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The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of men at the entry-level of the student affairs profession. Using the concepts found in the existing literature related to gender identity as a framework, the research was focused upon the meanings constructed by entry-level men within the field of student affairs and how those meanings are similar to or different from the societal definitions of masculinity.

The study consisted of 22 entry-level men currently working in the field of student affairs. Participants took part either in individual interviews ( $n=18$ ) or a focus group ( $n=4$ ) and discussed their experiences being a man in the student affairs workplace. Careful attention was paid to the perceived identity of entry-level men in student affairs in an effort to uncover any relationships between this identity and their experiences in the field. In addition, particular consideration was placed upon the ways in which these entry-level men in student affairs defined their roles and the ways in which they negotiated their identity.

Results indicated these entry-level men in student affairs identified with three distinct roles: Traditional Man, Leader/Mentor, and World Changer. In addition, according to participants, relationships and environmental factors have an impact on the experiences of this population. The level of support that an entry-level man receives, particularly from male mentors, has a large impact on his experience and potentially on his decision to remain in the field. Findings revealed that these men make meaning based upon their day-to-day activities, the contextual environment, and from traditional societal

norms. Additional findings include strategies used by this population to negotiate their identity within student affairs.

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF IDENTITY ON THE EXPERIENCES  
OF ENTRY-LEVEL MEN IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

by

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Approved by

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Committee Chair

To my parents, Dan and Wendy Calhoun.

Thank you for all of your love and support, and for showing me how to follow your dreams and to do what is right. I am a World Changer because of you!

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Research Problem**

Fewer and fewer men are entering the field of student affairs as compared to their female counterparts (Hamrick & Carlisle, 1990; McEwen, Enstrong, & Williams, 1990; McEwen, Williams, & Enstrong, 1991; Taub & McEwen, 2006; Upcraft, 1998). In 1972 women accounted for about 17% of all individuals going through job placement in student affairs; in 1987, that number had risen dramatically to 59% (Hamrick & Carlisle, 1990). By 1998, Upcraft estimated the number of women entering student affairs to be over 75%. In a recent study of graduate students in student affairs preparation programs by Taub and McEwen (2006), 222 of the 300 respondents (74%) were women. Although socially it is a great triumph that women are so well represented in student affairs, the lack of men entering the field creates another issue. With so few men in staff positions, to whom will male students turn for support? As Hughes (1989) stated, “more males in student affairs are needed as role models for students and faculty” (p. 26).

Exacerbating the situation are data regarding attrition rates of student affairs professionals, particularly at the entry-level stage of the profession (0-5 years). Wood, Winston, and Polkosnik (1985) found that within the first five years in the profession attrition rates in student affairs were at 32%. Another study found that after six years in the field, 61% of student affairs practitioners had left the profession (Holmes, Verrier, &

Chisholm, 1983). The work of Evans (1988) and Lorden (1998) presented a number of factors to which these attrition rates could be attributed (burnout, lower pay, current employment trends, etc.). There are few data regarding the causes of student affairs attrition, in part because leadership within the field of student affairs are divided on whether or not these rates are even cause for alarm. Lorden (1998) stated “to date, no conclusive data exist about gender differences in attrition rates . . . Such research could shed additional light on the factors contributing to attrition and the impact on the profession as a whole” (p. 214). Given the increasingly small numbers of men entering the field at present, such a significant drop off at the entry-level stage clearly will have an impact on the profession. Those men who choose to enter student affairs become even more important, and that critical window within the first five-years in the field is something that needs to be investigated further.

An individual’s experiences during the first few years in a job can set the tone for an entire career. The experiences people have in the first five years—the support they receive, the relationships they build, the successes and failures they experience—have major repercussions on their decision to continue on in that profession or to move on to something else. In addition, for most individuals their first five years in the professional setting are also a time when they are developing their identity and reevaluating some of their values based upon this new environment. As educators, we have a responsibility to the profession to examine the experiences of men in student affairs during this critical period in their development.

The practical objectives of this study are (a) to better understand the experiences of entry-level men in student affairs, (b) to explore the impact male identity has on these experiences, and (c) to discover what student affairs practitioners can do individually and as a profession to establish an organizational environment that is supportive and appealing to entry-level men in an effort to increase recruitment and retention rates. The intellectual objective of this study is simple—to help explain the high attrition rates in men in student affairs during the first five years in the profession.

As a male student affairs professional, I have a vested interest in this issue. I agree with Hughes (1989) and believe that there indeed is a need for men within this field to serve as role models and mentors for other professionals and for male students in general. The male and masculine perspective is one that needs to be maintained in the profession. This research is significant because it provides a voice for men within the field of student affairs. It may direct leadership behaviors that bring gender balance to the profession by rebuilding the male population of student affairs practitioners, while providing a framework for these men to explore their own identity development within the context of this profession.

The shortage of men in student affairs in some part may be attributed to the ways in which those in the profession define the masculine identity, leading to the following research questions:

1. What is it like to be an entry-level man in student affairs today (what are the identities/experiences of entry-level men)?

2. How do men make meaning out of their gender roles in student affairs and in their roles outside of student affairs?
3. What types of relationship networks do men in entry-level positions have in student affairs and how do those networks support/hinder the experience?
4. How do these individuals (entry-level men in student affairs) negotiate who they are as men within the context of the student affairs profession?

These questions are significant to theory and practice in that they may lead to more appropriate work climates for men, may enhance recruitment and retention of men in the profession, and may establish the foundation for a gendered theory of student affairs practice. By hearing the stories and understanding the perspectives of men within the field, perhaps we can provide a voice to a population that continues to diminish in number. An underlying thread to addressing the shortage of men in student affairs may be found by determining how men, particularly those men at the entry-level, make meaning of the term “male student affairs professional.” How these individuals define themselves and their environment during the first five years may help to shed light on their decision to leave or stay within the field of student affairs.

### **Key Terms**

Included below are some key terms and definitions that will help to provide clarity and understanding throughout this document. These definitions were found within the literature of the field and are cited accordingly.

Entry-Level – This term refers to a timeframe of work experience. Specifically, it means a “first-time, full time student affairs staff member,” who has graduated with a master’s

degree in college student personnel (or a related field) and has held his/her current position for less than 5 years (Renn & Hodges, 2007; Waple, 2006). This group accounts for approximately 15%-20% of the student affairs workforce (Cilente, Henning, Skinner, Jackson, Kennedy, & Sloane, 2006). According to a study by Burkard, Cole, Ott, and Stoflet (2004), the top ten entry-level jobs within student affairs are: Admissions Counselor/Recruiter, Residence Hall Director, Student Organization Advisor, Intramural Coordinator, Financial Aid Advisor, Recreation Coordinator, Career Services Counselor, First Year Experience Coordinator, Greek Life Coordinator/Advisor, and Health Educator. While this list is not all-inclusive, it provides a good example of the types of positions upon which this study will focus.

Gender vs. Sex – These words often are incorrectly used interchangeably in today's society. In 2002, the World Health Organization provided an excellent explanation that clarifies the differences in these terms:

Gender is used to describe those characteristics of women and men, which are socially constructed, while sex refers to those which are biologically determined. People are born female or male but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. This learned behaviour makes up gender identity and determines gender roles. (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 4)

It is important to note that, while admittedly incorrect, in this study the terms men and male (and subsequently women and female) are used interchangeably, in part because it is the vernacular used by the participants. The term male, referring to the learned masculine identity associated with gender, and the term man, referring to biological sex, are both used throughout this study in reference to men.



Gender Identity – This term refers to the gender with which an individual identifies (male/female; masculine/feminine), based upon his or her understanding of the role that gender has as defined by society (O’Neil, 1981).

Gender Role Conflict –This term refers to the conflict individuals have when their personal beliefs and feelings regarding their gender role do not align with the way the roles are defined by society. James O’Neil (1981) describes this concept as “a psychological state occurring when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles learned through socialization, result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self” (p. 21).

Meaning-Making – This term refers to the process that individuals make sense of their reality. Krauss (2005) describes this process as:

Meanings are cognitive categories that make up ones view of reality and with which actions are defined . . . A person draws meaning from, or gives meanings to, events and experiences. That is, experience starts to make sense as the person performs his or her psychological functioning of translating it into how he or she thinks and feels. (pp. 762-763)

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Student affairs professionals work diligently to help students understand and make meaning out of their experiences, but rarely do these individuals reflect upon their own experiences and identity within the field. For men in student affairs, this point may be of particular importance, especially as it relates to the roles they play and how it impacts the decisions they make within the profession. Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) state that one's identity is constructed by the individual and is based upon his or her experiences, personal values and beliefs, and societal influences. Using this lens, perhaps if we are able to better understand *what* individuals perceive in regards to their identity and experiences and *how* they make meaning of their identity dimensions through those experiences, we can assist individuals in appreciating the impact their identity has on them.

In order to better understand this issue, we must view the current evidence in a methodical way. First, to provide an overall context for the discussion, we must examine the concept of identity and specifically examine the importance of societal influence upon the identity formation in men. Next, we should consider the effect(s) gender identities have within student affairs, in terms of development and influence. Unfortunately, there is limited research that provides insight into the perceived identity of men within student affairs. Despite this gap in the literature, some research exists regarding men in female-

dominated professions, which we can draw upon to get an idea of men's experiences within student affairs. Environmental factors and cultural norms have a lot to do with shaping our experiences and the way in which we make meaning of those experiences. Finally, by looking at male identity in the context of student affairs daily practice, we may discover what the experiences are of men within the field, their impressions of their own masculine identity, and what impact, if any, their feelings of identity and gender role have on their experiences.

### **Identity Development in Males Explored**

In order to better understand the complexity regarding the male identity, we first need to get a broad understanding of the notion of identity itself. This concept is difficult to define, as it has multiple interpretations depending upon the theoretical perspective through which it is viewed or the discipline that is defining it. According to Deaux (1993), "as a construct, identity has a rich tradition and offers a multiplicity of possible meanings" (p. 4). Similarly, Minolli (2004) discussed why identity is so difficult to understand:

On the one hand, it is heavily connoted by historical philosophical undertones that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to use it in an "untainted" manner. On the other hand, identity is a sort of conglomeration of a number of other concepts and this makes it hard to unravel its different levels of meaning. (p. 237)

### **Identity from the Psychoanalytic Perspective**

Although the term identity is rarely referred to or cited in psychoanalytic literature, one approach to understanding the concept of identity is through the perspective of psychoanalysis. Originally devised by Sigmund Freud in the early

twentieth century, psychoanalysis focuses on one's internal drives and how individuals are able to negotiate those drives when they come into conflict (Edley & Wetherell, 1996). Freud believed that children have inherent drives towards finding physical satisfaction. These internal drives, and more importantly, how parents responded to those drives, had a significant impact on the development and identification of the self (Edley & Wetherell, 1996; Minolli, 2004).

Without getting too much into the specifics of this area, Minolli (2004) clarified this concept, stating "the caregivers, as the essential guarantee for the child's survival, provide the model according to which the child has to define himself/herself and establish his/her identity" (p. 238). From this perspective then, "identity is the product of an individual adaptation to criteria and models provided by society" (p. 238).

Another understanding of identity development through this perspective, and one that is often cited in the field of higher education, comes from the psychological model developed by Erikson (1968, 1980) and explored by Marcia (1966). Erikson claimed that identity development was the central developmental focus of adolescence, but he believed development was part of a lifelong process that was an important component to be built upon on for later development. This view of identity was personal in nature, referring to an individual's overall sense of being or self.

Marcia (1966) refined and expanded upon Erikson's model. He claimed that an individual's sense of identity was determined primarily by the choices and commitments made regarding certain personal and social traits. Marcia's theory of identity achievement argued that two distinct parts form an adolescent's identity—crisis and commitment.

Before individuals commit to aspects of their identity, they typically face a number of “crises” or situations where they are forced to reevaluate their values and beliefs. As a result, a committed, well-developed identity provides the individual with a sense of one’s strengths, weaknesses, and individual uniqueness (Marcia, 1966). While Erikson’s (1980) later work included the potential impact that race, culture, and other external factors have on the development of identity, these educators primarily viewed identity to be more internally focused and developed. From this perspective, identity can refer to “the collection of self-descriptive characteristics, such as being genuine, dependable, and energetic” (McEwen, 2003, p. 205). This represents one’s personal identity, encompassing the core values of the individual.

### **Identity from the Social Theory Perspective**

Another perspective used to understand identity is through the use of social identity theory. This theory was developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) in an effort to understand the psychological basis of discrimination within groups. What developed from this work was the idea that an individual’s self-concept is derived from perceived membership within social groups. Tajfel and Turner (1979) explored the view that a person has not one, “personal identity,” but rather several identities that correspond to one’s membership within social circles. Different social contexts may trigger an individual to think, feel and act on the basis of his personal, family or national “level of self.” Deaux (1993) further defined this concept noting “social identities are those roles or membership categories that a person claims as representative” (p. 6). One’s role in society (e.g. student, parent, guardian, sibling, friend, leader, victim, boss, employee,

etc.) can dramatically influence one's identity. Additionally, "one's self-esteem is enhanced through favorable comparison between one's own group and an out-group" (Deaux, 1993, p. 8).

The concept of social identity, particularly regarding perceptions and development of individual identity within and outside of social groups, has served as a springboard for many student development theories. McEwen (2003) stated,

theories and models of social identity development have evolved from the sociohistorical and sociopolitical climate of the United States, in which social groups that are not White, heterosexual, male, able-bodied, and of the privileged class have been oppressed . . . (p. 205)

Theorists like Cross (1971, 1991), Helms (1990, 1995), Cass (1979), D'Augelli (1994), and many others observed the shared interpersonal and internal reactions of individuals within historically oppressed groups (i.e. persons of color, women, gay/lesbian/transgendered, etc.) and were able to translate those observations into models of identity development for these groups.

### **Gender Identity Development**

Related to social theory, one perspective through which to view the male identity is by examining gender roles. According to gender role theory, behavior is directly attributed to the socially prescribed norms dictated by society. Individuals, like actors on a stage, take on roles that are assigned to them and act accordingly. O'Neil (1981) characterized gender roles as "behaviors, expectations, and role sets defined by society as masculine or feminine which are embodied in the behavior of the individual man or woman and culturally regarded as appropriate to males or females" (p. 203). In

describing gender identity development, McEwen (2003) described this process as “how one views oneself in relations to one’s own gender group, that is, as a woman or a man, and how these views evolve and become more complex over time” (p. 218). Each of these researchers stresses the influence of society on creating one’s gender identity and gender role.

According to McEwen (2003), “the experience and process of becoming aware of sexism, abandoning a sexist identity, and developing a nonsexist identity is different for women, the oppressed group, than it is for men, the dominant group” (p. 218). With that in mind, “...any adequate theory of men and masculinity has to reflect the fact that masculinities are both ‘structured’ in dominance and, in turn, help maintain or reproduce that dominance” (Edley & Wetherell, 1996, pp. 97-98).

### **Evolution of Gender Theories and Research**

Research related to men and masculinity has been conducted since the early 1900s. In looking at the majority of the research, male identity formation is often looked at in terms of masculinity. According to Pleck (1981), the first real attempt at studying the development of male identity was the male sex role identity (MSRI) paradigm. Like many of the standardized intelligence tests of the day, the MSRI was created in the 1930s and was developed to measure masculinity and femininity along a single continuum. It was revised on two occasions, once in the 1940s, and again in the 1960s and eventually divided masculinity and femininity into separate scales of measurement. During the middle part of the twentieth century, the MSRI was the framework used for nearly all of the research done on male psychological development.

The MSRI at the most basic level claimed that male identity (or male sex typing as it was referred) was solely internal in nature. Pleck (1981) critically analyzed the MSRI and found enough faults in it to create a paradigm of his own to measure gender identity, the sex role strain (SRS). The SRS took into account some of the internal aspects of the MSRI, but went a step further and included the external impact that society has on identity development. Social constructs were not considered in the MSRI, so the impact that stereotyping and socialization have on male identity development were not examined or accounted for in the research. Pleck, like Erikson before him, was one of the first individuals to realize that identity development was inclusive of both internal and external factors. O'Neil (1998) went so far as to say that Pleck's critiques of the MSRI and his creation of the SRS was ". . . one of the most significant breakthroughs in the psychology of men . . ." (p. 413).

Following the development of the SRS and the inclusion of environmental influences into male identity studies, researchers began to wonder what happened when the external factors that defined men, such as societal norms, clashed with men's internal thoughts and feelings. The term gender role conflict was coined to describe this process. O'Neil (1998) defined gender role conflict as "a psychological state occurring when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles learned through socialization, result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or self" (p. 21).

### **Gender Role Conflict Research and Analysis**

Earlier research by O'Neil (1981) discussed how gender role conflict was linked to sexism and oppression in society. He concluded that the socialization of male gender



roles led to a fear of femininity producing six patterns of gender role conflict and strain. The six patterns found were restrictive emotionality, socialized control, power, and competition issues, homophobia, restrictive sexual and affectionate behavior, obsession with achievement and success, and health care problems.

The Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) (O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986) was created as a means to measure how "men internally experience externally defined gender roles" (Davis, 2002, p. 510). The GRCS narrows down O'Neil's original six patterns and focuses on four underlying factors: restrictive emotionality; success, power, and competition; restrictive affectionate behavior between men; and conflict between work and family relations (O'Neil et al., 1986).

O'Neil, Egan, Owen, and Murray (1993) broadened the research to encompass both men and women's gender role transitions and created the gender role journey identity development model. McEwen (2003) summarizes this model by breaking it into five stages that includes acceptance of traditional roles, ambivalence, anger, activism, and celebration and integration of values.

Psychological studies have revealed much about how men deal with gender role conflict. Good, Dell, and Mintz (1989) used gender role conflict in reference to help seeking behaviors in men. They concluded that there was a significant relationship between traditional attitudes about the male role and a negative perception of seeking help. Good and Mintz (1990) and Good and Wood (1995) found a correlation between gender role conflict and depression. Gender role conflict has also been linked to the use of psychological defense mechanisms in men, who adopt these strategies in an effort to

cope or avoid not living up to traditional male gender roles (Mahalik, Cournoyer, DeFranc, Cherry, & Napolitano, 1998).

### **Reference Groups and Identity**

A number of research studies have been based on the belief that the psychological impact society has on individuals is the defining factor in the development of the male identity. Kimmel and Messner (2004) asserted that:

the important fact of men's lives is not that they are biological males, but that they become men. Our sex may be male, but our identity as men is development through a complex process of interaction with the culture in which we both learn the gender scripts appropriate to our culture and attempt to modify those scripts to make them more palatable. (p. xv)

Wade (1998) introduced the idea that the overall assumption in the research to that point was that there was one view of masculinity, one overall version that was the ideal to which all men aspired. The version he points out is the White, heterosexual, middle class, American male. Kimmel and Messner (2004) went on to assert that masculinity not only varies from culture to culture, but also within each culture as well. They discuss the importance of class culture, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation on the formation of the male identity. When working with men, it is important to account for variations in identity development as it relates to the above factors. These factors are what Wade (1998) refers to as reference groups.

Wade's (1998) male reference group identity dependence theory dealt specifically with the way in which men internally conceptualize and cope with the various definitions of masculinity. This theory looked at men's definitions of masculinity created from both

cultural standards and their inner selves and explored the psychological processes that create these definitions. Wade claimed that masculine ideology was directly related to the ego development of the individual. Men with a stronger sense of self are more likely to break away from traditional gender roles while males with a lesser developed ego more dependent on the views set forth by the reference group and are more susceptible to gender role conflict.

The Reference Group Identity Dependence Scale (RGIDS) was developed by Wade and Gelso (1998) as a way to measure the male identity described in Wade's (1998) earlier research. The RGIDS mainly was developed to measure men's feelings, beliefs, and attitudes in four main contexts—feelings about oneself as a man, feelings about other males, comfort with other males, and relationships with other males. Basically, the RGIDS measures masculinity in terms of men's connectedness, or lack thereof, with other men.

There have been a number of critiques of the RGIDS. O'Neil (1998) applauded the work of Wade and Gelso and believed it to be a new way to look at male identity. Eisner (1998) and Cook (1998) on the other hand, believed that the RGIDS was flawed, specifically saying that it was too broad and made too many assumptions. The RGIDS relies too heavily on masculine stereotypes (Cook, 1998) and does not account for the experiences of ethnic minorities (Eisner, 1998).

The Key Model (Scott & Robinson, 2001) is a more recent construct created in regard to male identity development. Although it specifically looks at the identity development of White males, it represents a significant step by actually producing a set

model. Based on earlier identity models that focus on race, this model discusses convergence of gender and race in the development of White males. The model is circular in nature and operates under the assumption that male development occurs in five phases or types. Men tend to show characteristics that are prevalent in one specific phase, but are not restricted into that one phase. Movement often occurs when a precipitating event causes dissonance. Men begin to question their current worldview and are challenged to think differently, subsequently leading to a change. Males can also show progression and regression in the model depending on the events that occur in their lives. The model is helpful to student affairs professionals because it views male development through the lens of both gender and race and sees men as “whole beings” (Scott & Robinson, 2001, p. 420). By understanding where men are developmentally, we can help them best cope with whatever they are struggling with at the time. Only by recognizing these issues can we assist men in overcoming them while making meaning of who they are as men in society.

### **Social Construction Component to Identity**

From an early age, boys learn what are acceptable and unacceptable masculine behaviors through reinforcement (e.g., praise for winning) and punishment (e.g., criticism for crying). In our contemporary U.S. culture, this socialization is believed to produce values, attitudes, and behaviors that emphasize that men be emotionally stoic and dominate others. (Mahalik et al., 1998, p. 247)

Pollack (1999) described the “Boy Code” in reference to the “outdated and constricting assumptions, models, and rules about boys that our society has used since the nineteenth century” (p. 6). This code, which both subtly and sometimes blatantly has

been ingrained within boys since youth, creates a “mask of masculinity” (p. 5), which dictates male behavior and defines what traits are acceptable and unacceptable for men to have and show.

Gender roles are clearly defined for boys and girls early in their development. Factors such as environment, media, family structure, and role models all define for children how they should act to be accepted within their gender. Men are taught to be strong, competitive, providers and protectors; women are taught to be caring nurturers. To show any traits associated with women is perceived as being weak or lesser in the eyes of society. For example, David and Brannon (1976) discovered four themes that characterized the male gender role. In their analysis, traditional male or masculine characteristics had to include:

1. No Sissy Stuff—a complete rejection of femininity
2. The big wheel—the constant pursuit of success and fame
3. The study oak—a tough, sturdy, confident, unflappable demeanor
4. Give ‘em hell—aggression, competitiveness, violence

Probably the most integral concept associated with making meaning of identity for men is the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Developed by Connell (1987, 1995), this term refers to the prescribed standards of masculinity that men have learned and have been conditioned to adhere to throughout life. Connell asserts that a man’s ability to negotiate these standards and to adopt either a compliant or resistant stance is critical to his development and acceptance of his gender role.

Kaufman (1999) stated that men have the “strange combination of power and privilege, pain and powerlessness” (p. 75), which sounds contradictory, but basically alludes to the paradox men face in their development. When internal thoughts and feelings clash with external societal norms, conflicts may arise, especially if men are perceived by society as not measuring up to their prescribed gender roles.

### **Identity Development and Privilege**

Regarding identity development models, McEwen (2003) stated “. . . more recent models also concern the social identities of *dominant* social groups, the primary groups in the United States who *collectively* have power and privilege . . .” (pp. 205-206). In spite of this observation, identity development theories for dominant groups (men, Whites, heterosexuals, etc.) are not at all prominent in the literature (Hoffman, 2004). As discussed earlier, most identity development theories were created out the common theme of oppression. For the members of dominant social groups, where oppression is non-existent, there is no polarizing common entity around which they can rally. There is no shared common bond that draws them together and affirms their thoughts and feelings as a member of an oppressed population. In fact, for the dominant social group, it often is difficult for them to even acknowledge their status as being part of a privileged community at all.

Nonetheless, “majority identity development models are integral to a true understanding of the nature of privilege and one’s membership in an oppressive group (Hoffman, 2004, p. 375). The few theories that do exist (Helms, 1995; McIntosh, 1998; Worthington & Mohr, 2002) serve to help members of the dominant group first to

become aware of their privilege, to come to terms with the idea of the opportunities that they have at the expense of others, and then to learn how to view the world through the lens of the oppressed. Similar to identity models of oppressed groups, dominant group models typically follow a pattern of development (referred to as stages, vectors, etc.) and usually include the negotiation of one's personal and social identities.

Ultimately, when determining an appropriate model to describe the male identity, the only thing that is clear is that there is no clear answer. Although men are the numerical majority and have historically experienced power and privilege, their gender represents only one aspect of their identity. As Hoffman (2004) states, "each of us has multiple identities, as racial, gendered beings of different ages, sexual orientations, religions, and so on, with privileged status in some areas and non-privileged status in others" (p. 380). For men, gender roles and social norms only are one component of identity development, and this component does not occur in isolation. Edley and Wetherell (1996) best sum up the state of male identity development:

no single theory or academic approach can hope to capture and account for every facet of even a single man's life, let alone the lives of black men and white men, gay men and straight men, and men of all different socioeconomic classes. (p. 97)

If one dimension of identity cannot be separated from another, and if individuals construct their own meaning of identity based both upon their self perceptions and the perceptions of others, then it stands to reason that the best models to use to more clearly define the male identity could be those that account for multiple identities.

### **Multiple Identities**

Most individuals consider themselves to be members of many social groups, each contributing to the development of their identity and their definition of self.

Unfortunately, “most developmental models and related research have addressed only a single dimension of identity, such as race or sexual orientation” (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 405). Reynolds and Pope (1991), after reflecting upon current identity theories, wrote “Although a few of the current models of identity development offer measurable constructs, they create an incomplete, and therefore, inaccurate picture of the multiple layers of identity and oppression” (p. 175). They went on to state “although these frameworks add much to our appreciation of human diversity, they also simplify the complexities of identity development and group identification” (p. 175).

When D’Augelli (1994) established an identity theory centered on sexual orientation, he referred to identity development as “the dynamic processes by which an individual emerges from many social exchanges experienced in different context over an extended historical period” (p. 324). Davis (2002) continued on that idea, stating “the construction of identity also depends . . . on the cultural, social, and political context in which these processes occur” (p. 509).

Reynolds and Pope (1991) developed the Multidimensional Identity Model, which examined identity from the broad context of oppression. They developed four strategies in the form of quadrants that members of oppressed social groups can use to negotiate their multiple identities. These quadrants included:



(1) identify with one aspect of self (society assigned passive acceptance), (2) identify with one aspect of self (conscious identification), (3) identify with multiple aspects of self in a segmented fashion, and (4) identify with combined aspects of self (identity intersection) (Reynolds & Pope, 1991, p. 179).

While helpful in addressing the issue of multiple identities, this model failed to acknowledge the possibility of successful integration of these identities. Quadrant four touched upon the idea of integration of identities, but Reynolds and Pope did not believe it could be successfully achieved. In addition, it narrowly focuses on the oppression aspect of multiple identities, rather than the identities themselves.

To better account for this aspect of identity development, Jones and McEwen (2000) introduced a theoretical model specifically addressing multiple identities. These researchers expanded upon the concept of socially constructed identities by creating a model to explain the intersection of one's personal identity with his or her social identities. They described their model as "a fluid and dynamic one, representing the ongoing construction of identities and the influence of changing contexts on the experience of identity development" (p. 408).

Using open-ended interviews, Jones and McEwen (2000) had their participants "use their own words in describing the internal and interpersonal processes by which they defined their identities and made sense of difference" (p. 407). Through this use of narrative analysis, they discovered that no one dimension of an individual's identity could be described or understood in isolation. For example, participants could define gender as a component of their identity, but almost immediately connected that with other

identity dimensions such as race, religion, or sexual orientation (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

At the center of this model lies the personal identity of the individual. This includes core values and the inner self and are “somewhat protected from view” of others (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 408). “Surrounding the core, and at times integrally connected to the core, were . . . more externally defined dimensions such as gender, race, culture, and religion” (p. 409). These areas were represented as circles around the main core identity. The intersection of these circles represented contextual influences on identity development such as peers, family background, social norms, stereotypes, and sociopolitical conditions, etc.

Unlike any previous identity frameworks, the Jones and McEwen (2000) model allowed for the idea that people construct their own identity and accounted for the intersections of both personal and social dimensions of one’s identity development. Abes, et al. (2007) expanded upon that initial model of multiple identities to include a meaning-making component based upon the constructivist framework. Constructivists believe that “meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). Abes and her colleagues (2007) built upon this idea, believing this component helps provide “a richer portrayal of not only *what* relationships students perceive among their personal and social identities, but also *how* they come to perceive them as they do” (Abes et al., 2007, p. 13). In addition to exploring the self-perceptions of multiple identity dimensions through narratives, this model looked at how individuals were able to filter the contextual influences into their perceived identity.

The individual's level of meaning-making determined how much they were able to separate self-perceptions of identity from these contextual influences (Abes et al., 2007). The authors observed three levels of meaning making ability—formulaic, transitional, and foundational. Those at the formulaic meaning making level have minimal filtering between contextual influences and perceptions, so relationships between multiple identities often go unnoticed. The authors provided a perfect example, one related to the context of gender, when they observed that individuals at this level “perceived their gender as either too masculine or too feminine if that is what friends or stereotypes told them” (pp. 8-9).

Individuals at the transitional meaning making level are progressing in their ability to differential between identity perceptions, but still rely somewhat on formulaic filtering. In those individuals, Abes et al. (2007) observed that:

As their meaning making grew more complex, these participants were starting to realize the limitations of stereotypes, feel frustrated by identity labels insufficient to describe how they made sense of who they were, and challenge other people's expectations that caused difficulties integrating multiple identity dimensions. (p. 9)

Finally, those persons with a foundational level of meaning-making filter demonstrated “greater ability to determine the relationship between context and perception of identity” which allows them to “define for themselves relationships among multiple identity dimensions such that they peacefully coexisted” (p. 11).

This reconceptualization of the multiple identity theory presents new ground in the realm of student development theory, as this represents a complex framework that

seeks to understand the holistic development of the individual's identity, not just one component. Abes et al. (2007) concluded that if identity is constructed by the individual, then by understanding *what* individuals perceive in regards to their identity and *how* they make meaning of their identity dimensions, individuals are in a position to better understand their own identity.

### **Practice Theory and Identity**

Holland and Eisenhart (1990) and Eisenhart and Finkel (1998) used the concept of practice theory to help to explain the understanding of identity, particularly in the ways that individuals make meaning and define themselves based upon their environment. This idea looks at “the generation of meaning systems by people as they participate in everyday, local activities (or ‘social practices’) and on the way these meaning systems connect people to broader patterns of social reproduction or change” (Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998, p. 43). Essentially, practice theory is the construction of ideology or culture as lived practice within specific contexts, such as everyday routines. Practice theory is centered upon three main concepts:

(1) what meanings are produced within and about everyday activities; (2) how knowledge, identities (e.g., the meaning of being a scientist, a woman, an expert, etc.) and learning are made socially available (or “situated in practice”) in the activities in which people actually participate; and (3) how everyday activities and meanings organize participants in wider relations of power. (pp. 43-44)

Holland and Eisenhart (1990) stated that part of practice theory focuses “on the generation of meaning systems by groups in response to structural constraints” (p. 41).

They also noted that, according to practice theory, “different forms of masculinities and

femininities are likely to arise, along with different interest groups that stand to gain or lose depending on the ascendance of one form over another” (p. 39). If practice theory is applied to men within student affairs, it would stand to reason that their identity is defined by their day to day activities, by their role in the workplace, and their perceptions of what a man in student affairs should be. That perception is one that may or may not be in conflict with the traditional prescribed role of a man in society. According to Holland and Eisenhart (1990), practice theory would account for an alternate masculinity to be formed based upon the experiences and perceptions of those men within student affairs.

In the context of women’s development in the sciences, Carlone (2004) used practice theory to explain how larger socially defined norms in a certain structured environment can be both confirmed and contested by the daily activities of those within that environment. Although she looked at women and science education, one could refocus the concept to men in student affairs.

Carlone’s (2004) use of practice theory keyed in on two main areas—cultural production and situated learning. Eisenhart and Finkel (1998) defined cultural production as the “meanings developed by groups in their everyday activities” (p. 44). Carlone (2004) pointed out the importance of history and larger context in the creation and development of these meanings. Her view was similar to that of Lave and Wenger (1991), who suggested that situated learning was directly related to “understanding how the legacies of history are reproduced and how they provide resources that help individuals act purposively and to value and enjoy their everyday lives” (Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998, p. 50). They went on to state:

Thus, in order to understand what individuals come to know, how they come to view themselves, and how these things change and develop over time, we must first understand their social practice: how activities are organized; how knowledge and identity are represented in activity; and how individuals can change their participation over time. (Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998, p. 50)

Entry-level men in student affairs are in the unique position of being from a dominant social group in one context of their lives, and at the same time being part of a minority in another. It would seem that the best way for us to explore their identity further is to allow them to share the constructed meanings of their identity—based upon both personal values and those created by their environment—within the context of the student affairs profession.

### **Student Affairs as a Feminine Profession**

Now that the strong personal and societal influence on the construction of male identity development has been established, it is necessary to situate this concept within the context of the student affairs profession. The role of faculty in higher education has been established for centuries, and is one that seemingly is easy for those both in and out of the university setting to understand. Conversely, student affairs as a profession has a relatively short history, so while the role of student affairs professionals has been defined over the last 70+ years (Student Personnel Point of View, 1937/1949; Student Learning Imperative, 1994; Powerful Partnerships, 1998, Principles of Good Practice, 1998), it is not as easily defined or understood by those outside of the profession. Originally, faculty alone assumed the responsibility for every aspect of a student's development. Slowly, as more and more people attained access to higher education, faculty began to focus solely upon the academic component of higher education, and the non-academic tasks were

relegated to others. Those others were usually deans of men and deans of women, who oversaw the social and interpersonal development of the students. It is from these positions that the field of student affairs was created (Sandeem & Barr, 2006).

Although historically higher education (and, in turn, student affairs) has been dominated by men both as students and administrators, evidence demonstrates that student affairs is perceived as being a feminine profession today. According to Hughes (1989), there are two sides to a student's development within higher education, both equally important and valuable. On one side is the academic component, represented by the faculty. This side embodies traits that stereotypically are masculine in nature, such as competition, ambition, independence, and reward. The other side is the co-curricular development, which is facilitated by student affairs professionals and carries traits associated as being feminine, like interpersonal communication, support, caring, and psychological development (Hughes, 1989).

McEwen et al.(1990, 1991) provided some excellent data that laid groundwork for future research. Their study was two-pronged in its approach, with data published in both 1990 and 1991. In the first analysis (McEwen et al., 1990), the authors utilized membership data from 17 of the 19 professional organizations that make up the student affairs profession. They also looked at enrollment and graduation data from student affairs preparation programs in a fourteen-year span. Some interesting information was revealed when this data was compiled. From 1973-1987 the percentage of women in student affairs increased 20%. The number of doctoral students decreased, but of that total number, female students increased 35% while male students dropped 13%. Clearly,

this data supports the idea that women are entering the field and men are choosing other career paths.

In regard to recommendations, the authors conceded that this topic must be looked at in more detail. They also recommended that focus be placed upon what factors contribute to this shift, as well as the impact this shift will have on the higher education environment. A secondary area that the researchers recommended for further investigation was the diversity aspect of this gender shift in student affairs (i.e. how does race, gender, culture, background factor in, if at all?).

The second analysis for their research utilized a qualitative approach to investigate further the growing gender imbalance in student affairs (McEwen et al., 1991). The researchers interviewed 25 people and had one person who responded in written form (N=26). Ten of the subjects were men and 16 were women. There were five questions that the authors asked ranging from environmental conditions to personal reflections.

Subjects raised several interesting points, including the idea that many people enter the field of student affairs due in large part because of a mentor. People tend to mentor individuals who are like themselves, so if more women are currently in the field, they most likely will mentor other women to become future practitioners (McEwen et al., 1991). Also, the claims that student affairs is a feminine or women's field with low pay or prestige was echoed in the data. Recruitment of future professionals was also discussed, with some respondents voicing a concern that in an attempt to bring more



males into the field that the caliber of candidate tends to be compromised (i.e. hiring a less qualified person because he is a man).

The authors suggested that the perceptions and characteristics of entry level men in student affairs may provide more information, specifically in regard to their views and/or concerns about working in a “feminine profession” (McEwen et al., 1991, p. 444). They stated that it is crucial for those within student affairs to recognize that feminine traits are important and not a sign of weakness within the field. They recommend that role modeling by male professionals to male students is necessary in order to “demonstrate to men the value and legitimacy of developing and incorporating the feminine dimension of themselves . . .” (p. 445). As McEwen et al. (1991) state, “the nature of student affairs work is that of being nurturing, care oriented, and facilitative, which is often a good fit for the kinds of attributes, interests, and skills frequently found in women” (pp. 441-442).

Similarly, Hamrick and Carlisle (1990) revealed that student affairs professionals are referred to within and outside of the field as “helpers” and “counselors” in light of their duties and responsibilities with student development and perform tasks that traditionally are feminine in nature. Using this perception as a key aspect of the state of the profession, the authors of this work coin the term “feminization of student affairs” and define it as the “demographic representation of women within student affairs and the changes in the profession that may be related to this demographic shift” (p. 306).

McEwen et al. (1991) explained that

although the student affairs feminine voice does play an important role in higher education, a struggle exists, sometimes intensely, between the feminine attributes of the profession, and the profession's continuing concern about credibility, marginality, and professional survival and strength. (p. 445)

In the "masculine-voiced higher education environment" (McEwen et al., 1991, p. 445), student affairs is perceived by some as being lesser in terms of prestige and importance. Hamrick and Carlisle (1990) agree, and contend that the feminine traits surrounding student affairs creates a stigma that may play a role in their decision to leave the field. According to prescribed social norms, men in student affairs are in a feminine helping field, which by definition puts their own manhood into question. Since student affairs is focused on the development of traits that are traditionally feminine in nature, student affairs, though historically serving male students, is therefore considered to be a female or feminine profession.

### **Male Identity within Female Dominated Fields**

Given that hegemonic masculinity, prescribed gender roles, and environment factor heavily into the development of the male identity, and that student affairs as a profession is associated with being feminine, it stands to reason that perhaps there might be something to the idea that a stigma of femininity surrounds men within the field. Unfortunately, there is limited research in the area of males within student affairs. There currently is no research that provides insight to the male identity in the context of student affairs. Despite this gap in the literature, some research exists regarding men in

traditionally female professions that can be used to make inferences about men's experiences within student affairs.

Bradley (1993) and Williams (1995) specifically mentioned how the social stigma associated with working in a feminine field negatively impacts men's self image and masculine identity. While the majority of the men in these studies echoed this sentiment, these two researchers summarized this idea particularly well.

Williams (1995) discussed the strong social norms that are in place early in childhood regarding gender roles based upon interviews she conducted with men in traditionally female fields. The information she pulled from these interviews provided some interesting thoughts on male perceptions in regard to female professions. For one participant, it was only after a discussion with another male friend that he allowed himself to follow a career path in education. He stated that he only felt comfortable pursuing this career after finding out that several of his male friends were doing it. The emphasis placed upon males needing other males to legitimize their own entrance into feminine professions is very eye opening. If we were to relate this to the gender shift in student affairs, it makes sense; because there are not enough men currently in the field to legitimize it, men who may be considering that career path in student affairs will pursue other options. For them, it is not safe socially until they get the "all clear" from their members of their own gender. Similarly, if this need for legitimacy is so strong, it very well could play a role in a man's decision to remain within the field of student affairs.

Williams (1995) also mentioned an idea regarding the malleability of gender roles. She stated that "jobs typecast as masculine at one time are considered feminine at

another, depending on which sex is predominantly engaged in the occupation” (p. 64).

This concept seems to be quite true in looking at men within student affairs. It is safe to assume that when men dominated student affairs, those within the profession did not have their masculinity put into question, but today, that is not at all the case.

According to Harriet Bradley (1993), the “connotations of femininity surrounding female occupations are . . . a strong deterrent to men whose masculinity may be jeopardized if they are associated with female work” (p. 18). Based upon interviews, she concluded that men need to change in order for them to successfully transition into female fields. Bradley stated that men need to “rid themselves of male expectations of superiority to women in terms of status, authority, and rewards, and in contributing to a revaluation of caring and interpersonal skills” (p. 25). This proverbial chip on men’s shoulders may be what is preventing them from entering or remaining within student affairs. Perhaps men cannot deal with the idea that in student affairs they would be the minority and may be supervised by women. The idea that some sort of masculine superiority complex is interesting and needs to be looked at further, specifically in regard to student affairs.

Simpson (2004, 2005) provided some revealing data after interviewing 40 men in traditionally female dominated professions (teacher, librarian, flight attendant, and nurse). Participants in this study brought up the “embarrassment, discomfort, and shame” that men can feel working within a female dominated profession (Simpson, 2005, p. 372). Most of these feelings came when discussing their professions with those outside of the field. A small number of men (3) were so uncomfortable that they were actively leaving their professions, and many others would lie or alter the truth when discussing their job

with others. For example, flight attendants might say that they worked for an airline or in the tourism field, but not get specifically into what they did.

Simpson asked questions regarding the men's thoughts and feelings on their experiences, opinions, and views as gender minorities in their field and explored the possible effect their career had on their masculine identity. This study focused on the themes derived from three main questions:

What are the motivations and aspirations of men in non-traditional occupations?  
How are men's experiences at work affected by their token status?  
What are the implications of men's non-traditional career choice for gender identity and how do they manage possible conflict in this respect? (Simpson, 2004, p. 353)

Simpson saw that three distinct typologies emerged when the men were asked their reasons for career choice. Seekers were men who actively chose the profession, finders were men who fell into the field, and settlers were those who settled into the field after experiences (often negative) in other professions (often male dominated).

Simpson also found that the stereotypical roles that men believed to have resulted in both positive and negative outcomes. The men often were assigned more difficult tasks, were expected to speak out more, and were sometimes thought to have expertise that they may not have had all because they were men.

Finally, this research focused upon the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of men in feminine fields and how much of a priority these motivations played in choosing a career. While all of these fields were low pay, some men reported that they wished to climb the career ladder (and pay scale) as quickly as possible and that it was a motivating

factor for them choosing their profession. Over half of the men (21) did not have these ambitions and were content with the intrinsic motivations such as building relationships and helping their constituents (i.e. teachers just wanted to be good teachers and reach their students). Although not exactly similar, these findings represent a starting point for studying men within student affairs.

It is also important to consider the relationships that men have within the field of student affairs, both with other men and with women. Taub and McEwen (2006) and McEwen et al. (1990, 1991) proposed that mentorship leads individuals to the field of student affairs. People tend to seek out and mentor those who are like them. If there are more women within student affairs already, then those women will naturally seek out other women in the field to mentor and less support for entry-level men. Conversely, with fewer men in the field come fewer opportunities for mentoring. Williams (1995) echoed this idea in talking about men working in traditionally female professions. Until other men provided social permission, these individuals did not feel it was socially safe to maintain a career in what they perceived to be a women's field.

Most organizational theorists operate under the assumption that organizational structures (i.e. the workplace) are gender neutral. Some feminists, however, argue that this is not the case (Acker, 1990). Kanter (1977), highly regarded for her theory of tokenism, argued that when any group represents less than 15% of an organization, its members are subject to predictable forms of discrimination. In student affairs, this situation might very well apply in regard to gender, as approximately 15-20% of the entry-level population of student affairs professionals are men (Cilente et al., 2006; Taub

& McEwen, 2006). An organization being gendered means that “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” (Acker, 1990, p. 146). Though these researchers were focused on women in a workplace dominated by men, the ideas presented are no less applicable to men in student affairs.

Lupton (2006) claims there are two distinct reasons for men to stay in professions dominated by women—individual and social. Some men feel that they can utilize the gender stereotype to their advantage and quickly progress up the ladder of power (Lupton, 2006; Williams, 1992). Others feel that even within their profession they are subjected to stereotyping, having to take on more vocal or physical roles because of their gender (Bradley, 1993).

### **Mentorship and Relationship Networks in Student Affairs**

There have been countless studies and articles about the importance of mentoring and the development of support networks in the profession of student affairs (Batchelor, 1993; Butcher & Steeling, 1977; Dalton, 2003; Kelly, 1984; McDade, 1987; Roberts, 2007; Schmidt & Wolfe, 2009, Strange & Belch, 1990; Taub & McEwen, 2006). Schmidt and Wolfe (2009) articulated the role of a mentor by stating “mentors are, by definition, colleagues and supervisors who actively provide guidance, support, and opportunities for the protégé. The functions of a mentor consist of acting as a role model, a consultant/advisor, and a sponsor” (p. 372). For new professionals in student affairs, research suggests that having a strong support network in place helps increase

satisfaction, productivity, and active involvement in the field (Kelly, 1984; Roberts, 2007; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

A number of studies have been done on the importance of mentorship to women in student affairs (Blackhurst, 2000a, 2000b; Blackhurst, Brandt, & Kalinowski, 1998a, 1998b; Twale & Jelinek, 1996). Although focused on women, this research is important to the study of gender identity within student affairs because it suggests that gender is an important factor to professional development in terms of support and guidance.

In their discussion about mentorship and the need for guidance and support for entry-level professionals in student affairs, Schmidt and Wolfe (2009) specifically discussed the concept of role conflict as it relates to student affairs. They claimed that conflict in roles is common for both men and women in student affairs. The researchers stated “the result of such role conflict may be a lower quality of professional output” and that a mentor’s function is “to serve as an example of a well-integrated professional, supporting and challenging the protégé to find a balance between personal and work responsibilities” (pp. 375-76).

As previously stated, while there is a substantial influx of women at the entry-levels of student affairs, the higher-level positions are still predominantly held by men (Hamrick & Carlisle, 1990; Williams, 1995). As such, the proverbial glass ceiling is still in effect in student affairs. However, it is important to note that recognizing and actively supporting the need for women in positions of authority in student affairs should not detract from recognizing and supporting the need for men at the entry-levels.



### **Personal Interest**

As a male member of the student affairs profession, I have a very strong connection to this research on many levels. I began my studies as an undergraduate in elementary education, which is a predominantly female profession. I experienced first-hand being the only male in class and the gender stereotyping that comes with choosing this type of field. As a member of the dominant social group on a number of levels (male, White), it was eye-opening for me to no longer be in the majority. This experience had a profound impact on my own development, as I negotiated aspects of my own identity in a new context.

My extracurricular involvements led me to a path in student affairs, which was once a male dominated field, but has recently shifted strongly in the other direction. Only one third of my classmates in my graduate program in higher education were men (7 of 21 students), so again, I could see and experience being in the minority. In my first professional position, I was the only man in my department, and one of two in the entire division. My current position represents more of a gender balance within my department, but within the division of student affairs and several of the leadership positions at the administrative level outside of student affairs of my institution are female dominated. For me, throughout the first five years of my career being in the gender minority, it was at times a struggle to find mentors and support. As suggested by the identity theories of the oppressed groups, I needed to find refuge with those who could share in my experiences and who could affirm my feelings. Finding my role in the field was difficult at times, and I was fortunate to find support and mentors to help me negotiate this process.

For men considering student affairs, and for those currently in the profession, it is important they establish and understand the role they have and the identity they enact within the field. Men in traditionally masculine occupations have no trouble in knowing what their identity and role will be every day. There is no gender role conflict. Competition, reward, survival, and other traditional male traits are the norm, and there is no question what they are to do or where their place is in society. For men in traditionally female professions, it is much more difficult. Their very presence in the field creates internal and external conflicts that they often cannot face or understand.

By using student affairs as the context to examine the issue of gender and identity development, we might finally find out exactly what the views are of men within the field, what their impressions are of their own masculine identity, and what impact, if any, their feelings of identity and gender role have on their experiences within the profession.

### **Conclusion**

The under-representation of men in student affairs in some part may be attributed to the way in which the masculine identity is defined for those within the field. What does it mean to be a man in student affairs? What identity do men within a traditionally feminine field have? How do men make meaning out of their role? Does this identity impact the decision to remain in or abandon the field of student affairs? By answering these questions through diligent research, with focus on the critical entry-level period, we may be able to better understand and address this overall issue. Therefore, the research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What is it like to be an entry-level man in student affairs today (what are the identities/experiences of entry-level men)?
2. How do men make meaning out of their gender roles in student affairs and in their roles outside of student affairs?
3. What types of relationship networks do men in entry-level positions have in student affairs and how do those networks support/hinder the experience?
4. How do these individuals (entry-level men in student affairs) negotiate who they are as men within the context of the student affairs profession?

## CHAPTER III

### PLAN OF INQUIRY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of men at the entry-level of the student affairs profession. Using the concepts found in the literature as a framework, the research focused upon the meanings constructed by entry-level men within the field of student affairs and how those meanings are similar to or different from the societal definitions of masculinity. By exploring men's perceptions of working in a female dominated field and the implications their experiences have on the male identity my goal was to illuminate what it means to be a man in student affairs and in the process present ways to provide the support and guidance needed to retain men within the profession. In this chapter, I will explain how I attempted to meet this goal. This chapter details the *design of the study, research sites and participants, methods of data collection, data analysis procedures, issues of validity, and finally, ethical considerations.*

I believe that this study provided an opportunity to explore the experiences of men in entry-level student affairs positions by answering the following questions:

1. What is it like to be an entry-level man in student affairs today (what are the identities/experiences of entry-level men)?
2. How do men make meaning out of their gender roles in student affairs and in their roles outside of student affairs?

3. What types of relationship networks do men in entry-level positions have in student affairs and how do those networks support/hinder the experience?
4. How do these individuals (entry-level men in student affairs) negotiate who they are as men within the context of the student affairs profession?

### **Design of the Study**

Maxwell (2005) stated that the goals of a research study dictate the methodology that is utilized. He reasoned that the nature of the research questions should make the decision regarding methodology simple. Here, the goals were to explore the experiences and identities of entry-level men in student affairs and to discover what meanings they make of these experiences. According to Krauss (2005), “understanding unique meanings has to do with the construction of the meaning process, and the many different factors that influence it. That is the unique work of qualitative research . . .” (p. 763). Therefore, in order to achieve the goals of this study using this mindset, the decision on a methodology in this situation is clear and a qualitative methodology is justified.

Using concepts related to practice theory (Carlone, 2004; Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998; Holland & Eisenhart, 1990), and multiple identity construction (Abes et al., 2007), while accounting for gender and privilege, will help us to understand how entry-level men might make meaning of their gender roles within and outside of student affairs.

Carlone’s (2004) use of practice theory to examine women in science education can easily be adjusted to focus on men in student affairs. She, like Holland and Eisenhart (1990) and Eisenhart and Finkel (1998), used qualitative approaches to help individuals explore and make meanings of the world in which they live. Practice theory subscribes to

the idea that identity is defined by the daily activities, the individual's role in the workplace, and the individual's own perceptions. Abes and her colleagues (2007) used qualitative inquiry to understand how the various aspects of one's identity help make meaning of the identity as a whole. For entry-level men in student affairs, the impact that hegemonic masculinity, privilege, and gender role conflict plays on their development cannot be ignored and must be incorporated into the construction of their identity. So, by combining these aspects of identity development and looking at them through the lens of an entry-level man in student affairs, one will get an understanding of how meaning is constructed and a qualitative approach seems justified. As Manning (1992) stated, "Discovering meaning as well as the manner in which people understand themselves in their world is the raison d'être of . . . qualitative research" (p. 133).

### ***Case Study Approach***

Using the research questions and goals as a guide, the approach that best suited this project was the case study. Yin (1994) called the case study approach "the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 1). In addition, unlike other methods of qualitative research, case study methodology is focused within the context of a bounded system. The participants in this study were limited to men who are in the first five years of their professional experience within student affairs.

Also, in order to provide clarity and direction, case studies need to be grounded in a theoretical framework (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Using the work of Abes et al.

(2007), Carlone (2004), and Jones and McEwen (2000) as a guide, the case study is anchored in the constructivist framework. As with the constructivist perspective, the underlying assumptions “include the idea that truth is not objective but rather socially constructed from the experiences, background, perceptions, and thought processes of humans” (Manning, 1999, p. 13).

As with most qualitative research, and particularly with case study, there is fluidity to the methods used, and in some cases, a natural combination of methods helps augment or provide further direction for the research (Schram, 2006). Because the goal was to hear about the experiences of men in student affairs through their constructed perspectives and day-to-day activities, the study lent itself to the combination of case study and narrative inquiry. The purpose of narrative inquiry is to understand the wholeness of people’s experiences through their stories. Schram (2006) states, “the aim is to understand how people structure the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives” (p. 104). Since part of the study looked at the experiences surrounding identity and how men negotiate identity as part of their lived experience, using parts of narrative inquiry within this case study method was justified.

### **Research Sites and Sampling Method**

#### ***Selection of Participants***

In regard to selection of participants, I used purposeful sampling rather than random sampling; a common approach to most qualitative research. Miles and Huberman (1994) explained why:

Qualitative researchers usually work with *small* samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth- unlike quantitative researchers, who aim for larger numbers of context-stripped cases and seek statistical significance . . . Furthermore, with small numbers of cases, random sampling can deal you a decidedly biased hand. (p. 27)

The depth and personalization of the information gleaned from participants is what I was looking for and was provided through purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990).

Qualitative samples, just like qualitative research in general, typically evolve once the study begins. Identifying relationships early on in data collection can help the researcher focus or key-in on similar ones in later research. Similarly, those participants initially selected can impact the type of individual selected later (Miles & Huberman, 1994). “Unlike random sampling where representativeness for the purpose of generalizing is the goal, the researcher uses purposive sample to identify people with particular characteristics” (Manning, 1999, p. 16).

In this case, the initial sampling focused on the level of satisfaction of entry-level men regarding their experiences within the profession. In order to get an overarching sampling of the male experience within student affairs, it was important to include men who were having a positive experience in student affairs, those who were having a negative experience in the field, and those whose experience was somewhere in-between.

For this study, the purposeful selection process known as snowball sampling was used. Patton (1990) described the process of snowball sampling, in which cases are identified “from people who know people who know what cases are information rich, that is, good examples for study” (p. 182). I began by utilizing the personal contacts that I



have within the field of student affairs to get recommendations from knowledgeable professionals on potential candidates for this study.

In order to get the breadth and depth of research needed for analysis, participants must be able to articulate their experiences clearly. “While reticent respondents are not actively avoided . . . , data collected from respondents who enjoy talking about their experiences and points of view is richer and more extensive than data gathered from shy, restrained individuals” (Manning, 1999, p. 17). This type of method of selection “benefits inductive, theory-building analysis” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28). Having chosen the sampling from student affairs, a profession that values openness and acceptance, I assumed that participants would be comfortable in sharing their thoughts and viewpoints freely. Fortunately, this assumption proved to be correct, as all of the participants provided rich, detailed information and insightful thoughts and feelings for me to examine and analyze.

Additionally, in an effort to gain access to strong respondents for our sample, I employed the use of gatekeepers. Gatekeepers “are individuals who know individuals and/or settings that meet the sampling criteria determined by the researcher” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 74). Gatekeepers also help researchers gain access to people and environments that they might not otherwise have. In addition, they serve as mediators between the researcher and the respondent during the sampling process, so a participant will not “feel obligated or unduly pressed to participate in the study” (Manning, 1999, p. 17).

### ***Visual Analog Scale***

In order to provide structure to the sampling, those individuals who expressed an interest in participating in this study were provided an opportunity to express their attitudes and impression of being a man in student affairs. Participants were able to demonstrate their level of satisfaction visually through a sliding scale, developed by Oppenheim (1992) known as the visual analog scale. According to Crichton (2001), the visual analog scale (VAS) is an instrument that “tries to measure a characteristic or attitude that is believed to range across a continuum of values and cannot easily be directly measured” (p. 706). Typically, the VAS is a horizontal line that is 100 millimeters long with descriptors on either end. As shown in Figure 3.1 below, for this study on one end of the line were the words “highly unsatisfied” and on the opposite end were the words “highly satisfied.” Participants were asked to mark the spot on the continuum that best described their personal feelings in regard to their experiences of being men within student affairs.

***How satisfied are you being in student affairs?***

***Please make a vertical mark on the line below to indicate your level of satisfaction with your experiences in student affairs today.***



**Figure 3.1. Attitudes Regarding Satisfaction with Experiences in Student Affairs**

Although this type of instrument is highly subjective in nature, it provided a range of measurement to use in selecting participants for the study itself. The scale allowed me

to pinpoint to an exact level of attitude regarding satisfaction, which I was also able to use to further select the sample. My goal was to have a return rate of approximately 70-80 respondents, from which I could determine a sampling size that sufficiently reflected the perceptions and experiences of men in student affairs.

### *Sample Size*

When conducting qualitative research, sample size is extremely important. Since qualitative samples often are much smaller than quantitative ones, there is a greater need to determine validity and trustworthiness in the data. Qualitative researchers try to find the point where no new themes or information can be found in the data—referred to as the point of saturation. Although there is some debate regarding what sample size can achieve saturation of data, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) stated that “for most research enterprises, however, in which the aim is to understand common perceptions and experiences among a group of relatively homogeneous individuals, twelve interviews should suffice” (p. 79). Having done 60 interviews, these researchers found that “after analysis of twelve interviews, new themes emerged infrequently and progressively as analysis continued” (p. 74).

In an effort to achieve saturation of the data, and using Guest et al. (2006) as a starting point, I concluded that a representative sampling for the interview portion of this study would consist of eighteen men. My initial goal was to divide the sampling into three categories: six men who were highly satisfied, six men who were moderately satisfied, and six men who were highly unsatisfied with their experiences as entry-level men in student affairs.

The focus group sample was based on convenience as well as on satisfaction level. From the initial respondent group ( $n=61$ ), I looked at men who worked at colleges and universities within a 30-mile radius of my institution. Using that criteria, and accounting for years in the field, institutional make up (size, public/private), functional area of experience within student affairs, and satisfaction level as much as possible (none of those who were located nearby listed their satisfaction level below the midpoint on the scale), I contacted five men with a request to take part in a focus group. Four of these men agreed to participate and were removed from consideration for individual interviews.

Of the total respondents ( $n=61$ ), over 80% marked their satisfaction level at or above the midpoint on the VAS scale. In fact, only 12 individuals who returned the initial response form ranked their satisfaction levels below the midpoint. Using the respondent sample that I had (minus the four who agreed to the focus group), I numbered and sorted the response forms in order from 1 to 57 according to where participants marked their satisfaction level on the VAS. Respondents were then divided up into piles: any men who listed their satisfaction level below the midpoint were put into one pile, which I called Pile A ( $n=12$ ). The remaining group was placed in another, which I called Pile B ( $n=45$ ). Since many of the marks the respondents made on the VAS were so close together, those in Pile B were then divided into sub-piles of ten making it easier to sort. I wanted to be as representative as possible of the entry-level men population within the context of satisfaction levels, so in addition to looking at satisfaction levels, I used other categories listed on the initial respondent form to more evenly distribute the sample set. As with the focus group selection criteria, I considered a respondent's years in the field, location and

size of institution, and the listed area within student affairs when choosing my final sample. Since those men in student affairs who were unsatisfied with their experiences were very important to my study, I contacted all respondents from Pile A. Of those twelve men, five replied to my follow-up contact and agreed to an interview. Those five men, along with the individual with the lowest satisfaction ranking from Pile B, were chosen to represent the low level of satisfaction. From the sub-piles within Pile B, I chose six men from the twenty-two who had ranked their satisfaction level at the extreme high end of the scale. The middle six men were chosen from the twenty-three that remained. Figure 3.2 illustrates the range from which the participants were selected based on the Visual Analog Scale. The green area represents the range from which the highly satisfied participants were chosen, the black area shows the range of the middle group, and the red area shows the range of the unsatisfied group.



**Figure 3.2. Range of Satisfaction for Participants**

These eighteen men were the basis of the interview portion of the study. The entire list of participants, along with their years in the field, functional area, level of satisfaction within each group (from low, middle, and high), and type/location of their most recent institution, is listed below in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1**

*Participant Demographic Information*

<b>Interview</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Years in Field</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Satisfaction Level</b>
1	Chad	>1	Res Life	pub 4 yr medium	Southeast	Mid 2
2	Mo	3	Res Life	pub 4 yr large	Northeast	High 1
3	David	4	Judicial	pub 4 yr large	Midwest	High 6
4	Melky	1	Leadership	private 4 yr medium	Southeast	High 4
5	Eric	5	Leadership	pub 4 yr large	West	Mid 5
6	Carl	4	Career Advising	pub 4 yr large	Southeast	Low 1
7	Phil	2	Res Life	pub 4 yr large	Midwest	Mid 6
8	AJ	5	Res Life	pub 4 yr medium	Southeast	Low 4
9	Andy	2+	Advising	pub 4 yr large	West	Low 5
10	Jorge	1	Greek	pub 4 yr large	Southwest	Mid 4
11	Nick	3	Leadership	pub 4 yr large	Midwest	Low 6
12	Johnny	2+	Greek	pub 4 yr large	Midwest	Low 2
13	Rob	1+	Res Life	pub 4 yr large	Midwest	High 2
14	Mark	2	Student Activities	pub 4 yr large	West	Mid 1
15	Alex	2	Res Life	private 4 yr small	Southeast	High 3
16	Brett	2+	Advising	pub 4 yr large	Midwest	Low 3
17	Derek	5	Advising	pub 4 yr small	Northeast	Mid 3
18	Jerry	1	Res Life	pub 4 yr medium	Midwest	High 5
<b>Focus Group</b>						
	Lou	2	Judicial/Conduct	pub 4 yr medium	Southeast	Mid-high
	Mickey	5	Career Services	pub 4 yr small	Southeast	Mid-high
	Roger	1+	Student Activities	private 4 yr small	Southeast	High
	George	1+	Multicultural Affairs	private 4 yr small	Southeast	High

### ***Research Sites***

The majority of the data in this study came from participant interviews (see Appendix C for the interview protocol) with supporting data coming from information collected via the focus group. Since I wanted to select a representative sampling of entry-level men from all over the United States and I was limited financially in terms of ability to travel for both interviewing and recruiting of participants, I took advantage of my attendance at the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) convention in Washington, DC (March 29 - April 2, 2009) to begin soliciting participants for my study. This conference is the annual meeting of one of the preeminent organizations for student affairs professionals. There are nearly 8,000 members of this organization, representing private and public institutions from around the world. Membership includes college faculty, graduate students in higher education programs, and staff from entry level to senior administrators. Since men from all over the country who represent each of these areas within student affairs attend the conference, it provided me with access to a strong pool from which to draw participant interest for my study.

A subset organization within ACPA is the Standing Committee for Men. The purpose of this committee is to promote men's development and the awareness of men's issues among association members. Individuals can elect to be a part of this committee when they join ACPA, and although the committee is comprised mostly of men, there are a small number of women who choose to join. I have been a member of this group for the past 10 years and have built relationships with some of the other members. Part of my

knowledge and interest in male identity development stems directly from my involvement in this committee.

Using the environment of ACPA provided a number of opportunities for me that I otherwise would not have. As previously stated, student affairs is a female dominated profession, so it is difficult to find enough men to study in any one location. At the conference, I had a large group of entry-level male student affairs professionals from whom I was able to solicit for participation in the study. Also, I was able to contact mid-level managers in the field who supervised entry-level men who were able to pass along my information to those individuals. Since the membership within ACPA is so varied, I was provided with an opportunity to recruit men from different campus environments around the country.

In addition, I used many of my colleagues within the field of student affairs to assist in the recruitment of participants. I contacted these individuals in hopes that they either would participate themselves (if they qualified) or pass along information regarding my study to those men in the field whom they believed would be interested in participating. I sent out to all of my peers in the field an email with information describing my study and provided them both an electronic copy and a downloadable link to the consent form and VAS information sheet. I sent this email out once in early May, but received minimal response ( $n=17$ ), I believe in part because of the varied schedules that student affairs professionals have following spring commencement. Having not reached my target goal of 70+ respondents, I sent out a second email with the same information again in early August, and within two weeks I reached a total of 61



respondents. Although I did not quite reach my desired goal, I felt that this number was large enough for me to move forward.

In order to get a sample representative of the male population of student affairs professionals, I was intentional in selecting a sampling of men from a number of diverse backgrounds (as much as I could based upon the minimal information they provided on the VAS information sheet). Locations for the interviews took place entirely over the telephone, with me in my office on the University of North Carolina at Greensboro campus. The focus group took place in a private conference room also located at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

Having established that narrative inquiry via case study as the methodology, the next step was to determine how to best collect the data. Creswell (2005) stated that “narrative researchers explore an educational research problem by understanding the experience of an individual . . . and emphasizes the importance of learning from participants in a setting” (p. 477). There are a number of qualitative ways in which the researcher can attempt to better understand the experiences and views of his or her participants. In this situation, where the researcher’s focus is on the perceptions and attitudes of individuals in a certain cultural environment, I determined that the most effective methods to use were interviews and focus groups, as opposed to observations, artifacts, journals, and other processes of collection. According to Maxwell (2005), “interviewing can . . . be a valuable way of gaining a description of actions and events—often the only way, for events that took place in the past or ones to which you cannot gain

observational access” (p. 94). Focus groups provide a means to “collect shared understandings from several individuals as well as to get views from specific people” (Creswell, 2005, p. 215). Also, providing multiple methods of collecting data is a strategy that “reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues you are investigating (Maxwell, 2005, pp. 94-95).

### *Interviews*

The interviews ranged from approximately twenty-five to forty-five minutes in length and were conducted in a one-on-one setting via telephone. Each session was audio taped so that the data could be transcribed and analyzed. Prior to agreeing to participate in the study, potential participants were made aware of the general purpose of the study, the time commitment involved, and informed of the methods in place to protect their confidentiality and ensure trustworthiness in the study (discussed in depth later). In addition, participants were notified that at any time they could leave the study, and if they chose to do so, I would provide them with all data and materials pertaining to their involvement.

During the interview, participants were asked a standard set of questions (see Appendix C), and when necessary, certain answers were probed further in order to clarify meanings or explore related themes that may not have been conceived ahead of time. The hope was that these interviews would shed some light onto the experiences entry-level men in student affairs have and what understanding they have regarding their identity development. I also wanted to see what the participants’ perceptions were being men in a

field dominated by women, and how it felt for them to, perhaps for the first time, be in the minority. Additionally, I wanted to discover where these men were headed professionally and whether or not gender played a role in that decision as well.

### ***Focus Group***

After completing all 18 of the interviews, I held a focus group in an effort to confirm the results through another means. Once common themes were established through an initial analysis of the interviews, the information gathered in the focus group served as a way confirm these themes or create new ones that the researcher can use to re-evaluate the interview data. As described earlier in this chapter, the focus group consisted of 4 entry-level men in student affairs, chosen out of convenience based upon proximity to me (the researcher). The focus group took place on the University of North Carolina at Greensboro campus and lasted approximately 90 minutes. The questions asked of the group were similar in nature to those in the individual interviews. The focus group protocol can be found in Appendix G of this document.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

During each interview, I took notes on my initial impressions and thoughts regarding participant's answers. In addition, immediately following each interview, I reflected upon the experience and added whatever relevant field notes or ideas that I may not have had time to record while speaking with the participant. The formal analysis of the data began with transcriptions of the data followed by an initial reading.

The first read-through occurred shortly after the data were collected, so I could recall key items that might not be clear in the transcriptions, audiotapes, or field notes

(things like facial expressions, non-verbals, pauses, changes in inflections, etc.). These were noted in the margins during the initial reading as memos. Also during this initial reading, I looked for key words and phrases that recurred throughout the data to use in the coding structure. At this point, the word choices of the participants were analyzed to make sure that their meanings, and not those of the researcher, were being accurately conveyed. These word choices were grouped into categories, which became the starting point for the coding process.

I developed several start codes (or lean codes) a priori, which provided me with a starting point from which to group the data together into themes (Creswell, 2005). Some of the preliminary start codes can be found in Appendix E of this document. Using Spradley's (1980) process of semantic structure analysis, I categorized the data by looking for connecting patterns in their semantic relationships, beginning with a domain analysis.

### ***Domain Analysis***

A domain, or cultural domain, is "a category of cultural meaning that includes other smaller categories" (Spradley, 1980, p. 88). A domain analysis is an examination of these meanings created by the semantic relationships between terms.

Examples of semantic relationships found in the domain analysis of this study included:

1. kinds of relationships
2. characteristics of men in student affairs
3. perceptions of men in student affairs

4. perceptions of student affairs as a field
5. ways to act as a man in student affairs
6. reasons to stay in the field of student affairs
7. reasons to leave the field of student affairs
8. expectations of men in student affairs
9. ways to define success in student affairs/in society
10. characteristics of campus environment

The next step in Spradley's (1980) approach is to organize the data further into a taxonomy of related themes. For example, one code/category that was used in this study was "reasons for staying in student affairs." Conversely, another code was "reasons for leaving student affairs." Both of these codes can be further broken down into subsets that more accurately describe the patterns that emerged.

### ***Taxonomic Analysis***

Reasons to Leave Field of Student Affairs:

1. Inadequate compensation
2. Family Pressures
3. Lack of support
4. Political Frustrations
5. Struggle with gender role
6. Lack of respect of profession

Next, the data were further broken down to a componential analysis, which looked at the meanings attached to the data by the participants. Finally, the codes that

were most similar and reoccurring were grouped together to create larger themes that could be more easily compared and analyzed, defined by Spradley (1980) as the theme analysis.

### **Trustworthiness and Validity**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that due to the distinct differences in design and analysis, the measurement of qualitative and quantitative validity should not be based upon the same standards. They proposed four criteria for judging the trustworthiness of qualitative research that in their opinion better represented the fundamental assumptions of qualitative research. These four criteria are shown below in Table 3.2, alongside the counterpart from quantitative analysis.

**Table 3.2**

***Criteria for Judging Qualitative Research Trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)***

<b>Criteria for Judging Quantitative Research Validity</b>	<b>Criteria for Judging Qualitative Research Trustworthiness</b>
internal validity	credibility
external validity	transferability
reliability	dependability
objectivity	conformability

Credibility, similar to internal validity in quantitative design, requires the researcher to establish that his or her conclusions are believable from the participant's point of view. Since the purpose of qualitative research is to describe and better understand the experiences from the participants' viewpoints, credibility is determined by

the participants themselves reviewing the data and confirming the researcher's conclusions.

Transferability can be likened to external validity in quantitative design. Lincoln and Guba (1985) related transferability to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. In their view, it is the responsibility of the qualitative researcher to enhance transferability by accurately describing, in great detail, both the research context and the assumptions made that were central to the research. If done well, the transferability of the results can be clearly established across different contexts.

When establishing validity in qualitative design, demonstrating the likelihood a similar outcome would occur when research is replicated is referred to as reliability. In regards to qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasized the need for the researcher to account for the frequently changing contexts within research occurs, which they called dependability. In their view, the researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the research approached the study.

Unlike the objective stance taken in quantitative research, qualitative design assumes the researcher is bringing his or her own thoughts and perspectives to the research. To account for the impact of the researcher on the trustworthiness of a study, Lincoln and Guba (1985) utilized the concept of confirmability, which refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. Confirmability can be established through accurate and consistent documentation, collaboration with an

outsider regarding the process of analysis, and through acknowledging prior biases the researcher brings to the study.

To address issues of trustworthiness (also referred to as validity) in this study, I employed a variety of tactics throughout the process. From the onset, I first and foremost acknowledged that my own interpretations (sometimes referred to as biases) were the primary instrument of the research. As a man in student affairs myself, I was able to build a strong rapport and identify with the situations discussed by the participants. While this proved to be beneficial in building trust (see below), I had to be intentional about constantly checking my interpretations to ensure trustworthiness. Jones (2002) cautioned that “researchers must be conscious of the decisions they are making and, consequently, that the boundaries between who the researcher are and what they construct . . . are blurred” (p. 463). Throughout the process, I asked myself important questions like: Am I hearing only what I want to hear? Are my interpretations accurately reflecting those of the participants? Does my sampling accurately represent the population I am hoping to serve?

Once all the data were collected and analyzed, I sent the themes generated to each of the respondents from the three satisfaction areas. For example, each participant was given the option to read over transcripts and any data that I collected related to him individually. They were provided an opportunity to see what common themes emerged. Sometimes referred to as member checking, this process affirmed that what I conveyed and interpreted from each interview was the actual views and perspectives of the participant and not my own. It also offered a chance for my participants to help to



generate additional data once they saw what information was recorded. Member checking also was a means for me to expand on or follow up on anything that came from the individual data. In several cases, when given an opportunity to review their own words, the participants themselves were able to see themes that I initially missed.

Creswell (2005) stated that for qualitative researchers, it is important to “triangulate among different data sources to enhance the accuracy of a study” (p. 252). For this reason, I intentionally incorporated multiple methods of data collection to corroborate my results. In this case, the focus group data confirmed the information collected in the interviews. In addition, the focus group data provided themes that I did not initially identify after analyzing participant interviews. However, these themes did emerge after I revisited the interviews with these themes in mind. By utilizing both a focus group and semi-structured interviews as my means of data collection, I was able to further substantiate my findings through triangulation.

One fact should be noted here regarding the sample and the generalizability of the results. Since the men who were involved in this study were purposefully found through my personal contacts, it is possible that they could represent a sample of those who have had certain types of experiences in student affairs. Being aware of this during the selection process, I believe as much as possible that I was intentional about selecting participants who accurately reflected different perspectives of entry-level men (both in terms of experiences and also in regards to institution type and size, etc.). Although this study was limited to those men who were referred to me through my professional

network, it provided a starting point for further research in the area of male identity within the field.

Finally, I posit that my role as a man in student affairs actually augmented the trustworthiness of the study. As a man, I was not perceived by participants as being an outsider, so they were inherently comfortable with me throughout the process of data collection. I believe that the participants were more willing to share their thoughts with me because I am “one of them” on a number of levels. I am a male, I am in the profession, I am active in my own professional development, and long ago, I was in an entry-level position. These qualities helped me relate to the participants and establish a sense of trust that led to uncensored data. There are a few ethical issues to consider with this type of relationship, which will be addressed in the following section.

### **Ethical Considerations**

To be sure that my interpretations as the researcher were accurate, I employed several strategies during the course of conducting my research. First, I made sure that all participants are aware that pseudonyms would be used to protect their anonymity. Confidentiality was of the utmost concern during the course of this study, so anything that could identify specific individuals was removed from the finished data. In qualitative research, protecting the anonymity of your participants is a key to attaining accurate information. I would never want anything that my participants said to be used against them in any way, or for them to be wary of sharing their true feelings for fear of their comments being linked back to them. As a part of the interview protocol, I shared with all the participants my research questions and my overall epistemological viewpoints in

regards to the study. Because the data collection primarily took place in person or via phone, the location of the interviews was factored into the protocol. For the phone interviews, I left it up to the participant to choose the location and number for me to contact him, since whether or not they were overheard discussing this topic may or may not have been important to them. In student affairs, it is not uncommon to hear colleagues talking about these kinds of ideas in the workplace, so this may not have been a major issue for many participants, but to be safe, I left it to their discretion to choose when and where they were contacted. For the focus group, I chose a small conference room with an external entrance. I also held this discussion in the evening in a location that was not near any of the participants' places of employment. Finally, I obtained informed consent forms from all of the participants prior to collecting any research, which also helped cover all of the issues stated above.

In regard to the development of my interview questions, I took great care in choosing questions that would not lead the participant in any particular direction. While there are certain areas that I focused on for purposes of this study, my questions were open ended, so it was entirely up to the participant to share his own thoughts as opposed to what I might have wanted him to share. Even the probing questions that I developed during the course of the interviews were not leading, they simply were follow-ups to points the participants made and provided loose guidelines for the participant to tell his story.

I was careful in selecting participants for the study, especially considering some of my respondents could have had a previous personal or professional relationship with

me. I believe that the use of gatekeepers in this process helped to minimize this occurrence. For those individuals that I did know who chose to participate, I took extra care to be sure that I was accurate with what they said, and made sure that they realized that I was ethically bound to report what they said, for better or for worse. The few individuals that I did know did not have any direct reporting lines to me in my role as a practitioner, and there was no power dynamic that could potentially skew their responses.

Throughout the process, I utilized the ethical principals set forth by ACPA (Kitchener, 1985) while conducting my research. The overarching issue here was to do no harm to the participants or to myself. I did my best to honor their wishes as to what information was shared and what was not.

Finally, I consulted with a mentor within the field of student affairs throughout the process to be sure that I was following ethical guidelines. It was important for me, as the novice researcher to have someone available for consultation and assistance. This mentor served as an auditor of sorts, providing feedback regarding the process by which I was conducting the study, not seeing or hearing anything about the actual data collected. Of course no identifiable information was shared with this mentor, only issues relevant to the ethical process of the study.

As described earlier in this chapter, Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that criteria for establishing trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I believe throughout the research and analysis process of this study that I was able to address each of these areas. I am certain that I have accurately described the

research methodology and thus demonstrated the trustworthiness of the results that will be explained the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of men at the entry-level of the student affairs profession. Using the concept of narrative inquiry and case study as a framework, the research focused upon the meanings constructed by entry-level men within the field of student affairs and how those meanings are similar to or different from the societal definitions of masculinity. By uncovering men's perceptions of working in a female dominated field and the implications their experiences have on the male identity, we can better understand what it means to be a man in student affairs and in the process discover ways to provide the support and guidance needed to retain men within the profession. The findings for this study will be presented by answering each research question directly. The research questions used for this study are listed below:

1. What is it like to be an entry-level man in student affairs today (what are the identities/experiences of entry-level men)?
2. How do men make meaning out of their gender roles in student affairs and in their roles outside of student affairs?
3. What types of relationship networks do men in entry-level positions have in student affairs and how do those networks support/hinder the experience?
4. How do these individuals (entry-level men in student affairs) negotiate who they are as men within the context of the student affairs profession?

Before I describe the results of the study, I will first describe the individual participants.

### **Participants**

Of those who responded to the initial questions provided and filled out their level of satisfaction in the field according to the Visual Analog Scale (VAS), nearly 75% rated their level to be at or above the midpoint. Therefore, the pool from which I selected my sampling for interviews and the focus group consisted of those who, according to the VAS, were more satisfied than not.

Participants were selected purposefully looking not only at their level of satisfaction within the field of student affairs, but also at the functional area in which they had experience, the size of their institution, and number of years of service in the field of student affairs. The participants in this study included 18 entry-level men within the field of student affairs for the semi-structured interviews and 4 men of the same status for the focus group, for a total of 22 participants in all (refer to Table 3.1 on page 51).

The average number of years of professional employment for the participants was 2.5 years, with some having less than a full year of professional experience, and some just having recently completed their fifth year in the field of student affairs. Although participants did not have to disclose their institutional affiliation, based upon the email addresses provided, the sample was representative of the main regions of the continental United States (Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, South, Midwest, West, Southwest). Functional areas represented in the sample included: seven from Residence Life, three from Leadership/Community Engagement, three from Advising Offices, two from Student

Activities, two from Career Services, two from Judicial Affairs/Student Conduct, two from Greek Life, and one from Multicultural Affairs.

### Research Question 1

*What is it like to be an entry-level man in student affairs today (what are the identities/experiences of entry-level men)?*

Three distinct categories or identities related to what it means to be an entry-level man in student affairs emerged from the participants. These identities demonstrated the ways in which participants actively displayed the role of entry-level man in student affairs. Table 4.1 lists the identities, the meanings ascribed to them, and the frequency with which participants shared these themes. Themes were not mutually exclusive of one and other, and participants mentioned multiple identities attributed to being an entry-level man in student affairs.

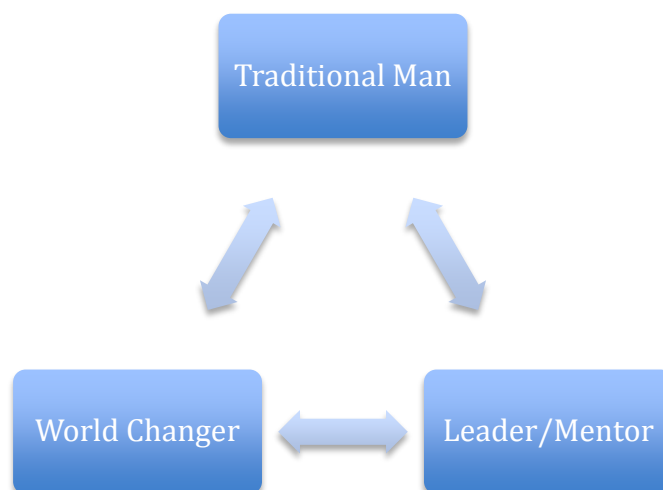
**Table 4.1**

*Identities Shared by Participants*

<b>Identity</b>	<b>Definition/traits of identity</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>%</b>
Traditional Man	Having traditionally masculine roles dictated by gender in the workplace	9	41
Leader/mentor	Possessing and using leadership abilities in the workplace. Providing and receiving mentorship in the field. Role modeling appropriate behaviors to others.	22	100
World Changer	Having an awareness of the history and context related to gender in student affairs, and a sense of responsibility to other men and women in the field to do what is right.	17	77



Results indicate that these entry-level men in student affairs assume different identities, depending on the context or situation. In addition, Figure 4.1 helps to illustrate these three identity concepts for these entry-level men in student affairs.



**Figure 4.1. Identity Elements of Entry-Level Men in Student Affairs**

### ***Traditional Man***

Surprisingly, although student affairs is considered to be a progressive field, entry-level men in student affairs are still subject to many of the traditional gender roles that society prescribes. The findings of this study suggest that a number of the roles that entry-level men take on within student affairs tend to be traditional in nature. Of the 22 men who participated in this study, 9 referred to taking on a stereotypical male role in the workplace. As George mentioned, parts of his job were defined for him based upon being a man:

I kind of took the job knowing that was something they wanted me to do, to be the male voice in the office. So now that I'm there and they haven't had a guy in the office in some years, they want me to address the issues with guys, so when some

issue comes up with a guy, they try their best to shove him off on me. I have to deal with that because I am the only guy in the office.

The specific traditional roles mentioned by participants in this study included: laborer, disciplinarian, and logical thinker.

Despite the fact that they are often in the minority within a student affairs workplace, the men in this study were asked to literally do “the heavy lifting” in the office. Mark described his experience related to this idea below:

**Mark:** There are times when I’ll notice that the office is possibly 75% women, um, and . . . So, being one of the few men around, I’m often asked to lift things and move things and do more, um, I guess physical tasks like that, than most of the other people in the department.

**Interviewer:** Whereas female colleagues aren’t asked to do that.

**Mark:** Yeah. Whenever there is desks that need to be moved or, um, things higher up that needs to be reached. . .like, oh, grab Mark and he’ll get it, he’ll carry these tables or something. I do try to take care of myself and I would say that I’m in pretty good shape, so, um, I think that also plays into it. But, I would say with high level of confidence that it’s just, “we need a man to lift it.”

Also, in student affairs men are still perceived and accepted as being more of an authority figure, compared to their female counterparts, as illustrated in this exchange:

**Nick:** . . . the degree to which being a man gives you certain sort of credibility, or a certain amount of credibility. I think sometimes you have to be tough. I think it’s easier, sometimes it’s easier for men to be tough than it is for women to be tough.

**Interviewer:** You mean with your students?

**Nick:** Yeah . . . You know having that conversation with that student who cheated on a paper about why should you have not done this, or the student who is planning an event that fails to do what they promised to do, and you have to have that conversation. . . . I think for some students I think it doesn’t seem strange to have that coming from a man—that authoritarian kind of perspective.

Similarly, Phil used an example of how traditional roles have an impact on the perception of authority by others:

I can come off as assertive without seeming cold. . . . Well, you know, it's just a conversation that I've had previously with my supervisor and my supervisor, like I said is very blunt, to the point, practical, logical and she and I have talked a lot because she has said that in her career, sometimes she will come across as kind of cold and you know, "bitchy" . . . but if a man does it, you know, he's driven or it's perceived differently when a man does it. So, I think I can be like that without having to worry about how people are perceiving me—if I'm cold and aloof or something like that.

Finally, the other traditionally stereotypical role that emerged based on the research was that of logical thinker. Participants stated that entry-level men in student affairs are looked at by others to take on a logical thinking role—they are expected to be the “thinkers” rather than the “touchy feely” ones. Brett explained this idea here:

I guess I'm kind of viewed as a logical thinker, I suppose. Um, you know there are some people who um, I don't know, who we refer to as more touchy feely, who are able to work with students and maybe develop programs that you know will be interesting and exciting and fun, and I'm definitely not the go-to for making things fun for students. I'm more the go-to to does this document read well; if we do this plan, is it safe to assume that these will be the outcome. So, more like the clarity of writing and kind of proofing logical lines of thinking I would say would be my role, and I guess, I assume that part of that has to do with being a male in the office.

For men in traditional roles outside of student affairs, money and finances are often of particular importance. While not a central part of their identity, the traditional role of breadwinner or financial supporter was a frequent topic for a number of participants. Eight of the participants mentioned financial reasons as being an area that could potentially lead them to leave the profession. All of them stated that they entered the

profession and continued to stay because of reasons other than money, but they acknowledged that a time could come where the desire or need for higher compensation could outweigh the reasons to stay. These thoughts were especially true of men who were projecting family commitments in the future. Comments shared to this affect included:

1. I guess another reason I will leave the field will probably just be there is an opportunity coming around to where I would have to support my family and this opportunity would offer me more financial stability. (Jorge)
2. Another thing would probably be money. I mean eventually I want to go back towards home . . . and it's a little bit pricier to live in parts . . . and sometimes student affairs doesn't quite get the best bang for the buck . . . that would be something when I do have that family would I need to be going towards a job that has a little bit more money. (Rob)
3. If our profession wasn't considered as much a profession or as much a priority over time and the salaries therefore didn't keep up either, then of course, I would have to get out because I need to raise a family and I'm not exactly in a really comfortable financial position to do that in my field. (Brett)

Related to finances is the feeling some men have that they are not compensated for the amount of work that they do. Although this sentiment is not uncommon for individuals in student affairs, regardless of sex or gender, for men it appears to have a particularly strong impact, in part due to traditional gender roles. Carl spoke to this idea in his comments about his interactions with students:

I advise students . . . that are going to make twice of what I make with half the degree and less of a GPA. So I swallow my pride on a daily basis when they say "Carl, my initial starting salary of 61K is not enough." And so for me it's like, I think I know why men don't do this because maybe it's too touchy feely, maybe it's the counseling and stereotypically we are not engineered that way. I could totally understand—why would an engineer take the time to career counsel, because they could do that, when they could be making two three times that money? But then I tell myself "it's not about the money, it's about the students."

Some of the men in this study discussed the advantages to being a man in a field of primarily women. Brett mentioned how he believed that being one of the only men in a meeting increased his credibility in the group:

I guess people listen. I think right or wrong, people, like if I'm in a meeting of some kind or something, because, like people always view my perspective as a different perspective, I think. So, I guess it's maybe relatively easier for me to get people's attention when I want to share an opinion on something because I do think people view my perspective as a different perspective because I am, you know, the guy in the equation and then there aren't many more sitting at the table who do what I do, at least. Typically, if there are other guys at the table, they're not people who are doing my job. So, that makes me unique.

Similarly, being a man in student affairs may have an advantage related to job placement. Rob talked about his experience in the employment market and how he and others perceived that it was an advantage to be a man:

. . . I think there are a lot of opportunities that are out there and I think that comes from being in a position where there are a lot of females—and that male in there would be a sense of diversity where it's a different perspective and different mindset. So maybe that equates to more opportunities—job opportunities since—there are a good amount more females in departments. I think that makes it a little easier and gives more opportunity there.

Five of the men who participated mentioned that they did not feel a need to have power and prestige, but that there was pressure from other people for them to do so. For these individuals, they did not desire to be at the highest levels of administration, yet there was almost an expectation that they push up the ladder simply because they were men. Eric stated:

I think for me, um, what I view is trying to counter the stereotype that I want to be a vice president of student affairs or a president of a university. Um, that I just want power and influence. I think that's definitely not. . .that's not my goal and I get asked that question many times when I'm at conferences or you know, with colleagues about you know, why you don't want to be a vice president, you don't want to be a president. That's definitely something I don't want to do and I think that that's a common misperception among a lot of. . .that a lot of males that are in student affairs want to take on those very typically male dominated roles in organizations. So, I would say that's a really tough thing, is trying to go against those stereotypes of wanting that power influence that comes with position, but also just wanting power and influence in general.

The feelings associated with power, prestige, and respect, either felt by entry-level men, or directed towards them, do play a role in their experiences in the profession.

Considering that men in student affairs are coming to terms with their identity and trying not to exemplify traditional stereotypes, it is of great interest to see that they are still placed into traditional roles in the workplace. One wonders what impact this message has on the development of the male identity for entry-level student affairs professionals.

### ***Leader/Mentor***

Results of this study confirmed previous research (McEwen et al., 1990, 1991; Taub & McEwen, 2006) regarding the importance of mentorship to individuals in student affairs. All eighteen men interviewed, and the four who participated in the focus group, stated the importance of being a role model and mentor. Due in large part to the mentors that they themselves had, participants stated they felt almost a duty to other men to be a mentor and provide opportunities for other men. In fact, they all claimed mentorship to be the reason they were in the field of student affairs. For these men, often times having a mentor helped lead them to the field of student affairs. These mentors provided the support and guidance that they needed. As such, according to these participants, there is a

desire for entry-level men in student affairs to take on the identity of mentor themselves.

As Derek explained:

I decided to pursue [a career in] education because I had a number different mentors and advisors that were there for me. They would encourage me to think about student life in particular as an interest [to explore], being that they felt that I . . . had things to contribute and I might be a good mentor for the other young students . . .

He went on to say:

. . . We are mentors, certainly as [student affairs] professionals [we are] practicing scholars...I would say I feel like there is a level of responsibility among student affairs professionals...I do see us as educators, just in a different kind of format . . . I think we do a lot of character building and we're responsible for students becoming accountable, responsible, civically engaged citizens.

Being mentored as a student seems to have created the need for the men in this study to take on an identity of mentor themselves. To the entry-level men in this study, being a mentor and role model can mean setting an example for others in terms of behavior and actions, and making a meaningful impact on others. Andy described the opportunity that men in student affairs have:

From what I can tell, . . . there are not a lot of men in student affairs and I think it's a great opportunity to be a role model, especially as a man. I guess to be the type of role model that I feel like other men don't always have, which is being able to, you know, show that you're a man, but that you don't have to fit into these (prescribed) types of masculinity. And I think especially for straight men, I just feel like they're not...they're definitely not the majority of our field. So, I think there is a good opportunity and a lot of power and responsibility that could come with that.

Alex echoed these sentiments, stating his impressions of mentorship:

I have also been mentored by people in the field and I've also. . . more this year, and I've had more, have been [in] more of a mentoring role for people who are coming into the profession. And, so, I would say that's always been something that I've seen. I've seen the importance to student affairs is in mentoring and being mentored.

Participants in this study pointed out the need for entry-level men in student affairs to have access to other men of whom they can ask questions, who have “been there” and who can role model and share insights into their daily lives. As Jorge pointed out:

. . . it is kind of nice to talk to those [men] who are in student affairs, who can understand the same issues and concepts that I am going through now, barely starting out in the field, because they went through it and they understand what I am going through.

Similarly, Chad explained what mentorship meant to him by recounting his relationship with a previous supervisor:

I'm looking for someone that I look up to and [with whom] I have a great relationship . . . I'm going to use my previous supervisor for example, we were very close when we hung out outside of work in the sense that, he was definitely able to give me some guidance, provide the support, . . . develop [me], . . . [and] really connect me to the resources I need inside the job. But outside the job, we had the ability to . . . you know . . . hang out and not really talk about work. . . . whether it's considered friendship or mentorship, I appreciate the fact that we had a shared experience . . . and he could really relate to me both personally and professionally . . . I would definitely recommend that someone interested in student affairs find someone who has a shared experience that they can relate to . . . just because it makes a world of difference, you know, when an individual might be struggling, [thinking] “I don't know if this field is for me” . . . I definitely feel obligated to give back to a profession that's given so much to me through my collegiate experience. I think it's (mentorship) important for me and something I really strive to develop [with others], some relationships that are within the field . . .



The entry-level men in this study shared a need to create and maintain bonds with others the way their mentors bonded with them. In addition, an analysis of the data revealed that men in student affairs have a desire to show others, particularly other men, the “right way” to do things. They want to teach and model to others what being a man should be. Rob clarified that this type of role modeling is not just designed for men, but for all students:

. . . I can hopefully be a role model to students whether it be a male or female student and just someone they can look up to and know that whatever issue they might have they can come to me and chat about it.

The research indicated that entry-level men in student affairs place a high degree of importance on mentorship and role modeling. The Leader/Mentor identity is one that these entry-level men seemed to freely accept and is one that it appeared they actively embraced.

### ***World Changer***

Possessing a strong sense of responsibility and obligation to others was the next most prominent identity that emerged from the analysis. Over 70% of those involved in this study (16 of 22) took it a step beyond simply role modeling appropriate behaviors. For these men, assuming the identity of World Changer meant being aware of the state of the profession regarding gender and taking an active role in advocating change in the field. Johnny illustrated this position by stating:

I think we are seeing the scales tip where we are becoming more female dominated [as a profession]—which isn’t necessarily a bad thing—but what are we doing to contribute to the retention males that we have on our college

campuses? Making sure that issue is being discussed and (asking) what will we be doing as student affairs professionals and institutions to make sure that the scales don't get entirely out of whack and that we are still aligned for that healthy balance. Having those conversations at the table, whether it's with student organizations or whether it's with other colleagues, about what's going on to influence our practice and works.

In addition, these participants indicated that being a man within student affairs carries with it an obligation to counter traditional gender stereotypes and combat the negativity that exists about men, power, and privilege. These men commented on the historical context of men within student affairs and of their feelings regarding advocacy and support for men in the profession while advocating for women as well. Derek, a man in his fifth year as a professional, stated:

As a male, some of the things that I initially think of relate specifically to mentoring and specifically to countering a lot of the stereotypes that relate to men and any biases towards women and I think sometimes it's a male's position to really stand up and say, you know what, some of this stuff is happening and it's not right and we need to start to allow different measures in the systems that will help to combat a lot of the unfair biases towards women.

Similarly, Roger, in his first year as a full time professional, when asked about the role he plays as a man, stated:

I think it's something that's in such huge transition right now, um, with changing social roles and changing norms in our society . . . As men, we are in the minority with staff members, I mean, maybe not necessarily at the higher levels of staff, but in general. I mean, student-affairs is a highly female dominated field. So, being men who have gone through training on how to be empathetic and how to work in ways that aren't traditionally thought of like in nurturing ways that aren't traditionally thought of as male roles, I think that we're exhibiting some traits that men need to learn to work in society as it is today. In order to be successful and in order to be able to empathize with other populations, that's a huge role we play.

The concept of environment and how it shapes the entry-level man's experiences and identity in student affairs will be explored more in Research Question 2 of this chapter.

### ***Summary of Research Question 1***

The data suggest that there are three distinct identities that define the experiences of entry-level men within the field of student affairs. These identities are Traditional Man, Leader/Mentor, and World Changer.

Despite the often progressive tendencies attributed to student affairs as a profession, the identity of Traditional Man is still very present. Men in the field are often looked at to take on manual labor roles, and also seem more likely to be encouraged to make difficult choices, be the assertive person, and are viewed as more credible by others, simply based upon their gender. The entry-level men in this study admitted that this role is one that at times has its benefits, even if it does not align with their individual beliefs or those of the profession.

All of the men who participated in this study mentioned the importance of leadership, mentorship, and role modeling as helping define their experience in student affairs. Participants indicated that having a positive impact on others helps define their experiences, just as they were positively impacted by their own mentors.

Finally, nearly half of the entry-level men in this study felt an even stronger need to make a difference, not only in individual's lives, but in the profession as a whole. These men, described as World Changers, are active social advocates, who are aware of

the history of gender and oppression in student affairs and who feel it is their duty to end gender discrimination in the profession.

According to the accounts of the participants of this study, the three different roles that entry-level men in student affairs take on seem to be interrelated. At some points, men can take on the role of Traditional Man, while other times they can be more of a Leader/Mentor or a World Changer. While there may be additional identities or roles that entry-level men can have, these were the ones that emerged based upon analysis of the data.

### **Research Question 2**

*How do men make meaning out of their gender roles in student affairs and in their roles outside of student affairs?*

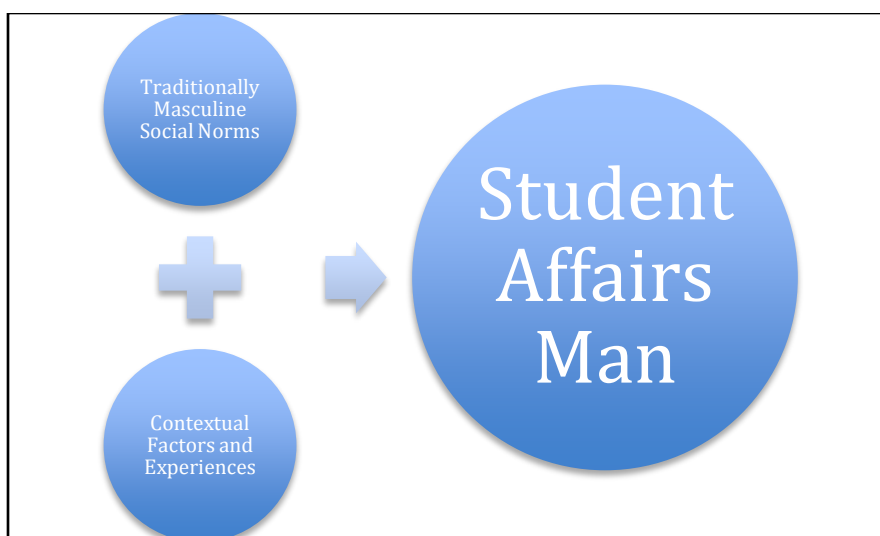
A desired outcome of the results of this study was to determine how the identity of an entry-level man in student affairs is created and how that identity manifests itself in the daily experiences of these individuals. The major findings regarding this question relate to how men make meaning out of their gender roles, both within and outside of the student affairs environment. Using concepts related to practice theory (Carlone, 2004; Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998; Holland & Eisenhart, 1990), and multiple identity construction (Abes et al., 2007), while accounting for gender and privilege, we can better understand how entry-level men might make meaning of their gender roles within and outside of student affairs. Practice theory subscribes to the idea that identity is defined by the daily activities, the individual's role in the workplace, and the individual's own perceptions. Similarly, Abes and her colleagues (2007) stated that understanding the various aspects

of one's identity will help make meaning of the identity as a whole. For men, the impact that hegemonic masculinity, privilege, and gender role conflict plays on their development cannot be ignored and must be incorporated into the construction of their identity as well. So, by combining these aspects of identity development and looking at them through the lens of an entry-level man in student affairs, we will get an understanding of how meaning is constructed.

As described in the key terms section of Chapter I, as human beings, we have a need to make sense of our roles and our reality. In general terms, individuals make meaning based upon their experiences and how they interpret those experiences to define who they are and what their role is in a particular context. For entry-level men in student affairs, meaning-making presents an interesting predicament, as the traditional gender roles assigned to men by society and the roles typically associated with the student affairs profession often are not the same.

An analysis of the data suggests that the identity construction of entry-level men in student affairs is contextual. In addition, meaning is constructed based on the level of acceptance a man feels by others and by himself, related to his identity as a man. Results of this study show that men make meaning of their gender roles based on what they have learned from family and friends throughout their upbringing (traditional social norms) and what they have learned themselves through interactions, encounters, and their own interpretations of how they should act and feel in any given environment (contextual experiences/situations). These experiences, thoughts, and feelings that men have within

and outside of student affairs related to gender roles help to create the “entry-level man experience.” This meaning-making process is shown below in Figure 4.2.



**Figure 4.2. *Methods of Meaning-making in Entry-level Men in Student Affairs***

### ***Traditional Social Norms***

Entry-level men student affairs, like all men, are subject to social norming and traditionally prescribed gender roles. All of the participants of this study stated that a key role that entry-level men in student affairs play is to model appropriately what it means to be a man to others. However, although entry-level men are aware of this responsibility, they still struggle at times with defining what it means to be men themselves, due in large part, the social norms that they have been exposed to throughout their lives.

One of the difficulties for these entry-level men in student affairs is the struggle that occurs when conforming to traditional gender roles does not align with one’s personal beliefs, described by O’Neil (1990) as gender role conflict. Men in student

affairs have been exposed to traditional gender roles throughout their lives, and despite academic and professional training, traditional roles cannot be completely dismissed. One participant hinted at this idea when reflecting on his relationships with students:

I come from a family of blue collared work. They don't necessarily talk about their emotions and our development, in the sense that the field [of student affairs] requires. I think that can be a struggle at times because that's how I was raised and sometimes when I work with students I want to have that conversation with them about [traditional gender roles] . . . but I think it's hard to erase twenty-five years of how I was raised as well. So definitely it requires me to be in check when I'm having those conversations. (Chad)

Similarly, Jerry talked about having to justify working in student affairs instead of the role that was expected of him as a man:

Well, I think sometimes, um, you know, like with family . . . just asking, "what do you do?" and "why are you doing *that*?" and you know, not really fully grasping what we do in student affairs, but also why it would be the appropriate career choice for me and for being a man. . . . I think that growing up, you know I grew up in a pretty conservative area, so I was expected to be kind of a breadwinner and go and do great things . . .

Another participant described the difficulty that men face when the role they play in student affairs does not line up with traditional gender roles:

. . . in general, [traditional] expectations are placed on men are to provide for their family, . . . to have a successful career, . . .and if . . . I think of those alongside of the demands of being a male in student affairs, I think about long hours, . . . the lack of financial incentives . . . it's really difficult for me to really find a congruence . . . (Alex)

Brett spoke of this struggle as well, particularly the influence that those outside of the profession have on how success is defined for men in student affairs:

For instance, even friends of mine, like my peers who are males, you know, I think a lot of males in my generation view a successful man based on his professional level, his status, his reputation, his earnings—financial earnings, his wealth, and those types of things. I think that that's honestly one of the great struggles for me personally, I know, is trying to not concentrate so much on those things because it's very tempting to want to pursue more lucrative jobs and rub elbows with powerful people in the community and those kinds of things because of the positive feedback, whether it's conscious or unconscious, that you get from friends, especially male friends, I think.

In spite of the difficulties associated with gender role conflict, modeling this struggle to other men is viewed as a good thing, as it helps affirm to men that they are not alone in their struggles. As Chad stated:

Yeah, I think it's really difficult to talk about that . . . living as an example in being what a man should be or how a man should act. Because I definitely think that's the individual's path to think with their identity, but I think it's important to show that they know how I struggle with the roles I play or show support for the decisions they might make.

Having chosen the profession of student affairs and learned theories related to student development and gender roles puts entry-level men in a position to help change perceptions and stereotypes about gender at a large level. As Roger summed up (mentioned earlier):

Being men who have gone through training on how to be empathetic and how to work in ways that aren't traditionally thought of, like in nurturing ways that aren't traditionally thought of as male roles, I think that we're exhibiting some traits that men need to learn to work in society as it is today, in order to be successful, and in order to be able to empathize with other populations. That that's a huge role we play.



These gender roles are defined by internally and externally, and a man's ability to successfully or unsuccessfully negotiate these roles directly impacts their experiences. How men negotiate these roles will be discussed in more detail in Research Question 4.

### *Contextual Experiences*

Contextual experiences, or those encounters and interactions with others in the context of a particular environment, also help define the roles of these entry-level man in student affairs. Twelve (54%) of the 22 participants made mention of the contextual factor of environment as shaping their experience as an entry-level man in student affairs. The contextual norms of environment included the profession of student affairs, the university setting, and the specific functional area/work environment of the participant's workplace.

The environment of the profession of student affairs was viewed by participants as shaping their experiences both positively and negatively. On one hand, these entry-level men expressed an appreciation for the openness and dynamic nature of the field student affairs, as revealed by the following comments:

1. I still feel like I'm encouraged to explore what it means to be a man in this field more than in other fields, um, because I think we are challenged . . . (Andy)
2. One of the reasons I chose this profession, was because it was, or at least I heard initially, and I still believe this, it is a very accepting profession. What other profession at the national conference had. . .one of the national conferences, had a drag show? (Alex)
3. Student affairs has been around for a while and there's new things we are still figuring out. And that's cool it's not stagnant, it's not an old thing, it's every day I come to work excited and it's never the same old thing working with students. (Rob)

Conversely, AJ described his dislike of the favoritism that sometimes occurs in student affairs, specifically related to gender:

. . . there tends to be a fair amount of bureaucracy and red tape in our field and sometimes I find myself more frustrated with that than others and I could see that at being a reason later on to leave. I would say that one of the easier things that it appears to me about being a man in student affairs is that I look around at sort of the higher ups, mucky-mucks, if you will, in our field and many of them still are men. You know, women have made great strides, but many of the CHOs [chief housing officers] and vice presidents for student affairs and so on are male.

I think it still demonstrates that it is easier to be promoted or be thought of as competent, if you are a man. I think there are still double standards, um, in our field based on gender.

In general, however, the participants in this study believe that the environment of student affairs is one that allows for discussion and change, and is open and safer than society at large. When describing the profession of student affairs, Phil stated:

You know, I haven't worked in the private sector, I have friends that do, and you know, it's not that diversity isn't talked about, it's almost like it's not practiced because it is such. . . I have a female friend that works in a bank and it is, at time, shockingly male, shockingly male chauvinistic, just you know, they're not having the conversation about privilege and things like that and so for a man who would find that frustrating to work in an environment where there isn't either a more level playing field or an attempt to kind of create that level playing field and openness. I think for men that would appreciate that environment, I think student affairs is definitely a place for them.

Similarly, respondents had high praise for working in the university setting, stating the positive environment as something that brings satisfaction to their daily lives.

1. I think there is such a good energy with new students always coming in, um, so kind of that mixes the history and the tradition and things mixed with the new and excitement and energy from students (Mark)

2. I feel like on college campuses they sort of set way for what new ideas and standards the world and society will see in the future. (Jorge)

*Contextual norms in student affairs.* The majority of the participants in this study perceived that as entry-level men in student affairs they were in the minority. In fact, only three participants did not mention gender as having an impact on their experiences in student affairs.

The data suggest that these men believe that they are in a unique position within the field of student affairs. They perceive that at the entry-level through mid-level management in student affairs men are in the minority, with women significantly outnumbering men in the workplace. Conversely, at the higher levels of administration around the university, participants noted that men still are in the majority. This circumstance sets up an interesting dynamic for men in student affairs. How can one be in the majority but also be in the minority at the same time? What does this situation mean related to the experiences of entry-level men in student affairs?

Although questions about gender and demographics in the field were not explicitly asked, these perceptions emerged through discussions regarding the participants' experiences as men in graduate school, the job search process, and their current/previous office environment.

*Political environment.* Another environmental factor that impacts the experiences of entry-level men is the political nature of the profession. According to the results of this study, having an understanding of politics and how to navigate this aspect of the field is a skill that can benefit entry-level men in student affairs. The role of politics in student

affairs has an impact not only on men's current experiences in student affairs, but also their future in the profession. Half of the participants (11 of 22) mentioned politics as shaping their experiences in student affairs.

David remarked on how frequently politics can come into play:

I am not a fan of politics at all, and unfortunately, . . . I realize that there is going to be politics wherever one goes to work regardless of the field, but in higher education, there is obviously much more than in other types of positions. . . . Politics that I come into contact with on an almost daily basis . . .

The political nature of the field requires an awareness of traditional gender stereotypes, which some entry-level men admittedly use to their advantage. Chad discussed his perceptions about how traditional societal gender norms can benefit men in student affairs:

I would say one of the easy things about being a man in student affairs is that men are kind of pushed into administration. I think there might be the automatic ease into that situation. I also think that like much of the world, like in the professional world, there's just some freedom to be who you are because based on history, based upon society, men kind of push or guide the way things have been.

Being aware of the political environment of student affairs can be an asset, as it can help one achieve success, regardless of skills. Mo summed up what the several other participants alluded to:

How do you obtain success (in student affairs)? Political nature of it, being who you know, how you know, how much they like you, what position are they in, what have you accomplished, what awards have you won . . . . But I feel like there's the political nature of the field and who you know, and uh whether it is still in higher up the "good ol' boys club" or in general making sure you please the right people.

Similarly, Eric added:

Bureaucracy is definitely . . . just the nature of student affairs. I think sometimes it's who you know as opposed to how you do your job. I think some of that definitely impacts me . . . I see that a lot of people progress in the field because of who they know and not necessarily what they've done or what their skill set is.

Some of the participants in this study acknowledged using their gender to their advantage. The following interchange with Johnny illustrated this concept:

**Johnny:** The leadership for the most part of an institution, or in most cases the division that I've been a part of, are mostly male dominated so I feel I'm more privy to more insight and the conversations probably going up . . . the organization . . . kind of the good ol' boys club kind of thing if you will. I know that I've been told a number of times "This is between you and I," and knowing the other things that are going on that's not open knowledge and information. I think in terms of short and long term strategy standpoint in terms of new professional it's nice to know what's going on so you can better strategize um but then I think also when you have that support from the higher-ups its interesting how things can happen . . .

**Interviewer:** And you do attribute that to being a male?

**Johnny:** Yeah, I think a lot of it has to do with the relationships that I'm able to build with male colleagues. Part of it obviously comes down to personality and the trust you're able to gain with that individual, but once again, probably my identity as a male gets my foot in the door.

While in general, the politics of the field seemed to be a source of frustration for the men involved in this study. It appears that for better or for worse it does play a large role in shaping their experiences.

**Gendered minority.** These entry-level men looked at being a minority in the field of student affairs from a variety of viewpoints. Several of the participants mentioned that a lack of men in student affairs made it difficult for them to relate to others. As Rob stated:

I think a lot of times when I think of the meetings I'm a part of, there are definitely more females there than males. I think the tough thing is (not) being able to relate with other guys or males in meetings and committees . . . I'm not saying males or females that one is better than the other, but I think it goes back to being able to relate more to someone of my own sex, and I don't think it's intentional, I think it's one of those subconscious things . . .

For some men, having a minority status led to feelings of isolation or being alone. As

Carl testified:

The only way I can describe being a man in the office is being the only one. When I notice it, it becomes clearly evident . . . umm when we are in group settings, when we are in staff meetings, or professional development like staff retreats. And you can tell that because I'm the male, that personality, that I stick out like a sore thumb.

*Feminization of student affairs.* Participants in this study discussed the stereotyping that occurs within the field of student affairs itself. Of the 22 total participants 9 made mention that to be a man in student affairs meant having your sexuality assumed to be homosexual. This type of thinking is attributed in part to their prior experiences as men in student affairs, beginning with their experiences throughout graduate school and culminating with their professional experiences. Comments made by participants in reference to experiences in Graduate School and in their professional career are shared below:

Graduate School:

In my graduate program I was one of two men out of twenty students. Granted, the other man was also heterosexual, so I don't think that. . . I think that it was strange being a straight man, particularly at the university I went to graduate school at, because there weren't very many straight men in the division of student affairs at the university. (Eric)

Professional Experience:

Um, sometimes I kind of wonder what it's like to be straight in the field, especially as a man, and I think about things like ACPA and just like the conference itself, and I feel like there is a lot of support and a lot of emphasis and there is just a lot of us, being a gay man out there. I can't think of any position I've had where I haven't worked with someone who is gay or is supervised by someone who is gay. Even now, my supervisor is gay, and his supervisor is gay. (Andy)

In addition, despite a man's disposition, 16 of the 22 participants of this study perceived that just being a man in student affairs gives you instant credibility and opportunity. Roger believed it might be due to traditional gender roles:

It's easy to take on leadership roles, I think. Um, because it's the way that society sets things up—that men are supposed to be the leaders. I think that a lot of the women in our office, though they are very strong, strong women and strong females, . . . sometimes they will sometimes fall into those old societal norms. And if I want to take initiative on something, I would probably say I'm looked at with more plausibility than maybe a woman would . . .

However, being in a field that is so closely linked to traditionally female traits is something that men in student affairs can have trouble adjusting to. As Eric stated:

I think one of the things that I've experienced is, I'm needed to be much more okay with being emotional or accepting of emotions . . . in staff meetings or meetings with my peers or meetings with students. That's definitely something that I think that is not necessarily something that in the larger society I necessarily have to deal with—being okay with being emotional or feeling with emotions on something that's an everyday situation.

For some entry-level men, the nurturing side that is associated with being in student affairs can be a source of frustration.

As Phil stated:

Often times I'm frustrated and I remember when I was in graduate school and also kind of in the workplace, I am a little bit frustrated when we talk about feelings. I'm not the most empathetic person, and it seems like a lot of the people I work with, even men, are very empathetic. I kind of bring that more maybe realistic, logical and less feeling-centric perspective to the table.

Similarly, Mickey admitted to having difficulty with the nurturing aspects of student affairs:

Sometimes it's [tough] being a male [in] a touchy-feely type of industry or type of situation. You know, where you look at the instructors, or you look at the folks in the general administration of your campus, and they're crunching numbers and they're doing all these things which would sound like that's where the testosterone is flowing. Okay, you're over here in student affairs and you're dealing with the touchy-feely items, it can be frustrating.

Jorge believed that the nurturing approach that is often taken in student affairs can be taken too far at times. In his opinion, it can sometimes hinder student development:

I feel like sometimes in student affairs . . . they just kind of cradle students along and not give them the tough love to live up to their actions and hold themselves accountable—because others [in the real world] won't be so lenient with them.

Not all of these entry-level men in student affairs wanted the mantle of leadership placed upon them by society. Interestingly, nearly 25% of the participants indicated that, because of their gender, they felt pressure to take on higher administrative roles, even though that was not their goal. Eric captured this feeling in the following statement when defining success in student affairs:



I don't think necessarily reaching a certain level (or) position is success, but I also think that educating students is really making sure that you're making a difference in student lives is also, I think, what it means to be successful. I think for me, um, what I view is trying to counter the stereotype that I want to be a vice president of student affairs or a president of a university. Um, that I just want power and influence. I think that's definitely not my goal and I get asked that question many times when I'm at conferences or you know, with colleagues about you know, "why you don't want to be a vice president, you don't want to be a president?" That's definitely something I don't want to do and I think that that's a common misperception...that a lot of males that are in student affairs want to take on those very typically male dominated roles in organizations. So, I would say that's a really tough thing, trying to go against those stereotypes . . .

*Reverse privilege.* One environmental theme that emerged regarding how entry-level men make meaning of their identity within student affairs was the idea of reverse privilege. There was a perception by some of the participants that men in student affairs have to constantly justify themselves and are punished because they have been privileged in society and in the profession for so long. As such, they are always on the defensive, essentially held hostage because of their privilege.

Below are participant comments that described this feeling:

I think sometimes there is some skepticism [by others in the field] in your ability to discuss power and privilege or that as a white man, that maybe my voice has been heard enough over history, and so [I wonder] "Where is there room for a white man at the table when discussing social justice?" I think there has definitely been some discomfort for me around that. (Andy)

You know, being a white man and trying to dominate the conversation on diversity can come off the wrong way. I think it's necessary to be open to learning, even if you are, you know, mister social justice and mister diversity. It's important that a man be open to listening more and making sure the others [in the workplace] know that. . .or that he is perceived as someone that is "down for the cause."

I think there is a perception out there that, if you're in a group of student affairs professionals and the white man is dominating the diversity discussion without mentioning his privilege, that's probably one of the hardest things. (Phil)

Johnny had similar thoughts on the subject. Here, he talked about there being assumptions about him simply because he is a man:

That [being a man] definitely plays a part in terms of not only how I view things, but also being cognizant of . . . whether it's just my physical appearance or the way I present myself—that individuals are going to make judgments of me and so being very cognizant when you're coming to the table you're going to discussions how others are going to perceive you.

Individuals make assumptions of stereotypes about me off the bat—before I've had a chance to speak or before they've really gotten to know me [because I'm a man].

Some of the participants felt that the negative feelings associated with male privilege have limited some of their opportunities in the field as well.

There are some positions that I would [ask myself] “should I apply for this, should not apply for this?” that were in multi-cultural centers, for example, Where it's like, “do I fit in there?” I feel like this is a job that I would definitely enjoy, it's something that I understand, but [I'm not considered for those jobs] . . . As a white man I also have an open mind in trying to learn more. (Andy)

[Because I am a man] I think that it's difficult having the opportunity of getting involved in certain activities that may be outside of my job description. I think that, whether it has to deal with women's issues or has to deal with . . . working with under-privileged students. I definitely didn't have those opportunities. Those opportunities weren't presented to me. (Eric)

### ***Summary of Research Question 2***

Clearly, the environment of student affairs plays a large part in how gender roles are perceived and how entry-level men within the profession make meaning of those

gender roles. Meaning is constructed both by traditionally masculine gender norms (breadwinner, competition, status, prestige) and also by contextual factors such as workplace environment and workplace activities. For entry-level men in student affairs, the traditional views of their role are primarily placed upon them by their family members and those individuals outside of the student affairs profession.

The majority of the meaning-making that takes place for entry-level men regarding their gender roles is based upon their daily experiences. The entry-level men in this study made reference to the impact that politics within student affairs has on their experiences. They mentioned the importance of having an understanding of the role that politics plays in student affairs. Results indicated that for better or for worse, politics is present, and some entry-level men describe the need to be aware of the intricacies of politics in student affairs in order to be successful.

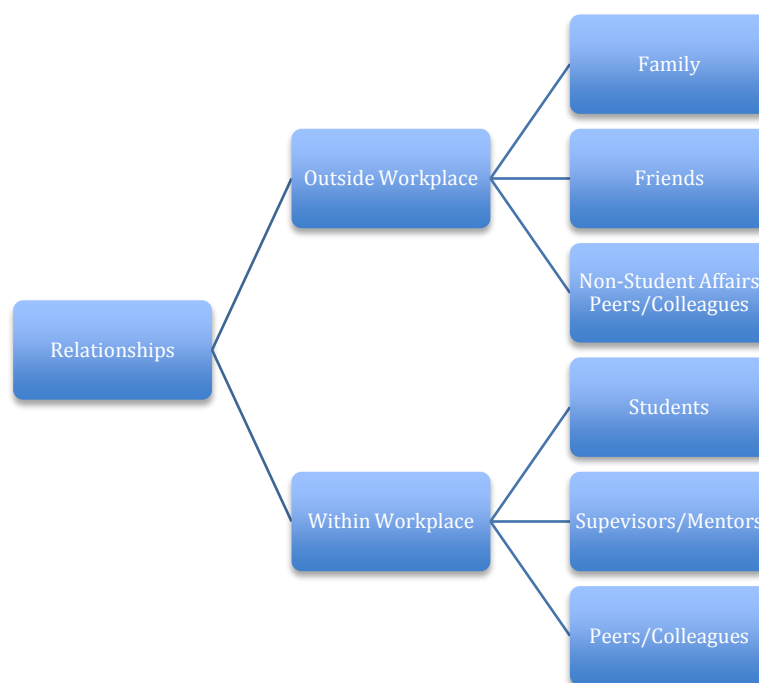
In addition, participants perceive that student affairs is a female-dominated profession, and as such, they often feel like they are in the minority. These feelings can be likened to those of traditionally oppressed groups in society, as entry-level men in student affairs at times feel isolation and marginalization based upon their male gender. Similarly, these entry-level men at times feel as though they are provided fewer opportunities because they are men. This may be due to the past history of the men being those in power, so they are often intentionally or unintentionally not thought of to serve on committees or to participate in events.

### **Research Question 3**

*What types of relationship networks do men in entry-level positions have in student affairs and how do those networks support/hinder the experience?*

As described earlier, relationships and networking are important parts of the development of student affairs professionals, and have a significant impact on the experiences of entry-level men. Relationships and networking were mentioned by all 22 participants as either positively or negatively impacting their experience in student affairs. Furthermore, the results indicate that entry-level men in student affairs have two distinct types of relationships: those within the workplace, and those outside of the workplace. Although at first glance breaking relationships into just two categories may seem simplistic, the nature of these relationships and the different approaches that entry-level men take based on these two categories, made this separation apparent. Essentially, these relationships represent two different worlds for these entry-level men in student affairs. According to the respondents of this study, how entry-level men act and define themselves seems to be tied to whether or not the relationship is associated within the workplace or outside of it. These relationships are shown in Figure 4.3.

In general, these types of relationships are two separate entities, although there does seem to be some overlap, specifically regarding those individuals who are both professional colleagues and personal friends, and in some cases some students whom entry-level men have a desire or obligation to assist in their development. These two areas can further be broken down to include peers, students, supervisors/mentors as well as friends, and family.



**Figure 4.3. Relationship Networks of Entry-Level Men in Student Affairs**

#### *Outside of Workplace/Student Affairs*

Relationships in this area consisted both of peers and colleagues employed on a college campus but not directly working in student affairs (i.e. faculty members and administrators) and those completely removed from the university setting (i.e. friends and family members). These individuals have a very powerful impact on the experiences of these entry-level men in student affairs. In general, the results of this study indicated that those outside of the student affairs setting seem to subscribe to traditional gender stereotypes. As such, relationships with these individuals seem to hinder the experiences of the entry-level men in this study. Chad explained how his external relationships impacted who he is as a man:

My definition of what it means to be a man would be more based on family values and a little bit tied to religious values, in the sense that . . . you know . . . being responsible for what I do . . . being a provider as much as possible and not only that but giving back to society, living by example and . . . um . . . being the best that I can be and following all the rules. Very traditional might sound cheesy but that's very definitely [the perception of a man's role] outside of Student Affairs. A successful man is one who is going to be judged by the car they can drive, the houses they have. Um, I think it might also be about where they're working at . . . I know it probably sounds cliché but I think that sometimes men can be pushed to make decisions or do something based upon what some of the norms are.

He went on to discuss the struggle related to these traditional roles being different that the roles of a man in student affairs:

Yeah, I think it's difficult to talk about . . . living as an example of being what a man should be or how a man should act. Because I definitely think that it is the individual's path to think with their identity. . . . I struggle with the roles I play . . . There may be individuals who don't want to fight that battle or who may not want to enter the field [of student affairs]. Why do they want to enter a field where their sexual orientation is questioned? Where they can relate to women but the stereotype is they cannot?

Similarly, Roger shared his experiences with traditional norms when discussing his relationships with those outside of student affairs:

It's swimming upstream. I mean, we're swimming against what society tells us to be as men. I'm generalizing here, but we are more in touch with our emotions and [there is] more of a nurturing side of us than the average male . . ., and that's looked down upon. I mean it's not just that it's not considered normal for men [to be sensitive], but it's actively like persecuted in a way. . . . My actions sometimes may come off to people as like "wow, he might be gay" or "what a pussy" or something like that. Like we're going against what society tells us to be as men.

A number of the participants mentioned that their sexual orientation and/or masculinity was questioned because they worked in student affairs, particularly by those

outside of the field. Whereas the majority of these participants were comfortable with these challenges from others (explored later in Research Question 4), the research suggests that these entry-level men may have difficulty when tradition gender norms conflict with their own beliefs. By questioning the participants' masculinity and pushing these entry-level men to fall into prescribed gender roles by drawing focus onto status, power, money, and other areas associated with masculinity, relationships with those outside of student affairs can be a cause of struggle for entry-level men in student affairs.

*Friends and family.* Twelve of the participants specifically mentioned a relationship with family or specific family members when describing their experiences in student affairs. Most of the information shared centered around the struggles entry-level men have from their family regarding them being in the field of student affairs. Eight of the participants pointed out that a lack of understanding of the student affairs profession by those outside of the field, was a source of stress for them. Jerry summed up this sentiment in the following quote:

Well, I think sometimes, um, you know, like with family . . . just asking well, “what do you do?” and well, “why are you doing that?” and you know, um, not really fully grasping first of all what we do in student affairs, but also why, um, it would be the appropriate career choice for me and for being a man in the field. . . . I think that growing up, um, you know I grew up in a pretty conservative area, so I was expected to be kind of a bread winner and go and do great things in terms of, like I was looking at a law career for a while and going to X School to work on my PhD in political science, um, not necessarily as many options in terms of being in a career that’s more people-focused, um, than what I think people would have expected me to want to do.

However in some cases, relationships with friends and family members provided a positive impact, by establishing an external support network, or an outlet away from

work. For example, Andy discussed how his family was a positive influence on him based upon their professional goals.

The only thing I could possibly think of is my whole family is counselors. My dad is a psychologist, my stepmother is a social worker, my mother is a guidance counselor, so I mean I feel that the helping profession was never something that I would have had a negative opinion of, which I think for some of us, I mean like, um, I think some people think that obviously there are more women who are drawn to this field, but for me that wasn't anything that I ever worried about.

Some of the participants felt that their training and experiences as student affairs professionals provided them with an opportunity to educate their friends and family members about gender roles and stereotypes. Mo elaborated on this idea:

I feel because of the field that I'm in, the experiences that I have, and where my uncles or my aunts or my cousins are at in their work lives, maybe fitting more in with male and female stereotypes, um . . . especially now with having a cousin who is just in undergraduate at MidAtlantic College, and um . . . feeling more comfortable with challenging him in certain developmental issues and questions and things that he brings up.

Similarly, Chad stated:

I think I have the opportunity . . . I have a brother who is in middle school . . . there's a huge gap there (in age) but I think . . . what it is to be a man . . . that conversation . . . comes up easier for me because I'm not afraid to have that conversation with him about what it's like to be a man in middle school and how it's going to relate when you're older.

Not all of these entry-level men felt comfortable questioning their family and friends.

Roger talked about some of his difficulties in trying to talk to friends outside of the field:



I go back home and I try to at least get a little edgy with my friends like, saying things that I've learned and they don't necessarily get it, but I don't want to like overwhelm them with what I've learned, but I'm starting to edge in slow. Like, tell them not to say like some of the stupid stuff that they say.

Lou shared his frustrations with his family members as well:

I just finished a course in social justice theory and white privilege. It opens your eyes and it really made me open my eyes to my family. And trying to talk with them [about those types of issues], I can't have a dialog with [them] because they don't understand.

*Non-student affairs colleagues.* A number of the participants mentioned relationships with individuals who worked on a college campus but not within student affairs. Individuals who fell into this group included faculty members and administrators.

Nearly 70% (15 of 22) of participants stated that in general, student affairs is not seen as a credible profession or as well respected by many around the university when compared to academic affairs. As Mo asserted:

I mean, again, there's always that stereotypical view from the academic side, whether it's not fully appreciating the value of our field or our job, or completely understanding it or valuing the collaboration, or valuing our contribution to learning and development.

Participants felt this belief could be attributed to a lack of understanding of the profession, or, as Jerry remarked, the fact that success in student affairs is often difficult to measure tangibly:

I think, as a student affairs professional {the perception is} that we don't. . .like, we rely a lot on feelings and not necessarily on hard data or getting all of our

ducks lined up in a row in terms of data and analysis before we make our decisions.

When asked about stereotypes about student affairs, Alex summed up the thoughts of several other responses with his answer:

. . . we're not educators. Um, that student development theory isn't legitimate. I've heard that. . . a degree in that isn't really going to heed much. It's not really a profession because it's so general. . . Student affairs professionals are touchy feely. Um, student affairs professionals. . . aren't concerned with students' academic success. They're more concerned with just a social . . . student affair professionals only care about programming. There isn't educational backing to what student affair professionals do, they're just concerned about fun.

In the majority of cases described by the participants in this study, relationships with individuals outside of the student affairs workplace had a negative impact on men's experiences in student affairs.

### ***Relationships within Student Affairs***

Relationships that occur in the student affairs workplace can be broken down into several sub-areas. Included within this group are peers, students, and supervisors/mentors.

***Peers.*** According to participants, men in student affairs appear to have strong bonds with those individuals with whom they have shared a difficult or trying experience, those who have provided valuable insight and input, and those who have had or currently possess shared viewpoints within the profession. Examples mentioned include individuals from one's graduate school cohort, male colleagues within the work setting, and mentors.

***Graduate school cohort.*** Nine of the participants mentioned strong ties to members of their graduate school classmates or cohort. The data indicated that men felt a bond with individuals with whom they have had a trying experience. These bonds seem to be strong, and while the men in the study indicated they did not touch base with these individuals on a regular basis, they still felt a kinship towards them in terms of personal support and care and a professional level of confidence. Below are excerpts from participant interviews discussing the bonds they have with graduate school colleagues:

I've actually been in several weddings of people I've gone to grad school with or I've held various positions with or been interns or in internships with or assistantships . . . um . . . so that's very different. I definitely hang out with or talk to on a regular basis my peers I went to grad school with so I don't know if there's more of a connection there just because of that shared experience of going to grad school and working. (Chad)

I really value the relationships that I have built in this field. So simple things like going to ACPA are very important to me. My first year as a fulltime staff member, our dept did not enable me to go to ACPA and I think I actually had a pretty big sense of uh, depression and loneliness because I was not able to go to ACPA to see my cohort. (Mo)

My strongest probably relationships are people from grad school, so especially the ones that I meshed well with. Um, so, those {relationships} I value greatly especially when I'm in a bind, or. . .not so much a bind, when I'm in a situation which is really kind of gray and I need some input, it's always nice to know that there is someone . . . and I trust their judgment and I can say, here is the situation, what do you think about this. I try as much as possible to give them the observation and the facts and see where they are. If they come up with a completely different response that I would have, then I would be able to discuss that and so I definitely appreciate that. (Andy)

Other individuals to whom these entry-level men seem to have a connection are those who take an interest in them as individuals and provide support to them, particularly when they are just starting out in the field.

I mean the one thing that most of them have in common is they were people who, {were} around a lot when I first started working here. Um, like they were actually in the same office as me. And so, even though some of us have gone to various offices and what not, we've stayed close. Um, but it was also, I mean, really people taking a genuine interest in my life outside of the office to be honest. (Brett)

*Male colleagues.* As discussed earlier both in terms of hard data and perception, the student affairs field, particularly at the entry and mid-management levels, is dominated by women. This gender dynamic within the workplace sets up feelings of isolation by these entry-level men in student affairs, and having a relationship, or the lack of a relationship, with male colleagues was mentioned as having a large impact on an individual's experience.

Thirty percent of the participants mentioned the need for another man in their professional lives to make their experience better. Carl articulated this concept in the following statement:

Because there is just not that many men in this field. And so it's hard to even seek out additional help (from men), from outside your office walls, because there is just not the numbers there. And umm I just feel that it's easier for them to relate to me because they get a sense of what it's like to be a guy, in a field that is not necessarily prevalent with men . . . It's like they can understand why I'm doing what I'm doing. And they can relate to that. They can empathize but I don't have that. Umm whether it's a mentorship role or just a colleague/best friend.

Similarly, Brett echoed this feeling of the importance of having a male colleague:

I never realized I guess, just having casual conversations with guys, how much I think that does to relax me and calm my nerves and, I don't know, just keep me in touch with who I am, I guess. I find that I'm just constantly wearing my professional face and using my professional language and I guess it. . .I'm learning, I think, that it would be really helpful to be able to, you know, take ten

minutes a day to have a casual conversation with a couple of guys. If I worked with a couple of guys and just talk about things that guys talk about.

Other men in the work setting can provide a positive impact regarding lifestyle as well.

Jorge described having a male colleague as being someone to confide in, who has an understanding of your situation, and someone who is a positive role model.

You know it is really kind of nice to have like another male co-worker. I guess just to sort of understand the same issues or just the same entire things that I would do, and realize that someone else does the same thing. . . . for example, my coworker is eating more healthy, regularly exercising to become more healthy. We talked about it . . . we have our scales and everything else, we will take a morning piss . . . and weigh ourselves, . . . it's just those little things here or there . . . or when we talk about different struggles that we have with our relationships because of the field, where there will be certain nights we have to stay later due to a program. And just sort of like the conflicts that come with it, where our girlfriends or wives don't quite understand the whole make-up of the field of student affairs, and how that can put a strain on the relationship. So it is just kind of nice to have that other male colleague to actually sort of talk about and not to feel alone in the situation.

*Students (male and female).* The data suggest that the relationships these entry-level men have with students is a positive influence on their experiences in the field. In fact, all 22 participants described their relationships with students as being the main reason that they are in the field of student affairs. Role modeling and making an impact on others, as described in Research Question 1, are very important to entry-level men in student affairs. As a man, having relationships with students can be difficult at times, due in part to gender stereotypes. As one participant stated,

[there is a stereotype that]men can't relate to students as much . . . And I think and you know just in general, that men can't relate to women as much. . . . as a man in

student affairs . . . I don't think people are always ready to open up to a man. Or I'm not as comfortable for one of our female students to open up to . . . (Chad)

As Chad described in the previous quote, participants pointed out that the nature of the relationships differs depending on whether the student is a man or a woman. Sixteen of the participants (72%) specifically mentioned that a student's sex/gender did make a difference in the approach and type of relationships entry-level men had. Jerry summed this up below:

As a man, you know, whenever that I'm having meetings with students, I definitely approach my workday a little bit differently if I have a meeting with a female student or a female RA. You know my conversations, and if the door is open, or you know, whatever like that, might be a little different than if I just hang out with a friend that happens to be a female after work. You know, and those connections and those relationships are very, very different. That's just something that I think a lot of men and I think just in the workforce in general, just have to do to make sure that, you know, that we promote a safe and inclusive environment for our students so that they feel comfortable as well.

For these entry-level men in student affairs, the relationship with male students can be challenging, but rewarding. For some male students, just having a male role model may have an impact. Because entry-level men are often one of a small handful of men in leadership positions within student affairs, there can be a tendency for male students to naturally be drawn to them. Two excerpts from participants described this idea:

In my last work unit I was the only man, and so I think sometimes male students latched on to me in a way they wouldn't necessarily latch on to me, as a mentor or social support, just because I was the only (male) person around. (Nick).

I can remember even in one of my assistantships at a cultural center, I was the only male. . . . when I became an advisor for the Latin American student organization, that the next time when elections came around, there were a lot

more male students stepping up to positions to take to be on the executive board . . . I guess the other males could just see that example and just try to step up and take those position and know that they could possibly be working with someone who can understand them as well. (Jorge)

Male students are not always quick to discuss their concerns or to confide in a professional staff member. For these students, the relationship seems to be more of modeling behavior and slowly making connections until a comfort level is established.

Lou talked about the nature of this type of relationship:

. . . when they can relate to you, it's kind of like, "wow", and they keep coming back asking questions. Sometimes students will show up and say, "Hey, how are you doing?," and those kinds of things. Then you start finding out like, there is stuff going on—whether it's academics or personal—and it's like you're chipping away at the wall they've had up and not allowing anybody in to help them. And, so, I just find that students keep coming back and the more times I see them, the more they reveal to me what's going on.

For male students, opening up is often done while performing other tasks (Davis, 2002).

Phil hit on that point when he discussed his interactions with his student staff members:

Some of my RAs, like seven of them, they really wanted to have a shaving party and they really wanted me to participate, so like three days ago I had like seven of my male RAs come over and we all shaved together because they wanted to have a bonding moment, which I think is awesome (a) because I think, you know, I think they were comfortable enough. . .I felt a little weird just being their supervisor and being there, but in terms of you know, masculinity and perceptions of what it means to be a man, I thought it was cool that they felt that they could bond like that and no one took it any other way other than say, hey, this is a really cool way for us to bond and it's fun.

These entry-level men in student affairs recognize that there is a unique opportunity to connect with students and provide support. Participants' responses

indicated that relationships with students provided a personal fulfillment, and are the part of their job in student affairs that are the most meaningful, and helps define their success in the field.

Another part of that, of that definition of success, is building relationships with students, and allowing them to return to me, not because they are accused of violating another policy, but because they are looking for advice, to form some of that mentor, mentee relationships, or even if it's just to stop by and say, hey, how are things going? (David)

And so for me, from that level, I know that every day, you know, I work more than I should; and I get paid less than I should; and I deal with difficult students every day and...um... you know, get an extra gray hair every day. But when I'm going to bed I know that I've had an impact on a student the way that administrators and faculty and staff did on me. So that's what makes me feel exceptionally happy to be in this field, even through the difficult days . . . (Mo)

*Mentors/supervisors.* According to the participants of this study, relationships with mentors and supervisors are very important for entry-level men in student affairs. Supervisors were described as being individuals who directly oversee job duties, like a boss or employer. Mentors are not necessarily tied to employment, but serve as guides and teachers to entry-level men. Twenty of the twenty-two participants specifically mentioned a mentor or supervisor as having an impact on their experiences as a professional. Mentors were perceived to be more important than supervisors, though there was some overlap. Alex talked about mentorship broad terms:

. . . the best mentors I've seen for me is usually being a sounding. . .um, a place just to talk to someone about whether it is those stereotypes that you're seeing about student affairs and need someone to talk to about, um, or someone who will support you in decisions you may have to make um, to also challenging you to think about things you may not have thought about before. And from those



relationships, I also think I try to do the same thing when I mentor new people who are coming into the profession.

In over half the men who participated in this study, the sex/gender of the mentor did have an impact on the relationship. These entry-level men felt that connecting with men who are in positions they aspire to be in made their experiences easier. Having someone whom they perceived to be “like them” to share personal and professional insights, was something that these entry-level men found to be very valuable. As one participant described below:

**Nick:** There is a strong emphasis in student affairs in mentorship as I mentioned and I think that that is something that I value about student affairs. There are a lot of women in student affairs that are very focused on mentoring other women. I have had good male role models in student affairs, but I haven’t had many of them...and so that is something that I wish there was more of, that I think would make life easier or better for men in student affairs.

**Interviewer:** How?

**Nick:** I think it is appealing for career advancement. I think it is important for skill development. Someone who gives you feed back and a way to kind of envision yourself in the future. I have had some great female mentors as well... but you know there is something, maybe it is about identification and seeing yourself, that I think it valuable in having a male mentor.

Chad echoed this sentiment as well when he described the relationship with his mentor:

. . . he was definitely able to give me some guidance, provide the support, develop (me), . . . really connect me to the resources I need inside the job. But outside the job, we had the ability to, you know, hang out and not really talk about work. But I think what I really, really do value from that relationship, whether it’s considered friendship or mentorship, is that I appreciate the fact that we had a shared experience . . . and he could really relate to me both personally and professionally.

Supervisors were mentioned as having an impact on the experiences of entry-level men as well, specifically in the tone they set for the office and the amount of direct support provided to staff. Seven of the participants mentioned having negative experiences with their supervisor. Reasons for this negative experience were primarily tied into a lack of support. While not specifically asked, eight of the participants mentioned that their direct supervisor was a woman. Participants perceived differences in supervisory styles related to men and women, with women being more nurturing and men being more logical.

### ***Summary of Research Question 3***

There are two distinct types of relationships that these entry-level men in student affairs have with others: personal and professional. Two of these areas seem to cross over the line of personal and professional: mentors, and in some cases, colleagues.

Personal relationships are described as those outside of the work setting, such as with family and friends. In general, these entry-level men believe that personal relationships can both support and hinder their experiences in student affairs. Personal relationships can be supportive and provide men with an outlet outside of the work setting. However, the majority of these relationships seem to hinder these entry-level men's experiences in student affairs, due in large part to traditional gender stereotypes that are prevalent outside of the field. Those outside of the work setting typically seem to be more likely to subscribe to these traditional gender norms. These entry-level men in student affairs typically do not subscribe to traditional roles, so there is the potential for conflict to occur. Internally, the entry-level men in this study may find it difficult or

frustrating to be compared to the traditional roles. They also may find it hard to explain or justify their manhood to those who have a different idea of what being a man might be. In any case, the views of those outside of student affairs can cause conflict or struggle and create a negative experience for these entry-level men in student affairs.

Professional relationships are those that center around the workplace. These types of relationships are subdivided into those within student affairs and those outside of student affairs but still in the university setting. Research indicates that these entry-level men seem to have a strong bond with individuals with whom they have had a trying experience related to student affairs work. As such, graduate school cohort members, and some work colleagues, are described as being strong sources of support for entry-level men. Also, these entry-level men state that when there are other men in the workplace, that there is a strong sense of support. When there are not other men present in the workplace, it is more difficult for entry-level men.

Relationships with students were mentioned by all twenty-two participants as having a positive impact on their experiences as a man in student affairs. Role modeling behaviors to students was very important to all of the men involved in this study. The nature of the relationships with students does differ depending on the sex/gender. Female students at times perceive male professionals as not being able to relate to them, while in other situations, female students are quick to open up and share their thoughts with male staff members. In addition, entry-level men need to be mindful of the dynamic between themselves and women students to avoid potential issues.

Relationships with male students are more centered on the idea of mentorship. Simply the presence of a man at the professional level can be a source of support for male students. Also, male students tend to want to bond with male professionals, but only after a level of comfort is established.

Finally, participants of this study described relationships with mentors and supervisors. An analysis of these data suggests that a relationship with a mentor is very powerful and is a great source of comfort and support for entry-level men in student affairs. Participants mentioned that they were likely to gain more from a male mentor, since there was a direct connection and feeling of mutual understanding between the two. Supervisors were sometimes mentioned as mentors, but in general, they were mentioned as having more of a negative impact due to lack of support and communication.

#### **Research Question 4**

*How do entry-level men negotiate who they are as men within the context of the student affairs profession?*

Having determined some of the factors that contributed to the identity of entry-level men in student affairs earlier in this chapter, this question focuses on the methods these entry-level men use to cope with their identity. The major findings of suggest that there are four ways in which entry-level men negotiate their gender identity in student affairs. These areas are: being self-aware, having a male outlet, recognizing motivation, and having a support system.

### *Self-Awareness*

Being self-aware and comfortable with one's identity as a man was a strong theme that emerged from this study. Twelve of those who participated in this study (54%) alluded to a strong sense of self as something essential to their experience. This concept relates to an individual's ability to understand who he is as a man (in student affairs and in society) and to be comfortable with that identity, regardless of the obstacles. It also ties into being emotionally mature and confident with one's place as a man in student affairs and in society. Considering that entry-level men in student affairs face duality constantly (they need to be logical AND caring, be feminine AND masculine, are privileged AND in the minority), having a strong sense of self-awareness is critical to successfully negotiating their gender identity. Alex summed up the main idea here:

I would say a successful man is someone who has grown and who has, you know, has I guess kind of worked through the hierarchy of needs and they're getting closer and closer to self actualization, you know, and that to me is someone who is successful. Someone who is able to have a career that, that they want to be in, that, you know, you go to work every day and if it's a job you love, it won't feel like work. And, so a successful man had found something for themselves that it doesn't have to feel like it's work, it's something they are really passionate about.

Self-awareness also ties in with the previous theme of responsibility and social advocacy, as participants who are self-aware often are those who feel the most obliged to make a difference when they see the need for it. Mo described this concept:

Um . . . again, being comfortable with yourself and who you are as a person and how that identifies with who you are as a male to help with having that privilege and responsibility to mentor men about their masculine development and society and their ability to have an impact on women and minorities, and LGBTQ, . . . to help to continue to progress the community they live in to be more equal.

*Comfort with sexuality and emotion.* Twelve of the participants mentioned that aspects of their sexual orientation were linked in some way to their experiences in student affairs. Two of the participants disclosed they were gay, and ten made reference in some manner to being straight. Either way, the general thoughts expressed regarding sexual orientation focused on the assumption or perceived assumption of homosexuality simply by being a man in a feminine field. Chad summed up this idea in the following statement:

. . . there is an automatic assumption about the sexual identity being questioned . . . you know . . . I'm okay with being questioned . . . but I think that's one of the things that I find interesting about our field, is that there's that stereotype [of being gay]. . . . But I think it's interesting that, you know, in a field that talks about understanding people for who they are that that stereotype automatically happens.

Regarding emotional maturity, Eric explained how it comes into play in his view:

I think one of the things that I've experienced is I'm needed to be much more okay with being emotional or accepting of emotions. That's definitely something that comes into decision-making a lot, and it also comes into. . . I mean staff meetings or meetings with my peers as professional staff or meetings with students. Um, that's definitely something that I think that is not necessarily something that in a larger society I necessarily have to deal with; being okay with being emotional or feeling with emotions on something that's an everyday situation.

Recognizing that showing emotion and displaying traditionally feminine qualities is acceptable for men shows a level of maturity. Having a strong sense of self-awareness and comfort level with one's sexuality seems to be key to negotiating gender related issues successfully, specifically in student affairs.

### *Having a Male Outlet*

One way that men in student affairs can combat gender role conflict is by connecting with other men in activities separate from student affairs work. Nine of the participants in this study mentioned the importance of having a masculine outlet outside of work. As Jorge stated:

. . . It's really kind of nice to just go and create that bonding moment . . . male bonding, which is what I guess I have been really lacking a lot within this field because I have been surrounded by women so much. Sometimes you know I really want to talk about the football game or talk about my baseball team I really like, and I don't really get the opportunity to do that as much [in the workplace] . . .

For this group, an outlet serves as a means to deal with the everyday stresses associated with being a man in student affairs. George explained the predicament that some entry-level men seem to find themselves in:

It's one thing to be in touch with our feelings and be a little bit better at it than the typical guy, but at the same time we still are guys. [Not] having that quality time [with other men], facing the illogical or emotion driven stuff all the time can be overwhelming if you have no way to kind of get away from that.

Carl discovered his masculine outlet while reflecting about his part-time job:

Because I am in student affairs it doesn't really pay the bills, so I have a part-time job and I work at Best Buy. And so it's like hyper-female at my job and hyper-prepubescent male at my part-time job. So in some ways I find my male outlet by being around electronics, which is traditionally a male dominated hobby. I never really thought of it this way because Best Buy was a way for money or a discount on stuff that I liked, but in some ways it's like kind of my way of bonding with the guys.

Similarly, Mickey found his refuge outside of student affairs. Here, he commented on his need to express himself as a man:

I wonder how it would be for me if I didn't have [this outlet]. Okay, it's five o'clock, I now take off this uniform [of a student affairs professional], put on a crazy looking uniform [of a referee], go out and chase young kids up and down a corridor or football field. But, I'm around other guys. You know, officiating is still pretty much a male dominated profession. I wonder how it would be if I didn't have that as a counter balance to what you do during the day. You know, how would I handle that?

I'm becoming more aware of it now because I mean, you finally look around and you go, "gosh, where *is* everybody [other men]?" You just wonder like, all right, should I . . . you know do I need to go out on the golf course or do I need to do something to say, "hey, look at me, this is something that is male oriented!"?

As Jerry explained, having an outlet helps men maintain their identity:

. . . My first year as a graduate assistant in housing, we had I think like 16 female hall directors and 5 males. Just being able to do things that, I guess, guys like, you know whether it's sports or things like that, and not lose that identity . . . just being able to find things that other men enjoyed doing together in that kind of environment. It was a lot easier for me because since I was taking classes in political science, I had another group that I worked with, but if I would have been a little bit more isolated, I think I would have struggled a lot more.

Perhaps Roger summed up the feelings many entry-level men in student affairs have, and why a male outlet is so important for this population.

It's swimming upstream. I mean, we're swimming against what society tells us to be as men. I'm generalizing here, but we are more in touch with our emotions and [there is] more of a nurturing side of us than the average male . . . , and that's looked down upon. I mean it's not just that it's not considered normal for men [to be sensitive], but it's actively like persecuted in a way. . . . My actions sometimes may come off to people as like "wow, he might be gay" or "what a pussy" or something like that. Like we're going against what society tells us to be as men. I



think in a long term, of course, that serves us well, but, doing it all the time—I mean I do have to have a little bit of a release.

For these entry-level men in student affairs facing gender role conflict, there is a need to express themselves as men in a safe environment. Rob added some insight as to why this outlet is important:

I think it goes back to a comfort level. I know for myself there are some things I would say or do in front of just guys and not females, and there may be some things that I feel more comfortable talking about in front of males than I would females . . .

Having meaningful relationships and support from other men is key to successfully negotiating the male identity for entry-level men in student affairs.

### *Types of Motivation*

Participants in this study believe that when a man chooses to enter student affairs as a career, he is already aware of the concept of gender role conflict. The fact that he entered the field in spite of this conflict says a lot about his level of self-awareness. Results of this study indicate that there are varying levels of motivation for men in student affairs. For some men, it is easy to see the bigger picture; the impact that their very presence in the field has on others is enough to keep them satisfied and motivated, regardless of the obstacles they might encounter. As Mo described below:

I know that every day, I work more than I should and I get paid less than I should and I deal with difficult students every day and . . . get an extra gray hair every day. But when I'm going to bed, I know that I've had an impact on a student the way that administrators and faculty and staff did on me. So that's what makes me feel exceptionally happy to be in this field, even through the difficult days

For others, making an impact is important, but it may not be enough to keep them motivated. Competition can be a motivating factor for some men. However, as shown in the quote below, sometimes it is difficult for men in student affairs to compare the work they do, to that of men in other professions.

. . . Compared with some of my friends who are doing jobs in business, it's like, "gosh, you have a lot of responsibility, don't you?" And so do I, right. But it's not tangible. It's not; you can't put a finger on it. I'm responsible for future. I'm responsible for thoughts, for ideas, for options. You can't put a quantifiable thing on that. In other fields if you don't bring in the clients or make quota then they can measure that, they can say you stink or you're good. In this field, I don't think you can do that, so that is an easy-tough thing, like the job is easy but you can't measure it . . . How do you know you are doing good at it? That's the frustrating part of it too. (Carl)

The allure of traditionally masculine qualities, such as success and achieving highest level can be a motivating factor as well. For Mark, being able to make an impact on a grander scale was of great interest:

I guess I'm kind of ambitious in that I do want to be in a higher position of authority, I guess. And to be in the position to make some bigger, broader decisions that have a larger impact on the bigger picture at the university, and what that means for students. Whereas right now I'm making a lot of smaller things that impact students more immediately and more directly.

Despite the varying degrees of motivation, in general, the entry-level men in this study are able to cope with the challenges of being a man in student affairs because they *can* see the bigger picture. They can see how they play a role in the lives of many, and are willing to endure situations that are difficult or uncomfortable for the greater good.

As two participants described below:

I think one of the things as guys in student affairs that I guess is important to think about, is that whether directly or indirectly, your job as a student affairs person is to reach down and help other guys. Because the state of men in general across the board in our area is dipping, it's getting worse. Whether that's low attendance in school, the fact that they're not doing as well in their grades as compared to women, whether it's not working in the field, it's kind of our responsibility to reach out and reach down and grab some people and pull them up too, whether they're going to be part of student affairs to work in or just do good in school so they can do other stuff. I guess to raise the level of men back up. It doesn't need to be above women, but I feel like right now it's starting to sink kind of below, so we need to at least be even. (George)

We need to make sure that as men working in higher education that we're looking out for men. I mean, as we're looking out for the larger student body, we're also making sure that we serve as role models for men. Because, in a way, I think that like we are the prototype of what men should be in this evolving society . . . I mean we're in a new society. As much as things don't ever change, they are constantly changing, and as men who are able to tap into what are traditionally considered feminine traits, and working in a field that is predominately female, we're able to operate within that new social structure and we can model that for men as they come through and as they enter such an important time in their life. (Roger)

### *Having a Support System*

As discussed earlier in this chapter, having an adequate support structure is key to a successful experience for entry-level men in student affairs. These entry-level men seem to be able to find support at an individual level, as evidenced by the relationships with mentors, supervisors, and colleagues. However, participants of this study indicated that higher levels of support, from the division, institution, and the national professional organization level, are lacking. The perception the entry-level men in this study have is that often times, the professional development of men and males in student affairs is an afterthought. Rob reflected on an opportunity at his campus that was offered for women but not for men:

It's funny a couple weeks ago there was a women in higher education breakfast, and there was a couple of [similar] committees like that on campus. But, I really don't hear about a "Men in Higher Education breakfast" or organization or anything like that. I think that's interesting and I don't know the numbers of males to females on our campus (professionals) or whatnot . . .

Similarly, Johnny recognized the assistance offered by the professional organizations in student affairs to some groups, but not all:

We often times see presentations or reports come out through NASPA or ACPA of helping women navigate the doctorate, or African American men and the support networks we need for them . . . I mean you can look at all of the affinity groups and I think at the same time, well yes men particularly white men have dominated the field and dominated the leadership. We need to make sure the skills don't totally go out of whack that they go the other way so making sure that the mentorship and the guiding lines are also staying intact for all professionals.

Some men just want the affirmation of others. They need a place to discuss the issues that men are facing and to know they are not alone:

One of the things that I was really looking forward to in coming over was not just to talk, but also to listen to other guys in the profession and [to find out] what they're seeing and what they're feeling and taking that back. . . . [I want to know] what are the other guys saying so that you don't feel like you're out on an island. Maybe that's a better way to say it. You know, when you look at things and you just go, "am I looking at this the proper way?" or "should I feel this way about it?" So, just knowing that other folks are looking at it the same way, you know, it may not solve it, but it makes you feel a whole lot better. (Mickey)

Similarly, Rob's statements concurred:

I think just talking about issues that males are facing . . . having a sounding board of talking about some of the things we are facing, whether it is raising a family in higher education or working with different types of diversity, and just having that group of people you're comfortable with to use as a resource . . . I think a lot of topics that might not be talked about . . . would be talked about if it was an all

male meeting or committee . . . So it's kind of being there and having that idea sharing and talking about those current events thing in colleges for students or professionals that would impact other males [would be beneficial].

Whether at the institution level or higher, it appears that adding additional levels of support for entry-level men will benefit their experience.

#### ***Summary of Research Question 4***

The data suggest that there are four ways that entry-level men in student affairs negotiate their identities within the profession. These areas are: being self-aware, having a male outlet, recognizing motivation, and having a support system. Those men who are more comfortable with who they are and who are more emotionally and cognitively mature seem to more successfully embrace their role as men in student affairs. Being more self-aware means having a comfort level with working in a feminine profession and being secure when one's sexual orientation or masculinity is challenged by others. In addition, men who are more self-aware define success themselves, and do not need others to define it for them. The more self-aware men are, the more likely they are to want to make a difference in the field and working with others.

Another method of negotiating the male gender role for these entry-level men in student affairs is by finding a male outlet. Whether intentionally created or discovered through other means, the participants in this study indicated that they require a "safe place" with other men to be themselves. Often, this safe space or male outlet is a place for a man to do or say things where he will not be judged. It is also a place when he can act masculine in an appropriate way. Having a male outlet and having an opportunity to

connect with other men seems to be a key coping method for entry-level men in student affairs.

Results of this study indicate that there are varying levels of motivation for men in student affairs. For some men, it is easy for them to see their impact in the field has on others at a more global level. These men are satisfied just making a difference and are undeterred by obstacles. For others, making an impact is important, but it may not be enough to keep them motivated. Competition and other traditionally masculine qualities, such as success and achieving highest level can be a motivating factor as well for entry-level men in student affairs. Despite the varying degrees of motivation, in general, the entry-level men in this study are able to successfully negotiate being a man in student affairs because they are able see the bigger picture and they are motivated by the impact that they can have on other students and staff, both male and female.

Finally, having an adequate support structure is key to a successful experience for entry-level men in student affairs. The results of this study indicated that although entry-level men are able to find support at an individual level, they feel as though support at the division, institution, and professional organization levels are not to the degree needed or desired. Entry-level men in student affairs perceive that professional development of men and males in student affairs is often an afterthought. When professional assistance is offered by these larger entities, they are provided to some groups, but not all.

Respondents shared that some men seek affirmation of other men, and are in need of a place to discuss the issues that men are facing. They need to know that they are not alone in their struggles and successes. Whether at the institution level or higher, it

appears that adding additional levels of support for entry-level men will augment their experience in student affairs.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will review the purpose of this study and the research methods utilized, as well as provide a summation of the major findings. This review will be followed by a discussion of my interpretation of these findings, including potential implications for the profession of student affairs. Finally, I will mention some of the perceived limitations this study presented and will offer some recommendations for future research related to this topic before the providing some concluding remarks.

The practical objectives of this study were (a) to better understand the experiences of entry-level men in student affairs, (b) to explore the impact male identity has on these experiences, and (c) to discover what student affairs practitioners can do individually and as a profession to establish an organizational environment that is supportive and appealing to entry-level men in an effort to increase recruitment and retention rates. The intellectual objective of this study was to help explain the high attrition rates in men in student affairs during the first five years in the profession.

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of men at the entry-level of the student affairs profession. Using the concepts found in the literature as a framework, the research focused upon the meanings constructed by entry-level men within the field of student affairs and compared how those meanings were similar to and



different from the societal definitions of masculinity. My belief was that by uncovering men's perceptions of working in a female dominated field and the impact their experiences have on the male identity this study would illuminate what it means to be a man in student affairs and in the process present ways to provide the support and guidance needed to retain men within the profession.

I determined that the best way to answer my research questions and achieve the objectives of the study was to utilize a qualitative methodology, using aspects of narrative inquiry within the context of a case study. This case study was conducted using twenty-two entry-level men in student affairs representing various functional areas within the profession. The average number of years of professional employment for the participants was 2.5 years, with some having less than a full year of professional experience, and some just having recently completed their fifth year in the field of student affairs. The sample was representative of the main regions of the continental United States (Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, South, Midwest, West, Southwest). Functional areas represented in the sample included: seven from Residence Life, three from Leadership/Community Engagement, three from Advising Offices, two from Student Activities, two from Career Services, two from Judicial Affairs/Student Conduct, two from Greek Life, and one from Multicultural Affairs. Data was collected via individual semi-structured interviews (18 participants) and a focus group (4 participants). These data were transcribed and analyzed, with the results detailed in chapter four of this dissertation.

### **Summary of Findings**

In chapter one of this dissertation I asserted that given the small numbers of men entering student affairs, that it was imperative to retain entry-level men because they were important to the profession. In conducting this study, it was my hope to better understand the experiences of entry-level men and to use that information to provide opportunities to support and retain this population in the profession.

Although there is some previous research available on the development of the male gender identity (Davis, 2002; Good et al., 1989; O'Neil, 1981, 1998; O'Neil et al., 1986; Pleck, 1981; Wade, 1998), very few of these studies look at this concept within the context of a particular profession (Bradley, 1993; Lupton, 2006; Simpson, 2004, 2005; Williams, 1992, 1995). Whereas fields like nursing and education are similar to student affairs in that they are associated with traditional female traits, the literature regarding this population is extremely limited. In fact, I was not able to find any current research that looked specifically at the impact of identity on the experiences of entry-level men in student affairs. For this reason, the results of this study represent new ground for research in the field. My hope is that this study will serve at least as a starting point for future research, some suggestions for which I will discuss later in this chapter. At best, the results of this study will provide a window into the entry-level male experience, which should help in terms of finding support for this population in hopes of increasing retention rates for men in the field.

In reflecting on the research questions chosen, it is apparent that all four are linked together. When looked at as a whole, the four questions seem to help paint a

picture of what it is like to be an entry-level man in student affairs, at least as it is perceived by the twenty-two individuals who participated in this study. Through hearing and interpreting their stories, I believe that we, as a profession and as individuals, can find ways to better support this population and prevent it from being an afterthought in the minds of others in the field. First, I will discuss the major findings based upon my four research questions in the context of the literature. I will look at the four research questions individually and as a whole and comment on what the answers may tell us about the population of entry-level men in student affairs. I have summarized the major findings of the study, by research question, in the following paragraphs.

*Question One: What is it like to be an entry-level man in student affairs today? What are the identities/experiences of entry-level men in student affairs?*

The entry-level men in student affairs in this study identify with three different roles: Traditional Man, Leader/Mentor, and World Changer. The idea that identity is tied to a particular role is related to the concept of social identity theory (Deaux, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As Deaux (1993) stated, an individual's role in society, or in this case within the context of student affairs, can dramatically influence one's identity. For the entry-level men in this study, the three roles they attributed to their experiences help to define who they are in student affairs. They assume different identities based upon the context or situation in which they find themselves—essentially, they are chameleons of identity, slipping in and out of roles depending on what is needed. For example, an entry-level man might be a Leader/Mentor while working with a particular student or staff member, but when asked to move a box or heavy object, he becomes a Traditional Man.

This idea of the malleability of gender roles to fit the situation is something that Williams (1995) suggested occurs in female dominated fields, and it appears that student affairs is no exception. She stated that gender roles can change and are flexible, based in part by the dominant group in the profession. If men take on roles that tend to be more masculine or more feminine in a given situation, it is probably because that is what is expected of them by the dominant gender, perceived in this case to be women.

In addition, the results of this study also indicate similarities to certain aspects of practice theory. What it means to be man in student affairs, as recounted by the individuals in this study in describing these roles, is defined by their daily activities, their workplace roles, and their individual perceptions. As Holland and Eisenhart (1990) stated, the perceptions of these individuals could define their identity, potentially creating an alternate view of masculinity in the context of student affairs. These varied roles that entry-level men in student affairs associate with seem to support some of the tenets of practice theory. Practice theory focuses “on the generation of meaning systems by groups in response to structural constraints” (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990, p. 41). These entry-level men in student affairs admittedly make meaning based upon the social constraints placed upon them by traditional gender roles and their contextual environment.

Therefore, it seems logical that the roles that the men in this study take on in student affairs, and in particular the World Changer role, has roots in practice theory. The World Changers seek to redefine gender roles and rewriting societal definitions of these roles. They do that through their actions, and base those actions on their perceptions of what men in student affairs are, and what they hope for them to be in the future.

The results of this study suggest that mentors, particularly those who are of the same gender, heavily influence the experiences of entry-level men in student affairs. These results seem to confirm the previous research in this area, specifically that of McEwen et al. (1991) and Taub and McEwen (2006). Taub and McEwen (2006) mentioned the importance of personal contact within the mentorship, and how it is essential to the recruitment and retention of student affairs professionals. This point was reflected by all of the entry-level men in this current study. McEwen and her colleagues (1991) found that individuals within student affairs have an inclination to seek out and be mentored by those most like themselves, an idea that seems to hold true for the entry-level men in this study as well. Similarly, these researchers also stated that an important dimension to the mentor relationship is “demonstrating to men the value and legitimacy of developing and incorporating the feminine dimensions of themselves into their professional roles” (McEwen et al., 1991, p. 445). Again, the men that I spoke with as a part of my study also shared this idea as well. Not only did their mentors have an important role in affirming to them that it was acceptable to display feminine traits as a man in student affairs, but they also stated it was crucial that they also demonstrate that same level of acceptance to those that they mentored.

Due in large part to the mentors that they themselves had, participants stated they felt almost a duty to other men to be a mentor and provide opportunities for other men. In addition, having someone of the same gender who can understand what they are going through and who has had similar experiences is important to entry-level men. It appears that for some entry-level men, having other men to legitimize their feelings is necessary,

which is similar to what McEwen et al. (1991) and Williams (1995) found in their research. As stated above, McEwen noted the important role that mentors play in legitimizing the use of traditionally feminine traits by men in the student affairs workplace. Similarly, Williams (1995) also found a need for men to legitimize and affirm the work that they do, particularly if it is work that does not align with traditional male gender roles, by other men. Williams noted that in order for men to feel accepted and at ease in their profession, they must see and hear that they are not alone in their experiences. They displayed a need for other men to affirm their manhood and to share in their trials and tribulations as men in a female dominated environment. These are nearly the same sentiments that the entry-level men in my study shared as well.

Becoming that type of model, one that serves as guide to others, is something about which entry-level men feel very strongly. These feelings are very similar to the results found in research related to mentorship with women in student affairs (Blackhurst, 2000a, 2000b; Blackhurst et al., 1998a, 1998b; Twale & Jelinek, 1996). This research on women in student affairs revealed a connection between strong gendered mentorship and higher satisfaction levels. Women in student affairs who had strong female mentors had a better professional experience. Similarly, the findings of this study on entry-level men suggest that mentorship in student affairs for men also may be related to higher satisfaction and a better experience. All of the participants (100%) indicated the importance of mentorship in their experiences. The fact that approximately 80% of those same respondents marked their satisfaction levels in the satisfied (midpoint) or higher range would seem to show a positive relationship between mentorship and satisfaction.

The high degree of importance that entry-level men in student affairs place on mentorship is significant, especially considering the direct link found between role modeling and constructed gender roles in men (Davis, 2002; O'Neil, 1990; O'Neil et al., 1986; Pollack, 1999).

All of the participants attributed their being in student affairs to the mentorship they received. To those in this study, being a mentor and role model can mean displaying a better awareness of self through behavior and actions and making a meaningful impact on others. In their recommendations, McEwen et al. (1991) asserted that role modeling to other male students is imperative to male students' development. The results of this study reveal that for these entry-level men this belief is something that is inherent.

Those men who identified as being World Changers ( $n=9$ ) seemed to be aware of the state of the profession regarding gender and to be taking an active role in advocating change in the field. These individuals actively hope to counter traditional gender stereotypes and combat the negativity that exists about men, power, and privilege. For these individuals, it would seem that their heightened awareness of their role and their desire to work towards change is similar to the later developmental stages of identity development theories associated with traditionally oppressed groups (Cass, 1979; Cross, 1971, 1995; D'Augelli, 1994). In many of the identity theories of traditionally oppressed groups, there is a common polarizing factor that unites them in their struggle. Although it is not clear what that might be for entry-level men in student affairs, they do share the common struggle of being in a unique position of having privilege in some aspects and being punished for those same privileges in others.

In any case, there are some similarities between the identity of World Changer and the later stages of some of the minority identity development theories. For example, in Cross's (1995) internalization stage (Stage 4), individuals become more secure with their Black identity, whereas in the internalization-commitment stage (Stage 5), individuals recognize their oppression and are actively working towards making others aware of it and working towards minimizing it.

Unlike the identity models of historically oppressed groups, the individuals in this study actually are utilizing their privilege to help others, which is more similar to the literature on privileged group development (Helms, 1995; McIntosh, 1998; Worthington & Mohr, 2002). According to Helm's White Identity Development Model, those in the Autonomy stage are comfortable with their "Whiteness" and are highly self aware. As Helms (1995) stated:

Working toward the elimination of sociopolitical oppression in general is a strong characteristic of the Autonomy stage. Via one's own self and environmental examination, the person becomes increasingly aware of the many shapes and shades in which oppression can exist. He or she also has begun to understand how oppression hurts all people even when it is not directly aimed at them. (p. 88)

Individuals in the Autonomy stage have a more global worldview and are actively working to end oppression, using their own privilege as a means to do it. These ideas seem to be quite similar to the viewpoint of the World Changers in this study of entry-level men in student affairs. The participants in this study, like those in the Autonomy stage of Helms, are actively working to end oppression and build awareness.



The findings of this study suggest that a number of the roles that entry-level men take on within student affairs tend to be traditional in nature, similar to what previous researchers (Hughes, 1989, Simpson, 2004, 2005) found to occur with men in other female dominated professions. Specifically, the role of Traditional Man that some of the participants identified as being part of the entry-level male experience mirrors the results that Simpson (2004, 2005) found when she talked to men in other female dominated professions. One of the traditionally stereotypical roles that men within student affairs are looked to take on is that of logical thinking—to be the “thinkers” rather than the “touchy feely” ones. This phenomenon seems to play directly to the gender stereotypes that Hughes (1989) mentioned in reference to the student affairs profession. This study confirms her assertion that women typically are associated with having a more nurturing role, whereas men are traditionally thinkers (Hughes, 1989).

In addition, being assigned more difficult tasks in the office and having a perceived level of credibility or expertise because of gender (e.g. this is a “guy task” or “we need a logical thinker, find the man on staff to handle this issue”) was something that the men in this study shared with the men whom Simpson (2005) interviewed as well. The men in this study, like those in Simpson’s, were believed to have an expertise in a given area, simply because they were men. However, unlike the men in Simpson’s studies (2004, 2005), the participants in this study did not indicate strong feelings of shame and embarrassment when discussing their occupation with others.

Although some of the men did state that it was difficult to explain their profession to outsiders, their feelings seemed to be more frustration associated with these

difficulties, not the discomfort that Simpson (2004, 2005) encountered. Perhaps this can be linked back to a strong sense of self that these men displayed, which would seem to allow them to feel more comfortable when challenged or questioned by others regarding their choice of occupation. The concept of meaning-making will be further explored below.

*Question 2: How do entry-level men make meaning out of their gender roles in student affairs and their roles outside of the field?*

How do entry-level men know what they can and cannot do in the student affairs workplace and outside of it? How are they supposed to act? Is there a difference depending on where they are or who they are with? Results of this study indicated that entry-level men in student affairs understand their gender role based on traditional roles that have been engrained by society, and by the context of the situation. For them, meaning is defined both socially and situationally.

As Pollock (1998) stated, there is a “Boy Code” that dictates to men socially prescribed norms based upon gender. He described the societal expectation that men are to be tough, that they don’t cry, that they are breadwinners, and that they are competitive. The entry-level men involved in study indicated that those social norms are still very much in place. The idea that there is a certain way that men are supposed to act in society, a sort of masculine hegemony, was developed by Connell (1987, 1995). Although the results of this study did not reveal any prescribed social norms for men in student affairs, the men in this study did claim that those norms placed on them by society are still present.

As discussed by O'Neil (1981, 1998), gender role conflict is a struggle that all men face internally when their beliefs do not align with these prescribed roles. As Chad stated, for some entry-level men in student affairs, it is difficult to escape the influence of traditional social norms related to gender:

I come from a family of blue collared work. They don't necessarily talk about their emotions and our development, in the sense that the field [of student affairs] requires. I think that can be a struggle at times because that's how I was raised and sometimes when I work with students I want to have that conversation with them about [traditional gender roles] . . . but I think it's hard to erase twenty-five years of how I was raised as well. So definitely it requires me to be in check when I'm having those conversations.

In this study, it appears that the struggle that entry-level men face is not entirely internal, as typically happens in gender role conflict (O'Neil, 1981). It appears that these entry-level men understand their role in student affairs and are more comfortable being associated with femininity than other men. Despite understanding the situation, as Roger described, it is not without struggle:

. . . we're swimming against what society tells us to be as men. We are more in touch with our emotions and more of a nurturing side of us than the average male would be and that's looked down upon. I mean it's not just that—it's not normal, not considered normal for men. It's actively persecuted in a way. My actions sometimes may come off to people as like, "wow, he might be gay" or "what a pussy" or something like that, excuse my language, but I mean, it's true. We're going against what society tells us to be as men, but I think in the long term, of course, that serves us well.

Their struggle is not like those faced by men in traditional gender role conflict, which are primarily based on a fear of femininity (O'Neil et al., 1986). However, the aspects of gender role conflict that the entry-level men in my study did display included:

focus on success and power, feelings of homophobia, competition, and minor conflicts between family and work relations. While the men in this study did not have a fear of femininity or homophobia, there was an awareness of both of these areas, based in part by interactions with others. Being men in a field dominated by women, the participants in this study shared that others made assumptions that they were overly sensitive or feminine or that they were gay. The assumptions of others were a source of frustration for these entry-level men.

Traditional social norms and gender roles weigh heavily on how the entry-level men in this study make meaning of their roles. As Brett shared, the constant reminders of social expectations of men and what defines success for men can have an impact:

For instance, even friends of mine, like my peers who are males, you know, I think a lot of males in my generation view a successful man based on his professional level, his status, his reputation, his earnings—financial earnings, his wealth, and those types of things. I think that that’s honestly one of the great struggles for me personally, I know, is trying to not concentrate so much on those things because it’s very tempting to want to pursue more lucrative jobs and rub elbows with powerful people in the community and those kinds of things because of the positive feedback, whether it’s conscious or unconscious, that you get from friends, especially male friends, I think.

In addition, the context of situation helps men to make meaning of their roles in and out of the field of student affairs. The entry-level men in this study claimed to be in the gendered minority. The feelings they shared related to this concept included isolation and inability to connect or feel like their opinions mattered. Again, these types of feelings are prominent in the identity models of minority groups, so it interesting to see that in the context of student affairs that men are having similar experiences. For most of these men,

their role in student affairs marks the first time that they were not in a position of power based upon their gender.

Also, the apparent feminization of student affairs, as described by McEwen et al. (1990, 1991) seems to be confirmed by the testimonials of the participants in this study. Beginning in graduate school and progressing into their first positions within the field, entry-level men notice that they are in the gender minority and there is an expectation that they will subscribe to the traditionally feminine qualities (nurturing, interpersonal communication, support, care, etc.) that Hughes (1989) related to this profession. While the literature available on the feminization of student affairs is nearly 20 years old, the results of this study would seem to reinforce the claims of McEwen and her colleagues (1990, 1991).

The political undertones present in the profession also seem to have an impact on the experiences of men in student affairs. The results indicate an existence of a good ol' boys club, where preferential treatment is still apparent based upon gender. Some of the men in this study discussed their frustrations with politics; however, others admitted to using their gender as a means for advancement. This concept is something that both Simpson (2005) and Williams (1995) found to be true of men working in other women-dominant professions.

Conversely, a number of the men in this study mentioned situations that they experienced a feeling of reverse privilege because of their gender. Essentially, these participants felt that because they are men they are intentionally treated differently and have been limited in the numbers of opportunities available to them. Whereas this

perceived oppression might not be to the extent of other traditionally underrepresented groups, it needs to be noted that some men do feel that they are held back because of their gender. This is an area that needs to be explored further in future research on male identity within student affairs.

*Question Three: What types of relationship networks do men in entry-level positions in student affairs have and how do those networks support/hinder their experiences?*

The results of this study indicate that relationships play an important role in the experiences of entry-level men in student affairs. The impact these relationships have on men in student affairs seems to be directly related to a person's understanding and acceptance of student affairs as a legitimate profession. The majority of the people who entry-level men relate to outside of the immediate student affairs workplace, such as family, friends, faculty, and campus administrators, seem more likely to subscribe to traditional gender stereotypes. Unfortunately, many in the higher education community still perceive student affairs as being lesser in terms of prestige and importance. McEwen and her colleagues (1991) claimed

although the student affairs feminine voice does play an important role in higher education, a struggle exists, sometimes intensely, between the feminine attributes of the profession, and the profession's continuing concern about credibility, marginality, and professional survival and strength. (p. 445)

Participants of this study indicate that this struggle continues to exist, particularly for entry-level men, and serves as a source of frustration.

Conversely, the relationships that entry-level men in student affairs have within the workplace are often much more supportive in nature. The relationships that are

formed with individuals with shared experiences seem to be particularly strong. These types of relationships include those between members of a graduate school cohort, individuals who enter the field and job at the same time, and mentors and colleagues who are of the same gender in the workplace. While it makes sense that people who share a common experience are likely to have a common bond, it is important to note the bonds that exist between entry-level men and other men in the workplace. Other studies on men in female-dominated professions (Simpson, 2005; Williams, 1995) stated there was a need for men to see other men in similar roles for them to feel comfortable in taking them on themselves. Although there may be some degree of affirmation needed for men in student affairs, this bond seems to go beyond just a need for acceptance by others. For entry-level men in student affairs, there is a desire to gain insight and knowledge from individuals like themselves. As Mickey illustrated, men need other men to help them see they are not alone:

One of the things that I was really looking forward to in coming over was not just to talk, but also to listen to other guys in the profession and [to find out] what they're seeing and what they're feeling and taking that back. . . . [I want to know] what are the other guys saying so that you don't feel like you're out on an island. Maybe that's a better way to say it. You know, when you look at things and you just go, "am I looking at this the proper way?" or "should I feel this way about it?" So, just knowing that other folks are looking at it the same way, you know, it may not solve it, but it makes you feel a whole lot better. (Mickey)

Again, the merits of mentorship have already been mentioned in literature about student affairs (McEwen et al., 1990, 1991; Taub & McEwen, 2006), and more specifically about women in student affairs (Blackhurst, 2000; Blackhurst et al., 1998; Twale & Jelinek, 1996); however, men were never the focus of this research. This study on entry-level men

in student affairs is first time that the experiences of men in student affairs are explored and detailed. It appears that men and women have similar needs to connect with those like them. Although each gender is slightly different, the bonds created between mentors of the same gender are powerful and need to be explored further.

*Question Four: How do entry-level men in student affairs negotiate who they are as men within the context of the profession?*

The major findings of this study suggest that there are four ways in which entry-level men negotiate their gender identity in student affairs. These areas are: being self-aware, having a male outlet, recognizing motivation, and having a support system. For this population, negotiating identity essentially means successfully overcoming any struggles associated with gender role conflict. The primary struggle for entry-level men in student affairs is related to how comfortable they feel with themselves as a man on a daily basis. The results indicate that successful negotiation depends upon both self-awareness and the levels of support that are in place to make the struggle easier or harder to overcome.

The men in this study related a strong sense of self to success not only in student affairs, but in life in general. This concept would seem to echo the research of Wade (1998) and the concept of hegemonic masculinity described by Connell (1987, 1995). Wade claimed that masculinity was related to the ego development of the individual. Men with a stronger sense of self more easily can break away from traditional gender roles and feel comfortable with their roles in society. Similarly, Connell stated that successful negotiation of hegemonic masculinity or the prescribed gender roles for men in society is



contingent upon self-awareness and confidence in oneself. These ideas align almost perfectly with the results of this study, where self-awareness was a key method that men utilized to negotiate their identity in student affairs.

In addition, virtually all current research related to male identity development (Good et al., 1989; Good&Mintz, 1990; Good & Wood, 1995; O’Neil, 1981, 1998; O’Neil et al., 1986; Wade, 1998; Wade & Gelso, 1998) suggests that gender role conflict is significantly decreased in individuals with a strong sense of self. Fear of femininity and homophobia are key components to gender role conflict, however the participants in this study specifically mentioned these were things they encountered but overall were comfortable with—supporting the claim that strong sense of self is a method of successfully negotiating gender identity issues.

Another coping mechanism mentioned by the participants of this study was having support at a more organized professional level, through their institution or professional organizations. Organized support is something that was mentioned in the literature regarding women in student affairs, so it stands to reason that men would equally benefit from a show of support from levels of authority. This type of support shows a commitment to men’s issues and helps them to feel that their concerns are valid and matter to the profession.

Having an outlet to act and be masculine was another means that the entry-level men in this study mentioned helped them negotiate their identity. This concept of the need to have a “safe” place can be found in some of the literature regarding the development of historically oppressed groups (Cass, 1979; Cross, 1971; D’Augelli,

1994), and has also been mentioned in male gender literature (Kaufman, 1999; Kimmel & Messner, 2004; Pollack, 1999).

This concept of a “safe” place is very similar to the experiences shared by Beverly Tatum (1997). In her book *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* Tatum examines a number of ideas about race and racial identity development in attempting to answer the question that is the title of her book. In her opinion, the “Black Table” is not a means of self-segregation; rather, it is a place where individuals with like experiences congregate to support one another and to make meaning of their experiences and identity. This table serves as both a “safe haven” from being treated differently and a place to find support.

In adolescence, as race becomes personally salient for Black youth, finding the answer to questions such as “What does it mean to be a young Black person? How should I act? What should I do? Is particularly important . . . It is the peer group, the kids in the cafeteria, who hold the answers to these questions. They know how to be Black. They have absorbed the stereotypical images of Black young in the popular culture and are reflecting those images in their self-preservation. (p. 60)

The experiences expressed by the entry-level men in this study seem to echo the feelings of Black youth in the predominantly White world. Both groups need a place to reflect upon their identity and support each other in their experiences. The results of this study seem to confirm that in order for men to work in a highly feminine environment, they also must have a place to be hyper-masculine. They cannot simply dismiss their masculinity, so having a safe place in which to display it helps provide balance and keeps these individuals grounded. Working in a feminine environment on a daily basis requires

that they have a place to exercise their masculinity in an effort to still feel like they are men.

Finally, discussing the motivations that men have in student affairs helps to better understand how they negotiate their identity within the field. For some men in this study, they openly admitted that their motivation was more related to career advancement and having more power, influence, and control. However, the majority of the participants were satisfied with the intrinsic motivation of making a difference. These findings were nearly identical to those found by Simpson (2005) in her study of men in traditional feminine fields. In her study, some men reported that their motivation was related to ascending the career ladder (and pay scale) as quickly as possible. The majority of the men in Simpson's (2005) study, however, like those in this study, were content with the intrinsic motivations such as building relationships and helping others to be successful. For these men, seeing others succeed was enough for them to be successful themselves.

### **General Discussion and Overview**

The results of this study indicate that these entry-level men in student affairs identify with multiple roles within the context of student affairs. These identities include Traditional Man, Leader/Mentor, and World Changer and are assumed both contextually and developmentally. The entry-level men take on different roles and identities depending on the situation they are in, and based upon own ability to negotiate and make meaning with said identity. In essence, they act as chameleons, assuming whatever identity is required of them at the time.

It may be of interest to note that the primary identity that is assumed by entry-level men in student affairs could be tied to their level of self-awareness. Although this was not directly a focus of this study, it seems that the three identities that emerged here could be viewed on a continuum. Men who are more self-aware tend to be more often in the World Changer role, at the high end of the continuum, whereas those who are less self-aware are more frequently in the Traditional Man role at the lower end. It stands to reason that this concept could be true, as the dominant identity was the Leader/Mentor, which seems to be in-between the other two roles. Again, it is important to note that this concept is purely anecdotal at this point, but future research provides an opportunity for exploration of the potential connection between level of awareness and identity role.

Entry-level men make meaning of their gender roles based upon traditional social norms, as well as the context they find themselves in within the profession. Their understanding of what it means to be a man in student affairs is based on their level of comfort with themselves and is influenced by traditional gender roles as well as daily activities and environmental factors.

Relationships are extremely important to entry-level men in student affairs. Depending on the nature of the relationship, it can either have a positive or negative impact on their experiences as student affairs professionals. These relationships can be found both within and outside of the field of student affairs. Relationships outside of the workplace (friends, family, faculty, non-student affairs staff) seem more likely to have a negative impact, in part because these groups are more heavily influenced by traditional masculine stereotypes. Conversely, relationships within the field (mentors, peers,

colleagues) tend to be more supportive, particularly those relationships with strong bonds that are either achieved through shared difficult experiences (graduate school cohort members) or through the perceived commonalities of experience (mentors, other male colleagues). In addition, the relationships with students, particularly those relationships that serve to model appropriate behaviors associated with men, are important to entry-level men in student affairs. These relationships can be either with male or female students, as the men in this study believe there are equally important opportunities for role modeling and mentorship.

Entry-level men in student affairs are able to negotiate their identities in four ways. The first way is related to their level of self-awareness. Those men who are more comfortable with who they are and more mature emotionally and cognitively seem to embrace their role as men in student affairs more successfully. Similarly, self-awareness is related to motivation for being in the profession. For some entry-level men, the motivation to make a difference in the lives of others outweighs any negative outcomes they might face. These individuals seem to be more at peace with their role as men in a female-dominated profession. These men feel an obligation to the profession and to male students to do what they can to make a difference.

Those entry-level men who have support, be it in the form of mentors, peers, or family members, are better able to negotiate their identity than those who do not. Having support in the form of a sounding board, someone to listen, to share ideas, and the like, is important to entry-level men in student affairs. However, it is important to note that these men still feel the need for support on a larger scale, be it from the professional

organizations of the field or at a more local level such as within their department or institution.

Finally, having a masculine outlet seems to be important to entry-level men and may help them negotiate their gender identity. Perhaps due to the struggles associated with identity and gender role, entry-level men in student affairs need a safe place where they can relate to other men on a more primal level. Men of any type are products of their environment, and it appears that even those men who actively work in a female-dominated field, still have a need and desire to have a time and place to be masculine.

### ***Implications for Practice***

The results of this study indicate there is a perception by some entry-level men in student affairs that fewer and fewer men are entering and remaining in the field. For those men currently in the field, and for those considering it, the results of this research provide important information if applied to the profession. For obvious reasons, the key implications of this research should focus on the practical objectives of this study. The primary objectives were to gain insight into the experiences of entry-level men in student affairs in hopes of seeing how they make meaning of their gender roles and how we can support them as a profession. The implications for practice can be broken down into three areas: implications for professional organizations, implications for campuses, and implications for graduate preparation programs.

### ***Implications for Professional Organizations***

Perhaps because historically so many of the initial studies in the field of student affairs were conducted on men (though gender was not the focus), and because men have

historically been the dominant presence in higher education in general and in student affairs in particular, they often are forgotten when it comes to support and outreach. The men who participated in this study indicated the desire to convene with other men the field to share ideas and provide professional and personal support and guidance.

In addition, the national parent organizations of the profession mentioned above, namely ACPA and NASPA, need to focus more attention on men, masculinity, and the male gender, specifically at the professional level. As an active member of the Standing Committee for Men in ACPA, I am aware that both ACPA and NASPA do provide a level of support and outreach to men institutionally; however, it appears that those efforts are largely unknown by the very population they are intended to help. There is an apparent disconnect between what is offered by the professional organizations and what is felt by the men in the field. The leadership of these groups must find ways to provide support and guidance to entry-level men in ways that are visible and meaningful to them. Perhaps the efforts of the national organizations have been focused too much on the annual national conference, where the specific interest groups meet and where they sponsor programs. This once-a-year approach in often-distant cities may be too infrequent to be helpful to entry-level men, or perhaps entry-level men do not have travel funds to support conference attendance. Professional association program planners should coordinate more opportunities for these interactions to occur more frequently and by used different methods, such as through workshops, mini-conferences, and webinars. In addition, leadership in the national professional associations of the profession should be more intentional about exploring more creative and structured approaches to provide

mentorship and support for entry-level men, including but not limited to newsletters, webchats, and social networking sites. Finally, encouraging further investigation into men's issues and providing funding for research opportunities in this area might be ways to reach the entry-levels of the field.

Upon reviewing the literature for this study, it became quickly apparent that there is little research in the area of men, masculinity, and identity development within the context of the student affairs profession. The little data that do exist, particularly regarding the feminization of the profession, are long out of date. NASPA and ACPA are in an ideal position to push for more research to be conducted in these areas. It is only through continued research that the experiences of men can be explored—and it is the professional organization that can encourage this research.

Finally, the ACPA Standing Committee for Men and the NASPA Men and Masculinity Knowledge Community both need to be provided more support from their parent organizations in order that they provide more formal opportunities for interaction, research, and practice for this population.

### ***Implications for Campuses***

At a more local level, campus leaders need to encourage the entry-level men in student affairs to discover safe outlets to explore and embrace their masculinity. Whether it be an organized gathering of the men in the office or just assisting an entry-level man to find whatever means they need to have that outlet outside of the workplace, we should be aware that having an outlet is a key to negotiating their gendered identity. However,



we must be cautious to avoid the perception of sexism in providing these opportunities, so equal measures should be taken for women.

A finding of this study was that entry-level men feel that at times they are treated differently in the workplace because of their gender. Previous gender inequalities should not be a reason why men in student affairs are treated differently. As a profession we must do our best to not assign tasks to men and women based upon traditional gender roles. Whereas typically we are on the lookout to avoid such treatment to make sure women are treated fairly, we must not forget men in the process. The entry-level men in this study shared feelings of reverse privilege, where their identity as men was a reason they were limited in having opportunities. As members of the field of student affairs, we cannot overlook men as a group in need of support, recognition, and further study.

Also, as a profession, we need to reach out to the faculty. The men in this study indicated that there remains a common misperception by campus faculty and administrators that student affairs is not a legitimate profession. McEwen et al. (1991) mentioned the issue of credibility, and this study seems to reaffirm that concern was legitimate and still exists nearly twenty years later. Student affairs professionals need to demonstrate to faculty and administration the value of what it is that we do. While so much of our practice is intangible, student affairs professionals must be diligent about assessment so that we are looked at equally when side by side with our academic brethren. Hughes (1989) stated that there were two equally important sides to a student's education, the traditionally masculine-traited side of academics, and the traditionally feminine-traited side of student affairs. Just because the student affairs side is "softer" it

should not be looked at as lesser. Perhaps if the profession was held in a higher regard, the men working within it would feel less frustration when working with outsiders.

### ***Implications Related to Attrition***

Although the vast majority of the men in this study indicated that they could not envision themselves leaving the field of student affairs, the reasons stated for possible attrition need to be seriously examined. Not surprisingly, as found by Evans (1988) and Lorden (1998), financial reasons were a major reason the men in this study stated they might leave student affairs. However, they state that while finances might not be an issue now, it most likely would become a problem when the time came for them to start a family.

For those entry-level men considering starting a family, the financial and scheduling commitments placed upon this population may be too much. The entry-level men in this study brought to light that traditional gender stereotypes are still present. The men in the field of student affairs are impacted by traditional roles created by society. The need for men to be the breadwinner and the concept that success is based on prestige and finances may be too much for some men, regardless of their level of self-awareness. Gender role conflict is still present in this population according to the data found in this study, so there is still a struggle when traditional roles enter into the equation. As a profession, we need to consider this when thinking about the types of people we want to retain. While this topic is one that should be studied further, the profession of student affairs needs to re-evaluate the compensation if it hopes to retain some valuable members (both men and women).

The entry-level men in this study feel a strong obligation to mentor other men in the profession and to students. They feel it is their duty to model what a man should be in the world today. As a profession, we need to provide support to these entry-level men by promoting these mentorship opportunities at an institutional level. We need to find ways, both formally and informally, to get our men in positions where they can mentor and role model.

### ***Implications for Professional Preparation***

In order for our entry-level men to be strong role models, they will need to have support themselves. Results of this study indicate the important role that relationships play in the lives of entry-level men in student affairs. Whether it be a mentor or a colleague, it is imperative that entry-level men have someone (or more than one person) in whom they can confide and share thoughts and ideas, both personally and professionally. Without this confidant, entry-level men might struggle to get their bearings and may become frustrated in the profession.

One of the key relationships mentioned by the participants in this study were the ones that were developed with members of their graduate school cohort. The research also indicated that there are very few men in graduate programs in student affairs at present. It would seem that there is a need to more actively recruit men into graduate programs in student affairs to create opportunities at this level for men to make connections with their peers. By assembling critical masses of men into these programs, we not only would increase the pool of men entering the profession, but also we can provide outlets and support for the men at the graduate level. However, we must be

cautious to avoid the concerns raised by McEwen et al. (1991) regarding the watering down of the field. It is important that we do not compromise the quality of those we wish to invite into the field, just because they meet a certain demographic. We must find ways to recruit strong men into the profession, not just court them because they are men. Sharing this information with graduate preparation faculty would allow for them to potentially create structured opportunities for men to develop relationships beginning in graduate school.

Similarly, with the knowledge that entry-level men in student affairs can more easily negotiate their identity with the presence of a male outlet, graduate programs might wish to provide opportunities for the male members of their cohort to bond with each other in a safe place. Men going into the field should be provided assistance in finding a mentor. They should be provided with opportunities to connect with others in the field, so they can be aware of the experiences that could be in store for them as they enter the field themselves.

Finally, graduate programs need to place a greater emphasis on the development of the male identity in general. Gender identities are not discussed as much as they should be in graduate preparation programs, and when they are, they are typically only in reference to women. Male and masculine identity development should be intentionally explored at the graduate level, so that men going into the field have the tools to become more self-aware as professionals.

Environmental factors can be explored as well by graduate preparation programs. The politics of student affairs is something that needs to be discussed at the graduate

school level. In addition, the men in graduate preparation programs should be made aware of the existence of the good ol' boy club. Politics seemed to be a source of much frustration for the men who participated in this study, so it stands to reason that we need to make men aware of these frustrations before they enter the field.

### ***Limitations of Research***

Although this study provides important new information about the experiences of entry-level men in student affairs, it is not without limitations. Researcher bias is a potential limitation of this study. As stated in the introduction, I have a strong personal interest in the outcome of this study, and as a man in the student affairs profession, my insider status is something that must be accounted for in the process of data collection and analysis. I have no doubt that my status as an insider proved to be an asset, as it I was able to connect more easily with participants and establish a comfort level that allowed for an honest dialogue to occur. Having realized my potential researcher bias early allowed me to design my study in such a way to decrease it as much as possible. By utilizing multiple means of data collection to triangulate the data, as well as enacting member checking, I believe that my interpretations are as close to the participants intended meanings as possible.

Another limitation that this study presented was in the research collection stage, particularly in the use of phone interviews as a main source of data collection. I had to weigh the constraints of time and money with the ability to have a regionally diverse sampling, and as such, face-to-face interviews were dropped in favor of telephone interviews. While I believe that the connections made with participants and the

information gathered using this method was genuine, the lack of face-to-face contact between myself as the researcher and my participants is something that should be noted. As cited by Creswell (2005), a drawback to a phone interview is the limited direct contact that takes place that “may affect the researcher’s ability to understand the interviewee’s perceptions of the phenomenon” (p. 216). The lack of non-verbal communication definitely proved limiting, as subtle cues were most likely missed that could have assisted in the interpretation of the data. The focus group was conducted in person, and I believe part of the reason that it was successful and provided such rich data was because the participants and the researcher were able establish a connection and play off of each other throughout the duration of the interaction.

Several limitations of this study can be found in the sample selection process. Although a state of saturation was achieved in accordance with the findings of Guest et al. (2006), the generalizability of the study is limited due to the relatively small sample size and the method in which the sample was collected. Although purposeful selection was clearly justified, it should be noted that this limits diversity of the pool before the study begins (Patton, 1990). The sample was limited to entry-level men in student affairs who had some connection to the initial request that I sent out. In addition, an analysis of the respondents showed an overwhelming response rate from men at public, four-year institutions, meaning those men at private and two-year colleges and universities were underrepresented. Similarly, the scope of my study did not include any selection criteria regarding racial or ethnic status or sexual orientation. While two participants shared that they were gay and ten disclosed they were straight, the orientations of the other men are

unknown. Similarly, two members of the focus group were African-American, but since I did not ask and I conducted all of my interviews over the phone, there is no way to know the diversity of my sample. However, the goal of the study was to discover the stories and experiences of entry-level men in student affairs, and was designed to be descriptive in nature. There was no prior existing research in this area, so the results of this study can provide a framework for future research with other populations of entry-level men.

Finally, the accuracy of the Visual Analog Scale (VAS) as a sample selection tool should be noted as a limitation. My intent was to gather a sampling of entry-level men in student affairs that were highly satisfied, highly unsatisfied, and those in-between. Unfortunately, those individuals who responded primarily rated their satisfaction levels on the satisfied to highly satisfied side of the continuum. The lack of unsatisfied respondents led to a slight change in the distribution of the eighteen individuals selected for the individual interview. It should also be noted that the information gathered in the interviews and focus groups often times did not directly reflect what the respondents marked as their satisfaction levels on the VAS. Men who marked their experiences as highly unsatisfied shared stories that seemed to directly contradict that claim. Similarly, men who initially indicated they were highly satisfied on the VAS provided information that would lead one to believe they could leave the profession at a moment's notice. One could argue that the participant's satisfaction level as recorded by the VAS basically was a measure of how they were feeling on the day in which they filled it out and submitted it. So although the VAS was not an accurate means of selecting the sample, I believe the sample that was chosen for the study was as diverse as possible, considering who agreed

to participate. In retrospect, men who are highly unsatisfied most likely have already left the profession, so in a future study, additional means should be taken to contact those individuals so that their stories can be shared.

### ***Suggestions for Future Research***

As stated in the preceding section, this study was the first of its kind to explore the experiences and perceptions of entry-level men in student affairs. As such, it should provide a framework to other research focusing on the impact that identity has on this population. In designing this study, while I acknowledged their importance in setting the context, I did not account for the concept of multiple identities. There have been many studies already that explore the importance that multiple identities brings to how an individual makes meaning, but I only focused on the gender identity. Undoubtedly the experiences of entry-level men in student affairs differ based upon other identities that these individuals possess, such as sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, ability, etc. As Edley and Wetherell (1996) stated:

. . . no single theory or academic approach can hope to capture and account for every facet of even a single man's life, let alone the lives of black men and white men, gay men and straight men, and men of all different socioeconomic classes.  
(p. 97)

In order to continue to provide support to all entry-level men in student affairs, future research needs to be done to account for the impact that these other identities have on the entry-level male experience.

The importance of contextual factors on the entry-level male identity was a major finding of this study, but there is much more that can be explored in this area. As noted,



the responses of the participants were rarely linked to the level of satisfaction marked on the Visual Analog Scale. What this paradox means is that there is a significant group of entry-level men whose satisfaction level is in a state of flux. It could go either way, depending on the context and the type of experiences they are having. Additional research should be done to continue to delve into how context impacts the experiences and satisfaction levels of entry-level men in student affairs.

One can assume that many of the men that are unsatisfied have already left the field. While it may be difficult to capture the data from those men who left student affairs during the first five years in the profession, that population would provide some excellent insight. It would be wise for a future study to try to capture the stories of these men in an effort to find out what was it about their experiences that led them to leave the field entirely.

Finally, additional research could be done to further explore the concept of self-awareness that seems to assist entry-level men with successfully negotiating their experiences. What is intriguing to think about, that unfortunately is not covered within the scope of this study, is how entry-level men achieve this level of self-awareness. According to Marcia (1966), until individuals make a commitment to their identity and become comfortable with who they are, their identity development is in a state of flux, what he referred to as crisis. Upon facing cognitive dissonance and re-evaluating their beliefs, individuals become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and who they are as people. One can infer that it may have something to do with the strong mentors these individuals may have had or the trials and tribulations associated with graduate

school—where strong bonds have been established. However, there is no concrete evidence to support that claim. Future research in this area could provide valuable insight into this area.

### **Conclusion**

As the results show, I believe that I was successful in meeting my practical objectives, but I am less certain that I was able to fully explain the high attrition rates of men at this stage of their careers.

In answering my research questions, I believe that I have made some significant steps regarding theory and practice. It was my intention that the results of this study might lead to more appropriate work climates for men, that it may enhance recruitment and retention of men in the profession, and may establish the foundations for a gendered theory of student affairs practice. This study provided an opportunity for the voices of twenty-two entry-level men in student affairs to be heard. I hope that by understanding the experiences of these participants that we are heading in the right direction. Perhaps George stated it best to sum up the role that entry-level men play:

I think one of the things as guys in student affairs that I guess is important to think about, is that whether directly or indirectly, your job as a student affairs person is to reach down and help other guys. Because the state of men in general across the board in our area is dipping, it's getting worse. Whether that's low attendance in school, the fact that they're not doing as well in their grades as compared to women, whether it's not working in the field, it's kind of our responsibility to reach out and reach down and grab some people and pull them up too, whether they're going to be part of student affairs to work in or just do good in school so they can do other stuff. I guess to raise the level of men back up. It doesn't need to be above women, but I feel like right now it's starting to sink kind of below, so we need to at least be even. (George)

These are their experiences. This is the world of an entry-level man in student affairs. As a profession, it is up to us now to better understand the obstacles that this population faces, and hopefully we can better serve them in the process.

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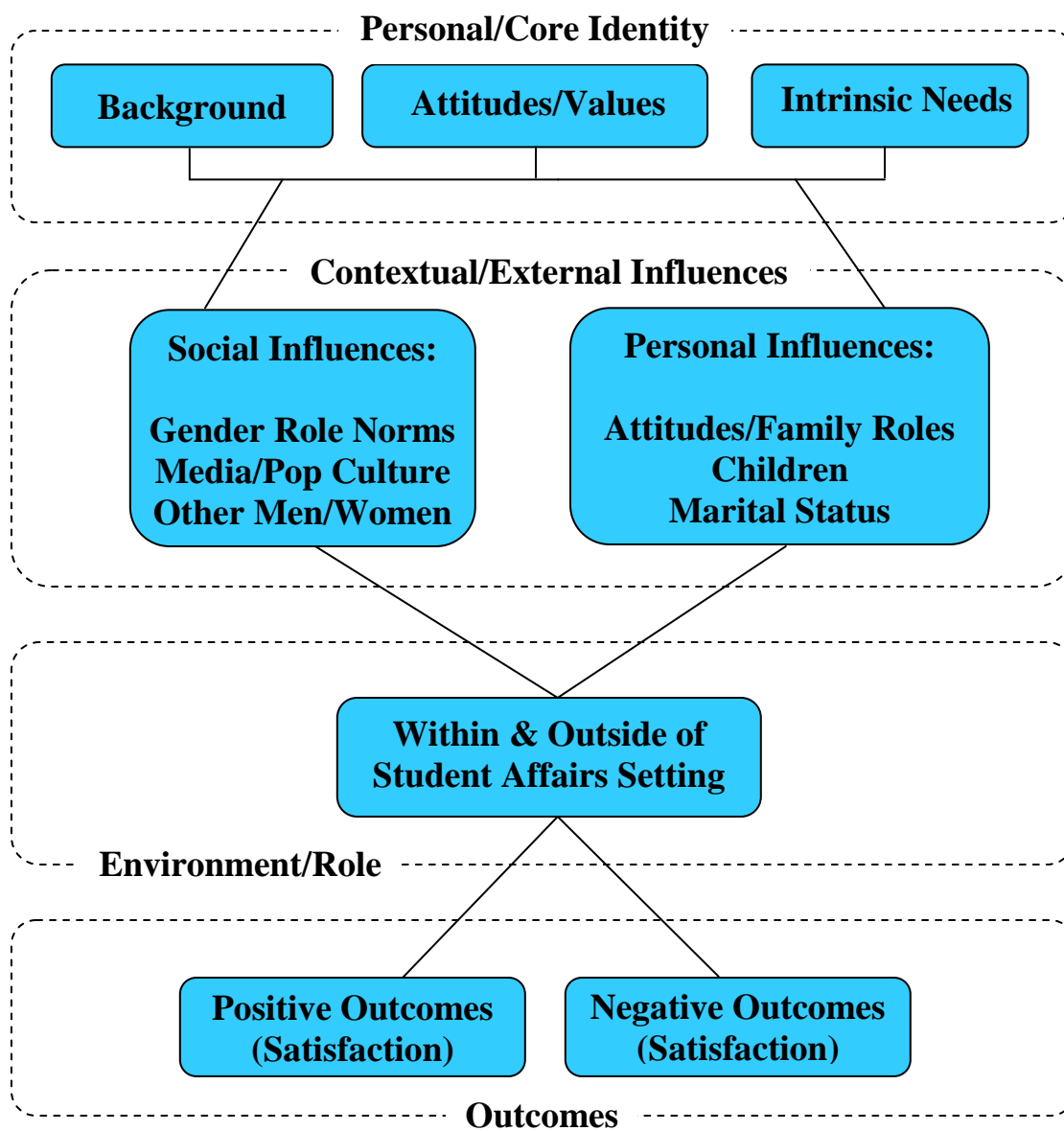
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Appendix A

Initial Conceptual Framework

**Influence of Male Identity on the Experiences of Men in the Student Affairs Profession**



## Appendix B

### Models of Multiple Identity Development

Jones & McEwen, 2000

Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007

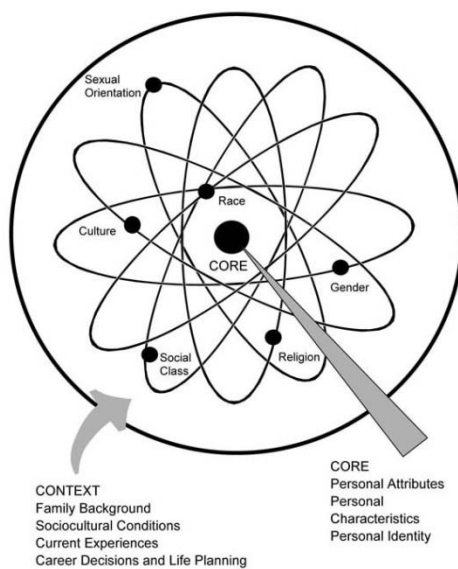


FIGURE 1. Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000)

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## Appendix C

### The Interview Protocol

Project: Understanding the Experiences of Entry-Level Men in Student Affairs

Date:

Time:

Interviewer: Dan Calhoun

Participant:

Position of Participant:

I will describe to the participant that I am attempting to examine what impact (if any) the male identity has on a man's decision to enter and remain in the field of student affairs. I will also outline my framework and get the participant to read and sign the informed consent forms. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes in length.

Questions to be asked in the interview:

- 1.) What motivated you to choose a career in student affairs?
- 2.) Does your sexual orientation play a role in how you view yourself as a student affairs professional?
- 3.) I'm going to ask you to make a list and we will follow up with some points afterwards...What are the things/reasons that you might leave the field of student affairs? What are the things/reasons that support you staying?
- 4.) Describe your relationships with colleagues in the field (both peers and supervisors).
- 5.) Describe your role as a man in the workplace. Compare that role to your role as a man outside of the work setting.
- 6.) Define a student affairs professional. What are the stereotypes? What is the ideal SAP?
- 7.) Define success in student affairs. How does one attain success in the field?
- 8.) Define a successful man. What characteristics does he possess?

- 9.) What are your career goals (within/outside of student affairs)?
- 10.)What is the toughest/easiest thing about being a man in student affairs? Why?
- 11.)What advice would you offer to a male who is considering a profession in student affairs?
- 12.)Do you have any additional information/insight regarding the male experience in student affairs that you would like to share?

At this point, I will turn off the recording device and thank the participant for his participation in the assignment. I will also remind him that I will take precautions to protect his confidentiality.

## Appendix D

### Initial Matrix

What do I need to know?	Why do I need to know this?	What kind of data will answer the question?	Where can I find the data?
What led men to a career in student affairs?	To see if decision was impacted by gender stereotypes/identity. To see what influences there are on males in the field.	Interviews, focus groups, reflections and artifacts/journals	Professional workplaces, conferences, meetings with men
What is it like to be a man in student affairs?  What is easy/difficult about being a man in student affairs?	To see how/if gender identity plays a role in the daily lives/activities of men in student affairs.	Interviews, focus groups, reflections/artifacts/journals.	Meetings with men, meetings and workshops with men.
Do men in the field act differently towards men and women in accordance to gendered stereotypes?	To see the impact gender stereotyping has on men in field in terms of their interactions. How do they identify with same/opposite sex?	Interviews, observations of men with men and men with women in professional settings, focus groups	Workplace settings, educational sessions, meetings, informal settings
What are the career goals of men in student affairs? How do you define successful men? How do you define success in student affairs?	To see if men in student affairs see themselves in the field for an extended period and how they see that happening To see if there is a conflict between success as a man and success as a student affairs professional.	Interviews with men; focus groups	Meetings with men, meetings and workshops with men
What advice would you give men considering the field of student affairs?	To see their perceptions of student affairs, in regards to gender and what message they are giving to future men in the field.	Interviews, journals, reflections	Meetings with men, meetings and workshops with men

**Initial Matrix, continued**

<b>What do I need to know?</b>	<b>Why do I need to know this?</b>	<b>What kind of data will answer the question?</b>	<b>Where can I find the data?</b>
<p>How are men working in student affairs perceived? (By those in the field and outside it).</p> <p>Compare your experiences as a man in and outside of the student affairs workplace.</p>	<p>To see what men think the social definitions/ perceptions of men in student affairs are, by those within the field and outside of it.</p> <p>To see if those social roles impact how they act in and out of the workplace.</p>	<p>Interviews, journals, observations.</p>	<p>Workplace settings, educational sessions, meetings, informal settings.</p>

**Appendix E**  
**Preliminary Start Codes**

**Means to an End:**

Ways to become actors (i.e. student affairs personnel)

Ways to act as a man in student affairs

**Attribution:**

Feelings about being a man in student affairs

Characteristics of a man in student affairs

**Rationale:**

Reasons for remaining in student affairs

Reasons for leaving student affairs

## Appendix F

### Visual Analog Scale and Initial Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Full Time Years in Field (must be 5 years or less): \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Institution which you currently work (circle all that apply):

Private                  Public                  For Profit

2 year                  4 year

Small (less than 10,000 enrollment)

Medium (10,000-20,000 enrollment)

Large (20,000 + enrollment)

In what functional area of student affairs to you primarily work?

\_\_\_\_\_

How satisfied are you being in student affairs?

Place a vertical mark on the line below to indicate your level of satisfaction with your experiences in student affairs today.



Thank you for your participation! You may receive a follow up contact soon to discuss your experiences in more detail. If you have any questions, please contact Dan Calhoun at 336-334-4072 or [dwcalhou@uncg.edu](mailto:dwcalhou@uncg.edu).



## Appendix G

### Focus Group Protocol

#### The Impact of Male Identity on the Entry Level Attrition of Men in Student Affairs

Date:

Time:

Facilitator:

# of Participants:

Site:

Participants will be asked to arrive 10 minutes early; Room must be set up at least 30 minutes before; rapport will be established with participants as they arrive; Each participant will be welcomed by the facilitator.

#### **Script Stages**

##### ***Stage One: Greeting and Introduction 2 minutes***

Purpose: Welcome participants and express appreciation

Things to include in welcome:

- Introduction of yourself and your role
- Discuss the participants' role in research, purpose of today's focus group.

##### ***Stage Two: Utilities 3 minutes (combined 5 minutes)***

Purpose: Setting the stage for the session

- Confidentiality: highlight definition of confidentiality
- Recording: highlight the presence of an audio/video equipment, purpose of items in qualitative design.
- read over script and secure consent forms if haven't already done so

Sample script: This session is being taped in order to gain the fullest information from the comments you make. The tapes will be transcribed and listened to or read only in strict confidentiality. Your comments will be transcribed only as information will be used only as those made by participant 1, participant 2, etc. Again, this information will be used only by those involved in this evaluation in order to study and improve our understanding of the experience of entry-level men in student affairs and provide a comparison for the data collected in interviews.

##### ***Stage Three: Icebreaker 3 minutes (combined 10 minutes)***

Purpose: Preliminary fun question that everyone can relate to. Develops rapport, comfort, and an initial relationship.

- Sample question: "Gosh, it was 94 degrees yesterday, 78 degrees today, what do you think it will be tomorrow?"
- Allow minor chatter. Then quickly refocus without talking over anyone.
- Introductions (first name basis)

***Stage Four: Expectations 5 minutes (combined 15 minutes)***

Purpose: establishing a safe environment

- Comfort: participants should feel free to speak openly and freely
- Use of I and Us: participants can speak on their own experiences, they can also speak on experiences that they have noticed of other entry-level men

***Stage Five: Discussion of Experiences - approximately 45 minutes (combined 1 hour)***

- Purpose: To explore experiences of entry-level men

- Process:

Using themes found in interviews as a guide, facilitator will begin discussion and see where it leads. Topics that most likely will be covered include: motivation for joining field, support network, role in and out of the workplace, definition of success for men in and out of field, toughest/easiest things about being a man in the field, and career goals.

- Remember:

Be a facilitator, not a participant!

Stay close to the participant's usage of words.

Be interested in everything, even if repetitive.

Lack of respect shuts down a group talk.

Empathy, empathy, empathy.

Control your sense of humor – maybe?

Stay on topic, keep track of time.

- Phrases to expand a participant's idea:

Can you expand on that?

Can you be more specific on that?

Do you remember any other incidents?

Can you clarify that?

- Probe to expand a participant's idea:

Do you agree with that?

Do you feel that way too?

Is that what it really is?

Anything you can add?

- Prompt questions to gain deeper and richer detail:

Why? How?

Is that the same for all of you?

- Counters for different participant personality types (extreme):

Counter the expert participant personality with: does anyone else have something to say about this idea?

Counter the dominator participant personality with: does anyone feel different about this?

Counter the rambler participant with: avoiding eye contact and focusing on other participants, then insert questions to other participants during pause/break.

Counter the disrupter with: we are not asking everyone to agree, all opinions are valued and will be heard.

Counter the shrinking violet with: can you add to that? Are you ready?

Counter the griper with: Asking him/her to say something positive.

***Stage Six: Wrap Up 3 minutes (combined 1 hour 3 minutes)***

Purpose: express appreciation

- Things to include:

Emphasize the importance of their voice

Stress potential benefits

Communicate that results will be made available

Dismiss participants with a big THANK YOU

Facilitator should ensure that all materials and recordings are collected and secured.

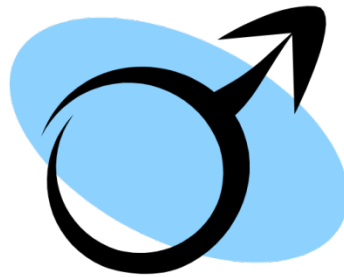
Initial Focus Group Questions:

- 1.) What does it mean to be a man in society today?
- 2.) What does it mean to be a man in student affairs today?
- 3.) What motivated you to choose a career in student affairs?
- 4.) What do you feel is the support network for men in student affairs?
- 5.) Describe the role of men in the student affairs workplace. Compare that to the role of men in other professions and outside of student affairs.
- 6.) What is the toughest/easiest thing about being a man in student affairs? Why?
- 7.) What advice would you offer to a male who is considering a profession in student affairs?

## Appendix H

### Flier for Recruitment

# We're Looking for a Few Good Men!



**Have you been in student affairs for less than 5 years?**

**Has your identity as a man impacted your experiences in the field?**

**Would you be interested in participating in a research study and sharing your experiences as a man in the field?**

**If you or someone you know would be interested, please contact Dan Calhoun, doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, at [dwcalthou@uncg.edu](mailto:dwcalthou@uncg.edu) or 336-558-8966.**

**Interested individuals will be invited to fill out a one page questionnaire and could be contacted for a follow-up interview or focus group.**

## Appendix I

### Dear Colleague Letter

Dear Colleague,

Greetings! I hope your semester is going well as we reach the home stretch. I am writing to you regarding a study I am conducting about the potential impact that male identity may have on the satisfaction and attrition levels of entry-level men in student affairs. The data collected from this study will be published in my doctoral dissertation. I am sending this email to you in hopes that you (or other men you know in student affairs) will agree to take part and share some information regarding your experiences being a man in the field.

As I stated, the information gathered from this study may help us to better understand the experiences of men within the field of student affairs. The information found could help lead to better support to those men within the field and also could be used to better prepare male student affairs professionals before they enter the field, thus potentially decreasing attrition rates. It is important, therefore, that I get participation from men of all levels of satisfaction—both highly satisfied and highly unsatisfied with being a man in student affairs.

If you agree to participate in this study, please thoroughly read over and sign the attached consent form. Then simply mark the level of satisfaction that best describes your experience in student affairs on the accompanying Visual Analog Scale and return it to the researcher either by scanning the document and faxing to Dan Calhoun at 336-334-5680 or by mailing it to:

Dan Calhoun  
HRL PO Box 26170  
Greensboro, NC, 27402

This whole process will take only a couple of minutes.

Shortly thereafter, you may be contacted for a follow up interview to discuss your experiences as a man in student affairs. This interview will take approximately 30-90 minutes, depending upon what is discussed. Additional follow up may take place once the data are compiled, which should last no longer than 60 minutes.

Your privacy will be protected throughout the process. Although you will be audio taped during the interview, you will not be identified by name or other identifiable information as being part of this project.

Should you have any questions please feel free to contact me at [dwcalhou@uncg.edu](mailto:dwcalhou@uncg.edu) or 336-334-4072. Thank you for your consideration and I would appreciate it if you could forward this to any entry-level (within their first 5 years in the field) men within student affairs whom you think might be interested in participating.

Sincerely,

Dan Calhoun