work since "I take pride in the energy and creativity I bring to the table." She regularly feels rewarded, not through public recognition, but "if I can do something to make someone's job easier or better…I think with a lot of these positions I've held, if I can make things better that's how I make a difference." There's two items on her desk that she shows me that contributes to how she identifies her work as meaningful. The first as a picture of Anna's five year old daughter, which motivates her because she wants her daughter to see her as a strong, compassionate women, which she can be through her job. The other is a picture of the cartoon character Elasti-girl from the Pixar movie *The Incredibles*, who Anna connects with as a fellow red-head with "a positive image, and she rocks!" These strong, positive images demonstrate what Anna hopes she emulates, and what in turn she gains from her work that she aims to project through other aspects of her life.

**Keith**

*"What I expect of others, I lead by example"*

With nearly 30 years of experience at FSU, Keith's story provided a historical perspective that I would not have had access to otherwise. As a White male, able-bodied, fourth generation person from the local area, he recounted his history in that he had left high school to travel the world in the Navy, and then spent 8 years in house construction in his home town adjacent to FSUs city. Keith had been married for 34 years, has a 28 year old son and a new daughter-in-law, and an 18 month old granddaughter. Family is paramount to Keith, the reason he has worked at FSU as long as he has is because of the benefits he can offer his family. How he is able to care for his family because of being in his job, as well as the family feel of the workplace environment, is what makes the job most meaningful to him and is reflected in the object he chose to describe to me. Seven years prior to our meeting, his position was reorganized under Housing, and after the first year of getting established in his new space he was going to be transferred to a different building. The staff there did not want him to leave so unbeknown to him they organized a meeting with the executive director at the time to present their case. That Christmas, knowing how much he loved baseball, they gave him a baseball clock and told him about that meeting, and the outcome resulted that he was not transferred. Since then he has kept his clock displayed where he can see it every day. Family is what he tells his staff should be their priority "cause if you're sitting at work worried about your family, you're not going to do the best you can do."

Keith came to FSU through a recommendation from his mother who retired from a position in one of the residence hall dining areas; he started working in an entry level

position in the laundry unit in 1981and then was promoted twice thereafter leading to a supervisor position in the mid-1990s. He spent 22 years in the laundry unit until it was reorganized under Housing, in the Facility unit. While his supervisory role has been similar for the past 15 years, his title changed at that time to custodian level 3. Most of the seven people Keith supervises have worked in housekeeping at FSU for over 20 years and he feels "really fortunate that I have some extremely efficient people, people with a very good work ethic helping me out." On multiple occasions he restates how lucky he feels to have his staff, and that the crux of their good working relationship relies on mutual trust, honesty, and respect. While his main responsibility is cleaning and inspecting the Community Center (CC) during the weekday 2:30pm-11pm shift, he oversees staff that work night and weekends shifts in three buildings in addition to CC. He also does inspections after a private company cleans the family housing apartments, and he gets called occasionally for weekend emergency cleanups. While he always feels the pressure of being busy, he feels it is paramount that he takes time to support his people because, "I'm a firm believer, that if your people aren't happy, you're not gonna get their best."

When asked about his observations on the cultural environment of Housing, Keith walked me though some of the history of what he had seen. For the first 10 years that he was at FSU, not only in Housing but across campus in frontline service areas, at the time "a lot of managers treated their areas like little kingdoms…and jealously protected it." Behavior that went along with that mentality included,

> I saw a lot of supervisors lead with fear rather than trying to earn respect or give respect to the people. And to me that's no way to run any kind of organization, cause if people fear you they're not going to approach you, you're not going to be aware of things going on around you that could either affect their position or

> something involving you…that was the atmosphere here at the time, like you just tell people do your job or you'll be replaced… so [now] I'm a firm believer that you respect the people you work with, that you show them you're there for them, not just as a supervisor.

By Keith's account this history of intimidation as a supervisory style started to change with campus reorganization around the mid-1990s. Change happened when some managers started to turn over, "some of the new managers had a different opinion on the way things should run… so things changed around that time and it's been slowly changing ever since." Nonetheless, for some people who have been in their job for a long time, they still wrestle with the feeling of how they had been treated.

Some of the changes Keith has seen include "people are getting treated with more respect", both for the job they do and for consideration of who they are in their social identities. Even so, he notes the challenge of timely communication that would be prevalent in any big organization continues to be salient in this setting. He has noticed, "there's still some people to me, they don't have the right information about the entire organization. I can't say that's anybody's fault cause it's a lot to take in. I've been here 29 years and there's still things I don't understand."

As management turned over, Keith began to hear the phrase "social justice" used more often. In the beginning he did not buy into the idea much, but now to him social justice means that his people "have things they need to work together…and can work together as a team because they respect each other's abilities." He has heard a lot of talk about race relations over the years, "they say there's still a lot of racism here, and I don't know, it's difficult to understand." Of the seven people he supervises, all but two are Hispanic, including his lead manager who has been at FSU over 30 years and is someone Keith relies on heavily. Regarding race relations, something Keith has observed is that

"some of the Hispanic population specifically here seem to feel like if they don't do what they're supposed to do they're gonna get fired." From this statement, it seems some of the history of intimidation in supervisory styles, particular among ethnic differences, is still felt among some frontline staff regardless of efforts to improve this mentality in recent years.

When asked further about the culture of Housing as a whole, Keith mentioned,

> the first thing is there's such diversity, not just in the different cultures themselves but in the way people interact. Because when you're raised in a certain culture, interacting with other cultures can sometimes be difficult. For the Chinese and Laotians and Hispanics… I notice that they work together fairly well but when it comes to breaks and social gatherings, they tend to stick with their own.

For him this was similar behavior to what he observed in the lunchroom on the Navy ship he was aboard from 1969-1973. We talked at length about what he had observed in his life about race relations, and he recalled "back then they kept separate because they didn't know what to expect from each other. It was such a transition era, you know MLK got killed, John Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy, and a lot of that… people felt it still had to do with race regardless of what the newspapers said." I asked him if there was anything in particular that he saw that affected how he thought about race relation today, and he recounted of growing up in what was then a small rural town directly east of FSU's city.

His father had been a journeyman electrician, who was sometimes around but on occasion had been gone for a year or two at a time. In the early 1960s the year before Kennedy was shot the family moved to Detroit for the summer while his dad was on a work assignment, and Keith "had never seen a black man in person until then." It was a culture shock "when you see all the poverty and how people lived at that time in that city, like nobody cared… there weren't these programs to help the homeless and all that." As

someone who has loved baseball his entire life, that summer he played with the kids he met there.

> One thing that surprised the heck out of me was that the kids played together and that was no problem, the problems came from the adults… operating off assumptions… I had a friend that was an American Indian, and that culture was virtually shunned by everyone out there. It was like, oh you're with that Indian? And that was from a Black guy! And it's like, yeah, well you're not! And I'm not! So what? You know he plays baseball good, better than I did, so did that make him better or worse than me? So yeah, I've had a few changes in my life that impacted me, my outlook let's say.

After returning West that fall, that experience made him look closer at the people around him. "One thing I noticed was virtually everyone in that town got along together… There were Czechoslovakians, a lot of Hispanics, Italians… there [didn't seem] to be a racial undertone in that town at all." This experience as a kid, as well as his travel in the Navy to places like Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Thailand, have since affected how he sees the world around him where now "I always try to keep an open mind."

Keeping that open mind as a participant in the LC, Keith feels that he has gained tools he can directly put into practice that he has seen makes a difference with his team. Especially from the module on team building, he has seen that people who are unsecure in their position are challenged to focus on their team, because they are focused on themselves. These tools build confidence, "to where you can give information or receive information or have good open discussion to find out what they feel is best for the team." Keith reiterates since communication has been a long time problem, "if there was a possibility to get it to every one of the employees, from the custodians on down, to me they would benefit more because it would open their eyes to what the organization is trying to do."

Communication is a key issue for Keith, most specifically in how he is able to translate department expectations to his frontline employees, and for how he feels in whether he and his people are understood by department administrators. At the end of our first interview he asked me a number of questions, all indicating that he hopes the LC can help with both of these issues. While he feels he has a good relationship with all his staff members, he wonders if they understand where he has come from in applying these newly learned techniques, and hopes they could take the LC as a way to gain the tools he has learned directly. Similarly, he feels the open discussion format has opened the eyes of people across Housing into the real experiences and challenges people face. In all for Keith, the LC has substantially contributed to supporting communication, which he views as a key issue.

## Alex

*"I'm a big believer in positive reinforcement, and making sure you're communicating with your employees, constantly"*

When I met Alex, Housing Manager of Catering and Retail Operations, the new Community Center (CC) building had been open for 8 months. While he had been working in various capacities of FSU Dining for 10 years, it was clear that being amid the first year of this new operation was stressful. The CC Dining unit was responsible for 5000 meals daily from the main dining room, as well as two convenience store retail operations, and a high end catering operation. The Dining unit employs approximately 250 professional staff, about half of all professional employees in the Housing department. Even with such a large operation, Alex felt that teamwork was valued by employees, and that made them "run as a well-oiled machine."

Teamwork in many ways defined how the Housing Dining unit operated. While not all 250 professional staff worked directly in the CC, accomplishing the task of implementing so many meals was clearly a coordinated team effort. For the retail operations side of Alex's position, he shared this role with one other professional staff and together they divided tasks to oversee five retail shops across campus. Alex's role for that focused on the personnel, menu planning, and implementation, as well as daily operations for the two retail shops in the CC. Technically he supervised approximately 40 student staff, and currently three professional staff, but will also oversee two more chefs once those positions are hired. Catering events occur daily, which as a separate program from the regular dining hall meant he often worked late until the job was done to oversee implementation of events. Even though he acknowledged things were stressful because he is currently short staffed, he felt he had a great team because "we all work together to make sure we're in great shape…I constantly mentor [student staff] on a daily basis… positive reinforcement goes a long way."

Alex started in career in food service 25 years prior in his hometown on the Northeast coast, where "for years all I cared about was cooking." After earning an Associate's degree in Culinary Arts and then finishing a Bachelor's degree in Food Service Management in the early 1990s, he spent most of his time in upscale restaurant kitchens in the northeastern U.S. until the crazy pace of life caught up with him. He had some friends that opened up a few deli style restaurants in the town where FSU is located, and originally came West to visit for a short ski vacation in the mid- 1990s, but never left the region. He continued to cook in a few upscale local restaurants, and while

he felt the pace of life was more manageable then the east coast, the late nights and weekend work schedule became tough when he had a family.

Two weeks after his first son was born in 2000, Alex started working for FSU, originally hired by an outsourced food services management company as General Manager of the University Club, the faculty dining hall. When that operation closed three years later Alex joined the Dining unit for Housing, and in total has held seven positions in the past 10 years. Twice prior to working at the CC he served as lead manager in opening newly renovated dining operations, and the longest position he held in those 10 years was when he left Housing and joined the Athletics department to manage their dining room for four and a half years. The pressure in working for Athletics made him work "consistently, 60 to 70 hours per week" and by then having two young children at home, he asked to do something different and came back to Housing as the North Campus Service Manager to oversee one residence hall dining area and two retail shops. While I got the clear impression that the pace of dining services was often frantic, in part due to a staff shortage, Alex felt supported by his supervisor and the Director of Dining operations. While in other food service jobs he had held a tight schedule, with this position "I'll take the week off for Thanksgiving, and two weeks off for Christmas. I take time off for spring break, that's why I'm here technically. We don't make a lot of money here [compared to restaurants], we make nice salaries but it's not about the money, it's about the quality of life."

While Alex has the experience and knowledge of upscale food and presentation, he knows his people-oriented skills is what has brought him into the position he holds. Because of all the events he oversees, "I really consider myself to be customer service

oriented…and making sure we're providing a service to the students, cause that's basically why we're here." Alex has reason to interact with other Housing units and offices throughout CC regularly, so he "knows people in every division, and the communication is pretty open." From his position and what he has seen about the organization from working with every unit, it has made him further stress the importance of teamwork.

As a White, able-bodied, middle class male, Alex recognizes race relations as a sensitive subject, particular in Dining where diversity of race and socio-economic class prevails. When asked about the culture of the work environment, after a pause, he thinks "we're lucky to work in such a diverse environment." Nonetheless he notes the underlying tone of animosity felt from frontline Dining staff in needing to operate with not enough staff, not being sure whether the upper echelon of management understands the reality of their daily pressures, and not having received raises in the past four years as part of the state funding freeze. Alex is well aware that for many frontline Dining employees, "they work three jobs and have five kids that they never see… when they come into work sometimes they're overwhelmed with their personal life that they can't focus 100%, and we have to understand that." In his opinion, the lowest level Dining employees "those are the hardcore people…that's where the machine really is, doing the job most people don't want to do." It is those staff he feels benefit most when he tries to remember to say "thank you, please, good morning, or good bye." For Alex that has been the greatest benefit of the LC, the reminder to "take time and look at the overall picture for what that employee might be going through… cause I think we're all just so busy that we forget the employee is the most important thing."

While Alex feels that for what Liam teaches in the LC "we're doing a pretty good job already", he also knows that "of course I went to college for it, but they don't tell you how to treat people in college." For Alex that made his experience in the LC a positive reinforcement for what he was already doing. From his point of view, the essence of the LC "is basically how you treat people when you get down to it." While he felt he was already inherently a people person, he did believe he had a number of ah-ha moments, "in every class something came to me, when I was like, maybe I could approach this situation differently… understand the employee a little bit more." When asked if from the LC he understood other units in Housing any better, unlike some other LC participants I spoke with his experience in the classes did not make him see anything about Housing as a whole differently. Though at the same time, for him the LC did not expose "what really goes on in the food service industry," so he was not sure if other Housing members knew what Dining unit staff experience. Alex stated on a few occasions that he felt the LC was a good thing for Housing, "I appreciate the camaraderie… and I find it interesting that a lot of people have similar experiences at work," but for him "I haven't seen a huge shift in treatment toward employees since the LC started." This made him wonder if the upper echelon of the Housing management hierarchy really understood what Dining employees experienced, a thought seemingly carried over from the animosity he recognized affected his staff's performance. Alex does see the LC as laying out the values and expectations of Housing to employees, and "for me personally, I see that as more positive reinforcement."

**Amy**

*"What you give out is what you receive"*

After 11 years as a lead teacher with the Children's Center, Amy has worked with many parents affiliated with FSU, either as an alumni, faculty, staff, or students, many of whom live in family housing or work in Housing. The Center has 70 children at any given time, ages 15 months to five years, and Amy leads the Bear Room for toddlers, ages 15 to 24 months. She has two professional staff assistant teachers in her room, and a number of undergraduate students that work part time. Because so many parents and her student assistants are connected to academic sectors of the university, Amy recognizes the Children's Center as being under the umbrella of Student Affairs, and likes being connected to a learning institution. Even though, she feels isolated from Housing as a department due to the distant proximity from other Housing offices, "we're kind of an island, and people don't really know about us… so [the LC] has been a great opportunity for our teachers to be our voice and say, yes we're here!"

Both Amy and her husband (also a FSU employee) are third generation Japanese-American local natives, making her two children fourth generation lineage. Her Japanese heritage is central to how important family is to her, insofar as she had both of her kids involved in a Japanese-American community center when they were younger so they could learn about their heritage in a community setting. Having a job that both supports teaching kids about diversity and has been flexible for her family has been most significant for her. She liked being able to bring her values of family and learning about diverse heritages into her job, and that has meant a lot to her in how she feels loyal to her workplace.

While earning a bachelor's degree at a neighboring state university in Art Education, Amy had not been active with student life, and recounted how she had a difficult time finding a job on campus. Having been connected with her close knit family, she worked on the weekends at a retail shop close to her home about an hour away to pay for college. After college she worked at a local art supplies shop in the graphic design department. Amy also worked with kids in a before and after school program in the same school district where she grew up, and where her own children later attended. She liked working with kids and "I believe in good early childhood development," so she continued her work trajectory in both public and private childcare centers. After her children were born and she was ready to go back to work she was initially hired part time at FSU (she is currently full time), which had the added benefit for her that "my children actually went to this school so they're alumni."

Having grown up in a neighboring urban school district where she estimated the current Asian population was "maybe 1 or 2%," she liked that her children, currently ages 15 and 12, "got to see so much diversity [growing up]… I'm lucky cause I'm allowed to let them come and help out, especially in the summer." Since FSUs family housing comprises approximately 65% international residents, families that bring their children to the Center are very diverse; currently she has many cultures represented in her classroom including French, Sudanese, and Polish. Amy is clearly proud to work in an environment that values diversity and "my daughter actually expressed that to me, she said yeah, I'm glad I went to that preschool and got to meet people from all over the world."

When asked about what she thinks about the culture of her work environment, Amy mentioned how long the state system processes takes, especially for hiring someone

or for acquiring supplies. She accounts a story of a fellow teacher that recently came from a private center, and how frustrated she became when she realized how far ahead she needed to think to acquire classroom supplies. For Amy, who exuded the natural patience of someone who daily directs a classroom of toddlers, she understood this was just a part of being in the state system.

Amy feels connected to the Housing department, but tended to view the Children's Center as being a closer part of family housing then Housing as a whole. Even though she reflects other members of Housing might see the Children's Center as "a little dot on the map," she appreciated when the Center is recognized, and aims to return that recognition. She is adamant that in such a big system "every job is important," and she shows appreciation to the dining services staff members that make and deliver the children's lunch, or the maintenance staff that repairs their 1970's ranch style building, through pictures as thank you notes so staff can connect a child's face to their job.

Hand drawn pictures and photographs set the environment at the Children's Center. Since it was nap time when I arrived for my first interview with Amy, she quickly guided my tour through the building. After our chat, she showed me a photo on her iPhone of the picture board she had created and chosen for me as her object that reminds her why her job is meaningful. In a combination storage space and staff break room, Amy used an old a bulletin board to create a picture collage of kids and teachers.

> We've created some great friendships and bonds…so all these pictures attach to your heart a little bit so I wanted it to be on a wall where people could look and say, do you remember so and so?...because I think it's those moments, you don't get paid a lot but there are those moments when you get rewarded and here you can remember… it's like our celebration , that's why you want to be a teacher, that's why you want to be with kids, and that's why you love being here.

When asked about her observations of the Housing environment, her recount focused on being a part of family housing. As an example of how Amy felt, she related the recent challenge of a new accreditation process the Children's Center had undertaken, and how supported the Center's staff had felt by family housing administrators throughout that process.

> Sometimes you feel like the low man on the totem pole, but I also feel like they have been really good to us. Family housing is pretty amazing in itself, just because even the people living in family housing connect with their own families … I think we're definitely like a family, and so that probably coordinates with family housing, just how important that family is, and so I think the people that live in family housing realize that, this is a pretty special place.

Family is a clear value to Amy, and how she is able to contribute to that family feel shows how she can live her values through her job.

### James

*"The key thing for me, whenever I hire somebody, I always ask 'em, who's your customer? And the one answer I'm looking for basically is, anybody"*

James first became familiar with the FSU campus in 1994 as an electrician contracted through an outsourced company to work on special projects. Winter and summer break in particular are the busiest times for the maintenance department, and often contracted specialists are hired on to support the work load. When a position opened up for an electrician with Housing in 2001, James applied for it since he liked the idea of security in working for the state system. A year later he applied for a supervisor position, and in the past nine years his job has evolved to oversee the central zone (one of four zones) for Housing maintenance, which included the new Community Center (CC) building, and many of the residence halls. No longer doing electrical work on a daily basis, his primary responsibility included supervising 12 tradesmen, responding to

requests and being on-call even nights and weekends, balancing a two million dollar budget, and directing his staff to particular projects. Task oriented and exuding a no-nonsense attitude, James took pride in being the go-to guy in Housing to get something fixed.

A local native, after high school James joined the Army and spent most of those 10 years traveling the world. Stationed in Hawaii, Korea, Panama, and Japan, and then spending his last year in New York, his time in the Army provided global perspective, but he had always known at some point he would come home. He met his wife while on vacation in California and they settled in his home town southeast of FSU's city. He had a family member that had been an electrician and got him into the field, so after five years of trade school he joined the local union and began contract jobs. With a family to support, he never liked that a contract job could be here today and gone tomorrow, and he told me for that reason most trade workers do not move for a job. For him that is why working for Housing has been a good fit for him; while he is always busy and things come up that are frustrating, he is proud to have built a good team and show they always get the job done.

After nine years as a supervisor, "everyone on my team I've hired, so I've got a real good group of guys;" James feels he understands his staff pretty well and they get where he is coming from in return. His staff includes a plumber, and electrician, a few carpenters, painters, mechanics, a dining systems person, and a night maintenance person. Their day starts at 7am when James checks the overnight maintenance log and he directs projects, and then spends the day running around following up on damages, problem solving, and answering calls. At our first meeting, CC was his biggest issue, including

heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), mechanical, and chasing plumbing leaks. As an essential services member, he carried two work phones and is always on call, “we’re always answering and trying to make people happy…just keeping the buildings together, it’s fun, it changes every day.” James’ central work philosophy is customer service, and anyone in Housing is the customer; “whoever wants something, we give it to them. It’s always about customer service for me and my team.” To show his team that he takes customer service seriously, he does surveys, talks to Hall Directors, and weights annual performance evaluations most high in this area.

As a part of the annual review, all members of James’ staff are required to complete 40 hours of training per year. Any training that his staff wants that is related to their job, he provides financial support. Particularly he promotes training that addresses computer or communication skills. While he qualifies himself as not a big talker, “I’m really big on email, cause I have so many guys spread across campus, it makes it easy for me to communicate with them.” Overall he saw benefit to participating in the LC, and mentioned a few times he would like for his employees to take at least a part of it, particularly the modules on communication and team building. Nonetheless he relayed “I’m almost 50 years old, this training isn’t gonna change how I do things.” For James, supervision is just a part of getting his team to accomplish tasks. Given that, the specific skills taught in the LC did not mean as much to him as what he got out of hearing what employees in other units outside of maintenance face on a daily basis.

When James was asked about his perception of how the LC made a difference in the Housing environment, he replied “as a whole I haven’t seen too much of a change yet, but there’s a few things it taught me, so I look at things a bit differently now.” For him

he sees “people taking their time a little bit more, understanding the other side of the coin kind of thing.” For example, he has worked on many projects for Residence Life over the years, but sometimes he has been challenged in seeing their point of view. As he tells it,

> I see everything in birch white, if I had my way I would paint everything that, but not Lori [a Residence Life Assistant Director]. I’ll use that as an example, working with Lori helped me see colors. If I had it my way every office, every residence hall would be birch white, cause it’s easy to clean. But Lori helped me see colors, ha ha, LOTS of colors. So that’s just an analogy, cause of the program, now I know WHY Lori wants colors, and that type of thing.

For James, understanding why a maintenance request is made contributes to him being able to see the bigger picture of Housing, and the purpose of why his team does what they do every day.

While none of James’ staff have participated in the LC, he has seen a difference in working with some of the housekeeping supervisors, who have been a part of the LC and are under the same Housing Facilities Director with the maintenance staff. While sometimes there are particular aspects the Housekeeping staff dynamics that infringe on his work and becomes a challenge, the LC provided concepts for supervisors to consider that are now implemented and discussed in new quarterly unit meetings based on the training program’s model. For James, these conversations have made a difference in the staff dynamics across the Facilities unit, since it provided a venue to openly discuss issues and challenges particularly related to collaboration and decision making. In this setting James has been able to provide a voice for his staff to the rest of Facilities in a way that so far has made his operations easier. In that way, the LC has begun to make a difference in what James’ sees in his workplace.

## Clay

*"Part of why I do the work that I do is that I feel like I can be valued in the higher ed environment and for the most part I can bring my true self to work… you know it's a lifestyle to me, not just a job"*

Describing himself as relational, and "Mr. Harmony" when he needs to be, Clay has built his career in student affairs where he can concentrate on program development, student leadership, and building relationships as a primary liaison to Residence Life. As someone who "definitely believes that relationships make all the difference," his day to day work often involves following up with situations, gathering information as a liaison to many campus offices, and generally problem solving to respond to many different people's needs. He often feels like "paving the way is a huge part of my job. Like when folks have needs, they need resources, whether that's money, space, connections to the department, I feel like that's a large part of what I do." In particular since Clay was promoted seven months prior to our first meeting to Associate Director of Residence Life and now handles much of the daily operations management for his unit, his relationships across Housing and the Division of Student Affairs are now even more paramount.

Completing his undergraduate education in Computer Information Systems from a regional state university on the central east coast, Clay worked for IBM for a few years before deciding he would prefer a job working more closely with people. Having worked as a front desk manager in a residence hall at his alma mater, as well as having been involved with their Residence Hall Association, he had maintained contact with a mentor that recommended a reputable master's program in Student Affairs at a neighboring institution. Graduate Assistant positions he held in Housing Facilities and Apartment Life there set his trajectory for a career in Residence Life, holding Hall Director positions

over four years at two previous institutions before being hired as a Residence Life Coordinator at FSU in 2000. Through unit reorganization he has been promoted twice since then, and now as Associate Director he works closely with the Director though where she is most involved with Housing leadership and strategic planning projects, he focuses on operations and oversees many of the 40 professional staff within the Residence Life unit.

As a White male, upper middle class, and able-bodied, Clay is conscious of his social privilege. Having always been someone who likes to joke around with the people and to display in his office colorful mementos reflecting himself, he now feels more reserved with his new position as he is conscious of the privileges this job affords him. Able to know more people, contribute to higher level decision making, and generally having access to more information makes him conscious of how he is now perceived, and careful about potentially offending someone, among other employees of the department. Clay strongly identifies with being a student affairs professional, and more so with higher level position he has held. Currently half way through his course work for a Ph.D. in Higher Education and Student Affairs in a primarily online program, Clay aspires to potentially be a Dean of Students, but also knows he is learning a lot from his current position about the intricate system a Dean's position would oversee. He is conscious of his privilege, while at the same time aspires to use that to make a difference in his community.

When we talk about the characteristics of the department, Clay characterizes Residence Life as "hardworking people, high levels of commitment, a lot of perfectionism, people volunteer and they want to help and give their time, a high need for

lots of communication, able to deliver through, rapid communication, and very creative." For how he would characterize Housing, most particular the organization's development, after a pause he offers,

> I think of the people I work with the most rather than the really big picture, cause there's not a lot of time when we're all together…I guess it's kinda like a big family, people will help you out and pitch in when it's needed, but I feel like there's bickering over thing like in a family, where it's like if you view the units as kids, I think the units vie for being the favorite child, you know getting attention or getting the resources.

The reason for this, Clay explained, was due in part to the department's large size. Additionally,

> we need all that staff because of what we do, cleaning, fixing things, meals and all that, but in some ways it's too big cause it really takes a while to get to know people across your own department, and I think it's hard to be moving in a similar direction when you have so many people to try and bring along… from front line to the top of the heap, there's just a lot to consider, education and language [differences], and it's not bad, but there's just a lot of gaps between where folks are at.

Given these observations, Clay is aware of the perceptions by other Housing units of Residence Life as the "favorite child," and how this contributes to how he is perceived being a leader within this unit. He recognizes that clout is because members of his staff work most closely with students, the most obvious customer for a department that places customer service as one of its highest priorities (as identified in the Housing mission statement). At the same time, Clay has also recognized how improved communication, including efforts made through the LC, has been essential support for how staff members feel about their job and being a part of Housing.

The opportunity for staff across Housing to communicate was a theme as Clay shared what stood out to him about the LC. He offered that "I learned a lot hearing what people struggle with, and I think as a leader that helps me support them." Clay most

enjoyed participating in the LC since "I felt I could understand the dilemmas going on [in other units] with what they're balancing, there's no other venue where I've gotten that, I don't think we've even ever been encouraged to talk about real stuff… so it gave me good insight when people shared." This reflected a sentiment shared by other staff I spoke with as well, that having the opportunity to understand what went on in other units offered perspective when units were required to collaborate to accomplish a task. The opportunity for staff to see the bigger picture provided a greater sense of purposes for what employees contributed to, particularly as they needed to work together across the whole department, on a daily basis.

While Clay had an opportunity through the LC to see aspects of Housing that he had not previously in a way he believes will help him in his future, his experience working with student development continued to be central to what gives meaning to his day to day. The object he chose to tell me about that reminded him why his job is meaningful provided insight on his personality; the flower pot that served now to hold pens, pencils, and markers, was a colorfully decorated collage of how the student who made it viewed Clay. A fan of craft projects as a way for students to share themselves and get to know each other, a student had made this decorated pot for Clay as part of a team-building activity in 2002, during Clay's second year at FSU, and he kept it in his office ever since. Clay's office was not heavily decorated since he chose to keep much of his décor packed in boxes when he had moved the previous summer, but he shared the flower pot reminded him of the students he has mentored, and he felt that helped him stay focused on why he cared about his job. Student focused, a strong problem solver, and a

systemic networker, it was clear Clay seemed at home with his job and in the Housing Department.

## Jeffrey

*"The [LC] definitely gives me a better understanding of where people are at, so I know which angle to come at them with, instead of assuming"*

Jeffrey has spent 16 years cooking food for the FSU community, the past 15 years with Housing. After being a part of three different resident hall dining areas, he spent the seven months prior to our first meeting serving as one of the lead chefs in opening the new Community Center (CC) dining area. Currently the Housing Dining unit structures the kitchen staff from level one through five, not including management; Jeffrey is a Dining level five kitchen staff (DS5) along with four other chefs at that level within the CC, who collectively supervise 80 professional staff at levels one through four, as well as 150 students. For such a large unit that is new, sometimes understaffed, and often required to operate at a frantic pace to serve 5000 meals daily, Jeffrey's primary focus was directing food preparation for seven culinary style stations to ensure timely and quality service to hungry members of the FSU community.

As Jeffrey shares his story with me, I hear the themes of his values in being conscious to balance work for a quality of life, having tenacity to live by his own rules, and loving to cook, as driving forces in what has gotten him to where his life is currently. Originally from the mid-northeastern coast, he grew up in an economically poor community raised by adopted parents. Ethnically identifying as half-African American and half-Korean, he never knew his biological parents, but was raised by an older-aged African-American couple who took pride in family meals of Southern style cooking. Helping his mother to prepare these meals from a young age was where Jeffrey first

learned how to cook. While in place of high school he worked odd jobs initially, eventually he worked his way up from a restaurant kitchen dish room to food line prep work, and has since been primarily self-taught in the art of cooking food. For eight years he bounced among many mid-priced chain type restaurants and a few privately owned establishments as a way to negotiate pay increases, where he learned a variety of cooking styles and flavor profiles that served him well down the road.

At age 25, Jeffrey moved to a southeastern coastal town to remove himself from a community that he knew if he stayed in that state he would have ended up on a troubled path. With no problem finding restaurant kitchen work, he developed some friendships and together they planned to save money and embark on a nationwide road trip the following year. For four months he crossed the country camping out of a covered-cab truck, where the friends planned their route as they went and often stayed in a city only long enough to see the highlights. Chicago, Atlanta, Las Vegas, and then up the California coast, I could tell through his recount that his adventure was understandably a lifetime highlight. By San Francisco money was running short, and the travelers decided to pick a favorite stop as their final destination. Heading back east, Jeffrey set up a new temporary home at a local campground and found work in a restaurant kitchen just east of the FSU campus. Still in that position four years later, he liked that workplace but resigned when new corporate management wanted him to cut his hair. Showing me the braid that hung part way down his back, he demonstrated still no interest in changing any aspect of his personal self to fit into a job.

Jeffrey's first year at FSU was spent running a small sandwich shop in the Math building as a satellite operation of the main student union. Maintaining the grill, ordering

inventory, and supervising students gave Jeffrey his first experience being a part of a college campus. Campus members that he interacted with daily commented on how much they appreciated that he had improved the food; even so, while his work load increased his pay rate did not which was different than any previous job experience, and eventually he put in his two week notice to leave. During those weeks in saying goodbye to his regular customers, someone asked where he was going next, and at that time he did not have a plan. The next morning he received a phone call from the then Assistant Director for the Housing Dining unit, asking if he was interested in a position as the daytime cook for one of the campus residence halls. He had not known when he accepted the job that he would be the only chef in that kitchen; while he learned the ropes by being "thrown to the wolves," he was proud to have quickly gained authority and made a difference in that space.

Jeffrey's first few years were not easy as he regularly navigated challenges in how he felt he was managed; "the recipes were ancient… I even got written up a few times for making the food better." By this point he had a young family to support, so Jeffrey resolved to stay focused on accomplishing his tasks. In the few years thereafter, new management restructured aspects of the Dining unit, and added welcomed opportunities for promotion and growth. Six years after starting with Housing he was promoted to a level four (DS4) kitchen staff position, and transitioned to giving more input on improving food quality and had more supervising responsibility. Five years ago, after initially having some resistance because of his busy personal life, the current executive chef promoted Jeffrey to his DS5 position, contingent upon taking an accelerated two year culinary arts training program. Deciding his personal life was now in better balance,

he was finally ready for a lead chef role; “I had to rush and get my GED… so that was my first official schooling.” While that period of time was busy for him, the education was worthwhile but not overly difficult as “there was a lot that I was already doing, I just didn’t know the name necessarily.” In his role at CC currently, he needed to be familiar with directing a variety of preparation stations, including Latin, Persian, Japanese, and Kosher style food. With that formal training, and feeling like he currently has a great relationship with the Dining unit management, his experience has served him well for accomplishing his daily tasks.

When asked about his observations of the culture of his workplace, his initial reply regarded dynamics among staff from various ethnic groups. Jeffrey noticed a divide amid different ethnic populations employed across Dining and he noticed this divide had been going on long before his time at FSU. On a few occasions he had experienced situations with staff he supervised that were from ethnic persuasions other than his own,

> They didn’t follow protocol and you call them on it, and they go upstairs and tell the powers that be and call the race card and say you’re discriminating against them, and why don’t you pick on the White guy or whatever… and you know, I’m like, I’m Black and Korean, I’m ethnic too! It kinda sucks, cause after that management gets dragged in and you have to go to these meetings and defend yourself, and what do you say? It’s the behavior, not the color, so that’s an interesting topic.

Even so, Jeffrey aimed to “try to stay pretty Switzerland when I can.” As I refocused the conversation on what were his observations of Housing dynamics as a whole, for him the different units seemed to operate well with each other. Throughout our conversation it became clear to me that the focus of his employment was internal kitchen management

including food preparation and managing kitchen staff for efficient delivery of meals, and with such a large task at hand his focus served him well.

While different from anything he had ever experienced, Jeffrey enjoyed participating in the LC; he felt like he got a lot out of it even though some days were hectic and he struggled to fit in the class with his daily responsibilities. For him the LC "defiantly gives me a better understanding of where people are at, so I know which angle to come at them with, instead of assuming." Most significantly he felt like he learned new techniques on how supervise people, and shared with me a recent incident where he needed to refer to his training manual to manage a situation. A woman urgently relayed to him how she felt she was treated by another employee, and in that moment he was frustrated to understand what she was talking about. Letting her know in that moment he had a task to accomplish but would get back to her later that day, during which he referred to his training manual and was reminded she might be a person that had a high context communication personality (Module 2), and needed to know her voice was heard. He listened to her story and as he asked clarifying questions, he realized this was the type of scenario discussed in class. Essentially she had taken circumstantial disregarding behavior from a co-worker to heart and just needed to be validated that she was valued in her work, halting the situation from continuing. Through participating in the LC, he was glad to now have the tools to be a better supervisor, and kept his training manual as one of the few items to reside in his office workspace.

In a corner of a mostly empty basement office in the CC shared with presumably the four other DS5 chefs, Jeffrey's workspace amounted to a desktop computer, a wall calendar full of hand written notes, a large stack of timecards he was amid processing

(both times we met), his LC reference book, and a wooden frame for three small photos. When I asked Jeffrey if there was something that reminded him of why his work was meaningful to him, he showed me the framed photos of his wife and two young girls, now ages 19 and 13. From the account of his background, it made sense why in his time at FSU he aimed to maintain focus on the tasks of his job, "for the first time in my life I had insurance, and the time off, you can't get that in a restaurant." In asking if he felt supported by his supervisors to balance his life, he agreed with certainty "the majority of them will say that's why they're here too." For Jeffrey, where tasks of managing food preparation sometimes seem never ending, the support he has received from the LC to help him more effectively manage his tasks so he can balance his personal life was a welcomed effort.

**Leah**

*"Our unit is in a transition, a reorganization actually…*
*morale and everything comes top to bottom,*
*so when we don't know what's going to happen, it's hard to be efficient and effective"*

Leah moved to the U.S. eight years prior to our meeting to pursue her second bachelor's degree in economics at a regional state university in the southern part of the state. Twenty years before coming to the U.S. she received her first bachelor's degree in accounting at the University of Tehran in Iran, and had worked in accounting there while raising her young family. Originally from Persia, her husband had wanted to move to this state so that brought her West, and she has since fallen in love with living in the city where FSU is located.

Within 10 minutes of our first meeting, she informed me how much she enjoyed being able to live her passion for math, "it's a saying in my country when you love to

work, I'm like a rich woman who doesn't work." Currently in the position of Billing Manager, Leah supervised two staff members of the Finance unit in Housing. She was first hired five years prior as a level 2 Accountant, and was promoted after her first year. Her days are mostly spent working with numbers to maintain checks and balances with Housing bills, so she often ends up working with customers to fix a credit or explain a charge. Most of the customers she worked with are the parents of students who live in the freshman residence halls or undergraduate apartments, but she also often works with graduate students living in family housing. While Leah enjoys being able to use what she has learned from her closely related bachelor's degrees, she likes working with people, and feels empathy for parents when she can help them.

With her two children ages 18 and 19, as students at FSU, Leah felt closely connected to the university. Because of her children, she was familiar with the academic offices and a few student clubs where they were involved, but she does not personally interact with those areas. In her position focused on Billing, she rarely had reason to collaborate with other offices in Housing or across campus. Leah was familiar that Housing was a part of the division of Student Affairs, but for her she most strongly associated with being a part of the Finance office. Sometimes she felt a part of Student Affairs when Housing held the annual department wide meeting and aspects of different units were discussed, but otherwise she felt most connected to the people in her immediate unit.

Leah liked working on a college campus, and while she knew she could do accounting work in a lot of places, she found "contributing to the campus community [to be] meaningful." She took pride in knowing she raised money for new buildings to grow

the community, as well as to improve the quality of life for students who lived in the residence halls and ate in the Housing dining halls. While money was Leah's daily responsibility, she viewed relationships as central to her job.

Getting to know people across Housing and building relationships was what Leah most enjoyed out of participating in the LC. Many of the concepts taught in the LC Leah had already gotten from her bachelor's education five years prior. She had taken all the management courses available which supported fulfillment of her economics degree, so for her "it was a refresher, but for somebody that graduated 20 years ago, maybe they forget about that so it's good for them, many supervisors here [probably] graduated a long time ago." As someone who generally enjoyed learning new things, she appreciated Liam's presentation style as she was always interested in the classes. Likewise concepts that were new to Leah, in particular the first module on intercultural communication, helped her better understand where some people she interacted with daily were coming from and not to take things personally if their communication style was different from hers.

We spoke at length of what she recalled of the class concepts she most enjoyed and felt were useful. Considering that the Office of Finance was about to undergo substantial reorganization with the upcoming retirement of the unit director, she felt the third module on conflict resolution to be insightful for what her unit was experiencing. While she was clear there was not open and direct conflict going on, there was some tension due to discomfort in the ambiguity unit members felt as they were unsure of what the reorganization would entail. I gathered this unit held a strict hierarchical structure, as she informed me "it's up to the manager that everything comes top to bottom… they just

inform us what decision is made, so we cannot effect that much." Leah felt this way as well when we discussed how she could personally implement what she had learned from the LC classes. In essence, felt she had little control over how decisions were made, and similarly how the module concepts could be implemented. She hoped in the future there could be internal unit discussion on how the class lessons could be applied, but for now "when you're on a roller coaster, training doesn't affect you the same."

### Ron

*"[The LC] is the first time since I've been here that we actually go to the root cause of some of the issues… maybe the environment you work in looks different, but in reality problems are the same and solutions are the same"*

Ron entered his position as Business Operations Manager for Housing Facilities in 2004, but he had been familiar with the region and FSU for over 30 years. Originally Ron left his home country in the Middle East in the late 1970's to seek better education in the United States. Able-bodied and from an economically stable background, Ron came to the U.S. to attend a small regional state college in the southern part of the region, earning a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. Thereafter he went on to earn a Master's degree in economics from FSU in the mid-1980s. After completing his graduate degree he lived in various regions across the U.S. and worked for a couple of large private corporations. Through directing global materials purchasing and contracts, he advanced leadership positions in companies such as OEA (now Autoliv) and Allied Signal (now Honeywell). While he had taken a substantial pay cut to join the FSU staff, he valued living in this region and the amenities of living FSU's city.

When I asked what his position entailed, Ron noted new responsibilities had been incrementally added to his position during his six year employment, so he felt he did not

have a specific job description. As he explained his daily schedule, he recited how his job was developing purchasing contracts for Facilities supplies, including building relationships with trade staffing companies and material suppliers, ordering supplies for maintenance and environmental services, engaging in the plans for the three newest Housing buildings including the Community Center (CC), and the cost estimating and analysis associated with Facilities $12 million annual budget. To qualify the mound of tasks comprising his responsibility, when I asked if he kept any items in his workspace that reminded him why his work was meaningful, he showed me the piles of purchasing orders and material samples on his desk. For him, these piles were constant reminder of the value of his contribution to the Housing community.

As Ron often worked with a variety of customers, he viewed good customer relations, both internal (other Housing units) and external customers, as paramount to accomplishing tasks of the department. Having been involved with customer service throughout his professional positions, he believed maintaining positive relationships a key to accomplishing his many tasks. He stressed this message among the Facilities staff, and in particular believed open communication with his direct employees helped him maintain focus on his daily tasks and responsibilities. Currently supervising two professional staff, he felt fortunate to have “a team the way that I do, we don’t have any problems.” He qualified his supervisory style as listening, and letting members of his staff vent when it was needed. Through these conversations he noticed many of the frontline staff in Facilities, particularly the staff that had been employed the longest, had a mentality where “they want the comfort zone associated with I have a job….they are happy in their comfort zone and they are not willing to change or adapt for anybody.”

We spoke at length about Ron's observations on his workplace culture. What he viewed specifically within the Facilities unit, "I deal with what I call a union mentality…they show a position of strength, and they're not supposed to show any sign of weakness." Frontline staff in Facilities were primarily classified as state system employees; although even if staff did not fulfill their job responsibilities or had an attitude on the job,

> Within the whole system [setup], they encouraged them to be that way, they're protected. To deal with situations it's not easy, it takes lots of effort from the supervisor's point of view to line up the corrective actions to go through the process, it's time consuming and creates lots of burden so lots of supervisors don't want to deal with it. So part of the challenge we're facing is how do we, I call it, convert that behavior.

For him this proved to be most challenging when his frontline staff observed reorganization or potential promotion opportunities in other Housing units, and complained they did not have the same opportunity. To address these complaints, he would remind them as state employees they could look for jobs with the City, or the Department of Transportation, but to him their responses indicated a desire to maintain in a comfort zone, to "protect themselves from the unknown." This behavior stemmed from a past history in his unit, including the prevailing viewpoint that the "leadership format of Housing is always run by Res Life," since that unit worked most closely with students. To him it made sense why a department under the student affairs division has been historically led by individuals with work history in Residence Life. Regardless, his frontline staff were often challenged to understand the priorities in other Housing units, and the Facilities Director's attempts to change the prevailing attitude and corresponding behavior had been going on since before Ron's job begun.

Our conversation on Housing Facilities' attempt to change staff behavior made an easy segway to discuss Ron's observations of the LC's impact on his workplace. When asked "do you think the LC does anything to support that transformation?" He replied,

> Yes. I hear that they're talking about what they learn and what they hear in their team meetings. More than anything else, staff hear that there is actually a coordinated effort to resolve some of the conflicts…the very fact that they hear that supervisors acknowledge that there are issues, that they are trying to address those issues, it helps. I'm not saying it's converting them all, but one at a time.

Particularly within the maintenance department, he has heard supervisors discuss how they tried something they heard in the LC and it is working, so now there are further attempts to get their teams involved. He noted, "it will not happen overnight, there is a long way to go for change to happen…this must continue." For Ron, the biggest difference is "the very fact that they are talking about it is a change to me."

**Liam**

*"When supervision is only one piece of what you do, and it's a piece that may at times seem like less of a priority to just getting the job done… with the LI were trying to teach how to supervise effectively… it needs to be intentional and you need to commit, then it's efficient"*

Since my relationship with Liam was different than with the other participants at the time I conducted interviews, our conversations we unstructured and organic. Naturally these conversations revolved around the topic of how he felt the development of the LC was going after completing delivery of year two. Easily filling the time for two, one hour meetings, our conversations were not unlike the many hours we had spent in the prior two and a half years planning and processing the LC's development.

Starting with his description of the current scope of his job, as the Housing Training and Development Specialist Liam held a variety of responsibilities beyond his focus on the LC. Including his general responsibilities being a part of the Human

Resources (HR) unit, Liam oversaw the Advisory Board for Social Justice (ABSJ), and his big upcoming project with that was to develop a training program similar in format to the LC but specifically for staff social justice education. Additionally, and what Liam and I had spoken at great length about, the biggest question he faced from Housing leadership was, how did he know the tools taught in the LC were being utilized in order to show this program's value?

While Liam and I designed the first year curriculum, we simultaneously designed two short surveys with similar questions for each of the first three modules to address how LC participants felt they used what they learned and also how frontline staff supervised by LC participants felt supported by particular tools. These surveys were conducted through an electronic format distributed by email after the first year summer, and while it yielded a low to moderate response rate overall, that feedback had been positive. Due to department financial constraints that made my hourly employment no longer possible, and Liam's time constrained with the increased workload, this 360 degree assessment effort fell by the wayside. While the assessment was something still desired and we had discussed in depth since that time, these restraints restricted the survey design task accomplishment during the development processes in creating the curriculum for years two and three. Liam and I agreed that a quantitative assessment would offer a perspective to understand the LC's impact on the Housing culture that would not be known otherwise, and that my dissertation provided a story of the LC in a way that addressed initial benchmarks and answered significant questions currently asked. Once I offered those benchmarks through my dissertation, direction for further assessment could be set.

Knowing how conversations with Liam typically ebb and flow, on a few occasions I refocused us to the question of his experience with being a part of the LC. I was most interested in what he has learned about Housing from this experience, and what he observed about his workplace. Having previously been a part of the Residence Life unit,

> Now that I'm starting to know more people in Housing, I realize I was unable to conceptualize the complexities of dining or facilities or e-services, compared to what it was that we did. You know it was easy for me to say back then something silly like, well we stay until the work is done, how about these people who punch out and they're gone, as if that was some sort of measurement of their commitment for the work that they do. And now I realize the work that we do is not even apples and oranges, its apples and, horses. It's just so completely different, and there are just different ways of being.

Shifting to his current position fulfilled for Liam desired professional growth and chance to focus on what he most enjoys, providing training on leadership and social justice concepts as an education opportunity for adult learners. His value in teaching was reflected in the object he chose to share with me that helped remind him why his work was meaningful. Acquired while employed in an interim position overseeing an Asian cultural center at a different university earlier in his career, a six inch statue of a Hindu mudra hand in a vetarka position (index finger and thumb connected at the tip while the final three fingers poised straight) resided on his desk as a "symbol of explanation and teaching." This reminded him that he felt like he was in a great place in his career and was glad he could support his workplace community in this way, "from antidotal information, a lot of people seem really supportive."

As we discussed his viewpoint on future prospects for the LC's development, Liam knows once the modules are completed and the overall curriculum can be reviewed, reorganization of some of the material could provide continual improvement. As new

managers join Housing, they will need this material as an orientation to the department, so he envisioned delivery in possibly a condensed format. Along those same lines, current frontline employees interested in supervisory positions could take the LC as a perspective manager, and potentially their effort could be a considered factor if promotional opportunity in their area arose. Since what was taught in the LC for many participants was a message of department values and expectations, I shared with Liam the desire I had heard for more frontline staff to engage in a modified version of the LC. Some individuals I spoke with in particular asked if their staff could receive the first year modules as a way to help supervisors communicate and reinforce these messages to their staff. Liam and I agreed there were a number of possibilities for program growth that could all be valuable in aiding the organization's development, yet any ideas were contingent upon available supportive resources, and initial benchmark measurements would be essential for any future opportunities.

Ultimately, for the LC to be effective Liam knows it is contingent on what we have come to refer as "the X factor." If an individual does not implement what is taught, their involvement in the LC will not fulfill the purpose of why they are in the classes. As Liam articulates "what we're trying to teach needs to be intentional and you need to commit, then it's efficient. If you don't practice these skills nothing changes." He hopes implementation is occurring, and based on antidotal feedback he has received and focus groups I have facilitated he believes this is happening to a degree. Essentially though for this question to be answered, my conversation with Liam comes full circle to the need for a picture of assessment; we are both looking forward to reviewing the feedback I collect.

## Summary

My goal with the preceding chapter was to highlight the distinctive voices of individuals who shared with me their stories in representation of the complex nature of this student affairs organization. Every one of the individuals I spoke with provided a unique viewpoint in their observations on what they learned from the LC, about the Housing culture, what impact they believed the LC had on their workplace after its second year. While many of these individuals reflected differently on what they had learned and how they used that knowledge, they unequivocally all learned something that shaped and impacted their perspective of their workplace. Similarly, there was a collective recognition in the value of relationships, both as a message received from the LC curriculum and experienced through the training in having the chance to get to know colleagues department wide. In the subsequent chapters, I will illuminate themes identified through my conversations with these program participants as a way to determine best practices and opportunities for improvement for this innovative student affairs workplace professional development training series. Finally, I will reflect on the higher education literature I primarily utilized to build rationale for the LC, to make meaning of the confluence of providing a transformative learning opportunity as professional development for student affairs staff and eliciting employee behavior change as a way to motivate organizational development.

# CHAPTER V

# THEMES AND FINDINGS

*"If we knew what we were doing, it wouldn't be called research" –Albert Einstein*

The value of professional development for student affairs employees is rooted in the philosophy of continual learning investment for personal growth, as well as the impact individual learning can have on organizational development (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Cooper & Miller, 1998). There is widespread agreement about the value of professional development in student affairs but less consensus on how to accomplish it (Carpenter & Stimpson; Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). Despite strong evidence supporting the need for continual training for personal and organizational development in student affairs, a number of factors have made this a difficult goal for administrators to actualize. Therefore, this empirical study fills a research void, and provides theory to practice direction for creating employee investment toward organizational development.

The individuals whose stories comprise this study provide emerging understanding of how employees experience a workplace training program as it fulfills the goal to provide transformative learning opportunity in support of staff practices that contribute to organizational development. In the previous chapter, participant narratives depict experiences of diverse employees in a workplace program, comprising an intrinsic case study of professional development for a large student affairs organization. This narrative-case study provides insight into how employees with broad professional role responsibilities and diverse personal backgrounds make meaning of using what they learn

as it impacts their view of the workplace culture and the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. Investing in human capital, in this context as leadership employees had opportunity to build cross-department relationships, communally problem solve, and share techniques to more effectively supervise, intended to provide staff support during a recession period where monetary pay increase had not occurred in four years. While this creative approach to providing staff resources was tailored to this organizational culture, this research aims to illustrate programmatic details and its value voiced by participants that supports reader transferability to create such a program in their own work environment.

In this chapter, I explore the following research question: How do employees experience workplace training as it contributes to organizational development? Therefore this chapter is organized with an introduction and conclusion addressing how employees depict the general Housing culture and how the LC contributed to some shifts in employee viewpoints about their workplace. These bookends generally frame employee depictions of longstanding issues they hoped would be addressed in their LC participation, and what was experienced through program participation. Specifically, primary themes of how personnel were invested in, what was learned about the bigger picture of the workplace organization, and what additional support is desired for the LC to continually perpetuate organizational development is explored. The goal for this chapter as I answer the fore mentioned research question is to utilize employee voices to provide direction for the LC program and department administrators in support of ongoing organizational development.

## Glimpse of HDS Culture

Workplace professional development can take on many different forms, but a program should align with the culture of an organization (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). Higher education literature depicts different types of organizations and the cultures that result (Birnbaum, 1988; Manning, et al., 2006); in context of exploring the LC's effectiveness in developing the Housing organization, how a workplace culture is described gives insight to what employee's value from a training program experience. In asking this question, interestingly some employees immediately requested that I turn off my audio recorder, and responded off the record their view of culture as involving dynamics of race relations among some ethnic groups particularly among Housing frontline staff. This was not the answer I initially expected, but this same scenario occurred multiple occasions where upon turning off my recorder I heard similar stories about sensitive situations among employees because of differences in race and ethnicity. To me this indicated the pervasiveness that race relations had been a longstanding contentious issue, regardless of significant efforts in recent years to promote and support ethnic diversity in the workplace. Likewise, the collective sensitivity around this question made me realize the importance of having built a curriculum with substantial dynamic of how leadership topics are addressed among various cultures, and having a facilitator experienced with navigating social justice conversations. No doubt contentious feelings about race relations affected the department wide culture and will be explored in this chapter in hand with how employees learned about the bigger picture of their workplace. Yet in the broader context, I sought stories depicting the organizational

culture from participants interviewed in regard for what was this workplace was like prior to implementing the LC.

Initially the response I thought I would gather from this question involved dynamics of how individual units worked together as it created a department wide culture, with responses expected such as "bureaucratic," "political," or "cooperative." Some participants described the culture as a family environment, where sometimes frustrations occurred but everyone knew they were stuck together and had to get along. One participant went into the challenge of consistent communication, which created a political environment because of who had access to information. This was evident from a story shared about this person's first year of Housing employment, but they reported this issue had improved over the past five years. Since Liam as the program facilitator and I held a different relationship then I had with other participants when entering the data collection stage, our individual interviews significantly involved what shifts he had observed of the department culture in his time with Housing. Given the general sensitive response I gathered from asking this question, the department cultural history description below is gathered primarily from my conversation with Liam.

**Old School/ New School Mentality on Change**

Twelve years prior when Liam first joined the Residence Life unit as a graduate student Hall Director, many of the then department leaders had built their entire student affairs careers in Housing. Starting as an undergraduate Resident Assistant, they transitioned into Hall Director positions and then into administrative roles such as Director of Residence Life or went on to lead the Human Resources or Conferences unit. In the late 1990s it was uncommon for Housing employees in any unit to have student

affairs specific graduate education (since this was not an available program at FSU), and foundational concepts inherent to student affairs work was generally unknown. As literature depicts, this form of student affairs organizational development, primarily influenced by administrative legacy, was common. Yet with the growth of Student Affairs graduate programs, administrators could realize leadership through "commonsense as obsolete" (Manning, et al., 2006, p. ix). In the 1990's when Liam joined Housing, the use of technology to complete essential Hall Director tasks (in his example) was not common therefore policies and procedures were rarely centralized, and department units and even individual residence halls operated as silos based on who led a particular community. Accordingly while collaboration among units had always been essential to operations, inter-unit cohesion resulted more from people having known each other for many years which challenged incoming employees, rather than implementing best practices for department operations. When Liam first moved to this state from the east coast, in reflection he noted his new home seemed pervasive with "the rugged individualism of the Wild West."

Over the first decade of the millennium, simultaneous changes occurred based on common challenges faced by higher education institutions. Financial constraints required more creative and efficient practices, technology advanced resulting in the ability to have centralized department procedures to improve efficiency, student populations grew, and legislative policies required increased sensitivity to diverse population demographics. Administrative turnover made room for new employees to join Housing from other institutions, bringing with them knowledge and experience gained from student affairs graduate programs. New language influenced from Chickering (1993) and Gilligan

(1982) stimulated talk about student development theory and social justice throughout Housing. Change seemed to be happening rapidly, and Liam, recently out of graduate school along with new colleagues of similar age and mindset, embraced and looked to stimulate further department change.

The desired change agents experienced what was referred to me as the "old school versus new school" mentality; there seemed to be resistance to change by some administrators whose entire careers had developed within Housing. In reflection it may have been that strategies for change suggested by the "new school" employees had previously been tried and decidedly had not worked, or whatever the case, rationale for resistance to new ideas by seasoned administrators was not transparent. Over time and with department wide staff turnover, the "new school" has transformed to become to "new-old school," and Liam wondered if what he and his colleague cohort experienced influenced the desire for department wide transparency intended through the LC. A continuing department trend that employees stayed among Housing for a long time, many of the colleagues among Liam's initial cohort remained among Housing through having been promoted or switched units in department restructures. While the "old school" mentality was not currently as prevalent in department wide decision making, reflections of change resistance and abounding "rugged individualism" in leadership styles remains apparent among the cultural tone of Housing.

Liam and LC participants I interviewed individually confirmed the timing for the LC's implementation as opportune. The desire for the opportunity to build department wide relationships, have a venue for more timely and effective communication, receive clearly articulated department values, and direction for implementing expectations to

build more efficient operations had been longstanding for many employees. Providing the LC for employees fulfilled a void many Housing members had not expected, and for that reason many participants voiced their appreciation for having a workplace training opportunity.

**Desired Support for Longstanding Issues**

Asking participants what they thought about the cultural dynamics of their workplace prior to their involvement in the LC also served the purpose to determine what issues were seen as needing support that a workplace training program could potentially address. Granted, I asked this question after the LC's second year, but I also asked participants to consider what additional support they felt could be useful in their third year of LC involvement. Most employees reported that prior to their LC involvement they had not considered the need for widespread workplace professional development training. In the same breath, many reported they enjoyed and appreciated what the program provided namely to build cross department relationships and some transparency on longstanding questions.

Stories told by participants who had been longtime Housing members recounted the ebb and flow of issues they had experienced. Due to state budget constraints in recent years, the issue of frozen pay increases was collectively a sensitive issue. More so then desire for an immediate resolution to this matter, employees wanted insight into what university and Housing administrators planned to do moving forward to support the budget. Financial strain was a certainly recognized as a national concern, and given rates of joblessness in the current economy some participants verbalized thankfulness for being

employed. Even so, some employees expressed discontent over the lack of transparency about how institution leaders intended to resolve the budget constraints.

In hand with feeling valued based on monetary compensation, many employees recounted communication as a source of validation for the value of their contribution to the department. Employees who accounted personal interaction with Housing administrators, with experiences such as personally sharing efforts on a current project or hearing a genuine thank you not only during a formal occasion like Employee Appreciation Week, felt validated that they contributed a valued role to the department. A few participants shared that the increased communication and camaraderie through relationships built in the LC in some ways provided validation for their contributions to the department that was perceived as not offered by department administrators.

Some employees recounted their personal value with feeling recognized and providing recognition for co-workers, but that provided recognition sometimes seemed to be a sensitive issue. Understanding budget concerns, Anna and Julie both noted the fine line between recognition and policy mandates against workplace “perks,” and some employees noted confusion over having received a pen during the recent Employee Appreciation Week. While the tangible benefit of monetary compensation was undoubtedly the reason employment was sought, having time to build relationship among the Housing “family” and the improved communication that resulted, for many employees similarly served as recognition that their role to the organization was valued. In accord with the constructivist theoretical frame of this research design, given my status as a department outsider prior to interviewing my participants I consistently wondered whether my contribution would be valued as I did not feel my efforts were validated,

similar to many employees I interviewed. The following subsections explore the longstanding department issues of the budget and communication as validation felt by employees as it affected the cultural history of the Housing department.

**Budget Questions**

During the research study, all supervisory employees were amid the annual process of personnel reviews. Each spring, employees were evaluated on their responsibilities and goals set with their supervisor approximately six months prior. In past years annual reviews involved a scoring metric to determine a salary increase. Three years prior due to state wide budget constraints, annual pay increases were frozen. At this time performance reviews were reframed as a permanent record reference for a Housing employee who desired job transfer or promotion within the department, university, or classified state system. Given that many employees stayed with Housing for a long time, many members were challenged to understand what change was actually made to the annual review. Since a pay increase was no longer attached to the evaluations, in particular for classified employees who knew people holding similar jobs in other state industries and still receive annual pay increase, the process was confusing and mostly seemed like extra paperwork.

After three consecutive years in this situation, participants I interviewed recognized the budget freeze was not likely to thaw anytime soon. When I asked what they thought could support further implementation of the LC concepts for them, some participants talked about this point of monetary compensation at length, but reiterated they choose to say in their position because they recognized the inherent benefits of state employment. In particular for employees from Facilities or Dining Services, they knew

they could do their same job elsewhere with possibly a higher salary, but valued working at FSU compared to previous jobs they had held for the schedule flexibility and security of working for a state system.

Nonetheless many frontline employees, specifically in the Dining and Facilities units, held multiple jobs, and participants in the LC openly asked when the opportunity for annual pay increased would return citing the need for these staff members in particular. Many participants noticed how the budget situation, and the lack of general knowledge of how it could improve, had widespread effect on employee morale. One employee stated "most people haven't gotten raise in 4 years, while our workload, for everyone it's a lot more. Some people see it as we're losing money by working here. How will that be fixed?" Another employee noted their unit director had told employees that at an annual meeting the previous year with the Housing Executive Director, there were not to be any questions asked about the budget or pay increases; "how is that an 'open discussion?'" they remarked. Employees understood the reality of the budget constraint, and that it was out of the Executive Director's control to implement pay increases in the near future. Yet some employees remarked that they wondered what was being done to remedy the situation, by anyone, as there had been no discussion or transparency on any considered solutions. They were challenged in being asked to trust administrators that this issue was being addressed while feeling excluded from what efforts or plans were being considered to remedy this situation. In this way communication about this budget issue, possibly more significant than the issue itself, sent a conflicting message to employees on the value of their contribution to the department at large.

**Communication is Validation**

Some employees I interviewed mentioned feeling valued stemmed from monetary compensation, since this was the tangible benefit for why most people worked. While this point is probably generally true throughout Housing, employees who desired intentionally working in an education environment expressed having access to information or interacting with administrators that provided validation that they held a valued role in Housing. Some of these same employees noted how communication improved, and equally how they felt more valued, as they held a higher ranked "position at the table." Anna, Julie, and Clay, whom all held master's degrees in Student Affairs and self-identified as field practitioners, independently mentioned growing in recognizing their position's privilege through participating in the LC. Clay offered, "positionally, I have access to information other people don't have, so I always try to be conscious of that privilege." Similarly Anna mentioned, "I think communication has been a constant issue thread throughout everything cause we're such a big place." As Julie summarized, "putting together names and faces, hearing stories, helps you recognize people." Giving employees space through the LC to communicate on workplace issues offers recognition and validation that each person has a valuable role in the organization.

In the same vein, employees who rarely interacted with department administrators, felt confused over some department-wide messages and were challenged to see how Housing leadership valued their contribution to the organization, which directly impacted employee morale. Primarily employees in trade roles who did not see themselves as members of the student affairs field (even if they self-reported working closely with student employees and described doing "development work" as part of their

regular responsibilities), such as in Facilities, Dining, or Finance, questioned whether department administrators recognized the realities of their work. One employee mentioned, “for the higher echelon, do they know what it takes to do what we do?” This pattern among LC participant’s stories highlighted communication as a source of validation; how employees felt valued and saw their department role as contributing to the bigger picture of the Housing’s purpose was affected by how employees received communication. Equally, a trickle-down mode of communication, while often occurring, did not provide the same affect in validating employees as directly interacting with a department administrator.

As a longstanding issue for many Housing members, department wide communication was generally considered to have improved through the LC. Having a venue to present expectations for workplace practice, discuss department issues, and have questions addressed in this setting for many employees provided validation that their role was valued to Housing operations. Employees who received this message saw the LC as making a clear contribution to employee investment.

## Personnel Investment

Staff development programs for student affairs employees constitute a human resources investment by an organization to enhance and develop personnel skills, such as relationship building and cultural understanding, to meet institutional goals (Grace-Odeleye, 1998). Colleges and universities are heavily dependent on human capital, so investment in human resources is time and money spent to assist staff in their personal learning as improved support for student learning (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). Socialization is central to demonstrating a support network within an organization, and

directly contributes to improved operational effectiveness and efficiency (Levin, 2002). Facilitated multilateral socialization builds relationships across a workforce, and training with this inherent purpose serves as a vehicle to define shared expectations across many points of view (Amey, 2002).

Most participants I spoke with had not known what to expect upon finding out about the LC and their required participation. For many people, it was just another thing to add to their to-do list and was something that would take time away from their other responsibilities. For members currently in or formerly a part of the Residence Life unit, since development training is inherent within the purpose of this area, they felt like what they would get from participating in the LC they probably already had. Yet all participants I spoke with found no problem with the fact that the training was required, and similarly did not see the time commitment as overly taxing. Even when participants were challenged to fit a class into a busy day, knowing attendance was mandatory and tracked made it a priority. Similarly because Liam's presentation style was enjoyable, participants reported they enjoyed the break the class provided to their day. The following section explores the investment employees felt out of participating with the LC. Including for the first time having a venue to openly discuss workplace realities, building relationships with colleagues across the department, tools learned to improve sophistication of necessary workplace skills, and the opportunity to hear department values and expectations clearly communicated. Through this review, investing in human resources will be demonstrated as an essential component to eliciting student affairs organizational development.

**First Venue to Discuss Workplace Realities**

Prior to the LC, there had not been a venue for employees to share or understand what challenges or priorities colleagues faced in other department units. Allowing employees to discuss their personal challenges in the constructive format of the LC setting provided desired collective social support. Clay stated about his experience with the LC “hearing stuff that came up with personnel [in other units] was valuable because I felt I could understand their dilemmas…there’s never been a venue where I’ve gotten that, and I feel like the LC is the only place I ever heard that because we’ve never been encouraged to talk about the real stuff.” Every LC participant I interviewed mentioned the uniqueness of the LC as a workplace training experience. Julie framed her LC experience in context to her overall loyalty to Housing because of how she saw work-life balance encouraged, “it’s so innovative…where else would something like this happen?” Amy recalled that she had taken part in many workplace trainings in her 12 years with Housing; while she was challenged to remember the content of previous trainings, the LC was unique to her in that she wanted to apply and integrate what she learned into her daily work “for that, [the LI] really stands out.”

**Inherent messages reinforce best practice.** When asked what stood out most to participants from their LI experience, Amy, Alex, Keith, and Clay used the word “confidence.” For these four individuals, supervising is central to their job responsibilities, but until the LC none of them had previously received formal training on how to be a supervisor. Amy described it as “it’s positive in that it shows your strengths… it also made me look at the strengths of the people under me so you can help them have confidence in their abilities too.” Clay saw it in terms of being supported as a

supervisor instilled confidence for employees that they could perform this critical task even if they did not previously have that experience; “for most of us there’s not a whole lot of training to become a supervisor, like you just become promoted and you just know from what you’ve seen, and you just say do this or don’t do that. But most of us ever get mentored into how to be a good supervisor.” Keith saw the most value in the module on team building, and saw those tools as helping staff build confidence because “people who are unsecure in their position are challenged to focus on their team, cause their focused on themselves.” Alex described his experience as reinforcement for best practices. He felt he had previously received some of the LC concepts from him bachelor’s degree in management, but being refreshed and reminded of these ideas made him want to apply the concepts more often. For Alex, “I always want to mentor, of course that helps employees be more confident and effective at their job.”

Similarly, empowerment was another theme recognized by employees. For Mustafa, Clay, and Anna, who had all done master’s degree work in or related to student affairs, employee empowerment was an especially salient message. For Mustafa, as a new employee to FSU his involvement in the LC provided insight to aspects of the department culture that he had sought since his employment began. Gaining insight into commonalities among units helped him feel empowered that ideas he wanted to implement in his unit were reinforced across Housing, “this is not just the world according to [Mustafa], haha, I’m glad to know these ideas are reinforced.” For Clay, the clear message of empowerment, including personal responsibility, was good for people to hear; “it legitimizes experiences of people in the department, they have a forum to talk if they choose to about the real stuff in their unit, they wouldn’t have that forum otherwise.

I think that's empowering for people to hear they have choices." Equally significant to employees receiving the message of empowerment, Liam's accessible presentation style was mentioned as reinforcing confidence, that for employees as Anna stated, "at the end of the day, we all make choices."

**Liam's presentation style.** Consistently, participants mentioned the value of Liam's presentation style. The power point slides and handouts were colorful and easy to use, he respectfully facilitated sensitive discussion topics, and his conversation based style engaged participants from various personal and professional backgrounds. As Julie stated,

> I think going in I was like, oh what could there be? I didn't think there would be a lot I would learn because in Res Life we get this kind of training a lot. But I've known [Liam] for 12 years, and I knew he was good. And every single time I left [class] I was like, wow, yeah [Liam's] just that good.

Based on participant feedback, Liam's knowledge of the department and engaging style made it easy to build relationships across the department and learn about Housing at large.

**Transparency.** When I asked participants if they had any significant "ah-ha" learning moments, many individuals mentioned having increased transparency within the organization, including insight into the challenges and dynamics of other department units outside their own. Understandably as the Residence Life unit works most closely with students as the primary customer of Housing, many participants mentioned while the Residence Life unit had long been viewed as the "favorite," the LC provided insight into their challenges and priorities that made this unit critical to Housing. In context to the privilege recognized by members of Residence Life unit, including English as the commonly held primary language, Clay mentioned "I have more awareness about the

challenges in other units with just how people communicate, like there's a challenge cause I'm your boss and I don't speak your language." Julie similarly resonated,

> I really learned so much… like struggles they have with supervising, we talk about [professional development] so much [in my unit], but that's not what they're dealing with, it's so different. It's like wow, pretty eye opening, and of course then I'm like wow, I feel very privileged. Just like in the job that I hold and the things I spend my time on, versus some other staff don't have that.

Julie went on to say that made her think more about the things that she asks for from other units, and used the examples of orientation set up, moving hall director's furniture between buildings, or how she is able to communicate with her supervisees how priorities are ordered when maintenance receives a mid-night call from a Resident Assistant.

Ron identified this new transparency as an opportunity to build empathy among co-workers. He described it as,

> 'I feel your pain'. Hearing others point of view, concerns, understanding that I'm not the only one, others are going through the same thing and see the same thing. And that brings a sort of partnership, cooperation, that they can think, I'm not the only one who faces these issues.

When asked whether this understanding impacts what he sees in his staff on a daily basis, Ron went on to articulate,

> it allowed them to understand that maybe you don't have to like each other but you do have to respect each other. Understanding each group allows for respect to grow within all of Housing. And when the respect exists, the result is better for the whole organization.

**Building Relationships**

Amy, Anna, Clay, Keith, James, Mustafa, Leah, and Julie indicated the value of participating in the LC as a way to build cross-department relationships, both in having face time with staff from other units for the first time, finding personal and unit commonalities useful for accomplishing tasks, and feeling known as validation of being a

valued member of Housing. These particular eight participants who mentioned the value of building relationships through the LC are of different racial, educational, and work history backgrounds, but this pattern is perhaps due to the necessity of their jobs to work with other Housing employees across the department. While the other four participants mentioned the value of getting to know people through the LC, based on the nature of their jobs they either already knew many other Housing members (such as Alex's role in coordinating catering) or were focused on accomplishing tasks that necessitated focus within their specific unit (such as Jeffrey's role in delivering meals). Nonetheless, the LC as an opportunity to build relationships across the Housing department was clearly a salient theme.

Building relationships through the LC was equally important for many research participants, but for different reasons. As a new member of Housing, Mustafa recently dealt with a crisis that required bringing together a committee of cross department members, most of whom he had yet to work with directly. In reflection he stated "we were able to make agreements and move quickly with a strong customer service standpoint, so maybe the relationships at that level went better in part because I've been in class with these folks." Similarly, Anna articulated "you can get so much more done when people know who you are and where you're coming from." Amy felt validated in knowing that now more department members knew her childcare center existed by saying "the LC has helped us, cause I feel like now [we're] not just a little blip on the map, we're a little bit bigger blip!" Leah mentioned, "many of us have the same problem and when we discuss we see how to resolve it, I think it was great to get to know people, cause we don't really work with other units." For Clay, "I get my needs met through

relationships and I like being connected to people at work…I like being a part of the bigger team and knowing who the players are." While he recognized the personal value of having time to build relationship, he saw the impact of this investment for his unit staff as well. Julie reiterated this sentiment, "for the Area Coordinators it's had a really positive impact since they have less contact with the leaders of the department… they just don't usually sit at that table since it's not a function of their job." For James, while typically focused on trade work and fixing mechanical problems, it helped him see why people asked for different things from his team even if he was challenged to understand the purpose of the request. In the focus group setting where James talked about why through the LC he was able to see other's viewpoints, Amy reinforced, "you know if he feels like he understands Res Life a lot more, that's huge, that's big, cause that's definitely apart of student affairs."

**Providing Tools**

Liam and I frequently discussed how the point of the LC was to give staff members "tools for their toolbox." He stated "the Center is about developing skills that make you a better manager. We provide so many tools, not just tools for how to use a particular skill set but even the action plan tools are meant to be a way for you to have a conversation with your supervisor for how you plan to use these skills." These tools are central to the LC curriculum, and without these common tools and space to learn how to use them provided as an investment in human capital, there is no assurance of individual or organizational competence, professionalism, retention, or personal development (Scott, 2000). Each module provided a couple of tools on a common theme, paired with clear definitions of staff roles, expectations, goals, norms, and opportunities to use these tools;

this demonstrates institutional care for employees so they can most aptly provide care to students (Carpenter, et al., 2001; Rosser & Javinar, 2003).

On two different occasions, Mustafa quoted "if your only tool is a hammer every problem will look like a nail." Having been used to continual conversations about student affairs theory to practice from his previous institution, upon joining FSU he had many personal questions regarding the cultural norms and expectations among Housing and reflected on this quote for how he felt during his orientation period. Wanting to "respect the trajectory of the program," he patiently observed as a way to understand his new environment and therefore was thrilled to start the LC when he did, approximately eight months after being hired. Originally noticing there did not seem to be many easily identifiable tools in practice, now with the LC "we have shared tools, shared knowledge that gives us a direction and gives us meaning and opportunity to become more sophisticated in what we're doing, so that actually helped me adjust to this university culture." Likewise, Anna was new to her position in Conferences and she reported the timing of her involvement in the LC was impeccable. Module four, in the beginning of the second year, began during the fourth month of her new position, right after the busy summer conferences season. During an exercise to arrange work responsibilities on a plate in consideration of how to prioritize and delegate, Anna realized she needed to have a conversation with her supervisor about what was expected in her responsibilities; "I went in and showed my supervisor my plate and said we need to work on this, it framed the conversation, so that was great."

Jeffrey, Keith, Ron, and James experienced using tools learned through the LC. These four participants self-identified their job roles as trades specific, did not self-

identify with doing student affairs work or being a member of the Division of Student Affairs at FSU, and Jeffrey, Keith, and James had not pursued education past the high school level. Perhaps the reason the tools they learned through the LC were particularly salient for them was because they had not previously been a part of conversations where they would have been exposed to these management tools, even though employees who self-identify as being members of the student affairs field consider some of these tools to be a natural part of doing this field of work. For example, Jeffrey referred to a situation he had with one of the dining service employees he supervised. Recalling the second module on intercultural communication, and the lesson on the differences between high context and low context communicators, "so then I clearly needed to take my time and make sure she knows I'm hearing her out… it seemed like she actually got that I was listening to her and I could tell she was calming down." Additionally, Keith gained skills through hearing what tools other employees used to supervise their staff members. Specifically, "I got some info on people's areas and how they do things that kinda helped me… now I'm doing more one on one meetings cause I like to talk to them on an individual basis to let them know how I think things are going and to find out what do they expect from me." Keith also noted,

> it made me look at the evaluation differently…a lot of people felt that they don't mean anything anymore since the pay for performance part isn't there, but now I can let people know those evals are for future reference…so I make sure they understand why they're getting their score and what it means.

Ron and James both saw a difference within their Facilities unit that people put more effort into trying to communicate. As Ron mentioned "the very fact that they're talking about it is change to me…it's a breath of fresh air to hear people talk about it." James mentioned over the past year his unit implemented quarterly meetings for the

purpose of discussing issues affecting the unit at large. Modeled off the idea of discussing issues around a theme in the LC, "we meet and talk about everything, they tell their complaints and problems, and my guys talk to the housekeepers, and we all talk it out. I really like that meeting…we've had a couple solutions come outta that." As intended in the curriculum design, many participants felt skills they learned in the LC could be directly applied to issues they faced in their daily work.

**Communicating Expectations**

Workplace opportunities that focus on expectations for valued concepts in practice according to an institution's unique culture provides transparency and direction for employees regardless of varied skill levels and the challenges faced by higher education (Winston & Creamer, 2002). Some individuals I spoke with characterized many of the LC concepts as "common sense," in particular those employees who held advanced education degrees in Student Affairs or Management. Yet having best practices presented and encouraged in the LC setting made clear the expectation the concepts must be practiced, and assured everyone received the same message on what were department values. As Ron articulated,

> all this stuff can happen in supervising, but emphasis on that encourages them to use it. Delegation, a very good example, the concept has been around forever, but people have been using it since the leadership training encouraged them to try it. It gives them some details, you know step by step, what is delegation, do you just pass the buck to someone else? No, you have to make sure this person has all the tools, all the training they need, and show them, walk with them, be with them. Basically it's nothing new here, however if you refresh and repeat and give them continual information, there's a better possibility that supervisors will utilize it.

Julie agreed,

> it's required, and it's from the whole department, and it's in your eval, there's follow up you need to do, it sends a clear message that this isn't bullshit… and that speaks here with so many different people cause I think we send so many

> different messages. This says these concepts are what people value, so that makes it easier for people to carry over into their daily jobs.

Defining clear expectations through formalized training assures employees are aware and practicing the values of the department.

## Learning About the Bigger Picture

Transformative learning as professional development occurs when an individual considers their assumptions or expectations about their workplace and practice, and has opportunity to revise them (Cranton, 1996). When an employee evaluates personal assumptions about their organization, and reconsiders their expectations according to new found insight gained through workplace training, that is an opportunity for staff members to reflect on how their decisions and behavior contribute to organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Defined as "having an ah-ha moment" or "a changed way of seeing the world" (Cranton, 1996), transformative learning provided through workplace training offers a venue for employees to learn about the bigger picture of operational dynamics among their organization.

### Transformative Learning as Professional Development

Amy, Clay, James, Jeffrey, Keith, Anna, Julie, and Mustafa discussed ah-ha moments they experienced in the LC as being personally insightful and occurring progressively. These eight research participants were individuals who previously had not received formal higher education, or held master's degrees in Student Affairs and were intentionally interested in working in a higher education environment. It seems the lessons provided through formal training enticed employees who had not previously been exposed to the LC concepts as much as individuals who had intentionally sought the opportunity for graduate education in Student Affairs work. Consistently I heard the

learning experience described as "gradual," with increased understanding gained in retrospect over many LC classes. Because each module built on previously presented curriculum, and homework assignments required personal reflection, looking at class concepts in an employee's workspace context reinforced this learning opportunity as transformative.

While not all participants would qualify their experience as "transformative," they consistently described "ah-ha moments" as impacting how they viewed their overall work environment and having improved understanding of the points of view from people they most frequently worked with directly. Keith, when I asked if he would call his learning experience transformative, replied jokingly "well I wouldn't go that far." Even so, he explained his experience as "when I look back overall on the entire number of classes I attended, it was a learning experience little by little. And that helped me because I realize that I was now looking at things differently… I didn't realize that until I got further along, then I saw how I was using all these things I had learned." Clay's learning experience was similar, "I feel like it was more progressive for me." In the same vein, he articulated his LC learning experience as,

> I think it made a bigger impact on me in the beginning, cause [the curriculum] is really good stuff, it's just figuring out how to make sure that I'm doing this is the challenge to me…I feel like what we do is so in the moment day to day so that's what gets my attention, more so than the longer term, like let me develop you…It's made me think about development broadly, like NASPA and ACPA sent out that doc on 40 core competencies for student affairs professionals, so now we'll do staff training to cover those topics. The LC made me think more like that, the value of doing that came from here.

Julie similarly affirmed the transformative power of increased insight to the organization's operations, "I'd be surprised if it hasn't changed something for them."

Learning through the LC had a personally transformative affect for many of the participants I interviewed. Similarly everyone I spoke with had a revised viewpoint of their workplace in having been provided newfound understanding on aspects of Housing operations through learning about other units. As Clay mentioned "I learned a lot about hearing what people struggle with *and* I think also as a leader it helps me support them." Clay, Julie, Anna, and James in particular shared increased awareness of how other units operated came from who spoke up in a class, and how challenges and priorities in a class setting were discussed among members of various units. The more members of a particular unit shared about what they experienced in their unit, the more insight was gained by other members of that class. For example, since Dining as a large unit had many employees attend the LC, Dinging members often shared their situations as it related to the class concept which provided insight for other employees that were previously unaware of challenges faced by the Dining unit. Generally classes varied based on who was present therefore not all participants consistently received insight about the same issue discussed. Although as all modules incorporated members from across the department and each module had a different class roster, class dynamics constantly shifted and everyone interacted with members of all units. Similarly helpful for LC participants, the facilitator gained insight through class discussions that was useful for him to draw examples from other classes to illustrate module concepts in practice.

**Expanded Awareness of Department Diversity**

Among other goals, professional development should highlight the purpose of employee's daily work activity, and acknowledge staff members where they are at in their development as well as their life outside of work (Winston & Creamer, 2002).

While the LC has aimed to maintain this goal, providing personalized attention for diverse members of a department as large as Housing has been both a challenge and benefit. While the challenge of creating personalized curriculum depended upon individual staff members sharing their experiences in the class setting, the benefit was insight gained by other department members into unit specific challenges and priorities. While the challenge is inherently a reality, transparency provides awareness of the diversity of cultural dynamics of the department, including insight to individual viewpoints based on unique professional roles and department interactions based on unit priorities.

During our second interview I asked Liam about how he would characterize Housing given what insight he had about the department since starting his current position. When he was in Residence Life "I always thought I knew e-services cleans, and dining feed, and res life programs… but now I just feel like I have new insight into this department, there's so much sharing that happens in the Center." For some of the participants I spoke with, cultural dynamics of the department immediately made them think of race relations or language barriers, which certainly affected the widespread tone of staff dynamics. Similarly, many individuals talked about the department cultural dynamics in terms of differences in supervision styles, comprehension levels based on different levels of education, or classified versus professional exempt employee status, all of which effected perceptions of the workplace and employee behavior accordingly. For example Julie mentioned "we supervise in such different ways cause we have such different jobs, that came up in every mod." Keith and James, both members of the Facilities unit who ended their formal education after high school in favor of joining the

Military, both mentioned how the visuals and examples both helped them understand the point of the module concepts. Yet, they independently mentioned they often felt the classes were theory heavy and for that reason they were sometimes hesitant to contribute to discussions. While Clay, currently in pursuit of a Ph.D., enjoyed the many theories presented through the LC, he wondered aloud if this joy for him stemmed because of his privilege in education. At the same time, he also affirmed Julie's statement that "it's spelled out and directly applied to Housing. [Liam] connects the dots and makes that connection for you, it really brings it home for people."

**Working for an education system.** In the second focus group with Anna, Leah, Keith, and Mustafa, I asked if anyone saw the concepts taught in the LC as inherently Student Affairs. Keith and Lead verbalized they were unsure what that meant, but Mustafa remarked,

> I think as a department were so huge and siloized, that it's really important to continue this so we know how to connect within the division of student affairs and as a critical part of the whole university as an educational institution. Helping people see that constantly and being more intentional will help people see that all of us are integral to the educational mission.

Similarly I asked this question in the first focus group with James, Clay, and Amy, and our discussion turned to how through the LC experience participants now felt they could see more of the bigger picture of their workplace and the complexity of being at a state university. Amy noted "when you don't know what really are the pressures over there, it's harder to really have a good context for it." She used the example being in a state institution; in her area a new staff that came from a private sector job was easily frustrated by the amount of time needed for procedures such as ordering supplies or hiring a new employee. Clay followed that thought by articulating,

> We're a part of an education system, and I think there are people who intentionally come into this environment because they like it, they like college students, or they like the educational environment or whatever. And then I think there are other people who for them it's a job. You know like I need to work, this is what I can do and here's where I'm working. And that's just kind of what it is, and I think that's OK. But to me, I feel like this experience highlights that, all of us are in an education environment and we can all learn, and that we're all learners, and that we're committed to growth, that doesn't necessarily need to be classroom learning but that we're committed to growth and development as supervisors, and I think that's a good message to have cause I think it also role models what we expect of student staff who are in school but also employees for us. I feel like we have some obligation to model, like yeah, growing is good.

Our conversation evolved to exploring being in a workplace that was both an intentional learning environment but also a space for folks who for them it was just a job. James mentioned "this is just a job for me, it was state job security. I took a pay cut to come here, but I wanted the security of the state job. I think a lot of maintenance folks see it that way." For him, "the things that drove me, one was the security, and the other was I felt we were like a family when we were here." Since many of the childcare teachers had been at FSU for over a decade, Amy agreed both points were true for people in her area as well.

**Ethnic differences affect the Housing cultural tone.** When I asked employees about their thoughts on the cultural dynamics of the department, those individuals who first replied with observations on race relations typically asked me to turn off my audio recorder so their response would be off the record. Many of these individuals were in trade specific units, were diversity at the frontline staff level was prominent and employees did not self-identify as being a part of the field of Student Affairs. This indicated to me dynamics among some ethnic groups continued to be a contentious issue, and some people had reservations to formally discuss it, even though significant efforts in the past decade had been made to openly recognize ethnic diversity as a workplace value

across the FSU campus. I had been somewhat aware of this long standing contention when I initially accepted my internship, since the inception of the LC stemmed from focus groups conducted with primarily frontline staff in 2005 demonstrating the pervasiveness of this issue department wide. While interviews I conducted demonstrated the history of ethnic differences continued to affect the cultural tone of the department, participants appreciated that they were invited to openly discuss these issues in the LC and that Liam was well qualified to facilitate the sensitive nature of these conversations.

Some participants noticed contentious cultural dynamics occurred more regularly among frontline staff, in particular among the largest trade specific units such as Facilities and Dining. When general workplace issues arose race relations were sometimes considered central to the conversation, but since contentious situations most occurred among frontline staff, issues of low wage or needing to work multiple jobs often went in hand with how people felt treated based on race. Similarly, language differences made these emotional situations more complex. A number of individuals I spoke with referenced this cultural dynamic as a primary reason they were interested in having their supervisees attend the LC. On a few occasions, these individual off the record conversations led to direct requests for frontline staff to participant in at least some aspects of the LC. Participants asked this because they desired their employees to see first-hand that considerations for racial differences among the department were made and they could have a supportive environment to constructively discuss their concerns. As reflected by the 2005 focus groups, for frontline staff who saw race relations as a significant issue, being a part of the space the LC creates can support their concerns as

well as provide validation in being recognized for the unique role they provide to the organization.

**Challenges and Priorities Across All Units**

All higher education institutions face social and political challenges, and divisions of student affairs often receive the first charge to handle these complex and sensitive tasks campuses (Colby, et al., 2010). How a student affairs organization is structured affects how a challenge is handled (Manning, et al., 2006). Workplace professional development training for all members of a student affairs organization assures employees have built essential working relationships and understand common values prior to being asked to handle a complex challenge.

An essential value of the LC program is that it provided participants with insight to various department challenges and priorities, some of which were unit specific and others that helped employees consider, as Ron noted, "I'm not the only one facing this issue." Generally many of the employees I spoke with noticed the wide spread challenge of effectively providing recognition, or being recognized, in being a part of a large workplace where financial strain was a constant challenge. One employee shared with me at length the challenge employees had with not having received an annual pay increase in four years. For them, they struggled to see how the pen they received during Employee Appreciation Week was a real form of recognition, but on a few occasions they did mention the LC made a systemic impact as positive reinforcement for employee best practices. Liam, Keith, Alex, Ron, James, Amy, Jeffrey, and Leah individually noted financial strain as having an impact on employee morale. All of these employees who noted financial strain are employed in positions, and supervise employees, where

they could do their same type of job in another environment with potentially higher pay and less bureaucracy (albeit also less job security, which was a noted reason for staying at FSU). Julie and Anna, who both strongly identify as student affairs practitioners, independently mentioned how employee recognition held personal value; they liked being able to offer recognition to others although it was a challenge since creativity in showing appreciation was increasingly required in recent years. Fortunately, discussion through the LC inherently supported cross unit relationship building, and many of my participants felt validated in their position by seeing the value of their contribution to the bigger picture of the organization.

**Decision making domino effect.** A collective challenge recognized by LC participants was how decisions made in one unit often had unintended consequences on another unit. In my first interview with Julie, she excitedly shared with me the many aspects she felt were most valuable about the LC. For one example, prior to taking part in the LC she had not consistently considered how her decisions affected other department units. Of the many reasons she liked the LC, the opportunity for employees to share their stories as it provided insight to the "decision making domino effect" significantly impacted this community. Consistent with a bureaucratic institutional model, rationalization applied to an institution's structure makes sense for decisions made by leaders but can have lateral impacts on frontline employees, demonstrating organizational inefficiency (Birnbaum, 1988). As the LC provides collegial and cybernetic elements to Housing to balance bureaucratic tendencies, relationships built and feedback collected gave insight to inefficient practices (Birnbaum). This

demonstrated how a decision made in one unit often had an unintended, but inefficient and sometimes frustrating, "domino effect" impact another unit.

Julie used the example of when her unit considered revising the layout for an orientation weekend. The idea was initiated in consideration to compartmentalize orientation participants to make it easier for her staff to utilize resources needed to serve the most number of people. When this decision was made, what was not considered was the impact on the Conferences schedule who needed to use the same residence hall, how much time was actually needed for Facilities to turn over rooms and move furniture in this new format, and the additional meals that had to be produced by a particular dining hall. In the initial meeting of Residence Life staff when the new orientation format was decided it made sense to everyone involved in making that decision, but without input from key members of additionally impacted units, they had not considered the domino effect. Later when this situation was constructively discussed in an LC class, employees from across the department could consider how a single decision rippled throughout Housing affected other department members in initially unknown ways. This transparency provided a learning opportunity for employees to consider what were realistic expectations in collaborating with various units department wide.

**Customer service as top priority.** While the domino effect of decision making was a communally recognized department challenge, excellent customer service was a collectively valued priority. Consistent with an administrative-centered institution, a customer service oriented student affairs structure holds merit in how students as customers navigate services, but the bureaucratic specialization rather than the integration of resources prioritized customer service over support for student development (Manning,

et al., 2006). While the goals of student affairs do not change based on institutional differences, how these goals are practiced is often left to the interpretation of individual employees and do not occur consistently (Harrison, 2010). In order for student learning support to be systemically recognized in hand with excellent customer service, institutional leaders should identify and direct how these ideals ought to manifest, and workplace training serves to support employees in considering these expectations and their role in practicing such ideals.

In the focus groups I asked, “has participating in the LC helped you connect the Housing mission in what you do on a daily basis?” The most common response I heard, even from Keith who had been employed at FSU for nearly 30 years, was the joking retort “what’s the Housing mission?” While employees were generally not aware of department mission statement in the same breath they collectively regarded the priority of the department to provide excellent customer service, however this was defined by the function of their unit. Alex, Ron, Keith, James, Anna, Mustafa, and Leah, who spent most of their work time conducting project or trade specific tasks, individually spoke about how they saw value in their position in providing excellent customer service as it contributed to support FSU at large. Ron explained customers were whoever needed support, either students or other Housing units, as it contributed to the overall functions of the department. Regardless of the role a staff member held in the organization, understanding each other’s diverse functions supported mutual respect because, as Ron stated, “they know they are truly are both trying to serve their customer, but only the manner that they serve their customer is different.” James expressed this similarly, “the key thing for me, whenever I hire somebody I always ask ‘em, who’s your customer?

And the one answer I'm looking for basically is, anybody." For Alex, who works with offices throughout the CC, his customers are "whoever needs our service…I consider myself to be mostly customer service oriented." Liam summarized how the LC contributed to support the customer service mission as "I have often felt that in a customer service oriented field, and in many ways student development oriented cause were providing the service to students, if you don't take care of the service providers, how can you expect the customers or the students that we work with to get the best?" Regardless of a unit's function, it is a cultural norm among this community that Housing members recognized providing excellent customer service is what they contributed toward as it served the bigger picture purpose of the organization.

**Supporting realistic expectations in collaboration.** The essential value of communally recognizing shared challenges and priorities among this large department is it supports realistic expectations when units collaborate. The student affairs profession regards group communication and collaboration (Lovell & Kosten, 2000). Yet in an administrative-centered model common for flagship institutions, where a student services mentality to provide customer "one-stop-shopping" prevails (Manning, et al., 2006, p. 70), the priority to build individual office reputation with customers contributes to the silo model. Therefore attempts to build collaboration to increase collegiality can be a challenge in these types of organizations (Birnbaum, 1988). Alternatively through the LC, collegiality is attempted first with the idea that improved collaboration will follow. In this way, challenges and priorities of individual units are made transparent prior to collaboration attempts, so when decisions in a single unit need to be made the potential domino effect can be considered.

In the third focus group, Ron and Julie discussed how transparency provided through the LC discussions in their view impacted employee behavior and morale in collaborating among their units. Such as when maintenance has been requested to move hall director (HD) furniture between buildings; "they can understand the environment of [a HDs] office is part of their presentation to their customer, the students… so help them if you can. The attitude is definitely better, the very fact that I don't hear as many [negative] comments is an indication of understanding." Julie agreed, and followed that thought with an example from her own unit; "yeah, expectations are more realistic. Cause if you don't talk to people you just don't know what people do." Such as if there is a mid-night maintenance emergency call to a residence hall, "they should show up within 20 minutes, but that don't mean there isn't something else going on someplace else. It's just making people think outside their bubble." In that setting, Julie and Ron agreed that this increased understanding definitely contributed to improved customer service across the department.

Participants generally identified that the value of their experience came from the opportunity to learn about the bigger picture of their organization's operations. Having a venue provided where employees could build cross-unit relationships, learn tools to improve supervision responsibilities, and constructively share challenges and priorities helped LC participants consider the collective purpose of Housing. Essentially, the LC gave employees a venue for "a changed way of seeing the world" through providing quality content, having an engaging facilitator, and in how participants learned from each other's experiences.

Since the purpose of this research is to consider initial benchmarks of the LC's affect among the Housing community, this review would not be complete without articulating what employees view as valuable for the LC to continue affecting the organization's development. The following section provides suggestions for how the LC can provide ongoing support that employee's desire for continual organizational development.

## Continued Support Desired

Outside of the formal interview, a few LC participants I spoke with who had taken part in previous department assessments mentioned enjoying being able to give back to Housing through contributing to department focus groups. Ron and Clay, both Assistant Directors whom neither had previously been a part of Housing evaluation projects, separately suggested continual widespread department assessment in various forms would be beneficial in measuring the impact of the LC as an innovative workplace program. Regarding the program design, while employees appreciated the "challenge by choice" format, they learned about other units through colleagues so less insight about specific units resulted when employees did not actively participant in the classes. Similarly for Liam concept implementation stemmed from trust that employees would use what was learned, and although assurance measures had been taken, his awareness that implementation was not consistent was referred to in our conversations as "the X factor." Specifically for the LC curriculum, employees collectively noted the department mission was not prevalent to them or how it should be integrated into their daily work. Likewise, expectations from administrators were not necessarily clear for how department values should be consistently implemented. Essentially, LC participants were

excited for the opportunity the LC provided in contributing to the organization's development, and the following section offers suggestions to further the impact this opportunity can make.

**Ongoing Assessment**

Higher education literature demonstrates that while assessment reveals progress for defining student affairs as a profession (Winston, et al., 2001), there is work that can still be done to understand what constitutes effective professional development (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007). Similarly in Lovell and Kosten (2000) meta-analysis on 30 years of student affairs literature to address what characteristics are necessary for success in student affairs, 57% of studies depicted assessment and evaluation as an essential skill for administrators. Ongoing assessment of the LC would provide continual benchmarks to holistically consider effective practices toward organizational development, and engage staff in their personal and workplace development. Quantitative or mixed methods assessment provides opportunity for staff to offer anonymous feedback on best practice implication by supervisors, while qualitative data collected supports staff validation in being heard and valued for the role they provide to department operations.

Upon asking in the third focus group what additional suggestions participants had for what they would like to see in year three of the LC, Ron stated "at some point in time analyzing what your training has done for the supervisor and how they reflect that for the frontline staff." Stressing the point of continual assessment in measurement of the LC's ongoing affect, Ron continued "bringing that feedback, that input, from frontline staff… at least from [the Facilities] side that would be very beneficial, it would be the most

effective thing you can do." Julie agreed, both at the benefit of ongoing assessment and involving frontline staff. She stated "I think they would benefit from a lot of it, obviously you need to find the resources. I think I know why you chose to have supervisors as the people going through it, but for sure I think frontline folks would get something out of it hands down." Many LC participants voiced desire for more Housing members to be involved in the LC, as it would contribute to both frontline employees morale through validation in their department contribution and potentially more consistent concept implementation.

**Consistent Implementation**

Amy and Mustafa talked separately about how they implemented the concepts in their areas. When Amy had a homework assignment, she brought her worksheets into her assistant teachers and they talked through the ideas together. In my second individual interview with Mustafa, he talked through how he could take a question presented in a module and modify it for an open discussion among the staff in his three areas at their monthly meeting. At our second individual interview, Anna excitedly shared with me how she and her supervisor had taken the ideas from module five on Mentorship, and presented at a recent national conference. Before joining her current unit she told me how her supervisor had wanted to implement regular staff development into their unit meetings, but it consistently ended up being a low priority. After their conference presentation, she blocked time each month for all Conferences staff to meet for this purpose over the next year, and they planned to use each LC module topic to guide these meetings. Clay and Julie individually mentioned how much training time takes place for Residence Life staff, and since many of the concepts already came up in many of their

meetings, they certainly saw value in directly applying ideas from the modules in future pre-planned trainings.

James and Keith, as Facilities employees, both stated more than once they hoped their frontline staff could take some parts of the LC. When asked individually if they ever talked about what they did in the LC with their staff, they both said they did because they wanted their employees to know where they were, but were not entirely comfortable in trying to explain the specific concepts. James noted, “cause I try to explain things, but they still wonder why. You know I’ve got a director over here and these guys over there, so if they could understand why I tell them what I do, that would help.” Similarly, Keith said,

> I think it would benefit a lot of people, like the custodial 1 staff, because it would help them understand what we’re trying to do. Cause we go to these classes, but it’s hard for us to explain the exact concept that we’re trying to get across. I think if they had some of the same info as far as what the goals are, that would help them better understand what were all working toward.

Leah and Alex both wondered what their supervisors, and “higher echelon” managers of the department saw as the priorities for how the LC concepts should be implemented. As Leah stated “we are in a transition period, and I think morale and everything comes top to bottom… so we cannot tell really if they are implementing… they are learning but I don’t know if they have implemented.” While the individuals I spoke with collectively heard the message of empowerment and personal responsibility to implement LC concepts, the staff members who were also encouraged by their supervisor to make those changes had an easier time putting concepts into practice. For the largest and most task specific units in particular, such as Facilities, Dining , and Finance, members of these areas I spoke with saw the LC concepts as having an impact, although to ensure deeper

implementation, further attention would be useful for supporting unit directors on how to put theory to practice according to an area's needs.

**The X Factor.** Usually paired with discussing tools, Liam and I spoke frequently about what we collectively referred to as "the X factor." The X factor was essentially our code for whether individual staff members implemented and practiced the LC concepts. Whenever we considered what impact might the LC make among the organization, the questions we could not directly answer often relied on how, and to what extent, employees practiced what they had been taught. Some assurances were built into the curriculum, including homework worksheets requiring observing and talking about dynamics in unit meetings, action plans that were turned in to and tracked by Liam, attendance checks where a missed class impacted a performance review, and updated annual evaluations that reflected checks and balances on performance of the LC concepts. Even so, Liam noted on a few occasions he had seen performance evaluations with high scores even though an employee had missed multiple classes, reflecting the X factor of supervisor interpretation in evaluating employees. He reflected "all the skills I can pass on to you, will do you no good if you don't take time to use these tools." Similarly since annual reviews no longer corresponded to pay increases, Ron and Alex as members of the Dining and Facilities units, talked about the challenge of not having monetary incentive to further support employee implementation. As Ron mentioned "the message of [personal responsibility] is there, but how do you truly enforce it and carry it out? The carrot is not there."

**Whose voice was heard.** Most participants mentioned they learned about other units based on who participated in class. Because Dining Services is a large unit and a lot

of its people took the LC classes, many Dining members attended classes together and discussed their situations related to the module topic in that communal setting, therefore a lot was learned by other department members about Dining operations. Similarly for smaller units with fewer LC participants, such as Conferences or the Childcare Center, members had to consciously contribute so other employees could learn about their unit's particular challenges and priorities. Similarly, while Liam clearly articulated department wide expectations, the voice that many employees missed was involvement from the department leadership.

**Department Advisory Board's (DAB) expectation**. On more than one occasion, I was asked about DAB's expectation for implementation; "how far is this supposed to go?" During the second focus group, participants discussed, "I felt like I got better insight into how decisions are made, but we still hit a level [be]cause the DAB group was not mixed in, cause everybody reports to somebody at that level." As well,

> We're learning these things and trying to figure out how to implement them with the people we supervise but we're still reporting to people ourselves who are the ultimate leaders and decision makers, so it would be interesting to learn about their styles and how do they make decisions, cause ultimately that trickles down.

One staff member mentioned "it would be good to hear from them as the leadership on how they want this material to play out, cause there could be a disconnect in our interpreting this material." The conversation evolved to considering in this context the commonly referenced tool of high and low context communication styles from the second module on Intercultural Communication. Another employee mentioned,

> Not knowing the upper admin, the DAB group in particular, are they high or low context? [From what we learned] I'd guess they tend to be low context, but we don't know. If upper admin is low context and we have a lot of high context people in other roles, that's a huge disconnect. How do we translate that when we're trying to improve our culture?

This final question directed at me, in that moment led me to share with the group I just as perplexed as they were.

**Summary**

The themes and findings in this narrative-case study provide insight into how employees with broad professional role responsibilities and diverse personal backgrounds make meaning of their workplace training experience. In gauging employee description of what they learned and use from the LC, we can how a continual training program experience impacts their view of the workplace culture and the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. Through exploring employee depictions of longstanding issues and what was experienced thru program participation, primary themes of how personnel were invested in, what was learned about the bigger picture of the workplace organization, and what additional support is desired for the LC to continually perpetuate organizational development are explored. Ultimately, this chapter utilizes employee voices to address how workplace training among this community is experienced. In the concluding implications chapter, I will illustrate what meaning can be made of this experience, as it may provide direction for the LC program and department administrators in support of ongoing organizational development.

# CHAPTER VI

## IMPLICATIONS

*"Be still enough to respond, rather than react"*
*–Rev. Master Jisho Perry*

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore a professional development curriculum in an institution of higher education. This case study advocates that all employees under a student affairs division need support in the form of continuous professional development training to provide collective understanding of essential concepts in their workplace as contribution toward effective organizational development. This research addresses the confluence of two areas of higher education literature: transformative learning opportunity for education practitioner's professional growth, and best practices for higher education organizational development. Using a constructivist case study design with sociological narrative techniques, this research explores employee experiences from a professional development training program in how they view the evolving culture of their workplace as it contributes to organizational change. With the intended audience of higher education administrators, the goal of this research is the more that is known about how student affairs employees experience professional development opportunities the more institutions can establish environments conducive to effective systemic development.

In line with the constructivist theoretical paradigm of this research, I felt connected to my research participants in a way I had not anticipated prior to my data

collection. I knew I was wholly connected to this research site as a co-creator of the Leadership Center (LC), but my participant's stories opened me up to a perspective I would not have known otherwise. Prior to my data collection, I felt disconnected from this community, both the employees whom the program was for and the organization's leadership that possibly just did not know how to engage with me as the department's first doctoral student volunteer. The honesty, thoughtfulness, and time my participants gave me in sharing their stories helped me see my connection to this community, and that they were positively impacted, by what I had worked for during the previous three years. They each shared with me feedback on their workplace observations and LC experiences, which for me provided essential connection and purpose for my years of effort I had questioned whether it had been worthwhile. I am grateful for what each of them has offered me, and hope that respect and gratitude is reflected here. Accordingly, this project in total helped me hone my professional philosophy as an advocate for systemic student affairs development, particularly for employees, that I will carry forward throughout my career. As Liam aptly stated, "if you don't take care of the service providers, how can you expect the customers or the students that we work with to get the best?" I wholeheartedly agree.

In the rest of this chapter, I address implications for practice, and recommendations for further research. My intent is that this study significantly contributes to improved understanding of how employees experience professional development, and in connecting higher education theory to practice on how transformative learning for student affairs employees contributes to organizational development. In my professional development of conducting this study, I have grown in

my value of connecting research to practice, and for what platform the research process provides in supporting the voices of individuals who may not feel heard otherwise. My hope is research can be viewed as enhancing practitioner circles, and that practitioners do not need to be mystified by how research is conducted. To do so, theory must connect to practice to professionally develop employees for systemic learning environments to ensure students are holistically supported. While I know this empirical research only provides a degree of insight to how employees experience workplace professional development training, I offer some suggestions for further research in hope that other scholar-practitioners are inspired to continue this topic exploration.

## Implications for Practice

Addressing implications for practice is to articulate what impact and meaning is derived by asking my research question, how do student affairs employees experience workplace training as it contributes to organizational development? In my last chapter I organized themes and findings of longstanding issues reported among this organization, participant’s experiences with transformative learning and personnel investment, workplace cultural observations, and recommendations for how employees could continue to use the LC to support their workplace responsibilities. In the following section, I will address how the LC has been an opportunity for organizational development, the power of human contact, how systemic learning development brings to life institutional values, the challenge when social justice is used out of context, and why theory should be more consciously applied to guide practice in a student affairs workplace.

**Organizational Development Opportunity**

The value of providing professional development for student affairs employees is rooted in the field philosophy of continual learning investment for personal growth, as well as the impact individual learning can have on organizational development (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; Cooper & Miller, 1998). Workplace training that promotes inter-organizational relationship building and self-reflection serves as an essential resource for employees to understand how their practice affects essential objectives of an effective student affairs culture. Supporting employee best practices through professional growth opportunity that contributes to continual staff learning also provides reason for relationship building across department wide co-workers and motivates continued organizational development.

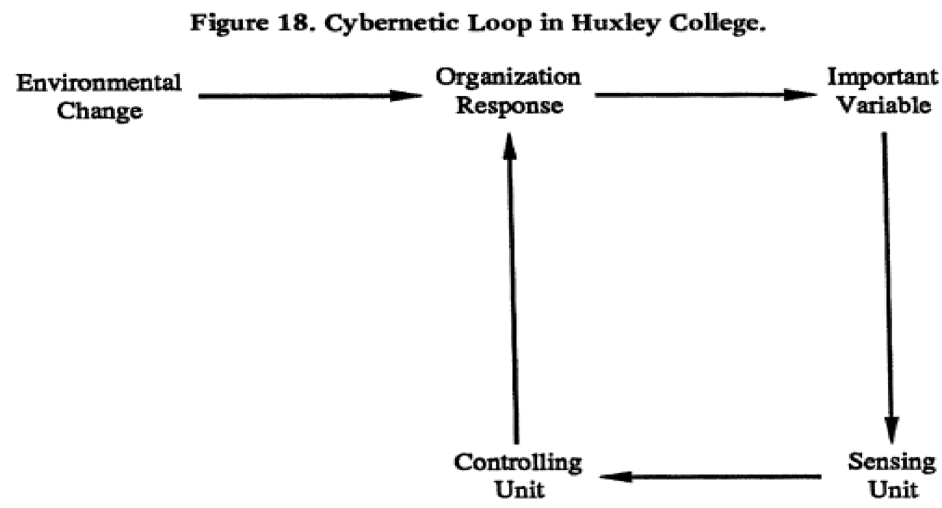
An effective student affairs organization has the ability to care for and understand the human development of students, and similarly to reflect on personal practice to grow professionally in support of student learning (Cranton, 1996; Evans, et al., 2010). As development indicates "increasingly higher, more integrated levels of functioning" (Clark & Caffarella, 1999, p. 4), practitioner growth involves improved understanding of student development theories, which likewise supports the reciprocal learning of a practitioner's own personal development (Carrington, 2004; Evans, et al., 2010; Pak, 2008). As the efforts of a whole student affairs organization collectively contribute to supporting student development, all employees not only those practitioners doing "student development work" benefit from institutional investment in their development. Just as theory provides insight to the underlying purpose of something (Evans, et al., 2010),

applied professional development constructs supports both the growth of quality staff and organizational development to achieve institutional missions.

Within this organization, the reality of the hierarchy is felt among employees. From newly perceived role privileges to long standing questions of whether the "upper echelon" managers recognize challenges faced by frontline staff, there are clear bureaucratic and political tendencies commonly displayed in the anarchical, administrative-centered culture of a flagship university (Birnbaum, 1988; Manning, et al., 2006). Fortunately, the LC demonstrates the desire to invest in human capital through intentionally building cross-unit relationship, providing tools to encourage more effective supervision, and beginning to communicate department-wide expectations to implement valued skills. Through providing the venue for cross-unit employee interaction, and encouraging facilitated discussion and feedback, the LC introduced collegial and cybernetic organizational models to balance the long established bureaucracy among the Housing department (Birnbaum, 1988).

Demonstrating that the underlying goal of perpetuating development with the LC for Housing has been achieved can be seen through Birnbaum's (1988) cybernetic loop model (p.192).

Figure 1: Birnbaum's model for cybernetic organizational development




Recommended by literature as best practice for higher education organizations, the cybernetic process begins when some change in the internal or external environment leads to an organizational response that alters the value of some variable.

> If that variable is being monitored by some formal or informal group (a sensing unit), and that change of value moves it beyond acceptable limits, the group will attempt to influence the administration (or other controlling unit) to change the organization response until the variable moves back into the acceptable range. (p. 192)

Through recounting assessment efforts in Housing's recent history, the cybernetic model explains the how efforts to develop the LC program contributed to perpetuate Housing's organizational development.

The first model point of "environmental change" occurred in 2005 when the social justice assessment review impacted how the Housing Executive Director viewed the organizational culture. The committee that evolved to address what to do with this insight recommended the second point of the model, the "organizational response", which initiated development of a department wide leadership training program. The third

point of this model, the “important variable,” is the Leadership Center program. As the co-curriculum designer and researcher of the LC’s impact, I served as the fourth point on this model, the “sensing unit.” While Birnbaum’s description of my role is to monitor whether the “change of value moves beyond acceptable limits” (p. 192), through my research I have determined there is a change of value for professional development among Housing employees, but that continued effort can support the program to make further change into desired acceptable limits. Finally, Housing administrators comprise the fifth point of this model, the “controlling unit.” Since the former Housing Executive Director who initiated the LC is no longer in this position, the current members of the controlling unit were not initially affected by the “environmental change.” As the researcher I felt detached from the new administration’s contribution to this effort, understandably since they did not have the experience that initiated the desire to institute organizational change nor were they familiar with what I offered in contribution of the LC’s success. Through this research, I hope department leaders are able to see and act as the “controlling unit” in continued support for what is needed by the LC to affect desired organizational change. Continued LC efforts will prove its value of perpetuating organizational development in Housing through advancing professional development for employees.

**Power of Human Contact**

Since the inception of the student affairs field, its foundation has been built on building relationships (Manning, et al., 2006). Colleges and universities are heavily dependent on human capital, so investment in human resources is time and money spent to assist staff in their personal learning as improved support for student learning

(Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). A personal form of investing in human capital for employee development can be found in mentorship relationships. In student affairs, a mentor-protégé relationship is significant because this is the space where reciprocal adult educator-learner partnerships can occur (Schmidt & Wolfe, 2009). Similarly, organizational revitalization can result because staff members learn about the workplace milieu, expectations, and work ethic in a personal way (Mertz, et al., 1990). Essentially, in workplace training where employee sharing and listening of personal perspectives occurs, relationships are inherently built which contributes to the power of human contact.

Building relationships contributes to the transformative experience of human development (Rogoff, 2003). In Lovell and Kosten's 30 year meta-analysis of student affairs literature, 78% of studies listed "human facilitation," or the ability to build relationships, as the most essential skill for practitioners. Yet with increasing fast-pasted work environments and the pressure of creativity, as my participant Anna noted "to do more with less," increased use of technology meant decreased face time to build relationships in "knowing where people are coming from" among co-workers. Even people who regularly collaborated would not necessarily have a chance to put together a name and face if there was not an opportunity to do so, and this was especially hard for new employees not yet socialized into the workplace culture. Such as Mustafa, with two years at FSU was my participant who was newest member to Housing, told the story of dealing with a crisis that required a meeting of some department members, most of whom he had yet to work with directly. He had only known who some of these key individuals were to resolve this crisis because they had interacted in the LC, "so maybe the

relationships at that level went better in part because I've been in class with these folks." If a situational resolve can occur more efficiently and effectively because relationships are built allowing individual unit priorities to be understood prior to needing to address a crisis, time spent in workplace training can be considered proactive time management.

The power of human contact can also be seen in Jeffrey's story about being able to help his employee when she was in a moment of frustration. Jeffrey referred to a situation he had with one of the dining service employees he supervised, when in a busy moment she frantically relayed to him primarily in her native Spanish language that she had been mistreated by a co-worker. Since race relations, and in some units where women were the minority, had made potential discrimination a longstanding point of contention, her mistreatment was initially perceived as being related to her minority status. When Jeffrey recalled the second module on intercultural communication, and the lesson on the differences between high context and low context communicators, "then I clearly needed to take my time and make sure she knows I'm hearing her out…it seemed like she actually got that I was listening to her and I could tell she was calming down." Upon listening to her story, it became apparent to Jeffrey she primarily needed to feel listened to as validation that she contributed a valuable role to the organization. While points of contention are certainly real among this culture, strengthening points of human contact particularly by encouraging in-person communication, can relieve how some of these contentious issues are perceived. Ultimately, had this situation escalated to an investigation, essential time to complete daily tasks could have been consumed. Since Jeffrey made time to listen to his employee's concern, the situation halted making it a more effective and efficient use time for all employees involved.

As this example illustrates, the power of human contact is real and meaningful to members of this community. Communication serves as validation for the essential roles community members contribute to their organization, and in-person communication allows individuals to more genuinely support and recognize each other. In a world where new technology is increasingly common, it can fill the intention to support efficient communication but cannot replace how human contact fills a need for people. In student affairs arenas where relationships are central, when modes for new technology are implemented, opportunities for human contact must also be balanced.

**Systemic Learning Brings to Life Institutional Values**

Workplace training curriculum that connects an organization's mission to the daily activity of student affairs employees is essential for shaping an organizational culture that support systemic learning (Schwartz and Bryan, 1998). Professional development training that teaches skills for success necessarily intends to transform practitioners through learning as a way to affect their practice toward universally promoting learning for all students. Workplace training that involves leadership curriculum on essential components of building positive organization wide relationships necessarily connects these ideas to the purpose of systemic learning for the institution. Similarly, professional development also serves to help staff understand the importance of and their role in supporting student retention (Cavalier, et al., 1994). Therefore, professional development training that aims for employee transformative learning so their practice can in turn support systemic student learning serves as a prerequisite to implementing an effective program of student development for retention (Grace-Odeleye, 1998).

As learning for employees is significant to support student learning, a systemic learning mission with subsequent goals and measurements for achievement across all areas of an organizational setting is wholly appropriate. This is true for employees of trade units as much as for traditionally defined student affairs practitioners. As Clay quoted, "we're in an education environment and we can all learn…[when] we're committed to growth as supervisors, that's a good message cause it role models what we expect of student staff who are employees for us…we have obligation to model, like yeah, growing is good."

An example of this is illustrated in a question that came up in my second focus group with Keith, Anna, Mustafa, and Leah. The question was posed by Keith, "how much contact do you all have with students?" Anna and Mustafa both replied a moderate amount, and Leah replied rarely. Alternatively, Keith reported his contact with students was constant. As a custodial supervisor, Keith had never been a part of practitioner trainings or division meetings, nor had he thought of himself as being a part of the division of student affairs. Yet comparing the frequency of contact he had with students to Anna, an 18 year veteran of student affairs practice, and Mustafa, who likewise considered himself a field member for over 25 years, Keith more regularly interacted with students. This showed that any employee, not only those who self-define as student affairs practitioners or support staff, can impact students.

Similar experiences came up in my interviews with Jeffrey and Alex. During my first individual meeting with Jeffrey, a student came to the basement office door requesting a suggestion on fixing the pasta maker. I had met this student a half hour before when Jeffrey gave me the backstage tour of his kitchen, and Jeffrey clearly had a

good relationships with the many students employed as kitchen support. Like Keith, Jeffrey did not consider himself a member of the student affairs division, nor had he any traditional training as student affairs practitioner; he had never attended college and had earned his GED at the approximate age of 38. Likewise for Alex, while he viewed his role in the organization as strictly food service oriented, he supervised 30 to 40 students during any semester, and was a “mentor, constantly.” Generally speaking for my participants, the closer their role was to frontline work for Housing, the more they spoke about their work with students and supporting the educational purpose of a higher education institution. This theme reinforced for me that all employees should have opportunity to learn about the foundations of student affairs practice, and to receive consistent expectations on the institutional value of learning, to further support their frequent direct work with students.

The purpose of higher education is to provide advanced education as professional development to young and older adults with a wide range of social demographic characteristics (Thelin, 2004). Therefore, systemic learning must be encouraged for all employees to be equipped to support the variety of students and their experiences in fulfillment of the institution’s purpose. The more student affairs organizations implement programs to invest in employee professional development, the more systemic learning can be valued toward fulfillment of the learning purpose higher education serves to society.

**Challenges When Social Justice is Used Out of Context**

The field of student affairs has a history of philosophical commitment to social justice dating from the second *Student Personnel Point of View* (ACE, 1949), and is

reflected in the current mission statements of ACPA and NASPA (Evans & Reason, 2001). Tranformative learning and social justice go hand in hand, since values associated with social justice like freedom, empathy, self-awareness, equality, tolerance, and rationality create a normative foundation on which to gauge transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). In the context of this research, I recognize that social justice values enrich the research process toward the goal of bringing social change (Schram, 2003).

The inspiration for the Leadership Center (LC) first stemmed from the results of a series of focus groups conducted among Housing frontline staff in 2005 on social justice understanding. One result of that study was that the concepts of social justice and leadership were often confused, and widespread talk about social justice, regardless of the context, led employees to constantly question perceived discrimination. A former director that I spoke with early in my internship told a story about walking into the office of a Hispanic human resources (HR) employee, and noting that her overhead light was burnt out, they exchanged a joke that it must be a matter of social justice to get her light bulb replaced. While this director and the HR employee both knew a light bulb was not a matter social justice, the director used this story to illustrate to me their experience with how the phrase social justice was often applied out of context. The goal of the LC was not to directly address social justice in the workplace, but to help LC participants distinguish how leadership with cultural awareness complimented social justice understanding. For participants who reported newfound awareness of department operations and how they were now able to consider some different perspectives among colleagues, distinguishing this differential between leadership and social justice was their transformative learning experience.

While many employees reported learning about cross cultural differences in the module leadership topics as what was most valued from their LC participation, the number of individuals who asked me to turn off my recorder when I asked their observations on the workplace culture indicated to me that specific training on social justice concepts must continue. If the original intention of the LC was to help employees distinguish between leadership and social justice, more efforts must be done to help employees understand social justice practices in the workplace. Also as the 2005 study focused on frontline staff perceptions, the LC in its current state intended for supervisory staff does not directly support frontline employees in understanding dynamics of social justice in practice. Currently working with supervisory staff in the LC is a good thing; employees can empathize with each other as they share their stories in this setting since they all share the common responsibility of supervising. As illustrated in Jeffrey's story about knowing when to listen to his employee, staff under Jeffrey's jurisdiction were supported because of Jeffrey's engagement in the LC. Alternatively, had that employee instead taken her complaint directly to management for further investigation (which is the current policy for frontline employees with discrimination complaints), any practices of effectiveness and efficiency Jeffrey and his LC cohort members had implemented in their area would have been disrupted. While the concept of social justice is central to student affairs philosophy, institutional cultures where this phrase is used but employees are not systemically supported to apply social justice ideas in correct contexts, cannot optimally have organizational effectiveness or efficiency.

Supporting employee buy-in of this program, my participants collectively spoke highly of Liam's presentation style, particularly his ability to constructively discuss

sensitive topics related to social justice and cross cultural understanding. His extensive professional background facilitating discussion on topics of diversity and social justice, and personal interest to continually develop a knowledge base on social justice theory, made him a respected leader among this department. His history and organization position combined make him an apt facilitator to conduct further training on deeper topics of social justice in the workplace. Congruent with the results of the 2005 study, the more staff can understand the difference between leadership and social justice, and what these concepts look like in practice, professional growth for employees will be supported, and organizational development will result accordingly. This research finds that the LC in its current state is perpetuating organizational development in a positive direction, but further efforts in line with the current goals would motivate additional positive results.

**Support Theory for Practice**

Literature identifies that senior student affairs officers recognize the importance of staff development programs, but competition for fiscal resources and limited time of qualified practitioners diminishes development opportunities and limits connection of scholarship to practice (Komives, 1998; Sandeen & Barr, 2006). Likewise, student affairs researchers have identified the value of having scholarship and practice work in tandem (Evans, et al., 2010). In fact, “scholarship can and should provide leadership” for practice (Allen, 2002, p. 155). As such, if student affairs is to grow from an emerging profession, focus must be on the role of “practitioner scholar” (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007, p. 270). A renewed sense of activism on campus helps serve the values of the profession by connecting theory and practice (Evans & Reason, 2001).

Many student affairs doctoral students seek further advanced education because of their previous experience as a student affairs practitioner, and their desire to advance in student affairs leadership roles or to engage in further scholarly practice. Although unlike other professions, student affairs has no licensure or certification requirement to ensure professional standards of practitioners (Fried, 2002), and many student affairs employees do not have field specific advanced education (Creamer, 1997). This is not an argument in favor of necessitating student affairs advanced degree work for all practitioners; many positions including those held by participants of this study should not need to earn such a degree. Yet given the constrained schedules of most practitioners, as Anna stated there is a requirement to "do more with less," finding time to review student affairs literature is often a low priority. Without supporting practitioners to easily access literature, how is literature supposed to support the best practices of practitioners?

One suggestion for how theory can be more directly applied to practice is through actively encouraging employees to scan current higher education and student affairs literature. Staff members who are familiar with best practices reported in literature will save time and energy in making decisions because a framework for best practices will already be known. Also, staff who engage with research will have a conception of the value of research, strengthening systemic learning among a university workplace. Since it is often difficult for practitioners to find the time to review scholarship, workplace training that incorporates theory, and provides connection between current research and practice ensures staff receive some literature points of best practice, and those staff who want to do further literature review have direction for finding research that supports their practice.

An additional suggestion for reinforcing theory for practice is through supporting graduate students in assistantship and internship positions. Graduate students, both masters and doctoral students, are inquiring minds looking for mentors and project opportunities to complement their classroom learning. According to student development theory and adult transformative learning theory, learning that most aptly affects behavior happens when formal teaching, tangible experience, and personal reflection are paired (Cranton, 1996; Evans, et al., 2010). Allowing graduate students to have insight to operations, work on projects appropriate to their education goals, and build accessible relationships with service office leaders creates a "theory-practice" partnership that benefits the students and service offices alike.

After three years of collaboration, I have come to view my work with Liam as a "theory-practice" partnership. Liam, 10 years my senior and that much wiser, held practitioner experience that grounded the theoretical suggestions I offered for the curriculum design. When a question arose during our planning periods, I would often search topical literature to provide suggestions, and Liam offered insight for logistically what would work best in practice. This process was repeated for the module format design, activities corresponding to module topics, modifying activities for time and topic appropriateness, framing in-class questions for discussion, designing homework assignments, and creating survey questions. This was such a collaborative process I cannot distinguish what program design efforts were mine from Liam's; but I maintained to be respectful of Liam's professional role, that as the practitioner, he served as the program's face among this community. That being said, I believe he would concur that

my efforts "behind the scene" were no less valuable. For this program to exist, a theory-practice partnership was essential.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Higher education and student affairs academic literature has a great need for further empirical research on professional development for all student affairs employees. Much has been written on the value and purpose of student affairs professional development, and theoretical links for essential workplace training components, but little data exists on training practices tailored to particular workplace cultures. Program designs that model best practices in varied institutional environments and demonstrate effectiveness at aligning an organization's mission with employee behavior are needed. Quantitative and mixed-methods review of employee experiences that demonstrate how learning through training translates to practice also provides a more comprehensive picture of organizational development results from workplace training. This study provides insight to employee experiences from a broad range of individuals with varied sociological background, education levels, and work histories, but further stories can be uncovered to reveal employee voices rarely heard.

When I first decided to make this project the topic of my dissertation, I had no idea what shape that would take or what may result. I knew at the initial time of my decision, here was an innovative practice that I had access too, and I wanted to provide the program and the members of this community with deserved recognition. Not knowing what shape this research would take, there were many directions in retrospect that I could have followed. Whether focused on assessment from the pilot cohort, a 360 degree quantitative or mixed-method review by surveying employees who worked for LC

participants, or administrative reactions to what this program provided the organization, future scholarship on this topic can explore varied avenues. Also, literature often referred to practitioners as individuals who have followed a relatively traditional career trajectory; but many student affairs employees who are not traditional practitioners have frequent contact and impact student learning found value in student affairs professional development training. A collective study of workplace professional development programs for all student affairs employees across the country could provide a comprehensive list of best practices, when applied an especially effective program could be created.

This study addressed the crossroads of two significant bodies of literature, transformative learning for education practitioner's professional development, and higher education organizational development best practices. Upon completing this research project, I would not claim to be an expert on these individual subjects, but I will argue that these topics enhance each other in confluence. Since employee professional growth contributions to student affairs organizational development is a vast and varied topography, much can still be discerned in research about implications in practice particularly as service departments are impacted by ever evolving current events. Employee professional growth and organization development influenced by modern technologies, financial crunch, legislative changes, and demands for increased creativity and accountability are all topics that need empirical review.

Higher education as an institution is as much of a social value as it has ever been, demonstrated by increasing enrollment numbers and the growing array of for-profit universities (Public Broadcasting System, 2010). Even though enrollments persist,

higher education continues to be criticized by national media and members of these communities alike. Need exists for insight to more effective and efficient organizational practices, not only for researchers but for accessible citizen review, particularly to demonstrate best practice efforts to policy makers and acknowledge concrete need to state funding boards. Fiscally speaking, the national average for public universities that received its institutional budget from state support dropped from 75% to under 20% in the past 90 years (Thelin, 2004). During the year of this data collection the institutional site of this study, the state's flagship university, received 3% of its operating budget from the state, ranking this state nearly lowest in nation in the amount of state financial support offered to public universities. While higher education might be a social value, it is an issue of social justice when reduced state support marks this experience as an increasingly privileged opportunity.

During my data collection when participants talked openly about their frustration in not having received a pay raise in a number of years, I could not help but think about the referendum initiative from a few years prior. I wondered how many members of this community had understood the implications of the referendum legislation from 2006 that would have increased taxes to maintain the state's higher education budget support. Voting patterns were not a part of my inquiry, and I cannot speculate on how or whether members of this community voted. Yet this referendum had failed, so I wondered if in 2006 had higher education employees in this state understood the impact of that failure, would there have been a stronger collective effort to exercise their vote toward its passing? Higher education funding continues to be a contentious issue with this state's legislature, and new ballot initiatives on this matter are expected in the near future.

Given this priority topic among employees of this community, raising awareness of this topic in the LC setting, not influencing votes but explaining the issue and its pass or fail implication, could support understanding of the influence employees have in these budget constraints. Research that demonstrates best practices for higher education organizational effectiveness and efficiency, and advocates for employee professional development in the workplace, can be used to enhance widespread policy reform efforts toward holistic institutional improvement.

Accessible research can also be presented in varied formats, not only bound to journals and books primarily limited to academic and administrative circles. Creative publishing in the form of blogs, instructional videos, short form documentary films, newsletter articles, and white papers can complement traditional academic formats for publishing empirical research. If a goal for research is that it is more readily used in practitioner communities, data must be accessible for quick review, be easy to comprehend, and provide direction for application to practice. Student affairs work often seems to take a backseat among university settings; even many of my participants who did student affairs work did not consider themselves as working for student affairs. If the field of student affairs is to graduate from being an "emerging profession," not only must scholarship and practice meet more often but scholarship must work with and be accessible to practitioners where they are at in their development.

## Final Reflection

My contribution to developing this program stemmed from my belief in a need for student affairs workplace professional development training, built through my experiences as a graduate assistant and new practitioner, and my review of higher

education literature. Workplace professional development which inherently builds inter-organizational relationships and promotes personal growth for employees through learning about their colleagues perspectives, perpetuates essential organizational development as it strengthens social justice understanding as an element of student affairs. Even though student affairs has been around and advances in practice have occurred over the past 80 years, higher education literature has called this field an “emerging profession” (Carpenter, et al., 1980, p. 21; Winston, et al., 2001). Reasons for the disconnect between theory and practice of the field are still debated today (Fried, 2002). Although recently leaders acknowledged that if practitioners act professionally, think professionally, and hold themselves out to be professionals, it is then that “they will go a long way toward making their preferred social constructions ‘actual’” (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007, p. 269). Through exploring how employees experience a workplace training program, we can glimpse how this organization’s culture is depicted, consider how training served as a personnel investment, gain insight to what was learned about the bigger picture of the department, and address direction for additional organizational growth by knowing where continued support is desired. Until this empirical research project, this complex phenomenon in practice had yet to be explored. Through this attempt to design and execute professional development training according to the needs of a particular institutional culture and assessing qualitative feedback on participants’ experiences, we can now entertain possible solutions to further develop this “emerging profession”.

*Back in the conference room, I write down a few observations about the class that day in my notebook as Liam, on the other end of the long conference table, prepared for the second half of the first class for module four. The five minute break counting down on the overhead projector screen to reconvene the class is nearly up as a group of class*

*participants enters the room. Colleagues continue their personal conversations as they take their seats, many now with a beverage or food item from the grab-n-go area of the cafeteria downstairs. Some class participants check email on their phones or silently write to-do lists, and as Liam starts class a few participants hurry in to take their seats. While some class participants used these few break minutes to socialize, others clearly attempted to use those few minutes to catch up on work tasks. As an observer, I could see a collective mental shift as class members juggled their many work responsibilities with needing to learn in this classroom setting.*

*"What does it mean to be productive?" Liam begins class discussion. The following minutes are filled with participant's attention on Liam's power point slides, although I notice a few class members are still in transition from the tasks they attempted to catch up on during the break. "Work smarter, not longer" proceeds the next two slides, as Liam explains this strategy and asks for examples from the audience. Ironically, "Staying focused" with an explanation of how multitasking actually distracts from completing work tasks efficiently, gains attention from the few class members engaged with their to-do lists. "My favorite 80/20 principle is saying no." Liam goes on to say, "most of us feel required to take on more than we can handle, so how can delegation help us?" Participants are requested to review the post-it notes on their plates, and to create a pile of note of tasks that could be delegated. Lively discussion regarding what is needed to more effectively delegate ensues, and Liam presents a slide on "Seven tips for effective delegation."*

*Liam states, "In all your job descriptions, there are typically responsibilities that become a low priority, and tasks that become unaccomplished." I assist Liam in distributing the homework handout, as Liam instructs participants on how to accomplish their required homework assignment. "When we meet again this time next week, have considered, what benefits would there be to your team for you to delegate some of your tasks? What would it take for you to be able to delegate?" A few participants ask clarifying questions, as others review the handout they've just received. One class member asks "how are we supposed to motivate someone to do more then they're already doing?" "That's for module five," Liam responds as the class is wrapping up "we'll get to talk about that when we see each other again next week."*

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# APPENDIX A

# INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

November 19, 2010

TO: Maria Lahman
Applied Statistics and Research Methods

FROM: The Office of Sponsored Programs

RE: Exempt Review of *Learning on the Job: A Qualitative Exploration of Employee Experiences with a Professional Development Program in an Administrative-Centered Student Affairs Organization,* submitted by Katherine Vahey (Research Advisor: Katrina Rodriguez)

The above proposal is being submitted to you for exemption review. When approved, return the proposal to Sherry May in the Office of Sponsored Programs.

I recommend approval.

M-L'C 11-24-10
Signature of Co-Chair Date

The above referenced prospectus has been reviewed for compliance with HHS guidelines for ethical principles in human subjects research. The decision of the Institutional Review Board is that the project is exempt from further review.

IT IS THE ADVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY THE STUDENT OF THIS STATUS.

Comments: 11-21-10 see email

25 Kepner Hall ~ Campus Box #143
Greeley, Colorado 80639
Ph: 970.351.1907 ~ Fax: 970.351.1934

# APPENDIX B

# CURRICULUM

Module Introduction

The goal of the introductory module is to introduce the intentions of The Leadership Institute. Through a brief content overview, including the curriculum foundations of Strengths and Action Centered Leadership and the purpose for employee understanding foundational principles of social justice, the LI launch will induct participants toward the goal of supporting their workplace practice alignment with the new mission of HDS.

Module Introduction

1. Facilitator Introductions & Guidelines
2. Overview of the curriculum
   - Catalyst (why?)
   - Purpose & outcomes (what?)
   - Program structure (how?)
   - Module calendar (when?)
3. Strengths
   - Review group strengths
   - Map Cohort strengths
   - How will this be used?
   - Activity: Helium Stick
4. Break
5. Action Centered Leadership
   - Approaches to leadership
   - Qualities Approach
   - Situational Approach
   - Functional Approach
   - The Three Circles: task, team, and individual
6. What is Social Justice?
   - Social Justice Defined
   - Individual and Group Identity
   - Identity Inventory
   - Dominant and Subordinate Identities
   - Cycle of Socialization
7. Wrap-up

Module 1: Interpersonal Communication

Cultural differences can result in varied communication styles among individuals who work together. Understanding style differences can support influences for communication effectiveness. Through an assessment analysis, and examples of sending and receiving messages (particularly with email), the goal of this module is to support LI participant’s recognition of ways to improve modes of communication as support for their team’s efficiency and effectiveness.

Mod 1:1 Interpersonal Communication

1. Discussion: What is communication? How do we communicate?
   What methods of communication work best?
2. Activity: Line up by birthday
3. Communication patterns and networks
4. Break
5. What is effective communication?
6. Influences on effectiveness
7. Sending and receiving (email) messages
8. Communication styles: high and low context
9. High and low context cultures
10. Homework: Communication styles assessment. Complete the questionnaire and find two additional people who know you well to complete the questionnaires about your behavior

Mod 1:2 Interpersonal Communication

1. Discuss assessment
2. Action (what?), process (how?), people (who?), ideas (why?)
3. Do you see correlation between your communication styles and you Strengths?
4. Break
5. Discussion: Interpersonal communication, influences, and styles
6. Action plan: What concrete steps will you take to improve or maintain effective communication with your work group?

Module 2: Team Development

Situational leadership, as depicted in *The one minute manager*, in combination with Stages of Team Development, provides a framework for LI participants to consider the dynamics of teams they are a part of and lead. Through exploration of what comprises a team, with regard to the cultural demographics of teams within HDS, the goal of this module is for participants to consider ways to improve and support the functionality of their teams.

Mod 2:1 Team Development

1. Recap Mod1
2. Discussion: What makes a team? Are all work groups teams?
   What are the characteristics of a good team? Do you work in a group or a team?
3. Stages of team development: Forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning
4. Break
5. Activity: As a team, get from one side of the grid to the other
6. Discussion: How do you lead your team?
7. Team needs
8. Situational leadership
9. Leadership behavior: Directing, coaching, supporting, delegating
10. Homework: Observe among at least one team you are a part of and considering the situational leadership model, what stage of development is that team in? Apply the model and see if you can adjust your leadership to meet their developmental needs

Mod 2:2 Team Development
1. Discussion: What are the characteristics of a good team?
2. Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions
3. What are the implications of Hofstede's theory on your leadership functions?
4. HDS demographic (as of Nov 2008)
5. How does the HDS Diversity and Social Justice Mission Statement benefit your team?
6. Break
7. What are the keys to being a more effective leader?
8. Critical factors to team success
9. Action plan: What concrete steps will you take to build and maintain you team?

Module 3: Conflict Management
Utilizing the Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory, LI participants will explore approaches to conflict management, and how to recognize and work with different conflict styles within varied work situations. In application to the HDS Diversity and Social Justice Mission Statement, the goal of this module is to support HDS members in understanding how cultural differences may be the root in some conflict situations, and how recognizing cultural differences can assist conflict resolution.

Mod 3:1 Conflict Management
1. Recap Mod2
2. Discussion: What is conflict? What kind of conflict exists at work? What is conflict management?
3. Break
4. Style Matters: Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory (harmonizing, directing, compromising, cooperating, avoiding)
5. Homework: Complete conflict worksheet. Questions to consider: What styles do you observe being used by different people? What kinds of situations in your work place require using each of the different styles?

Mod 3:2 Conflict Management
1. Discussion: Why is conflict resolution important for the long and short term health of your team and the individuals in it? How does conflict resolution connect to the HDS Diversity and Social Justice Mission Statement?
2. HDS Diversity and Social Justice Mission Statement
3. Understanding conflict: A process of escalation
4. Break
5. Activity: Conflict case study
6. Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions
7. Debrief activity with regard to Hofstede chart
8. Action plan: What concrete steps will you take to manage conflict on you team?

Module 4: The Art of Effective Delegation
*"I'd like to spend more time developing individuals, but I've got too much work to do and not enough time to do it…"* This is a typical response from many leaders in HDS. During these difficult economic times, we are asked to more and more with less and less. Efficient is not the same as effective. Working smarter (rather than harder) and learning the art of effective delegation will allow us to accomplish the task while building the team and developing individuals. Participants will have an opportunity to review their job description and brainstorm how to work smarter.

Mod 4:1 The Art of Effective Delegation
1. Recap Year 1
2. What's on your plate activity
3. What does it mean to be productive?
4. Organize your plate using your performance plan as a guide
5. Break
6. Discussion: How should you be spending your time?
7. What is delegation?
8. Seven tips for effective delegation
9. Homework: Questions to consider: What are the benefits of delegation? What would it take for you to be able to delegate?

Mod 4:2 The Art of Effective Delegation
1. Review: What is delegation?
2. Discussion questions from last week
3. Benefits & roadblocks to delegation
4. Break
5. Accountability through creating mentorship/protégé relationships
6. Action plan: What concrete steps will you take to use delegation to mentor individuals on your team?

Module 5: Mentoring Matters (Developing the Individual)
Aligning with the ACL, this module will focus on developing individuals on our teams by emphasizing the importance of building positive working relationships with employees. Although a supervisor may be viewed as a mentor, supervising and mentoring are not synonymous because supervision lacks mentoring's affinity for building relationships (Schneider, 2002). The fostering of mentoring relationships between leaders and followers in our organization is will also help meet followers' four basic needs as outlined in *Strengths Based Leadership*: TRUST, COMPASSION, STABILITY, and HOPE.

Mod 5:1 Developing the Individual
1. Recap Mod4
2. Apple activity
3. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
4. Quotes (treating employees as volunteers)
5. Break
6. What it means to volunteer
7. Five strategies to treat employees like volunteers
8. Using your Strengths to meet followers' needs: Stability, Compassion, Hope & Trust (S.C.H.T.)
9. Homework: Don't forget to do your S.C.H.T. list

Mod 5:2 Developing the Individual
1. Review: Your S.C.H.T. List
2. How your S.C.H.T. list can help you build community
3. Herzberg's factors
4. Importance of building relationships with employees
5. Treating employees as volunteers
6. Break
7. Mentoring matters
8. Mentoring techniques: Using Situational Leadership to Develop the Individual (incl. accountability)
9. Action plan: What concrete steps will you take to mentor individuals on your team?

Module 6: Career Path Development & Coaching
The HDS Strategic Plan includes a departmental commitment to employee career path development. This module will focus on LI participants by providing opportunities for self-reflection and evaluation that support the development of a clear and inspiring idea of what they want to achieve in the future. Understanding what motivates us at work will help our leaders to understand what motivates their followers. The skills developed can be applied directly to the mentoring of others and will inform our performance coaching practice by emphasizing the need for individuals to be responsible for their own professional development while reinforcing the manager's responsibility to support this process.

Mod 6:1 Career Path Development
1. Recap Mod5
2. Career Path Development; Why? Individual needs
3. What? HDS strategic plan: Integrated learning
4. Assess your interests, values, & strengths (suggested MAPP assess tool)
5. Break
6. Career Development Toolbox
7. Activity: Value cards: place in order of importance, partner and reflect
8. Skills: how do you work best? When do you use your tools most effectively?
9. Homework: Apply competence/commitment grid to supervisees. Are they in a good place for career path development? Why or why not?

Mod 6:2 Career Path Development
1. What factors influence the career path we choose?
2. How do we navigate these factors to support an individual's CPD?
3. Discuss homework
4. Career Ladders
5. Break
6. Coaching/Mentoring
7. Managing vs. coaching: The coaching process
8. Knowing when it's time for change
7. Action plan: What concrete steps will you take to mentor individuals to develop a personal career plan?

Module 7: Practical Performance Management
Time and time again, the issue of holding employees accountable comes up during leadership development and working within the state system only complicates the process. This training emphasizes compliance procedures rather than effectively exploring the development potential of the state performance management process. This module will attempt to re-frame participant's concept of the PPM process to strategically support employee development. S.M.A.R.T. goal setting and effective behavioral coaching techniques will be explored. Personal empowerment and accountability issues will also be addressed.

Mod 7:1 Practical Performance Management
1. Coaching relationships (partnerships, mentoring)
2. PPM timeline
3. Performance plans (S.M.A.R.T. goals; HDS mission, vision, goals)
4. Break
5. Feedback techniques (engagement, strengths); Examples
6. Action plan: Planning feedback

Mod 7:2 Practical Performance Management
1. Coaching sessions
2. Homework review (share, barriers/challenges); Group wisdom
3. Brainstorm: How do you address a difficult situation?
4. Break
5. Intercultural coaching (Hofstede review)
6. Discussion: Comparing cultural "profiles"
7. Action plan: Performance review model

Module 8: Productive Collaboration
There are a number of skills necessary to help us Achieve the TASK: effective meeting management techniques, group decision making, cascading communication, and problem solving. This module will provide participants with strategies that make our limited time as productive as possible. We will learn to manage the people who manage us by utilizing an operational definition of trust: being PREDICTABLE, RELIABLE, and RESPONSIBLE and will explore how to stay fresh by applying a practical approach to innovative problem solving.

Mod 8:1 Effective Collaboration
1. Meeting purposes
2. Types of meetings: information vs. Action
3. Designing your meeting: Information
4. Conducting your meeting, Evaluate meeting effectiveness
5. Steps to productive meetings
6. Break
7. Designing your meeting: Action
8. Group Decision Making: Tannenbaum & Schmidt
9. GDM: How? Intro to 6 Hats method
10. Homework: How effectively did the Meeting Leader address these items? Did their use (or lack thereof) help or hinder the effectiveness of the meeting?

Mod 8:2 Effective Collaboration
1. HDS Mission & Vision
2. Discuss homework
3. Group Problem Solve: How? Grid Analysis
4. Activity: Jelly Bean
5. BNet video (BNet.org)
6. Break
7. Discuss BNet video: Group decision making that works
8. Cascading communication
9. Action Plan: What steps will you take to support your team's productive collaboration?

Module 9: Navigating Organizational Culture, Climate & Politics
In this module we will explore organizational culture and the role it plays in our individual and group success. We will identify the factors that influence organizational and institutional climate to broaden our perspective of the work we do, reconnecting our daily tasks with the overall "Big Picture." Finally, we will discuss the reality of organizational politics and competing interests. We will explore how to be effective at work while maintaining personal integrity.

Mod 9:1 Navigating Organizational Culture, Climate & Politics
1. What is organizational culture
2. Discussion: Is HDS a strong or weak culture? What creates org culture?
3. Values of HDS: Mission and Vision
4. Characteristics of a healthy org culture; org personality characteristics
5. What characteristics are present where you work?
6. Break
7. Organizational culture characteristics: Constructive, Passive/defensive, Aggressive/defensive
8. Handout: styles wheel
9. Homework: What is the “mood” of our department?

Mod 9:2 Culture, Climate & Politics
1. Assess “mood” of three individuals on your team
2. What is Organizational climate?
3. Relate to culture wheel handout
4. Break
5. What are organizational politics?
6. Identifying stakeholders
7. Stakeholders BNet video, discuss
8. HDS Leadership Institute Purpose
9. Action plan: What concrete steps will you take to effectively navigate organizational culture, climate and politics in order to help accomplish the task?

2-HR CLOSURE (in Units)
We believe it would be beneficial for us to end the final year of the LI the way we began it, by creating opportunities for participants to put closure to the experience while openly discussing the application opportunities for the material presented as it relates to their unit within HDS.