The Development of an International Student Advisor

A Grounded Theory Study

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Drexel University

by

Kathleen Keenan Sparaco

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Education

June 2012

UMI Number: 3525446

UMI

Dissertation Publishing

ProQuest

Office of Graduate Studies
Dissertation/Thesis Approval Form

This form is for use by all doctoral and master's students with a dissertation/thesis requirement. Please print clearly as the library will bind a copy of this form with each copy of the dissertation/thesis. All doctoral dissertations must conform to university format requirements, which is the responsibility of the student and supervising professor. Students should obtain a copy of the Thesis Manual located on the library website.

Dissertation/Thesis Title: The Development of an International Student Adviser: A Grounded Theory Approach

Author: Kathleen Sparaco

This dissertation/thesis is hereby accepted and approved.

Signatures:

Examining Committee

Chair

Members

Academic Advisor

Department Head

This EdD Dissertation Committee from The School of Education at Drexel University certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

The Development of an International Student Advisor:

A Grounded Theory Study

Kathleen Keenan Sparaco

Committee:

_____

Dr. Kathy Geller

_____

Dr. Edward Bureau

_____

Dr. Wesley Young

_____

Date

Abstract

The Development of an International Student Advisor

A Grounded Theory Study

Kathleen Keenan Sparaco, Ed.D.

Drexel University, June 2012

Chairperson: Kathy Geller

This qualitative study explored the professional experience of international student advisors. The statement of problem for this research was that the professional role of international student advisors has not been clearly defined or understood within U.S. higher education. The research questions asked (1) what encompassed the lived experience of international student advisors, (2) what emergent concerns might be important in the experiences of international student advisors, and (3) in what way have the personal constructs of professionalism and professional identity for international student advisors been developed?

This studied utilized a grounded theory methodology, a systematic but flexible inductive approach to analyzing data to create theory specific to the studied phenomenon. Theory, in this study, was defined as a way of understanding or making sense of the world in order to have the practical insight needed to guide action. The research tool of interviews was used with international student advisors across the United States in a variety of institutions profiles. The findings were organized into three major thematic categories: *the student first; not being invited to the table;* and *they don't get what we do.*

The first theme, *the student first*, reflected the connection of the participants to the student population they served. All the participants had had a transformative international experience prior to entering the field which was the catalyst in seeking a career grounded in commitment to international students. *Not being invited to the table* emerged as a way to understand the common experience of disenfranchisement across interviews. The final theme, they *don't get what we do* suggested that the overly regulatory, paper-focused, administrative side of working with international students is what many participants felt kept the advisor invisible and undervalued on campus.

The findings indicated the participants demonstrated a clear commitment to the student population they served, but it is oftentimes when the advisor is off campus and interacting with other international student advisors that he or she experiences a true sense of community. The recommendations suggest international student advisors invest the time and money to participate in professional organizations.

iv

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated with love to my father, Edward T. Keenan. His deep respect

for higher education was always a constant in my life. With his Irish humor, love, and

positive outlook on life, he never failed to encourage me and challenge my thinking.

To the memory of Edward Thomas Keenan

Thanks, Dad!

Acknowledgments

In the fall of 2009, I stood among a group of strangers in the new Drexel Graduate Center in Sacramento ready to become part of the inaugural cohort of the doctorate in education program. Although we came from very different backgrounds, we were all thinking the same thing that first day which was the questioning the sanity of our decision in starting what would become an intense and challenging program. To the rest of my cohort: thank you for your support which got me through periods of self-doubt and fatigue. Along this journey there are a few people who deserve special acknowledgement.

To my dissertation chair, Kathy Geller: you support and interest in my research topic was unwavering. I was inspired by you not only for the strength and commitment you brought to the job of dissertation chair, but also by the insight and analysis you brought to the experience. Working with you has been the high point of my doctoral program with Drexel.

To my dissertation co-chair: Edward Bureau: your enthusiasm and optimism for our cohort and our journey through the program was infectious. Many a day I was buoyed by your *I'll let you know when it is time to panic* mantra. You always had the balcony perspective for all of us and kept me going with your patience and dedication.

To my third committee member, Wesley Young: as an accomplished administrator in our field, your understanding of the research was critical to my success. You have always been exceedingly supportive of me and I am most sincerely grateful for having worked with you and shared this experience.

To Linda: thank you for always being there for a shoulder to cry on, a glass of wine, or a Skype hug! Your ability to listen to me and then lovingly tell me exactly what I needed to hear was the best gift of all.

To my good friends, Jill and Ashley: thank you for your humor and support during this time.

To Jack, Nicole, and Michael: thank you for your patience with me during this program. I am inspired by each of you every day and hope that you know learning is something we engage in every stage of life.

To my mother: thank you for reminding me to find my greatest strength and resolve in the power of prayer.

To my husband and best friend, Ken: thank you just doesn't seem to do justice to all you have given me. There is no way I would have finished this program if you hadn't been there cheering me on. Your belief in me was often times heroic. You always have seen the best in me…even when I couldn't.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Problem

Susan (a pseudonym) is an International Student Advisor at a public university. As an international student advisor, she is responsible for advising and relevant programming for the university's international student population. Her department provides services to international students and international scholars, as well as to American students participating in study abroad programs. Susan's responsibilities include meeting directly with international students, processing immigration-related documents, and developing and leading workshops on various topics of concern that are unique to international students.

Having studied abroad as an undergraduate, Susan expresses a great deal of empathy for the experience of the international students she serves. With nearly 10 years of experience, she describes her work as part lawyer, part advisor, part therapist, and full-time mother. She admits her workload is unmanageable and notes she often works in the evenings and on weekends to stay on top of the paperwork demanded of her.

Susan speaks of feeling disenfranchised within the larger framework of the institution. She entered the field because of her international background, but on campus feels her identity as an internationalist is not valued. She is adamant about the importance of her position; nonetheless, she is at a loss for understanding how the university can continue to cut resources to her department while expecting it to grow its international student population.

Susan is buoyed by the positive relationships she shares with her colleagues and credits them with professionally inspiring her. She is dedicated to the students she serves

and sees one of her primary roles on campus to be an advocate on campus for international students. Because international students can be seen as revenue sources in a cash-strapped state university, she questions the administration's genuine interest in this student population that isn't purely financial.

Susan is concerned about her career and while she desires the opportunity to develop professionally beyond her current administrative role, is unsure how to go about it. She comments that career paths for international student advisors and strategies to advance in the international education field are not clear. Constant change since the shift in immigration regulations following 9-11 (2001) has defined her work over the past 10 years and left her feeling extremely dispirited and seemingly adrift.

Susan's story as a struggling professional in the larger framework of higher education administration is not unique considering the reality that she works in a relatively new profession in the emerging field of international education. Higher education in the U.S. is experiencing dynamic changes in many areas, but particularly with its response to globalization (McInnis, 2010; Rosser, Hermsen, Mamiseishvili, & Wood, 2007). With national and international landscapes quickly changing and evolving due to the global knowledge economy, increasing numbers of higher education institutions are impelled to consider internationalization-focused efforts in order to best play a key role in this emerging new era (Hudzik, 2011).

Altbach (2004) suggested U.S. higher education is moving away from a public-good concept toward a market-driven model; subsequently, motivations for internationalization are increasingly economic as well as pedagogic. U.S. higher education has become a vital export with strong growth potential; and international

students annually add billions to the U.S. economy (Douglass & Edelstein, 2009; IIE Network, 2009). Research suggests that along with the clear and present need to educate American students with the skill sets to address cultural and ethnic diversity, there needs to be a focus on the continued development of the U.S. as a top destination for international study (Childress, 2009; Parsons, 2009). The manner in which an institution responds to the call for internationalization is being greatly shaped by the intersections of these historical, cultural, and contextual realities (Burnett & Huisman, 2010; Childress, 2009). How to prepare faculty, students, and staff for engaging in a global higher education system has emerged as a top agenda item for many college presidents; and consequently, campus-wide internationalization efforts on many U.S. campuses are seen as immediate and emergent priorities (Hudzik, 2011).

International student enrollment trends have received increasingly more attention in the past decade, due, in part, to fluctuating student numbers that are the result of immigration regulatory changes as well as increased competition from other countries eager to build revenue from international student numbers (Guruz, 2011). Services for international students are not consistent across campuses. As with many institutional services designated to support minority and special-need higher education populations, international student services units at many institutions have historically received little attention and insufficient resources to effectively support the international student population (Wood & Kia, 2000). International students are in need of clearly defined support systems, and yet, research demonstrates institutions do not do enough in this area (Campbell, 2011; Murphy & Ozturgut, 2009).

A perfect storm of complex changes at the international, national, and institutional levels introduced new challenges and opportunities for professionals who work within international education. The larger changes brought about by a post 9-11 regulatory environment along with the growing competition to attract international students focused campus leaders' attention toward internationalization efforts in new ways. The field of international education continues to define its professional practitioners amid large-scale changes. Advisors like Susan have been confronted with navigating a professional space where their roles in higher education are imprecise (Rosser et al., 2007).

Statement of the Problem

The professional role of international student advisors has not been clearly defined or understood within U.S. higher education.

Purpose and Significance of the Problem

Because of the limited research on the professional identity of international student advisors, this study sought to develop a theory on the experience and stature of international student advisors. In the ensuing months after the September 11th 2001 (9-11) terrorist attacks in the U.S., the work of international student advisors began to change dramatically due to the enactment of major immigration regulations and a changing political climate. These regulatory changes imposed an increasing number of measures aimed at assuring stronger oversight of international students studying in the U.S. and their hosting institutions (Urias & Yeakey, 2009). When the biggest regulatory changes were first imposed throughout most of 2002, institutions found themselves at a loss for understanding the new implementation procedures required to admit and service international students.

Given the marginalization of the international student advisor to this time, many senior administrative leaders did not initially know to whom to turn for the technical expertise associated with responding to these changing international student regulations (Rosser et al., 2007). Before this time, there had not been an infrastructure to address such large-scale changes for the population of international students. As institutions worked quickly and sometimes chaotically to understand what was happening, the role of the International Student Advisor began to change and the position began to figure more prominently on campus (Rosser et al., 2007).

Despite growing attention in U.S. higher education, internationalization is still a low priority for many American colleges (Douglass & Edelstein, 2009). For current and aspiring professionals in the field, a challenging aspect of international education is the vagueness and inconsistency of what it entails (Dolby & Rahman, 2008). Even entry into the field is not clear, and as a result advisors come from wide-ranging backgrounds with a variety of knowledge and skill sets (Wood & Kia, 2000).

International student advisors are integral to an institution's internationalization efforts; and yet there is no clear or consistent structure in place for this profession. This research study emanated from the desire to identify and provide insight into the professional experience of the international student advisor. This research sought to understand the concept of professional identity from the advisor's point of view. Accordingly, this research focused on the substantive population of international student advisors and sought to give voice to their experiences in academia (Creswell, 2007). The findings of this study endeavored to inform higher education organizations and current

advisors in international education on best practices for professional development and leadership in the field.

Research Questions

This research endeavored to create a "cultural portrait" that balanced the emic and etic worldviews of the researcher and participants to examine the development of professional identity for international student advisors (Creswell, 2007). The research questions were as follows:

1. What encompasses the lived experiences of international student advisors?

2. What emergent concerns might be important in the experiences of international student advisors?

3. In what way have the personal constructs of professionalism and professional identity for international student advisors been developed?

Conceptual Framework

This research was framed in social constructivist and pragmatic paradigms. The researcher, in partnership with the participants, utilized methodological and ontological approaches with the goal to generate an actionable and meaningful theory. Important to this research was the philosophy of symbolic interactionism as it relates to understanding the development of self and, by extension, a professional identity (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2011). This research sought to take an organic approach by beginning at the individual level of the advisor and describing the development of a professional self.

This research was shaped by multiple and context-bound perspectives. The larger interpretive community of postmodern perspectives provided a critical lens to this research. In keeping with the researcher's social constructivist worldviews, grounded

theory method was the most appropriate choice because of the inductive and exploratory nature of the approach. As a qualitative study seeking to give voice to a substantive population, the researcher recognized how her experiences affected the lens through which the stories of the participants were viewed and was intentional about addressing preconceptions in the data collection and data analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007). Gilgun (2011) submitted, "researchers are reflexive when they are aware of the multiple influences they have on research processes and on how research processes affect them" (p. 16) .

Having worked in many of the same positions as the participants, the researcher did not always maintain a distant stance in the interviews but used it to the advantage of the interview experience. Sharing stories as a way of building trust and establishing credibility was incorporated naturally into the interview environment. This researcher recognized the need to be cognizant of her own interpretations and values being as much an element of the research data as the transcriptions.

As a former international student advisor and administrator, the researcher brought a deep working knowledge of the day-to-day work experiences advisors need to overcome to best serve the international student population. In addition, the researcher had first-hand experience of the very real experience of working in a campus environment with divergent concepts of internationalization. One experience was poignantly appropriate. While participating in a faculty committee on developing a MA program in international education, the researcher was informed by one faculty member that what she [the researcher] did [as a manager of an international services office] had nothing to do with international education. The concept this faculty member had of the

researcher's role was in direct contrast with how the researcher identified herself. This disconnect informed the researcher about the schism existing in the conversation of campus internationalization. The data in this research revolved around deeply personal and heartfelt stories.

The experience of disenfranchisement, as well as the strong resolve of the participants, strongly resonated with the personal mental models of the researcher. The researcher was careful to let her own experience inform and guide her and be counted as a possibility of explanation along with the rest of the participants.

The literature on the professional experience of international student advisors is limited. The research streams used to understand the professional experience of the international student advisors were as follows:

1. Internationalization of higher education,

2. International Student in the U.S. amid Post 9-11 Realities, and

3. Dimensions of professional identity.

By looking at these streams together, the researcher sought to develop a deeper understanding of the integral factors impacting international student advisors. These streams provided the conceptual framework and the organization for the literature review. The first stream looked at why and how institutions internationalize their programs, services, and campuses. The second stream was important to this study as it provided an overview of the climate for international students within the United States in the past 10 years. Professional identity, the third research stream, considered how a professional individual may develop a professional sense of identity and belonging. These three streams together brought to bear all the external and internal influences that framed the

setting of research. Chapter 2 provides a more complete understanding of the literature review in support of these streams. The research streams are briefly described in the following sections.

Internationalization of Higher Education Stream

In today's 21st century knowledge-based society, higher education institutions recognize the growing internationalization imperative as critical for preparing students to be globally cognizant (Delgado-Marquez, Hurtado-Torres, & Bondar, 2011). Educators and public leaders are concerned with the ability of the U.S. educational system to prepare globally oriented students and to continue to attract the best and the brightest students from across the world to study here (Hudzik, 2011). Projected estimates indicate that by 2025 there will be over 8 million international students worldwide, which will be more than double the 2011 numbers (Guruz, 2011).

A 2008 report published by the American Council on Education (ACE) on internationalization efforts on U.S. campuses found, "overall, internationalization doesn't permeate the fabric of most institutions. It is not sufficiently deep, nor as widespread as it should be to prepare students to meet the challenges they will face once they graduate" (Douglass & Edelstein, 2009, p. 19). In this same report it was noted that less than 40% of U.S. higher education institutions make any reference to international or global education in their mission statements (Douglass & Edelstein, 2009). The emergent body of literature on internationalization of higher education identifies specific dynamics affecting growth in this area.

Twenty-first century higher education is in a constant state of change as technology and globalization have required new approaches to learning and leading

(Altbach, 2005). Yet Childress (2009) suggested higher education has a reputation for being highly decentralized and slow to change. He noted traditional management structure with silos and firm hierarchical movement represents significant barriers to all stakeholders. Childress (2009) further asserted that the structure of higher education is at its core a huge obstacle to internationalization because "it requires a paradigm shift to alter institutional stakeholders' assumptions, values, and practices from a myopic inward focus to a broader international perspective" (Childress, 2009, p. 290).

This stream suggests an understanding of the organizational and attitudinal conditions within higher education concerning internationalization of higher education is critical to this research. As a developing sector within higher education, internationalization presents many challenges as well as opportunities. Particular to this study is an understanding of the larger dimensions of internationalization in order to consider the professional experience of those on campus who work in this area. Services for and attention to international students represents just one aspect of how an institution may address the imperative to adopt a more international persona or agenda.

International Student Mobility and Post 9-11 Realities Stream

Although there have been international students studying in the U.S. throughout the 20th century, there has only recently been a concerted effort to look at how well the U.S. attracts this population and understand what barriers may exist to their participation in U.S. higher education. As a strategic element of higher education internationalization, international student mobility is complex and research into it reveals a range of push-and-pull factors determining student choice as well as institutional response (Altbach, 2004).

The U.S. currently hosts the greatest number of international students in real numbers and this includes approximately 18% of the current global student market (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2011). With increased awareness of the economic value international students bring to the U.S. economy, is a growing emphasis on developing structures on campus to recruit and provide services to international students. In the past 10 years, the U.S. has experienced a 5% decrease in the market share of international students. Clearly the U.S. holds a dominant edge but the loss of market share over the past 10 years has caused many to worry about the attractiveness of the U.S. in a burgeoning international student market. International students are savvy consumers of education and respond to economic and political constraints or incentives. This stream provided a backdrop and a timeframe within which to analyze the changing patterns of international student mobility.

Dimensions of Professional Identity Stream

Prior to 2001, in the majority of institutions, most of the staff supporting international students were relatively unknown on most campuses and did not figure prominently on the presidents' or provosts' agendas (Rosser et al., 2007). When the regulatory waves of change began to hit throughout most of 2002, institutions were at a loss in terms of understanding the new implementation procedures to support a group of students representing a small percentage of their overall population. Many international student advisors felt confused with the very real experiences of international students being denied visas, stopped at the borders, and prohibited access to research or education that had been previously available (Jaeger & Burnett, 2005). International education professionals had to work very hard to understand a continually changing regulatory

environment, adapt to and create new business practices, as well as advocate for an international student population feeling increasingly politicized and targeted as would-be terrorists (Lu, 2008b).

NAFSA: Association of International Educators and other advocacy associations quickly mobilized to provide institutions and international student services staff with tools to understand how new regulations would impact their jobs, workload, and students. Through the ongoing change and accompanying chaos, the international student advisor and other campus administrators who work directly with international students began to occupy more influential and increasingly professionalized positions on campus (Rosser et al., 2007). More recently, campuses have seen an increase in the creation of senior positions responsible for guiding campus efforts related to international efforts (Dessoff, 2010). While higher education institutions work to define internationalization and what it may mean on their campus, the practitioners who work with international students struggle to find a professional base on campus. This stream considers professional identity of the international student advisor by looking at the concept of identity as well as the current body of research on changes in professional identity in various dimensions of higher education.

Definition of Terms

This section contains conceptual definitions used in this research study. Key terms include the following:

Constant comparative method

A data analysis method of jointly collecting, coding and analyzing data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

Emic

Interpretation of the participants (Creswell, 2007)

Etic

Interpretation of the researcher (Creswell, 2007)

Globalization

"The globalization of commerce, social forces, idea exchange, and growth in

student mobility drive further significant internationalization of education"

(Hudzik, 2011, p. 6).

Grounded Theory

A systematic research method emphasizing the creation of theory with broad

explanatory powers grounded in the data of the study (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser &

Strauss, 1967)

Internationalization of Higher Education

The process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the

teaching, research, and service functions of the institution (Childress, 2009)

International Education

Education transcending borders through the exchange or movement of students,

faculty, programs, and knowledge (Altbach & Knight, 2007)

International Student

Non-immigrant visa holders who come to the U.S. as F-1 or J-1 students for the

purpose of attending higher education or post-secondary education in the U.S.

International Student Advisor

Higher education professional who works with international students coming to the U.S. to study

Social Constructivism

A worldview that seeks to understand or make meaning of the world in which one lives. In research, the perceptions and interpretations of the participants are integral to the process. Meaning is negotiated socially and historically (Creswell, 2007).

Symbolic Interactionism

A process of human interaction whereby individuals create meaning in their world through the use of symbols. Symbols can include words, language, as well as concepts of self (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

The U.S. has a large and diverse higher education community; therefore, this research may be limited in its ability to be generalized to a larger population. While the use of technology allowed the researcher to collect the stories, perspectives, and experiences of advisors throughout the U.S., data collection through Skype or by the phone will not provide the rich level of detail an in-person interview can.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research problem and research streams employed to understand the professional identity and stature of international student advisors. The problem this research addresses is that the professional role of international student advisors is not clearly defined or understood within U.S. higher

education. As a result, international student advisors have not been included in the current conversation in higher education on internationalization. The research questions asked (1) what encompassed the lived experience of international student advisors, (2) what emergent concerns might be important in the experiences of international student advisors, and (3) in what way have the personal constructs of professionalism and professional identity for international student advisors been developed? The research streams used to shape the study include the following three:

1. Internationalization of higher education,

2. International student mobility and post 9-11 realities in the U.S, and

3. Dimensions of professional identity.

Chapter 2: The Literature Review

Introduction of the Problem

As described in Chapter 1, while the responsibilities of international student services has become increasingly complex, and the numbers of international students studying in America continues to increase, little attention has been paid to the role and preparation of international student advisors. This research study sought to develop a greater understanding of the experience of international student advisors in the U.S., with a larger goal of providing better insight into the development of professional identity of advisors in the burgeoning field of international education. International student advisors who have long been at the margins of institutional hierarchies are coming more into the mainstream of institutional policy and practice but still struggle with a professional sense of place (Rosser et al., 2007). This research studied the opportunities and obstacles confronting international student advisors and impacting their development of a sense of professional self.

The U.S., with a large fragmented and decentralized higher education system of over 4,000 institutions, offers learning experiences for nearly every kind of learner, but for those students from other countries, multiple layers of complexity with immigration regulations, visa applications, and unclear paths through the system exist (Lu, 2008a). Institutional support for international students through its admissions practices, student services, and campus culture differs greatly depending on the institution (Childress, 2009). Furthermore, for many institutions the distance between the rhetoric of internationalization and the actual practice is great (Murphy & Ozturgut, 2009). In other

words, there is talk of valuing internationalization and international students, but real commitment in terms of resources, programming, and staffing is not often realized. Inherent to these challenges are the multiple perspectives on what encompasses internationalization.

Hudzik (2011) suggested that as U.S. institutions seek to compete in the increasingly global higher education market, more campuses are looking at the people and structures that can support international students. By examining the intersection among the work of international student advisors, the experiences of the international student population and the comprehensive internationalization efforts taking place in higher education, this study sought to explore the dilemma of how international student advisors develop professionally.

Conceptual Framework

Central to this study were theories on identity, research in internationalization in higher education, and international student experience. The story of Susan introduced in Chapter 1 was intended to provide a portrait of the multifaceted contexts of how a person who has decided to be an international student advisor develops a professional identity. A driving assumption of this study is that international student advisors struggle with finding a voice and place amid the rapidly changing higher education environment in which the internationalization of higher education as a campus initiative continues to move toward the center of institutional priorities. This research was shaped by the lived experiences of its researcher and the participants. The findings may offer insights into how to best enhance professional development in the field of international education.

The theoretical structure that drove this study centered on the experience of the advisor within a local institutional culture, the entrenched U.S. higher education culture, and the changing market forces of international education. This concept is portrayed graphically in Figure 1 to delineate the interrelatedness of forces on the identity of the international student advisor.
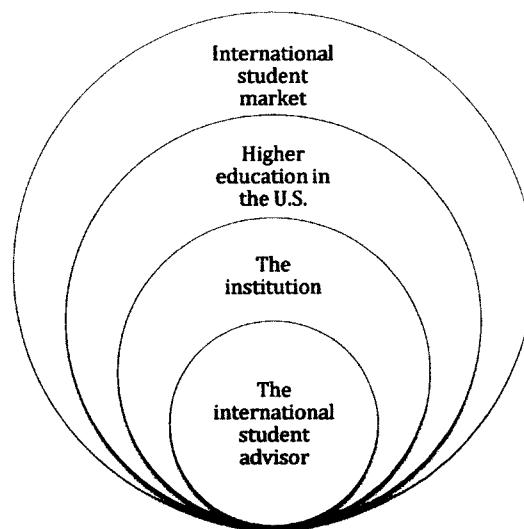
Figure 1: Conceptual framework.

In this study, the researcher took an inductive or fact-finding approach with the objective of generating a theory reflecting the lived experience as understood through the perspective of its participants: the international student advisor. The research methodology dictated the researcher enter into the research with as few preconceptions as possible in order to allow the data or categories to emerge unencumbered by previous concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher employed the use of memo writing and self-reflection to recognize any bias brought into the analysis of the phenomenon.

Glaser and Strauss (1967), in their seminal work on grounded theory method, directed the researcher to "ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study

in order to assure the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas" (p. 37). In most research endeavors, the literature review typically functions to demonstrate the need for the research and how the research will be positioned within the existing literature (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theorists are challenged to strike a balance with the literature review's place in their research. One perspective is to use the literature review to "set the stage" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 166). This researcher took the stance of reading broadly across tangential literature themes to inform the direction of the research without overly prescribing the prospective theory (Birks & Mills, 2011).

The Literature Review

The literature review reflects the overarching research streams indicated in Chapter 1:

1. Internationalization of higher education,

2. International Student in the U.S. amid Post 9-11 Realities, and

3. Dimensions of professional identity in international education.

Internationalization of Higher Education

Access to higher education has moved from an elite sphere to greater access leading to a *massification* (Hudzik, 2011). This change in access to education has led to an increasingly diverse student population and redefined the concept of student. Furthermore, the current evolution of contemporary higher education toward a market-driven perspective of higher education increasingly treats students as *clients* or *customers*. Higher education institutions operate in an increasingly competitive environment where being an internationalized university is thought to attract better

students, faculty, and researchers (Delgado-Marquez et al., 2011). The flow of students into an increasing array of countries continues to gain strength as an economic force leading governments and institutions all over the world to develop programs and processes that attract and grow a healthy international student population (Altbach, 2004).

Current practitioners and leaders in international education understand the field of international education has been going through a significant formative phase due in a large part to the rapidly changing set of dynamics within higher education over the past decade (Burnett & Huisman, 2010). What encompasses international education, while often contested, generally includes studies in comparative education, study abroad, internationalization of the curriculum, or any other activity an institution engages in which the content or student is crossing international borders (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Hudzik, 2011). Exchange and study abroad is nothing new as students and faculty have been studying, teaching, and conducting research outside their own countries for centuries. What is currently unprecedented is the concept that education has increasingly shifted from a public responsibility to a private good as evidenced by the commoditization of higher education worldwide (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Douglass & Edelstein, 2009).

Internationalization activities have dramatically moved to the center of the strategic planning agenda of institutions in the past decade (De Wit, 2011). The emerging body of literature on internationalization of higher education suggested this is an area with limited concurrence on what it means for an institution to take on the international dimension. Without a clear consensus on a definition for what

internationalization entails, characterizations diverge according to institutional priorities and needs (De Wit, 2011). Delgado-Márques et al. (2011) noted because there is no common definition on internationalization, efforts vary reflecting divergent strategic goals. Delgado-Márques et al. (2011) outlined four main perspectives of internationalization in higher education from the growing body of literature devoted to the topic. According to their investigation, which draws from Knight's (2007) generic perspectives on internationalization, an institution may take an activity perspective, competency perspective, ethos perspective, or process perspective. The activity perspective places emphasis on the presence of international students, changes to the curriculum, and study abroad initiatives, whereas, the competency perspective considers skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values as important to global know-how. An ethos perspective takes a campus-wide approach to developing an environment that is supportive to internationalization initiatives, and the process perspective emphasizes a variety of intercultural and international dimensions through all activity sectors of a university (Delgado-Marquez et al., 2011).

Where internationalization planning falls within the greater context of an institution's overall strategic plan is a key indicator of predicting success in this area (Hudzik, 2011). Internationalization plans are an institution's overt commitment to engaging in internationalization strategies. By taking into account Knight's (2007) internationalization cycle, the internationalization plan is deemed to be a necessary first step in internationalization (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Childress, 2009). Strategic planning in internationalization with the full support of faculty can guide the efforts and

resources an institution has for preparing its campus to engage in a complex global environment.

Childress (2009) considered the prevalence of internationalization plans among a select group of institutions as well as what factors impeded or facilitated the development of such plans. Her research specifically looked at how institutions engaged faculty in internationalization efforts as a strategy for developing a more global perspective at campuses. The findings of her research determined internationalization plans were in place at approximately 71% of the institutional members of the Association of International Education Administrators. A predictor of how internationalized a campus appears was measured through the vocal and demonstrative support of the top administration (Childress, 2009). Childress's research suggested two factors hindering the development of the plan lay in a decentralized organizational structure and a time-consuming decision-making process. A lack of understanding of international education also affected the implementation of the internationalization plans. Childress's (2009) research delineated a number of attitudinal barriers in the development and implementation of internationalization plans currently existing in colleges and universities. Her research contributed greatly to the growing body of literature finding faculty involvement in internationalization efforts is key to its success.

Similar research to Childress's (2009) is offered by Agnew and VanBalkom (2009) who examined organizational change on campus in response to globalization. Agnew and VanBalkom (2009) positioned their study on the assumption that "if higher education is to stay true to its nature and purpose in serving the public good, global literacy is the imperative, and internationalization the strategic priority to achieve it" (p.

451). The study identified four institutional types and discussed their relationships to an institution's ability to be considered internationalized.

The findings of their study emphasized that weak and internally oriented institutional cultures tended to be locally focused, whereas, strong and externally oriented cultures had a more international focus. Agnew and VanBalkom's (2009) research suggested public institutions may struggle with an either/or mentality with internationalization efforts. In other words, the institution may see efforts at internationalization as taking away from its local, and primary, mission. Additionally, their research suggested the faculty in private institutions were disinclined to participate in specific internationalization activities as these were not seen to advance tenure. Similar research by Burnett and Huisman (2010) suggested institutions thought to be more commercial or enterprising would have a better developed and more strategic approach to globalization issues impacting higher education. The results of Burnett and Huisman's (2010) research determined a connection in which more entrepreneurially oriented academic cultures showed a more strategic and opportunistic orientation to globalization.

The literature on internationalization in higher education provides key points in addressing long-held assumptions about internationalization efforts beyond the usual rhetoric often heard by college presidents or seen in institutional mission statements. This stream is important to this research study because international student advisors receive cues about their professional value within the institution by reflecting on internationalization efforts and their place at the table. Ideally, international student advisors and the offices they occupy should play a pivotal role in the success of campus

internationalization, but that is not always the case. The research points to a growing

awareness of internationalization in higher education but also a great deal of

misunderstanding or vagueness as well.

International Student in the U.S. amid Post 9-11 Realities

On March 29, 2011, Florida Representative Gus Bilirakis introduced H.R.1211 –

Student Visa Security Improvement Act to the 112th Congress. Mr. Bilirakis's bill

proposed more surveillance of international students in the United States through stricter

visa scrutiny as well as additional reporting requirements on behalf of the institutions

(Bilirakis, 2011). In previous years, Representative Bilirakis had unsuccessfully

introduced similar bills focusing on the possible connection between terrorists and the

student visa program in the U.S. Bilirakis's (2011) initiatives point to a disturbing reality

for international students and U.S. institutions. U.S. immigration policy is often fear-

based and, as such, the creation and implementation of the multiple acts after the tragic

and public event of 9-11 are consistent with other periods in American history

surrounding the experience of immigrants and non-immigrants (Urias & Yeakey, 2009).

Presently, no other visitor on a visa to the U.S. undergoes as much scrutiny as

international students (Johnson, 2011). By the time a new international student arrives on

any given college campus in the U.S. to begin her academic career in the U.S., she will

have been processed through no fewer than four separate U.S. government agencies to

get her visa and travel into the country. Once on campus, the student reports to an

international student advisor whose primary role is to keep this student in correct

immigration status while at the same time making sure the institution does not violate any

federal regulations. The focus on regulatory compliance has become an overwhelmingly

large part of an international student's experience as well as the international student advisor's position (Rosser et al., 2007).

A number of legislative efforts have significantly shaped the way in which U.S. higher education admits and supports international students and scholars; however, four main regulatory actions undergird current international student guidelines. These are Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), USA PATRIOT ACT, Enhanced Border and Security Visa Entry Reform Act, and The Homeland Security Act. The past decade has seen major changes to policy implementation with regard to immigration regulations, but attention to international students as a possible avenue for security threats in the U.S. took concrete measures in the 1990s. The first World Trade Center bombing in 1993 was carried out in part by an assailant who had entered the U.S. on a student visa but subsequently dropped out of school (Wong, 2006). Following this in 1995, an Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) task force was convened to look at problems that might exist with visa and immigration practices related to international students in the U.S. and to make recommendations to Congress. In 1996, Congress enacted IIRIRA (Cronin, 2001). IIRIRA significantly amended the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act in a number of key areas to address illegal immigration. There were many newly imposed penalties that had not been present in the law prior. For example, IIRIRA established 3- to 10-year bars for those who overstay their visas along with restrictions on future visa applications. As a result of the sweeping changes, IIRIRA received strong reaction from higher education, business, and legal communities (Fragomen, 1997).

There were a number of provisions specific to international students in the U.S. in section 641 of IIRIRA. This section established the unfunded mandate of a tracking system for international students. Originally conceived, this system was to pilot by collecting information on students from five designated countries. After a period of testing and review, the system would then be launched to include all countries (IIRIRA, 1996). The initially piloted system was called the Coordinated Interagency Partnership Regulating International Students (CIPRIS). CIPRIS was meant to test the feasibility of a reporting system and was considered a "throw away" program. After it was piloted with 21 institutions in four southern states, it concluded in October of 1999 (Cronin, 2001).

IIRIRA had established a timeline calling for the implementation of the pilot by 1998 and then provided a window of four years during which time a feasibility report would be submitted to the Secretary of State, Secretary of Education, and Attorney General. In the original IIRIRA, full worldwide implementation would occur no more than one year after the report was submitted. Following the conclusion of the pilot, CIPRUS was officially changed to Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) in July 2001. At this time, a national deployment of SEVIS was beginning with a limited number of schools in the Boston area. SEVIS was being introduced in measured steps and in accordance with IIRIRA (Cronin, 2001).

Shortly after SEVIS entered its national deployment phase in the summer of 2001, the tragic events of 9-11 occurred. As the news of the events unfolded, speculation on the origin of the terrorists and how they were in the U.S. began. Although there have been a number of reports with varying degrees of accuracy, the 9-11 commission confirmed that one of the hijackers came into the U.S. on a student visa and two of the

hijackers had applied to change to student visas once in the U.S. (Johnson, 2011).

Somewhat damaging to the reputation of the INS was the fact that the approval for the

change of status of the two hijackers came six months after 9-11.

In quick response to the attacks of 9-11, Congress passed the Uniting and

Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Interrupt and

Obstruct Terrorist Act (USA PATRIOT ACT) on October 26, 2001. The USA

PATRIOT ACT addressed a variety of provisions related to terrorism protection. Section

415 specifically addressed foreign students in the U.S. by imposing a January 1, 2003

deadline on SEVIS and allocated $38 million to make that happen (USA PATRIOT Act

of 2001, 2001). Section 415 of the USA PATRIOT ACT did not introduce any

drastically new legislation but was calling for full implementation of section 641 of

IIRIRA. Shortly after the passing of the PATRIOT ACT, testing on a full SEVIS

implementation began in December 2001 (Wong, 2006).

The Enhanced Border and Security Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002 established

reporting requirements for international students, visa issuance procedures, as well as

specific information required for the electronic monitoring. Although always included in

the Immigration and Nationality Act, in-person interviews were now enforced as a

requirement for all visa applicants. The Act also established an interim program for

institutions to report the arrival and participation of international students on their

campuses. Finally, in November 2002, the Homeland Security Act was passed

establishing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the abolishment of the

Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Pertinent to international students, The

Homeland Security Act designated the SEVIS program to be under its authority. One of

the largest U.S. government agencies, the DHS's primary mission is to prevent, reduce vulnerability to, and minimize the effect of terrorists' attacks in the U.S.

There exists a general public perception that the SEVIS system came into existence after 9-11; however, as previously detailed, the intent to create a system to monitor international students began six years prior in 1996 (Cronin, 2001). Prior to 9-11, very few knew about CIPRIS or SEVIS; consequently, the perception for many in and out of higher education is that SEVIS was hastily created and implemented to appease strong public concern about terrorism. In fact, at the time of 9-11, SEVIS was methodically being introduced and staged for national positioning. After 9-11, a national fervor toward initiatives that fought terrorism existed and SEVIS was basically the only thing the government had that it could readily deploy. SEVIS's fast-tracked position addressing public concern is consistent with True, Jones, and Baumgartner's (as cited in Alcantara, 2009) argument that U.S. policymaking is characterized by long, slow periods punctuated with sporadic highly public policy changes. Even though there was alarm in the higher education community that SEVIS was being implemented too hastily, no one wanted to be caught in the uncomfortable position of appearing soft on terrorism. As the country dealt with the shock and grief of the attacks and demanded action, there seemed to be no option for a tempered deployment of SEVIS or visa issuance reform. The focus on issuing visas and accepting international students shifted from promoting a diplomatic orientation to one of preventing terrorism (Urias & Yeakey, 2009).

The regulatory events beginning in 2002 have had a major impact on the involvement of international students in the U.S. (Urias & Yeakey, 2009). One estimate is that 15-30% of international students who wanted to come to the United States chose

not to because of the implementation of the SEVIS's web-based system maintaining information on international students in the U.S. (Jaeger & Burnett, 2005). Fears of national security have been debilitating toward the establishment of a national policy on international education (De Wit & Rumbley, 2008). Douglass and Edelstein (2009) emphasized the need for the U.S. to continue to attract the best and the brightest to be competitive in a global economy by developing a national plan for international student enrollment, improving visa procedures and developing better immigration benefits. Altbach's (2007) perspectives on international education delineate the realities currently facing U.S. institutions, including increased competition by other countries, limited higher education capacity in developing countries, economic issues, and post-9-11 realities. Other countries have responded to changes in international student market realities by developing national policies to competitively attract international students and bolster their higher education enrollments (Guruz, 2011; Hudzik, 2011).

Immigration regulations and public perception has had a significant impact on the reputation of the U.S. as an unwelcoming destination for international students. In considering the impact of federal regulatory laws on international students in the U.S., Urias and Yeakey (2009) contended that missing from the literature on policy analysis are research studies measuring the impact of policies within the realm of international higher education. Urias and Yeakey's (2009) research provides an understanding of where deeply entrenched attitudinal barriers impacting international students on U.S. campuses may have originated. The impact on the higher education community was not only in terms of how to implement new federal regulations it was also philosophical. Institutions, not knowing how to respond, became confused on how to best work with

their international student and scholar population. Urias and Yeakey (2009) proposed

fear became an undercurrent through all the legislation and impacted public opinion.

They wrote, "Even though the public appreciated the need for international education in

its myriad forms...American still live in a climate of fear that some believe is based in

large part on race and religion" (p. 85).

What connects the international student and the International Student Advisor is

they are both the end user of a complicated process of policy creations and

implementations that did not begin with each of them in mind. Reflecting a top-down

policy implementation, the regulatory changes of the past decade impacting international

students and institutions were imposed in hasty measures to address the very public

concern of terrorism (Alcantara, 2009).

Dimensions of Professional Identity in International Education

The stated purpose of this research study was to explore the development of the

professional identity of international student advisors amid the complex and changing

higher education environments that have been reviewed in the previous two sections.

Within the past decade, international educators and international student advisors have

begun to achieve a new status within higher education as a result of the perceived

economic value of international students, the importance of internationalization

initiatives, and the competition for rankings (Dessoff, 2010; Hudzik, 2011).

With institutional cultures becoming more focused on international students and

internationalization efforts, international student advisors are challenged to evaluate their

professional identities within a changing context. While there is no current body of

research that has a singular focus on international student advisors, there are other areas

of research that can contribute to this research and inform the findings. The literature on identity as well the changing nature of higher education professionals is considered here.

Identity theory provides a larger framework to understand how an individual identifies and describes his or her multiple identities through social interaction (Burke & Stets, 2009). According to identity theory, "identity meanings are based on culturally recognized characteristics that individuals internalize as their own and that serve to define and characterize them as unique individuals" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 125). How a person identifies him or herself is based on characteristics which are culturally shared. An elementary teacher, for example, is a unique individual; however, there will be attributes of his or her identity that are identifiable and shared among a community of teachers. It is in seeing him or herself as a part of a community of professionals that he or she can derive feelings of authenticity and be clear on his or her identity as, in this example, an elementary teacher. A person may be feeling authentic when there is a "feeling that one is being ones true self" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 126). According to Burke & Stets, authenticity is a new area of self-esteem research in social psychology and is often discussed within the workplace when individuals cannot be themselves and feelings of inauthenticity emerge. A lack of authenticity is a undesirable state that can greatly impact how a person feels at his or her core (Burke & Stets, 2009). The research on identity is important to this study because of its intent to understand how international student advisors develop a professional sense of self.

Moving from general identity theory into specifically higher education identity, Henkel (2010) posits, "academic identity is a function of community membership" (2010, p. 172). Her research is focused on the experience of faculty; however, her thesis

emphasizes that higher education institutions are "multi-professional" in their structure (Henkel, 2010). The university organization with its administrative, academic, and multitude of stakeholders with varying interests and priorities has led to a struggle with what has been considered professorial precedence. Henkel (2010) suggested the institution is a "weaker source of identification" because the university structure is a more administrative and considered a more bureaucratic structure that has lost sight of the fundamental academic mission (p. 164). Henkel's research highlights the changing nature of the relationship between academic and non-academic functions.

In response to globalization, economic limitations, and 21st-century technology, higher education continues to be redefined and, consequently, the gap between instructional faculty and non-instructional staff is showing signs of change (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2005; Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007; McInnis, 2010). With so much change impacting traditional roles in university administration, Quigley (2011) provided an analysis on academic identity offering a perspective on understanding the current role of the international student advisor. Quigley (2011) brings a constructivist, interpretive critical theory perspective asserting academic identity is a "constantly shifting target" (p. 21) and suggesting it is important to consider community and culture in an assessment of oneself professionally.

Whitchurch (2009) suggests that changes in academia have influenced the ways in which concepts of professionalism have crossed institutional boundaries. She provides a new model which moves professional identity from a solely administrative identity to a blended professional who occupies an emerging third space located between traditional professional and academic domains. Her theory of the third space provides a context for

considering how higher education professionals influenced and shaped by a changing landscape occupy imprecise domains that are not fully administrative and not fully academic (Whitchurch, 2010). The dynamics of third space is based on a framework of three distinct phases: *contestation, reconciliation,* and *reconstruction* describing a process of movement through third space toward professional identity in reaction to a changing environment of sometimes contested spaces (Whitchurch, 2010). Her work lends support to Quigley's (2011) concept of self-reflection amid cultural and contextual change.

The model of third space may provide a relevant lens through which to understand the professional dynamics and personal constructs of professional identity in the emerging field of international education. The roles within and between the academic side of the institution and the staff side have blurred considerably with "knowledge boundaries" being shared by faculty and staff (Henkel, 2010, p. 542). Changes to the professional in higher education can be attributed to large-scale changes (McInnis, 2010).

Changes in higher education professionals include the margins between professional and academic spheres of activity becoming imprecise (Henkel, 2010; Whitchurch, 2010). The story of Susan, in many ways, has the opportunity to identify her professionalism with that of "third-space" higher education professional. International student advisors are called upon to advise, teach, direct, and conduct research in the attempt to meet the needs of international students and understand the unique dynamics of the roles they play in higher education. In this way, International Student Advisors navigate a changing landscape where professionals occupy imprecise domains that are not fully administrative and not fully academic (Whitchurch, 2010).

As noted previously, research on the professional development of international student advisors is limited and career growth in international education is not always clear. Pathways to senior positions in international education continue to draw from traditional academic routes and the faculty ranks leaving aspiring professionals very few options for career growth (Water, 2006).

Wood and Kia (2000) noted the location of international student service units on campus is not consistent throughout U.S. higher education, so international student services offices can be housed in various departments ranging from the provost office, legal affairs, admissions, and counseling. Because of the service aspect of international student advising, international student advisors are oftentimes situated in student affairs departments, so the research on student affairs may offer useful insight into the issues confronting international education.

Ping (1999) provided a contemporary description of the role student affairs plays in U.S. higher education in light of internationalization and focuses specifically on the influx of international students. Ping (1999) asserted, as Carpenter and Stimpson (2007) did, that the student affairs office is becoming increasingly responsible in non-academic learning areas such as creating policies and procedures that guide students' rights and responsibilities (Ping, 1999). Ping (1999) contended internationalization is a radical transformation of the campus, as a whole experience within an institution, and is not limited to just simply having international students on campus. He went on to suggest institutions, through their student affairs professionals, need to be intentional about

building a student community that is mindful, respectful, and interested in those who are different.

Carpenter and Stimpson (2007) challenged professionalism in the field of student affairs by suggesting its practitioners act, think, and portray themselves professionally; however, more needs to be done at a deeper level to develop scholarship, research, and professional development. In other words, critical to furthering the professionalism of student affairs practitioners within academia is the call to behave more scholarly through the use of research-based data and building bridges with faculty (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007). They further asserted a key aspect of professionalism in other professions is that its members substantially share goals or communities of practice, but they suggested this is lacking in student affairs.

The literature presented in this stream has centered the concept of identity, the experience of the individual in higher education, as well as the way in which outside influences or internal structures can have a tremendous impact. The research on professional identity development of international student advisors is nearly nonexistent so the theories presented provide a backdrop with which to explore relevant professional development.

Summary

Complex changes in higher education as a result of global, economic, and competitive forces challenge the thinking and structures at all professional levels. The international student advisor occupies a particularly challenging role, working within a changing U.S. higher education structure amid a rapidly growing international education market force. These streams provided a structure in which to examine the context of an

international student advisor in U.S. higher education. The literature of professional

identity pointed to a growing force of higher education practitioners who cross traditional

boundaries. The stream of research and practice related to international student mobility

describes the challenges and opportunity of international students, and sets up the context

for a population served by the international student advisor. Finally, internationalization

of the higher education paradigm brought in the macro changes impacting the

international flow of students and the changes on campuses to professional and academic

identities. These streams together informed the data collected in the form of perspectives

and experiences of the research participants.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the professional identities of international student advisors. This qualitative study considered the personal constructs of professionalism for international student advisors who have worked within higher education for at least 10 years. This research sought to inductively generate a concept explaining the particular experience of an international student advisor in U.S. higher education post "9-11-2001." It was the hope of the researcher that the findings of this study may be used to provide current international student advisors in international education with greater insight regarding examining issues of professional identity and growth.

The research questions presented in Chapter 1 were purposefully general and broad in order to not overly influence the direction of the research, keeping with grounded theory methodology study where the data generate the central problem or problems to be studied (Birks & Mills, 2011). Grounded theory method was chosen because the intent of the research was to develop a hypothesis of what occurs with professional identity development from the perspectives of international student advisors (Creswell, 2008). This theory developed from the unique perspectives of a specific group of individuals working within higher education. This chapter describes the utilized methodology in greater detail. Descriptions of the population and site are followed by research design, rationale, and method sections. An overview of the stages of data collection is discussed.

Site and Population

Population Description

The target population for this study was practicing international student advisors across the U.S., all of whom were members of NAFSA: Association of International Educators (see Appendix A for chart of participants). Given the diversity of U.S. higher education options, the study included advisors representing a variety of institution types including private, public, and public community college, as well as non-profit and for-profit entities. The common denominator among the participants was that they worked within institutions that have the approval from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to admit international students in F-1 or J-1 status. The advisors' primary role was to work directly with international students on their campuses. The discerning variance among the participants were differences in context and institutional culture toward internationalization as evidenced by the number of international students, both in percentage and real numbers, and the level of services specifically dedicated to serving their international students.

The participants in the study were considered active members in guiding the findings of the study. The nature of a grounded theory design requires a flexible approach to allow for emerging themes and categories. This study entered into the initial data collection with a broad agenda that, through ongoing coding and analysis, developed into a very specific inquiry on the aspect of professional growth previously identified (Birks & Mills, 2011; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Utilizing the traditional tool of interviews, this research followed a systematic design in grounded theory and used the

data analysis steps of initial, intermediate, and selective coding toward the development of a theory.

Because grounded theory research studies typically utilize a large number of participants, the number of participants in this research was 28 (Creswell, 2007). To attract a diverse group of participants and assure compliance with the Internal Review Board (IRB), the following steps were taken to identify the participants in this study. An email describing the study and a call for participants was sent through various list serves on the NAFSA: Association of International Educators special interest group sections. Emails were also sent directly to colleagues and international student and scholars offices to solicit their involvement (see Appendix B). Once commitments to participate in the program were received, informed consents were distributed and collected prior to the initial interview (see Appendix C).

Site description. The participants chose the time and place of the interviews. Every effort was made to meet the participant in a time and place that was most convenient for him or her. With the majority of interviews having taken place outside the realm of face-to-face interviews, Skype or phone conversations were the primary interview site. The context within which the advisors worked was important for framing their experience; however, each participant could choose to be interviewed during work or outside of work hours. The interview emphasis was placed on the individual experience and perspectives.

Site access. Building rapport and a level of trust with the participants was integral to the success of the interviews. The structure of the interview delved into the

participants' personal understanding of professionalism and internationalization and how these were realized, or not, in their institutions.

Research Design and Rationale

In this qualitative study, the researcher was the key instrument for data collection and brought a deep and personal connection to the research experience (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory methodology was chosen because of its emphasis on creating theory for a phenomenon where none had existed (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory research is an inductive approach with constant and recursive data analysis (Charmaz, 2006).

The researcher strove to develop a hypothesis of what occurs within higher education institutions from the phenomenological experience of the participants (Creswell, 2008). The theory developed from the unique perspectives of individuals working within higher education who sought to understand internationalization and its influence on their campuses.

Research Method

Introduction

Grounded theory research is an inductive approach with constant and recursive data analysis. Grounded research method centers on a process in which data is analyzed continually and groupings begin to surface revealing a new perspective or theory on the phenomenon identified (Creswell, 2007). The data collected for this research drew on the experiences, perspectives, and unique stories of practicing international student advisors. Within a grounded theory study, data collection is not considered a task separate from data analysis (Birks & Mills, 2011). To allow for a deep exploration of ideas and reflection, open-ended interviews were the main mode of data collection. Beginning with

the first interview, each interview was analyzed and then used to build the structure of subsequent interviews to develop the theory (see Appendix D).

Birks and Mills (2011) put forward that the data is at the forefront in a grounded theory study and the researcher "maintains this close relationship with the data throughout" (p. 65). The conceptual framework of the study was grounded in the unique process of theoretical sampling, unique to the grounded theory method. Theoretical sampling is a technique of data collection by which the researcher collects, analyzes, and codes simultaneously to determine the direction and future steps of the research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Utilizing the traditional tool of interviews, this research followed the systematic design of grounded theory and used a sequence of data analysis steps toward the development of a theory.

Stages of Data Collection

To adhere to the principles of grounded theory, the researcher conducted data collection and analysis in accordance with theoretical sampling. Interviews began in December and continued through March. The technique of constant comparative analysis began with the first interview and continued through the final one. Data collection was considered complete when no new properties or dimensions were introduced in the final interviews (Birks & Mills, 2011). After the core category had been identified and the other categories were positioned around it, the researcher considered the data collection complete. As a final stage of research, the participants were given an overview of the findings and interpretation of findings (See Appendix E). Their reactions and perspectives were important in validating the theory on professional identity of international student advisors.

Description of Method

Grounded theory was the method used in this qualitative study. Open-ended interviews were the strategy for generating data. The initial interviews endeavored to identify key categories upon which to build a concept, build trust and rapport with the participants, as well as begin a dialogue about the experience of the advisors and the institutions' agendas in international student services and recruitment. Integral to a grounded research study is the need to not bring any preconceptions into the interview experience but allow the theory to transpire.

Ethical Considerations

Data in this grounded research study was gathered through open-ended interviews. Care is taken in grounded research to not bring any preconceptions into the interview experience because the theory and final product of the research comes out of the experience and perspectives of the participants. Appropriate ethical practices were followed through respect for the individual, honoring anonymity, and full disclosure of the research study to the participants. Because there may have been multiple individuals from a single institution, attention was paid to concealing the identity of the participants from each other and to ask the participants to refrain from discussing the study with others.

Chapter 4: Findings and Results

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to give voice to the experience of international student advisors and develop a theory explaining the development of their professional identity within the context of U.S. higher education. The problem to be examined in this study was that the professional role of international student advisors has not been clearly defined or understood within U.S. higher education. As a result, the voices of international student advisors have been left out of a significant part of the current conversation in higher education regarding internationalization.

The research questions framing the study and methodology were as follows:

- What encompasses the lived experiences of international student advisors amid the complex and changing landscape of U.S. higher education?

- What emergent concerns are expressed through the important experiences of individuals who are international student advisors?

- In what way have the personal constructs of professionalism and professional identity for international student advisors been developed?

In considering the findings, it is important to revisit the conceptual framework detailed in Chapter 2. Figure 2 shows the positioning of the international student advisor and the dominant forces generally impacting his or her professional experience.
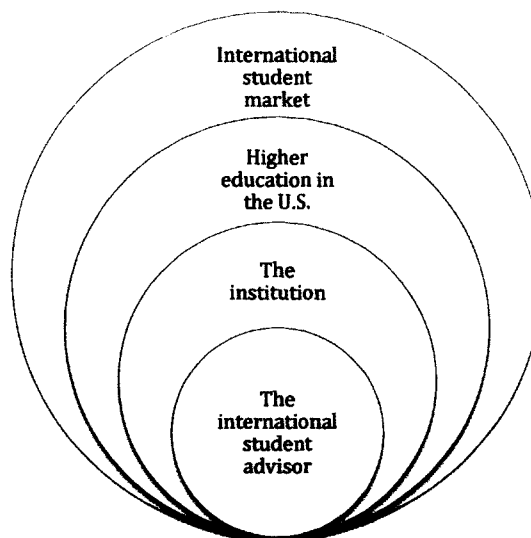
Figure 2. Conceptual framework.

Understanding the perception of the advisor's professionalism within the context

of the international student market, higher education, and institutional culture gave this

study a foothold in which to explore the identity of an international student advisor. Of

note to this research study was a general lack of literature on international education and

specifically international student advising. The use of grounded theory was appropriate

in this case as the methodology has an exploratory nature allowing for the establishment

of a foundation of new knowledge in an area where previously little was known (Birks &

Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2006). The study was conducted through interviews spanning a

three-month period. The interviews were confidential, all reported data was collected

anonymously, and pseudonyms are used in identifying direct quotes.

This chapter begins by presenting the descriptive and demographic profile of the

participants. The findings and observations are presented and framed in the context of

the top thematic areas identified through analysis of the data. Chapter 5 considers the

findings in light of the aforementioned research questions.

Findings

The use of grounded theory method was chosen to move beyond providing a merely descriptive portrayal of the subject phenomenon to providing a larger theoretical framework with broader explanatory power (Charmaz, 2006). The interviews were opportunities to understand what it was that led an individual to choose his or her career, as well as to understand how the participants defined themselves in the context of the institution. Identity theory provided an understanding for how an individual constructs meaning for his or her identities and how the larger context of culture influences one's sense of self (Burke & Stets, 2009). A central pillar to identity theory is the idea that "the relationship between the individual and the situation is one of a dynamic control system" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 32). The individual is impacted by his or her environment but also acts as an agent to shape the environment as well. The combined stories of the participants provided a window into understanding the larger structure of the profession and the interplay between the individual and society.

The new theory conveyed in this study is based on an interpretive definition of theory. An interpretive understanding emphasizes using theory to understand, see patterns, and show connections (Charmaz, 2006). This approach toward theory making seeks to understand how the participants view their situation through their own lens and in their own words as well as in the words and view of the researcher (Charmaz, 2006). The following theoretical model is influenced by Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory framework (as cited in Creswell, 2007), which uses the axial coding process to orient larger categories and themes in a novel manner. This model introduces the larger causal relationships that provide a way to make sense of the phenomenon of study, which in this

case is the professional identity of the international student advisor in higher education.

Figure 3 shows the relationships of key elements impacting the professional identity of

the participants.

Context	**Causal Conditions (Complex forces)**	**Phenomena**
Cutlure of Academia	*Regulatory & Political climate after 9-11* *Trend towards internationalization in U.S. higher education.*	*The professional identity of an international student advisor.*

Strategies	**Intervening conditions**	**Consequence**
Putting student first *Involvment with NAFSA* *Connecting to a mission outside of institution*	*Transformative international experience.* *Regulatory responsibility* *New responsibility*	*Conviction* *Empowemnet* *Passion* *Mission*

Figure 3. Framework to explore professional identity.

For example, the major event of September 11, 2001 (9-11) led to a series of

complex changes impacting the very work environment of the international student

advisor.

> I remember when SEVIS came in. We did not want SEVIS at all. We had nearly
> 4,000 students. Now, we go to NAFSA...the new younger professionals are so
> excited for SEVIS II...I am like 'do you realize that people left our field for
> SEVIS because of the reporting'. (Tina, 2012)

By being faced with these very real conditions of regulatory change and work stress, the

role of the advisor was changed by external forces, and those in the role then experienced

a shift in their perception of the work. The interviews and subsequent findings provide a

picture of a professional metamorphosis still being defined amid a set of complex

environments.

Demographic Information

As described in Chapter 3, the participants for this study were international

student advisors from higher education institutions in the U.S. The types of institutions

varied from public research to small private graduate programs. Total student population

among these institutions ranged from less than 1,000 to over 40,000 degree-seeking

students. More than half worked in public institutions classified at the doctorate level.

Figures 4 and 5 denote the classification and type of institution within which the

participants worked.

Private
35%
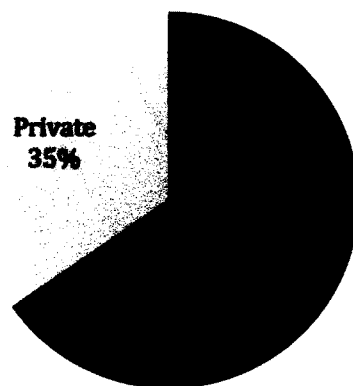
Figure 4. Institution type.

■ Baccalaureate   Doctorate   ■ Masters

58%

Figure 5. Carnegie classification.

Twenty-seven confidential interviews were conducted in gathering the data. The age of the participants, 23 of whom were female, ranged from their 20s to their 50s. Length of time in the field of international education ranged from less than one year to over 30 years in the profession. Some of the participants came from newly established one-person offices, whereas others worked in larger, more established offices with greater resources and staff support.

The richness of the data was enhanced by drawing from the experience of international student advisors across the U.S. Participants spanned 18 states with a spread that included both coasts, and the Midwest. Figure 6 (iMapBuilder, 2012) provides a visual overview of the geographic spread of participants.

Figure 6. Geographic spread of participants.

All the participants worked on a regular basis with international students, and 10

of the participants also worked with visiting scholars, both researchers and faculty. In 13

of the institutions where the participants worked, the student and scholar support

functions were combined. This is a logical connection of responsibilities because of the

shared needs for regulatory aspects and immigration advising required of both

international students and visiting scholars. In addition, many offices originally were

charged with handling all aspects of anything under the larger rubric of international. A

larger proportion of participants held the title of International Student Advisor but there

were those who were in management roles in addition to advising duties. The range of

titles is in Table 1.

Table 1

Titles of Participants

Title	Number
Assistant Director	4
Associate Director	2
Immigration specialist & program coordinator	1
International Faculty/scholar advisor	2
International Student & Scholar Advisor	4
International Student Advisor	9
International Student Advisor & Admissions Officer	1
Manager, Immigration Services	1
Program Coordinator	1
Student & SEVIS advisor	1
Student Services Manager	1

This range of titles and structures may be in keeping with the emerging nature of the profession. As suggested by Wood and Kia (2000), international office structure can vary significantly depending on institutional plans or priorities. In addition, the findings support that historical precedents may have influenced the current structure of international student offices. As one participant explained:

> The scope of duties that we have as professionals is so incredibly varied and works to the detriment against us. It's our professional detriment…there is no standard of preparation.…Certainly you always have very competent and not so competent people in a profession but there is no standard of practice. (George, 2012)

This wide range of titles and settings within even this small research study led to the impression of no authentic sense of place or structure for this role. In support of this notion, the following list illustrates the various titles used to identify the departments in which international student services are housed.

1. Center for International Education

2. Global Initiatives

3. International Office

4. International Admissions Office

5. International Affairs

6. International Education Services Office

7. International Programs

8. International Programs and Services

9. International Student and Advising Services

10. International Student and Scholar Services

11. International Studies and Programs

12. Office of Global Education

13. Office of Strategic Initiatives and Internationalization

Of these offices, 14 of the participants' offices fell under the academic affairs side with the reporting lines ending with the Provost or President. Eight of the offices were under Student Affairs and the remaining were a part of admissions, or other campus entities. Some offices were devoted just to the support of its international student

population while others shared space with study abroad, sponsored student services, and other international-focused programs.

The size of international student populations also varied considerably from approximately 50 to over 5,000. Figure 7 provides an overview of the size of the international student populations in real numbers, and Figure 8 shows the percentage of international students to total student population. Nationally, the average percentage of international students to total student population is 3.5% (IIE, 2011).
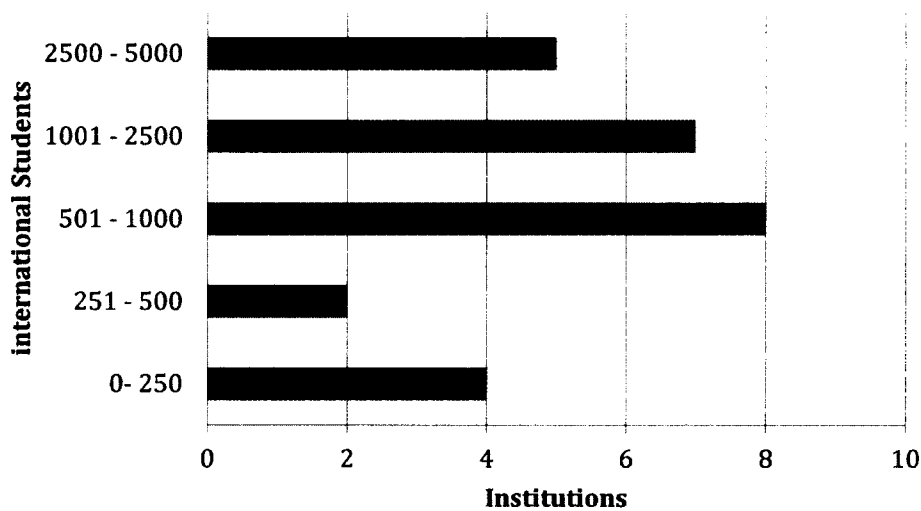
Figure 7. International students in real numbers.

As Figure 7 illustrates, the majority of participants were working with international student populations of over 500.
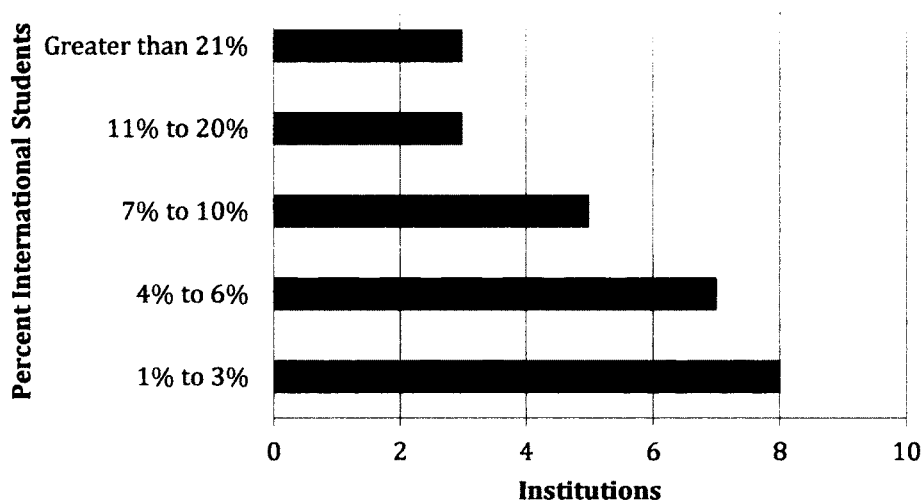
Figure 8. International students as percentage of total student population.

However, percentage-wise, the majority of participants' institutions had international student populations that made up less than 6% of total student population. In this study, institutions with greater percentages of international students was higher than average. This was due to the fact that all the participants were members of NAFSA.

The Research Process

Data collection in this study was limited to interviews and the majority of those were conducted through Skype. Following the tenets of grounded theory, the researcher moved from a probing or seeking nature to eliciting reactions to specific developing themes. Initially, in the earlier interviews, questions were very general. For example: "tell me how you entered the field," "what is your role?", and "how is your department viewed on campus?" were some of the earlier questions. The analysis of data from these early interviews identified initial categories about the advisors' entrance in and movement through the field of international student advising. Other strong categories emerged early on regarding the context of the international student advisor's position

within the campus, as well as his or her perceptions of community with the institution. In

keeping with grounded theory, every attempt was made to utilize the constant

comparative method of data analysis. Figure 9 provides an overview of the research

process.
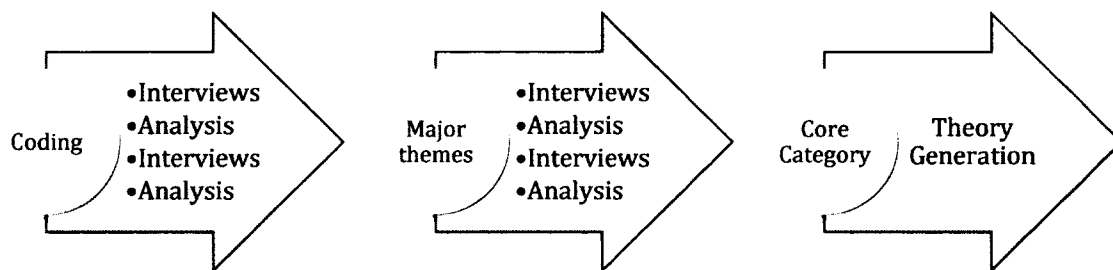
Figure 9. Stages of research.

Subsequent interviews further explored salient themes that emerged and resonated

deeply with the participants. Experiences shared in initial interviews began to shape the

type of inquiry into the story of the professional international student advisor. These

experiences were used to uncover major themes and led to the questions used in

subsequent interviews. For example, one participant shared the story of how her

colleagues and she were left out of a campus-wide initiative to win a coveted

internationalization award. This singular event, which contributed much to shape her

perspectives, proved to be a powerful springboard in interviews with other participants

for discussing the perception of disenfranchisement that many of the participants

identified as a profound professional issue.

> [Anonymous institution] won the [anonymous] Award; we were not really in the
> helping with it. The planning of it. We kind of found out when it was almost
> done. When we went to the [NAFSA] conference, faculty, provosts...they didn't
> know anything about our roles...There is this very big disconnect in what

internationalization means and how it is on the ground versus how it is in theory. (Veronica, 2012)

Throughout the interviews and data analysis, the researcher endeavored to uncover a road map that could illustrate the process of developing a professional identity in the field of international education. The analysis of the interviews yielded approximately 26 significant codes. Figure 10 provides an overview of the code system created using the MAXQDA test analysis software. The themes were organized into larger categories and grouped accordingly.

Code System
- commenting on field, professional identity
  - Articulating a professional direction
  - Being in an awkward/in-between place
    - They definitely don't always
  - Shifting priorities for advising generations
  - Contrasting with Study Abroad
  - No time for programming
  - Connecting to higher education/int'l ed work
  - mobility issues
  - Supporting colleagues within office
- Describing/positioning office structure
  - Transitioning of office structure
  - Describing scope of responsibility
- Entering the field
  - Studying abroad as introduction
    - I studied abroad
  - Experiencing transformation as undergraduate
  - Breaking into the field.
- Motivating factors for internationalization
  - increasing international
  - Leadership bringing a stronger int'l presence
  - Building stronger connection mission
- Visibility or perception on campus
  - Impacting by leadership
  - Experiencing or connecting with faculty
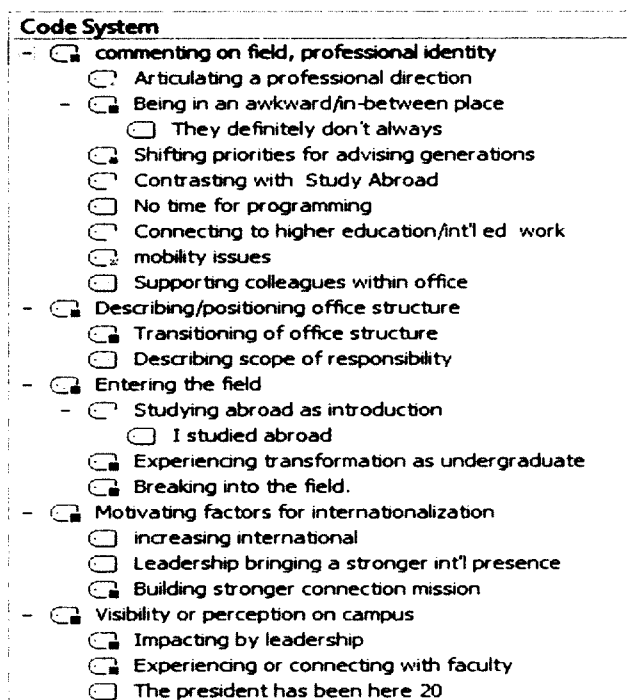 - The president has been here 20

Figure 10. Code system.

Out of these codes, three main categories were isolated, which became the basis of the study's theory described at length in Chapter 5. It was evident from the stories shared in the interviews that those in this new field are an amazingly interesting and dedicated group of professionals trying to navigate multiple, complex environments. The

individual stories are unique but there exists a common discourse of passion and

commitment to the field of international education, which connects this group of

professionals and allows for interesting analyses.

> What I can do is make the lives of these brilliant people a little bit easier. They shouldn't be stressing...they should not have to worry. These people are amazing. I just feel really committed...this is our job. To take as many of the stresses away from them. (Jane, 2012)

A Grounded Theory

Out of the process of looking for relationships among codes and categories, a

story emerged allowing for the understanding of the key attributes of an international

student advisor's professional identity in U.S. higher education. As a community of

distinct professionals, there were a number of interesting commonalities. Each

participant's story provided an additional hue needed to illuminate the core phenomenon.

Figure 11 presents the visual representation of the main thematic inputs representing the

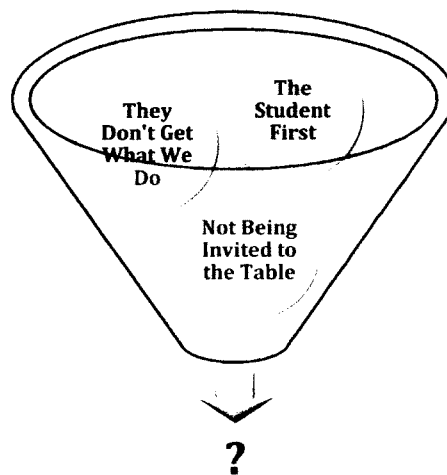professional identity of an international student advisor.

Figure 11. Inputs towards theory on professional identity.

The *Student First*, *They Don't Get What We Do*, and *Not Being Invited to the Table* denote the three main elements that inform the core ideology of the advisor to be presented in Chapter 5. The elements are overlapping and even mutually dependent. These three are well situated in the current chapter as they describe what was found, but with a low level of interpretation. The final concept, the grounded theory, is offered in Chapter 5 as an *interpretation* of *the* findings.

The student first. All the participants described a transformative international experience influencing their decision to enter the field. "I am here because I want to help" (Matilda, 2012). Whether it was studying abroad, traveling, or being an international student in the U.S., the participants shared many stories on the personal challenges and rewards of living outside their home country.

> I started off in college by going and studying abroad in Germany for a year. Um, I came back and had the opportunity to be a PIER advisor in the study abroad office and, uh, absolutely loved doing that. Before that I was strictly an English/German literature major. I was going to, you know, become an English professor. That was my track but then I studied abroad and I was able to share my experience with other people. I was just fascinated by it. (Paula, 2012)

The experience and lessons learned through living overseas left a strong impression. This experience was oftentimes the catalyst in seeking a career grounded in a commitment to international students.

> I was never intending for this career and in school. I was on line to be a teacher. I had joined the international club and I fell in love with the international students that I interacted with. I was one of the leaders of the international club...I spent a few years abroad after that and then I returned home I started looking at NAFSA and started to look for jobs there and started to go to conferences. I took workshops...admissions, F-1 for beginner. I did an internship for six months at a junior college and then got a little foot in the door...I was like, yes, this is what I want to do. I want to be an international student advisor. I wasn't interested in the study abroad side anymore. (Julia, 2011)

Within the study this was labeled as *the student first*. This connection to **the**

student first is what so many of the research participants declared as their initial interest

in working in the field. There were many who thought they originally wanted to work

within the study abroad sector of international education because of their own study

abroad experience. In fact, there was a clear delineation between working with college-

age international students over U.S. students. "I specifically wanted to avoid study

abroad. Do not like dealing with winy American teenager" (Tina, 2012).

> I think part of it is because I love to travel and lived in different countries. My
> main interest is in this field in general because I love to travel. I love to meet
> people from different countries. If I were working primarily with American
> students I wouldn't get the same depth. (Barbara, 2012)

The connection to international students led to a deep sense of mission that, in many

ways, transcended the connection to the institution, their employer. Overall, each

participant identified him or herself as an international student advisor first and a higher

education professional second. This connection was even more pronounced for those

advisors who entered the field prior to the implementation of SEVIS and the emotionally

charged regulatory environment of the early aught (2001-05) years.

> Yes, that's when it [SEVIS implementation] was all going kind of crazy and I
> found that it actually surprisingly suited me much better than I thought. The
> analytical part of being an international student advisor... [Referring to study
> abroad] I can go all of the cheerleading; do all of the counseling, but I like
> working with students. I know that's a good fit for me. ...it was also a very
> interesting time since I got hired, I started on ... 2002 I started not knowing
> anything about immigration. Or any of that but it was that summer that they
> announced the SEVIS was going to occur beginning the next January. Ummm,
> so, I was really learning as things were changing. I didn't have all of the
> immigration baggage that a lot of other people had. So I was going into it fresh, it
> made sense. Everything was new. It was supposed to be new. I, ahhh, so, it just
> fit. I didn't have to fight it like a lot of other people. It was new for everyone else
> but for me I didn't know any better. (Paula, 2012)

Advisors in the field through this time period adopted a very protective role for international students. Protecting them from not only the barrage of regulatory changes but also from an institutional structure in which international students were oftentimes a marginalized population. A sense of obligation to the student transcended the connection to their institution as these advisors were frequently the only ones on their campus who fully understood the new regulations and their impact on students and institutions. One participant, in looking back at the implementation of the Department of Homeland Security's (legacy INS) federally mandated web-based student tracking system SEVIS, described her feelings and how it changed the field.

> They were really worried about what SEVIS doing and the sort of bad reporting requirements. I thought of leaving the field a lot but then I heard sort of rumors that younger people coming into the field were a lot more enforcement minded and were not strict advocates of the students so I thought I'd better stay. Once I got to learn it, I thought I should stay. (Veronica 2012)

Not only the implementation of SEVIS, but also the rapid fire and ongoing changes in international student regulations, or interpretation of regulations, changed the practice of international student advising from a paternalistic-oriented practice to a compliance-oriented practice for its practitioners and institutions.

> The conversion to SEVIS was a killer for all of us because it was very intense even in the small institutions. For us I think there were weeks when I worked about 80 hours…the entire idea behind SEVIS changed how we are advising and what we are doing. (Renee, 2012)

One of the contributing themes occurring in the study was the difference in style between those advisors in the field prior to SEVIS implementation and those who came after. Terms to describe the former included "flexible" and "open-minded," whereas, the latter were described as "enforcement-oriented" or "black and white." One participant

who had been in the field prior to SEVIS succinctly summarized her perspective on the

generational difference between advisors:

> I love that I've been in the field long enough …I get it the whole picture. The pre-SEVIS life where we had all of those procedures, I get that. I remember when SEVIS came in. We did not want SEVIS at all. We had nearly 4,000 students. Now, we go to NAFSA…the new younger professionals are so excited for SEVIS II… I am like 'do you realize that people left our field for SEVIS because of the reporting?' People are so 'let's terminate them'…there isn't a lot of follow up with ICE. People do not realize that kind of enforcement side. With the new ones it's just the way it is. They don't understand the pre-SEVIS life where we were advisors first. (Alice, 2012)

Many of the participants saw the field after 9-11 as more "legalistic" but also

more "professional" and "authoritative" than ever before. Advisors who work in the field

today need to have a high degree of technical skill in learning, understanding, and

applying federal regulations. The changes in the field were seen in many ways as a

double-edged sword. While the compliance focus professionalized the field, it also led to

greater stress and isolation for many. Participants, especially those who were newer to

the field, spoke about their strong interest in the regulatory aspect of the profession and

how it kept them engaged.

> But I found a very interesting, almost authority in the field over students that can't be compared to other roles in the university. And I think a lot of that has to do with the support of the government and the requirement of reporting to the government. Ummm..I think that is what attracted me to continue to stay in the field. It has that sense of authority and sense of connectedness to the federal government; whereas, any other role they would have to almost be at the vice-provost level, or even higher general counsel's office to be connected to the federal government. (Mary, 2012)

Not being invited to the table. One of the salient themes focused on the place of

the advisor within the larger context of the institution amid a growing interest in

internationalization efforts. The interviews concentrated on the participant's perception

of their role as viewed by other faculty, administration, and staff on campus. What was

uncovered was a persistent disconnect between the value the participants felt about their

role on campus and their perceived lack of regard given by the rest of the campus.

> I do think that we are not being a part of that [internationalization]…we are not
> being viewed as a cornerstone of it or even the backbone. If nothing else we bring
> these people here and some other people are taking the credit for that. (Renee,
> 2012)

What was heard again and again was the perception that outside their offices most others

just did not understand what the international student services office did on campus and,

by extension, its staff were often not included in key conversations on

internationalization efforts.

> If one happens to be fortunate enough (at least once in his/her career) to report to
> a senior administrator (President, Provost, VP) who is like-minded (shares similar
> formative experiences and an inherent and very real commitment to
> internationalization of the campus) then all feelings of "separateness" "of being a
> professional outsider" as you state can disappear. As others are forced to jump on
> board this senior executives international agenda, the complex skill set and
> attitudes developed over a professional (and pre-professional) lifetime can
> become sought after commodities (for as long as it lasts). (Kevin, 2012)

Often perceived by other staff, faculty, and administrators as paper-pushing

bureaucrats who just said no, the advisors in the study were frustrated about "a rush to get

into internationalization without thinking about whom on campus can support it" (Joyce,

2012). This sensitivity to *not being invited to the table* surfaced as a major subject in

almost all the interviews.

> And to top it all off, they don't ask the right people the right questions to get the
> right information, so they are making decisions as they go along and having to
> remake those decisions at a later point…They brought in an outside
> consultant….because they [administrator] will listen better to someone outside the
> system. (Tina, 2012)

Many of the participants spoke about their offices being in a state of change, often

the result of a restructuring on campus to provide more focus to comprehensive

internationalization efforts.

> I definitely see and it [internationalization] is definitely becoming more part of the, you know, the primary mission of the university. So the President at the time, I think, had set that up within a year or two of when I started as one of his long-term goal lists. …With our newer President that is one of his top core values for the institution and something that he really is trying to focus on of making that a central part of our mission moving forward. (Chris, 2012)

Additionally, advisors from the public institutions commented that due to a

decline in state money, as well as a declining student population, there was a focus on

increasing international student numbers. The attention toward the international student

population as being seen merely as a "cash cow" resonated significantly with the

participants. One participant commented it was because the international student was

seen as an economic source of revenue and those students were less likely to be

connected to internationalization efforts, as if internationalization and economic gain

were mutually exclusive.

> I think actually it [reason for internationalization] is economic. So, what has been happening is that as they [state government officials] change their state budget they are starting to reduce the amount of contribution that the state is giving to the universities. We have to increase tuition and cut prices all this other stuff to make up for the deficit. So, of course, they [university administrators'] go 'international students pay three times as much tuition, why shouldn't we focus on them to bring in this extra income we need.' (Hanna, 2012)

This outlook toward international students as an economic source has played a key role in

understanding the extent to which participants began to be more visible on their

campuses. Becoming more visible did not automatically translate to being more valued

or understood.

All of a sudden…you know when you are in a room and you say something, a thousand heads turn toward you all at once? It [focus on recruiting more international students] was kind of like that. Everyone is looking at us! It's always been our hope but no one has had the power or necessity to do anything about it. At this point we are saying. 'We have had this dream for a long time and it's now become a higher ups dream, so for them to make their dream possible they will have to make our dream possible'. . . . it gave us that opportunity to say 'ok, if you want this to happen you have to make this happen first'. Until that happens we are going to be at the same level. 'Yeah. You can bring 15 more students. Can I advise them all properly, NO? Is that going to look good down the road, you know?' So they are doing it very carefully. We are just standing here and we are ready when you are. (Hanna, 2012)

Feelings of disenfranchisement, lack of support, and lack of involvement echoed through much of the research data. Even those advisors who work in the larger offices serving thousands of students felt no more valued or integrated campus-wide over those who were in one-person offices serving fewer than 100 students. One would think those advisors in the larger and more well-known institutions had an advantage in numbers but that was not necessarily the case.

I just think there is a little bit of disenfranchisement because…not only am I a one-person office, I am generally made to feel alone in what I am doing. I have a couple of people that are my colleagues that I coordinate things with, but other than those people. I am kind of just swimming in the river. And I am by myself. (Samantha 2012)

When asked if discussions or initiatives with internationalization could be heard or seen on their campuses, most of the participants said it was more and more being promoted or pushed by their President, Provost, or other executive. Participants felt it was gratifying to see the attention being given to internationalization at the highest levels of institutional agendas, but there was clear consensus that despite the interest in marketing to more international students (especially mentioned were Chinese students),

the distance between the rhetoric of internationalization and concrete support for the

international student was large.

> Working with international students is maybe not what any one calls
> internationalization. You know, I've said this for a while when we've talked about
> internationalization on our campus...especially. When we go to meetings or
> things on campus, people are always talking about internationalization. It's
> always about study abroad or all of these other outside things. We are always
> saying there are a lot of international students here. We should find ways to be
> able to integrate or use, not use in a bad way, integrate those students in a way
> that you are getting the kind of internationalization that you want...I mean they
> [international students] are here...they are here [emphasis]. I mean in a way the
> international students who are here are not considered a part of
> internationalization either. (Veronica, 2012)

They don't get what we do. The impact of an ever-changing regulatory

environment on the professional identity of the advisor was spoken about at length in the

interviews. Many of the participants spoke with pride about their knowledge base and

skill with advising.

> I definitely see that there is a lot of knowledge and background that I bring to my
> position that's not something that you can just walk into. It takes a while to
> establish that background and it's something that does require a specific
> knowledge and skill set to engage in. (Daniel, 2012)

The reality that their position was responsible for the legal status for students was

taken very seriously by all the participants. Oversight of the regulations advisors were

responsible for managing were not always perceived as a skill set appreciated on the

campus; however, it was respected as a necessary piece to having international students.

> Yes, one of our jobs is to be bridges. We can understand this body of legalese and
> we can tell them [senior leadership] what it really means. In the long run they are
> so much better for having spoken to us usually because we know how to stay
> legal and do it right. (Melissa, 2012)

Many felt their offices were not the "fun" offices as compared to study abroad, for

example. "When they have to come see us it is like going to the doctor's" (Barbara

2012). Working late through lunches and on weekends to comply with SEVIS deadlines

or deal with a complicated visa issue was a given. The overwhelming focus of the jobs

required daily interaction not with people but with computers and documents. As one

participant commented:

> It is that we are now chained to the desk and SEVIS has chained us into less
> looking at the people and more looking at the paper and so we are looking less at
> people...For all of us who entered the field, I am here because I want to help them
> [international students] while we are stuck looking at the SEVIS field. (Renee,
> 2012)

Despite being a highly skilled and technical function, the overly regulatory,

paper-focused, administrative side of working with international students is what many

participants felt kept the advisor invisible and undervalued on campus. The complexity

of the position was oftentimes perceived as intimidating or unapproachable by the rest of

the campus community. "They just don't get what we do" (Anna, 2012) was a refrain

heard repeated throughout almost all of the interviews. The "they" variously included

faculty, staff, presidents, provosts, and students. Participants voiced not *feeling* valued or

visible on campus in the arena of internationalization. "Internationalization is such a big

word and people don't realize that there are other pieces to it" (Veronica, 2012).

A point in contrast to the disenfranchised feeling of the international student

advisor was the perceived positioning and valuing of the study abroad advisors and

office. Study abroad came up time and time again in the interviews as the counterpoint to

international student services. Many mentioned it as the "*fun*" and "*sexy*" side of

international education.

This distinction was a central concern with regard to the idea of who is seen as

critical to the larger internationalization efforts. That study abroad offices were seen on a

campus as more of a participant in the internationalization conversation was a source of frustration echoed throughout the interviews. "If they [faculty] are internationalizing the curriculum they are more likely to go to the study abroad office and say 'how can we start a program with your office'…not to really involve us (Barbara, 2012).

There was a collective sense that those international student services offices housed together with study abroad had much better resources and visibility. With faculty involved more with study abroad it seemed clear study abroad was invited to the internationalization table more than international student services. Study abroad was almost always clearly attached to academic affairs, whereas international student services was often connected to an administrative function and disconnected from the larger institutional mission of learning. One observation by a long-term professional in the field was that internationalization seemed to be more and more about study abroad, MOUs, and branch campuses but not international students.

> You hear this too, at NAFSA, our end of the spectrum is going to the dark side but study abroad is going into the light. There is that bad…we are like the martyrs who actually go to sessions and they are going having drinks and party. We are like bad martyrs. (Veronica, 2012)

There seemed to be a pervasive feeling of no authentic sense of self or place for the international student advisor and his or her office.

Results

The problem statement in this study was that the professional role of international student advisors has not been clearly defined or understood within U.S. higher education. As a result, the voices of international student advisors have not been included in the current conversation in higher education on internationalization. This study sought to

develop a theory on the professional identity of international student advisors and give voice to this population in the scholarly literature. The findings suggest the professional identity of international student advisors has been shaped by personal experience, larger complex forces, and institutional realities.

This research suggests that the experience of living, working, or studying abroad is a common denominator among international student advisors. This international experience defines international student advisors, as well as establishes the basis for a clear interest in working with international students. Furthermore, this research suggests that while international student advisors bring a very clear sense of mission and commitment to their work, their presence on campus has limited visibility.

The regulatory environment of the past 10 years strongly impacted the experience of international students in the U.S. After 9-11, increased government oversight on international students shifted the primary focus of the work of international student advisors from a paternalistic role to a more enforcement-oriented position with their advisees. The only ones on campus who had a clear understanding of the regulatory maze through which international students had to travel, international student advisors were oftentimes put in the position of being the only voice of support for this population.

In response to globalization, higher education institutions have placed a greater emphasis on internationalization efforts. How internationalization is defined continues at the institutional level and can vary greatly depending on institutional priority and strategies. In addition, who on campus is involved in internationalization efforts seems to be different across institutions. The findings when analyzed in combination with the

literature imply that the stature of international student advisors may be negatively impacted by the administrative and regulatory nature of the position.

Summary

This chapter presented the data collected from individual interviews with international student advisors across the United States. The stories and perspectives of the participants gave rich description to understanding the professional realities of international student advisors in the U.S. The findings suggest that the complex culture of higher education in combination with the recent movement toward internationalization efforts, as well as the overly regulatory environment of immigration continues to impact the professional life of international student advisors. Furthermore, the findings propose that international student advisors bring a connection and commitment to their work that can transcend their loyalty to their institution. The participants recognized the powerful changes in higher education to embrace a more globalized mission but oftentimes felt that they, as an internationalist, were not included due to a lack of visibility. Out of these challenges and realities, a portrait of an international student advisor emerged.

Chapter 5: Interpretations, Conclusions, and Recommended Actionable Solution

The problem this research sought to address was that the professional role of international student advisors has not been clearly defined or understood within U.S. higher education. Chapter 5 presents the interpretations and conclusions that emerged from this study, along with recommended actionable solutions. This research endeavored to contribute meaningful research on the professional identity of international student advisors to the collection of scholarly literature as well as real-world implications for practicing advisors. This chapter seeks to connect the findings presented in Chapter 4 with an original theory on professionalism for international student advisors. Theory, in this study, is defined as a way of understanding or making sense of the world in order to have the practical insight needed to guide action (Fullan, 2008).

In conceiving the research study, the researcher was inspired to give voice to a population of higher education professionals who work hard to champion the marginalized population of international students in U.S. higher education. This researcher took a constructivist approach to the methodology to allow the expressions and perspectives of the participants to come through and give shape to an original theory that informs those in the field. Chapter 5 begins with an interconnected analysis of the research questions and main themes followed by a presentation of the theory on professional development.

Interpretations of Findings and Results

The lived experiences of international student advisors as told from the stories and perspectives of the research participant is one of hard work, intrinsic motivation, and

advocacy. International student advisors are a diverse group of individuals who, having experienced international sojourns, are committed to the vision and mission of international education. The three research questions posited in Chapter 1 and stated again in Chapter 4 provided a starting point from which to situate and analyze the findings. The research questions are as follows:

- What encompasses the lived experiences of international student advisors amid the complex and changing landscape of U.S. higher education?

- What emergent concerns are expressed through the important experiences of individuals who are international student advisors?

- In what way have the personal constructs of professionalism and professional identity for international student advisors been developed?

In as much as international education is developing and taking shape within higher education in the U.S., international student advisors are seeking to understand their professional identity and place. This research suggests international student advisors have an opportunity to define a professional foothold within a changing U.S. higher education backdrop.

Despite the pride and skill the participants in this study felt about their work, feelings of disenfranchisement and frustration were common. The isolating nature of the work along with the complexities of adhering to difficult immigration regulations on behalf of a population of marginalized students were critical realities that advisors dealt with on a daily basis. Through the literature and the researcher's analysis, the participants' perspectives provided the opportunity to examine how international student advisors develop a professional identity amid challenging and complex forces.

Identity theory suggests that individuals do not learn about and develop their identities in isolation but that it is through interaction with others that one can develop a socially constructed sense of self (Burke & Stets, 2009). On many campuses there are often not strong examples of standards of practice or professionalism through which international student advisors can see and learn about their professional identity. Not being able to have role models on campus can lead to a crisis of self and authenticity. According to Burke and Stets, not feeling authentic affects the deeper core one may feel about oneself (2009).

The data in this research showed that despite a clear commitment to the student population served, international student advisors often only experience a true sense of community when off campus and interacting with other international student advisors. In this research, for example, when talking about their participation in NAFSA, regional or local organizations, the participants became perceptibly more animated and, as perceived by the researcher, more confident. It was in their interactions with other international student advisors that the participants recognized a community of their own as well as developed a language by which to define themselves. Central to identity theory is the idea that individuals not only understand who they are when they are a part of a community, but also that their own self-views are in many ways validated. International student advisors are able to gain validation of their own professional identity by seeing themselves among a community of other international student advisors. This interaction is essential to developing a sense of dignity consequently to the extent that this does not happen one may feel alienated and unhappy (Burke & Stets, 2009).

NAFSA: Association of International Educators was spoken about in many of the interviews as a being a professional lifeline. Often feeling alone in their work, the participants commented on the integral role their participation in the national or regional conferences played in developing a professional identity. The participants indicated that it was through NAFSA national and regional organizations where they were able to connect to their community and establish a professional sense of place that in many ways may be missing for them on their campus. This sense of belonging to a larger community of like-minded professionals "activates a sense of belongingness and raises one's self-worth" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 121). Burke and Stets suggested that in joining groups, an individual is able to reduce uncertainty as well as improve one's sense of self-image (Burke & Stets, 2009). Connectedness to NAFSA and other professional associations may be more critical to an advisor's professional role beyond just learning technical skills or networking. In reality, the professional associations provide key opportunities to develop a professional identity.

This research does not intend to promote NAFSA, but as the only professional organization devoted to international education, it stands out as the most visible resource for international student advisors. The researcher acknowledges that all of the participants in the study were members of NAFSA but it is unclear to what extent international student advisors who are not members of NAFSA develop professional communities outside of their institutions. This may be a future area of research.

One of the major themes driving the findings was labeled *they don't get what we do*. The stories of the participants painted a picture of the international student advisor as being invisible or undervalued on campus; however, the literature on the changing nature

of higher education professionals suggests a different approach to further unpacking this theme and its implications for understanding professional identity amid changes in higher education. This research suggests that the larger community of higher education which includes administrators, staff and faculty may not fully understand the role of the international advisor because it is a part of the new and emerging professional role of the blended professional (Whitchurch, 2009). As Whitchurch suggests, the blended professional occupies a new space within higher education that is neither fully administrative nor academic (2009). The participants in the study shared many examples of navigating across all campus relationships and taking on responsibilities that were expansive and diverse. Because of the imprecise nature of their work, blended professionals struggle with a sense of not belonging entirely within traditional academic structures leading, potentially, to issues of legitimacy (Whitchurch, 2009). Whitchurch's assertion that "individuals [blended professionals] were, therefore, obliged to build their own authority via day-to-day activity and relationship with colleagues, rather than via their position in the organization chart or special knowledge (2009, p. 409) has implications for international student advisors and the professional associations or communities that support them.

The current trend in higher education to become more internationalized is a dynamic issue across U.S. campuses and has impacted international student advisors in a particular way. The imperative to respond to a market-driven globalized environment has left universities uncertain in managing new realities. What internationalization actually is can be a confusing and contested process (Childress, 2009). As one participant commented, internationalization is a *big* idea that can take on different perspectives

depending on the university culture. Agnew & VanBalkom submit that within *strong* institutional cultures there are shared values, outlooks and beliefs; whereas within *weak* institutional there are divergent values, outlooks and beliefs (2009). Their findings suggest that strong institutions which are externally oriented are more capable of change and adopting a broader mission of internationalization (Agnew & VanBalkom, 2009). Within this research data were examples of strong institutional cultures where participants articulated a more open and accepting atmosphere to internationalization efforts; however, more prevalent in this research were weak institutions with a strong internationalization focus. This type of institutional structure was presented by a fragmented campus culture where participation in internationalization efforts was under the purview of a select group (Agnew & VanBalkom, 2009). Many of the participants knew there were internationalization efforts taking place on their campus but were at a loss to understand why they weren't invited to participate despite their role on campus.

The campus culture towards internationalization is important to understanding the professional context within which the international student advisor is situated. This research suggests that one barrier to the inclusion of international student advisors in internationalization efforts is the perception of their role as merely administrative on behalf of faculty or other campus constituents. Within higher education culture, administrative tasks have historically been held as non-learning activities entirely separate from the faculty dimension (Carpenter & Stimpson, 2007). The misconception on the role of the international student advisor is consistent with the literature on the blended professionals who strive to overcome a "mismatch of perception" by creating new spheres "which champion new forms of activities" (Whitchurch, 2009. P. 409). One

participant spoke with pride about his efforts to forge relationships with faculty by adopting a posture that was recognizable to them as well as speaking the *language* of the administration. Despite his successes, the majority of participants shared stories illustrating how the *rush* to internationalize has potentially become an exclusionary practice on campuses where professional staff is not traditionally seen as being on par with faculty.

The findings paint a portrait of an emerging professional who brings a very specific skill set into a changing higher education environment. The research questions discussed current and emerging issues and challenges faced by international student advisors. These questions shaped the research but as a grounded theory study, the intent of this research was to provide a theory that could go a little bit deeper in exposing the mental models that drive international student advisors to do what they do with such conviction and zeal (Senge, 2008).

All the participants, including the researcher, experienced a transformative international experience that proved to be a key factor to the identity of the advisor. What was heard from the participants was that in the larger community of their institution they felt, in some way, like an outsider or struggled to fit in. Not belonging is consistent with the experience of the blended professional but it is also how one often feels when traveling or living abroad. Therefore, it is *The Advisor as the International in Higher Education* that is offered as the interpretive theory of this research.
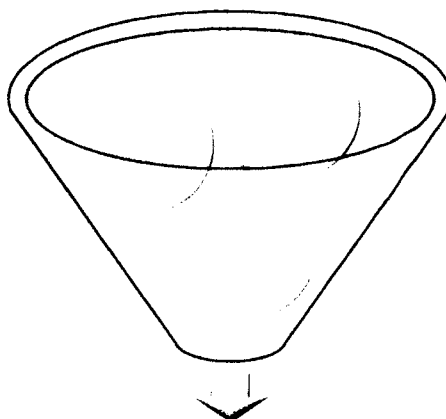
The International Student Advisor as the International in Higher Education

Figure 12. Complete theory.

The professionals in the study spoke at length about their frustrations at feeling

disenfranchised, overworked, underpaid, and even invisible in a profession that has

historically lacked shape and continuity within U.S. higher education. In light of the

findings, one might ask, "Why continue to stay in the profession?" Interpretive theory

demands an "imaginative understanding of the studied phenomenon" (Charmaz, 2006, p.

126). Charmaz (2006) stated, "this type of theory assumes emergent, multiple realities;

indeterminacy; facts and values as inextricably linked; truth as provisional; and social life

as processual" (pp. 126-127). In keeping with these sets of assumptions, the theory in

this study suggests the international student advisor is not only connected to the

international student in his or her experience of being an international in the U.S., but

that, in fact, he or she occupies an analogous position of living at the margin within the

culture of higher education. What is suggested from this research is that the earlier

experience of being an outsider or international prior to entering the field provided the

international student advisors with the practical knowledge of what it felt like to

experience being different. It is because of this experience the advisors have the fortitude to stay in a position that oftentimes may feel like a professional outsider. In addition, having been in the same shoes, to a certain extent, as the international student, the international student advisor, in remembering his or her experience of first traveling to and living in a new country, is able to quickly empathize with the international students he or she serves.

As a culture, higher education can be foreign and difficult to navigate for many. For international student advisors in particular it can be a challenging journey to find their identity within a role that is not easily understood across campus at a time when many are speaking about internationalization but there is little consensus on what that mean. This research considered new ways of understanding professional identity specifically in relation to the international student advisor as a blended professional. Charmaz (2006) suggested, "Grounded theory serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them" (p. 11). Furthermore, the constructivist approach to developing a grounded theory admits to an "interpretive portrayal of the studied world and not an exact picture of it" (Charmaz, 2006). The theory offered in this study is based on data and was influenced by the rapid state of change in higher education in which the roles of professional staff are blurring lines between academic and non-academic support functions (Whitchurch, 2010). Professional staff, more than ever before, has the opportunity to move across academic departments to deliver a variety of programming and services that challenge the clear boundaries of traditional academic culture.

This theory is considered as substantive as it speaks to a specific empirical area of investigation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The intent of this theory was not to be all things to all people but to suggest the international student advisor's experience is unique in the larger U.S. higher education environment for very specific reasons. Moving through new environments and new realities, the international student advisor may in many ways feel as if he or she is the foreigner among administration. Despite the challenges, this research suggests that there are opportunities for international student advisors to learn and develop from their professional experience just as they had when overcoming the challenges of living overseas.

Conclusions

This research study set out to provide an opportunity for the voice of international student advisors in higher education to be heard in the literature. Understanding how international student advisors developed a sense of professional self in light of hurdles confronting their working lives provided the overarching focus. Because there is currently no literature concerning the professional identity of international student advisors, this research is a first attempt at uncovering the motivations and viewpoints of a particular professional group. It is substantive in its scope by seeking only to provide a theory on this particular population.

The literature streams served to set the stage for the interviews and situate the findings. The three main themes: *the student first, not being invited to the table,* and *they don't get what we do* take greater shape when considered in context of the chosen literature. The first stream, internationalization of higher education, situates the interests and motivations of the institution in general with respect to the current movement toward

internationalization efforts on campuses. This stream gives greater understanding to the theme of *not being invited to the table*. The second stream on international student mobility provides a clearer picture on the experience of the international students in the U.S. Serving this population, international student advisors are in many ways deeply connected to challenges and obstacles international students experience in the U.S. The third stream, *they don't get what we do*, articulates the limitations professional staff may encounter while trying to create an identity of professionalism. As the culture of higher education changes, there is a growing body of literature suggesting the lines between staff and faculty are blurring. What used to be the specific purview of faculty may more and more be shifting to an administrative or professional practitioner responsibility. International student advisors represent a new type of professional who brings a combination of hard and soft skills and must be adept at working across the university.

The theory offered in this study has shown to be meaningful to and resonated deeply with the participants and researcher. The theory suggests international student advisors are in many ways *The International Student Advisor as the International in Higher Education*. Occupying a relatively new professional place and advocating for a marginalized population, the international student advisor does not fit in well in traditional higher education hierarchy. In not completely fitting in, the advisor is able to draw upon his or her past experience as an international student or traveler to survive and persevere in the culture. His or her commitment to international students along with the sense of purpose buoyed by membership into the community of international educators at large defines the professional perspective of the advisor.

Recommendations

This study sought to give voice to the experiences of practicing or future international student advisors by developing a theory explaining the dimensions of professional identity. It is also the intention of this study that the findings of this research provide advisors with an opportunity to have greater insight into their own practice and inform the field with directions for professional development. This research presents opportunities for international student advisors to apply and adopt the findings for their own career development and advocacy on campus. The implications for practice are organized first with the larger recommendations for action at the leader's level followed by recommendations at the advisor level. Suggestions for future research are presented at the end of this section.

Recommendations for Leaders

This study puts forth one major recommendation for leadership:

1. Promote professional growth for international student advisors.

Supporting the professional growth and inclusion of international student advisors on campus as a component of developing comprehensive internationalization is strongly endorsed by this research. Specific action to accomplish this includes putting the resources (time, money) toward membership in and participation with the local and national professional associations. At this point in time, NAFSA is the only real professional organization in the U.S. actively supporting international education; however, other professional organizations outside of the U.S. exist as well. Whether it is at the local level or nationally, the findings of this research suggest international student advisors can develop their strongest sense of community and professional self-worth

when connecting with other professionals. In terms of strong strategic planning in the realm of internationalization, campus leaders would do well to support the international staff toward developing their professional capacity.

Recommendations for International Student Advisors

This research offers two key recommendations for the international student professional.

1. Seek out and develop opportunities to connect with other international student advisors. Participating in professional organizations is the most likely activity to accomplish this; however, other lower cost alternatives may include participating in online listserves as well as local meetings.

2. Create opportunities to be more visible on campus.

As the findings suggest, participation in professional organizations can play a key role in developing a community and positive sense of self. Many advisors work in small offices where it is not possible to interact with similar professionals on their campus. This research suggests the time and money invested in participating in professional organizations will help advisors overcome a sense of alienation and low morale. In addition to professional organizations, reaching out locally to other advisors within the region to develop a local community of supporters may also be beneficial.

The participants in the study who seemed to be most satisfied in their work seemed to work hard at outreach with other staff and faculty. Universities are famous for building silos, even in the smallest of institutions. In taking the time to interact across departments as well as explain the functions of the work, international student advisors may develop greater awareness for their offices and their myriad of duties. Possibly,

making efforts to build more bridges with other international-focused services and departments may help develop a stronger campus coalition and support for the individual advisors.

Suggestions for Future Research

Internationalization of higher education is a burgeoning area of research in U.S. higher education. Involvement of faculty in internationalization strategies, international student mobility, and preparing students for a globally competitive environment are areas of research that currently inform key areas of internationalization. The findings of this study have led to recommendations for future research.

1. Examine the role of international student advisors in other countries.

2. Examine the experience of campus internationalization from the perspective of staff and how it compares to that of faculty.

3. Examine the professionalism between international student advisors who participate in professional organizations and those who do not.

4. Develop career paths and learning development plans to better support the enhancement of a professional identity.

Summary

Using grounded theory methodology, this qualitative study explored the professional identity of international student advisors in U.S. higher education. The research problem stated the professional role of international student advisors has not been clearly defined or understood within U.S. higher education. The theoretical framework proposed that the larger complex issues of internationalization, international student mobility, and higher education culture were factors in determining the stature and

self-concept of international student advisors. The literature supported this framework by implying that higher education is in a state of change in order to address issues of globalization, economic constraint, and competitiveness for students. Internationalization of higher education as a market force and focus of strategic planning is relatively new in higher education. The international student, often times seen as integral to internationalization efforts, has had a difficult experience in U.S. higher education. The regulatory changes after 9-11 changed the experience of international students in the U.S. The international student advisors were oftentimes the only people in higher education who knew the regulations and how to advocate for the international students.

According to the 27 participants interviewed in this study, the professional experience of international student advisors was difficult but also deeply fulfilling. The data revealed many themes, but the underlying conclusion of the interview data in this research is that international student advisors are committed to their professions because of their own international experiences and abilities to identify with the marginalized role of international students. Furthermore, their professional self-worth connected to the larger community of international student advisors found outside of their institutions.

Chapter 5 concludes this research. The findings suggest international student advisors can develop positive professional self-worth and persist in the field if there is opportunity to connect with a community of colleagues. Recommendations from this study call for higher education leaders to recognize the unique role of the international student advisor and support international student advisors in opportunities for professional growth as well as better utilize their expertise on campus.

List of References

Agnew, M., & VanBalkom, D. W. (2009). Internationalization of the university: Factors impacting cultural readiness for organizational change. *Intercultural Education, 20,* 451-462.

Alcantara, R. E. (2009). A *learning model of policy implementation: Implementing technology in response of policy requirements* (Unpublished doctoral Dissertation). University of Southern California.

Aldiabat, K. M., & Le Navenec, C.-L. (2011). Philosphical roots of classical grounded theory: It's foundations in symbolic interatactionism. *The Qualitative Report, 16,* 1063-1080.

Altbach, P. (2004). Higher education crosses borders. *Change, March-April,* 18-24.

Altbach, P., Berdahl, R. O., & Gumport, P. J. (2005). *Higher education in the twenty first century.* Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.

Altbach, P., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 11,* 290-305. doi: 10.1177/1028315307303542

Bilirakis, G. (2011). Student Visa Security Improvement Act *H.R.1211:* 112th Congress.

Birks, M., & Mills, J. (2011). *Grounded theory: A practical guide.* London: Sage Publishers.

Burke, P. J., & Stets, J. E. (2009). *Identity Theory.* New York: Oxford University Press

Jaeger, P. T., & Burnett, G. (2005). Information access and exchange among small worlds in a democratic society: The role of policy in shaping information behavior in the post 9/11 United States. *The Library Quarterly, 75,* 464-495.

Burnett, S. A., & Huisman, J. (2010). Universities responses to globalisation. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 14,* 117-142. doi: 10.1177/1028315309350717

Campbell, N. (2011). Promoting intercultural contact on campus: A project to connect and engage international and host Students. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 20*(10), 1-23. doi: 10.1177

Carpenter, S., & Stimpson, M. T. (2007). Professionalism, scholarly Practice, and professional development in student affairs. *NASPA Journal, 44,* 265-284.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Childress, L. K. (2009). Internationalization plans for higher education institutions. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* 289-309. doi: 10.1177/1028315308329804

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational Research* (pp. 212-242). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Cronin, M. (2001). *Memorandum for management team name change to the Coordinated Interagency Partnership Regulating.* Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

De Wit, H. (2011). *Globalisation and internationalisation of higher education* (introduction to online mongraph). Barcelona, Spain: Revista de Universidad y Sociedad del Conocimiento.

De Wit, H., & Rumbley, L. E. (2008). The role of American higher education in international student circulation. In H. De Wit, P. Agarwal, M. Elmahdy Said, M. T. Sehoole, & M. Sirozi (Eds.), *The dynamics of international student circulation in a global context* (pp. 199-231). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Delgado-Marquez, B. L., Hurtado-Torres, N. E., & Bondar, Y. (2011). Internationalization of higher education: Theoretical and empirical investigation of its influence on university institution rankings. *Globalisation and Internationalisation of Higher Education, 8,* 265-284. Retrieved from http://rusc.uoc.edu/ojs/index.php/rusc/article/view/v8n2-delgado-hurtado-bondar

Dessoff, A. (2010). The rise of the senior International officer. *The International Educator, Jan-Feb,* 45-50.

Douglass, J. A., & Edelstein, R. (2009). The global competetition for talent: The rapidly changing market for international students and the need for a strategic approach in the US. *Center for Studies in Higher Education Research and Occasional Papers.* Retrieved from http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/publications.php?id=341

Fragomen, A. T. J. (1997). The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996: An overview. *International Migration Review, 31,* 438-460.

Fullan, M. (2008). *The six secrets of change.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Gilgun, J. (2011). Reflexivity and qualitative research. *Current Issues in Qualitative Research, 1*(2), 1.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction.

Guruz, K. (2011). *Higher education and international student mobility in the global knowledge economy.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Henkel, M. (2010). Introduction: Changing and contintuity in academic and professional identities. In C. Whitchurch & G. W. Gordon (Ed.), *Academic and professional identities in higher education.* New York: Routledge.

Hudzik, J. K. (2011). *Comprehensive internationalization: From concept to action.* Washington DC: NAFSA.

IIE. (2011). *Open Doors 2011 fast fact.* Retrieved from Open Doors website: http://www.iie.org/en/Who-We-Are/News-and-Events/Press-Center/Press-Releases/2011/~/media/Files/Corporate/Open-Doors/Fast-Facts/Fast%20Facts%202011.ashx

IIRIRA. (1996). *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996.* H.R. 3610; Pub.L. 104-208; 110 Stat. 3009-546. 104th Congress.

iMapBuilder (Producer). (2012). *iMapBuilder Online V3.090.* Retrieved from http://g3.imapbuilder.net/_map/?s=72380077633f268627fbfbfe40b312d8&m=4457&size=full

Johnson, V. (Producer). (2011, April 7). Letter to the editor: Student visas don't facilitate terror. *Washington Times.* Retrieved from http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/apr/7/student-visas-dont-facilitate-terror/

Lu, M. (2008a). Not part of the family: U.S. immigration policy and international students. *HEINONLINE.* Retrieved from http://heinonline.org

Lu, M. (2008b, Fall). Not part of the family: U.S. Immigration policy and foreign students. *Thurgood Marshall Law Review,* 343-374.

McInnis, C. (2010). Traditions of academic professionalism and shifting academic identities. In C. Whitchurch & G. W. Gordon (Ed.), *Academic and professional identities in higher education* (pp. 147-166). New York: Routledge.

Murphy, C., & Ozturgut, O. (2009). Literature vs. practice: Challenges for international students in the U.S. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 22,* 374-385.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2011). *Education at a glance 2011: OECD indicators.* Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/32/48631079.pdf

Open Doors (2009). *IIENetwork.* Retrieved from http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=150649

Parsons, L. (2009). The effects of an internationalized university experience on domestic students in Australia and the U.S. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 14,* 1-22. doi: 10.1177/1028315309331390

Philip G., Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 11,* 290-305. doi: 10.1177/1028315307303542

Ping, C. (1999). An expanded international role for student affairs. *New Directions for Student Services, 1999*(86), 13-21. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rosser, V. J., Hermsen, J. M., Mamiseishvili, K., & Wood, M. S. (2007). A national study examining the impact of SEVIS on international student and scholar advisors. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Education Planning, 54,* 525-542.

Senge, P. (2008). *The Necessary Revolution.* New York: Random House

Urias, D., & Yeakey, C. C. (2009). Analysis of the U.S. student visa system: Misperceptions, barriers, and consequences. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 13*(1), 72-109.

USA PATRIOT Act of 2001. (2001). *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001.* 107th Congress.

Water, V. D. (2006). Lessons learned: Musings on a 30-year career in international education. *International Educator, 15,* 57-62.

Whitchurch, C. (2009). The rise of the *blended professional* in higher education: a comparison between the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States. *Higher Education Quarterly. 58,* 407-418

Whitchurch, C. (2010). Optimising the potential of third space professionals in higher education. *Zeitschrift fur Hochschulentwicklung, 5*(4), 9-22.

Wong, K. C. (2006). Implementing the USA Patriot Act: A case study of the student and exchange visitor information system. *Brigham Young University Education and Law Journal, 2*(2006), 373-454.

Wood, M., & Kia, P. (2000). International student affairs. In L. K. Johnsrud & V. J. Rosser (Eds.), *Understanding the work and career paths of midlevel administrators* (pp. 55-64). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Appendix A: Chart of Participants

Chart of Participants

Pseudonym	Location	Position	Public/Private
Renee	East	Assistant Director	Private
Alice	Midwest	Assistant Director	Public
Mary	East	Assistant Director	Private
Veronica	East	Assistant Director	Private
Kelly	West	Associate Director	Private
Kevin	West	Associate Director	Public
James	East	Immigration specialist & program coordinator	Private
Joyce	East	International Faculty/scholar advisor	Public
Anna	West	International Faculty/scholar advisor	Public
Paula	West	International Student & Scholar Advisor	Public
Carole	West	International Student & Scholar Advisor	Public
Tina	Midwest	International Student & Scholar Advisor	Public
Julia	West	International Student Advisor	Private
Barbara	South	International Student Advisor	Public
Maggie	South	International Student Advisor	Public
Samantha	East	International Student Advisor	Private
Melissa	West	International Student Advisor	Public
Brenda	South	International Student Advisor	Public
Hanna	South	International Student Advisor	Public
Matilda	Midwest	International Student Advisor	Public
Lucy	Midwest	International Student Advisor	Private
Agnes	South	International Student Advisor & Admissions Officer	Public
Martha	West	International Student and Scholar Advisor	Public
Jane	South	Manager	Public
Daniel	Midwest	Program Coordinator	Public
Chris	West	Student & SEVIS advisor	Public
Eliza	West	Student Services Manager	Private

Appendix B: Email Invitation

Date _____, 2011

Dear (insert name of advisor),

I am a doctoral student in the EdD program in Educational Leadership and Management at Drexel University. I am writing you to ask your participation in a research study I will be conducting on the professional experience of international student advisors. Your participation would take place in the form of an open-ended interview either in person or by phone or Skype. Your interview is completely confidential and no identifiers will be included in the report. You may be asked to participate in a follow up interview. Identifying information and interview responses will not be linked in reporting results of data gathering.

I have worked as an international student advisor and this research study came about from my interest in seeing how research could inform and improve the professional experience of the international student advisor. What I hope to do is understand the concept of professional identity from the advisor's point of view. International student advisors are integral to an institution's internationalization efforts; and yet there is no clear or consistent structure in place for this profession. I hope that the findings of this study may be useful to inform higher education organizations and current advisors in international education on best practices for professional development and leadership in the field.

Participation in this research is voluntary. Interviews for this study will be ongoing through March of 2012 and participation in this study is a first-come first-serve basis until 30 subjects have been reached. Any participation is very much appreciated in this project. I know your time is valuable and will do everything I can to schedule the interview at a time and place that is the most convenient for you.

Sincerely,

Kathy Sparaco

Appendix C: Informed Consent

Drexel University
Consent to Take Part in a Research Study

1. **SUBJECT NAME:** _____

2. **TITLE OF RESEARCH:** The Development of an International Student Advisor: A Grounded Theory Study

3. **INVESTIGATOR'S NAME:** Kathy Geller, Ph.D. – Principal Investigator
   Kathy Sparaco – Co- Investigator

4. **RESEARCH ENTITY:** Drexel University

5. **CONSENTING FOR THE RESEARCH STUDY:** This is a long and an important document. If you sign it, you will be authorizing Drexel University and its researchers to perform research studies on you. You should take your time and carefully read it. You can also take a copy of this consent form to discuss it with your family member, physician, attorney or anyone else you would like before you sign it. Do not sign it unless you are comfortable in participating in this study.

6. **PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:** You are invited to participate in a study. The purpose of this study is to develop a theory on professional identity of international student advisors through a grounded theory methodology.

   This study is being conducted by a graduate student doing this research project in partial fulfillment to obtain an EdD. You were selected to participate as a possible participant in this study because you are an international student advisor in post-secondary higher education. This is a national study with the expected participation of 30 international student advisors from a variety of public and private institutions. You should be aware that you are free to decide to not participate or can withdraw your participation at any time.

7. **PROCEDURES AND DURATION:** If you decide to participate, you will have one or more open-ended interviews in person or through Skype. The length of the interviews is expected to be approximately one hour.

   - In these interviews, Ms. Sparaco and you will discuss your professional background in the field of international education, your experience as an international student advisor, and future goals or aspirations in the field.
   - This study expects to conduct up to 30 interviews which will be recorded and transcribed.
   - You may be invited for a follow up interview to either provide additional information or for clarification. These follow up interviews are expected to last no more than one hour.

- Notes, audio recordings and transcriptions of the interview will be securely stored and accessible only to Kathy Sparaco.

8. **RISKS AND DISCOMFORT/CONSTRAINTS:** Risks for a protocol of this nature are minimal and may involve issues such as questions that you may find embarrassing or personal in nature. The methodological premise of this grounded theory study is dependent upon your being in complete control of what your say and do at all times.

    You will be able to discontinue the interview at any time. What you choose to share with the researcher is entirely your choice. Because you will be interviewed more than once with the researcher, there will be a loss of anonymity with the researcher only. The researcher will keep your identity safe and not share her notes, transcripts, or any other research data with any other person.

9. **UNFORESEEN RISKS:** Participation in this study may involve unforeseen risks. If any unforeseen risks should occur, they will be reported to the Office of Regulatory Research Compliance.

10. **BENEFITS:** There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. This study will provide potential societal benefits by contributing to a growing body of research in the field of international education.

11. **ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES:** The alternative is <u>not</u> to participate in this study.

12. **REASONS FOR REMOVAL FROM STUDY:** You may be required to stop the study before the end for any of the following reasons:

    a) If all or part of the study is discontinued for any reason by the sponsor, investigator, university authorities, or government agencies; or
    b) Other reasons, including new information available to the investigator or harmful unforeseen reactions experienced by the subject or other subjects in this study.

13. **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:** Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to be in the study or you may stop at any time without the loss of the care benefits to which you are entitled. However, you will be expected to follow the instructions provided by the research staff, in order to ensure your safety.

14. **RESPONSIBILITY OF COST:** There is no cost to you for participating in this study.

15. **CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY:** Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way and only the researcher will know your identity.

The researcher will store all data in password protected electronic files accessible to only the researcher. In any publication or presentation of research results, your identity will be kept confidential. Once the study is complete, all transcripts and recordings will be destroyed.

The anticipated end of the program is May 2012. As per Drexel university guidelines, a copy of this informed consent form will be kept with the PI for three years following the completion of the study.

16. **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** If you wish further information regarding your rights as a research subject or if you have problems with a research-related injury, for medical problems please contact the Institution's Office of Regulatory Research Compliance by telephoning 215-255-7857 or Dr. Kathy Geller at 916-213-2790.

17. CONSENT:

- **I have been informed of the reasons for this study.**
- **I have had the study explained to me.**
- **I have had all of my questions answered.**
- **I have carefully read this consent form, have initialed each page, and have received a signed copy.**
- **I give consent voluntarily.**

_____   _____

Subject   **Date**

_____   _____

Investigator or Individual Obtaining this Consent   **Date**

List of Individuals Authorized to Obtain Consent

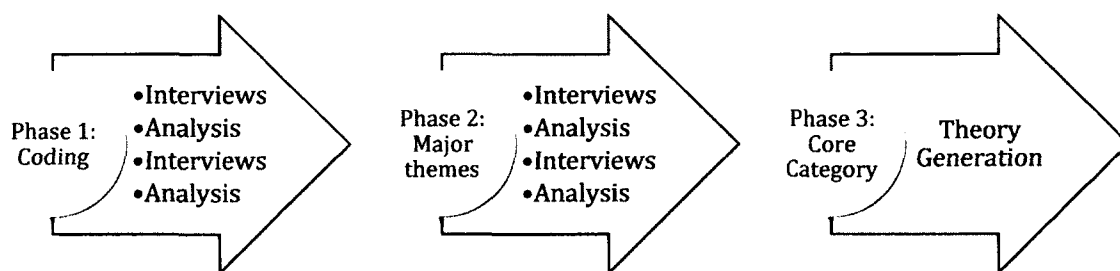| Name	Title	Day Phone #	24 Hr Phone #
Kathy Sparaco	Co-investigator	(916) 847-3887	(916) 847-3887

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
The Development of an International Student Advisor:
A Grounded Theory Study

Introductory talking points:

- Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Before we begin I'd like to give you some details on this interview process as well as provide you with a brief background on myself and the study. I am calling you through Skype which has a recording function to it.

- As you have already been told, this call is completely confidential. Anything you say is between us and there is nothing in the final manuscript that will ever connect you or your institution to this research. Part of the reason that I am doing a national study is because our field is so small that it might be evident who participated if I limited this to just the local area I am in. So, this is completely confidential.

- I have been in the field of international student and scholar services for just about 11 years. I've worked in large public research as well as small private and community colleges. Prior to that, I worked as an ESL instructor for about ten years. My experience in working with international students spans about 2 decades and I also have the pre and post SEVIS experience.

- In looking at the topic of my dissertation, I was guided by two pieces of advice. The first was to choose a subject that speaks to you personally. The second was that the most scholarly rationale for a study is to give voice to a population that is not heard in the literature.

- We work in a field that is experiencing a lot of growth over the past ten years. When I look at the body of literature that might be considered under the rubric of international education, I see a growing body of research on international student experience as well as internationalization of higher education. I haven't seen our voices as international student advisors in the literature.

- My chosen method for this study is called Grounded Theory. This is considered a very inductive research approach where I am going in to mine the field of experience of advisors. I chose this because I wanted to enter into this research without a specific hypothesis or theory in mind other than to generate an actionable theory through my data that will speak to our experience as international student advisors in the field. It is very participant driven and participatory in nature.

| Phase 1: Coding | •Interviews •Analysis •Interviews •Analysis | Phase 2: Major themes | •Interviews •Analysis •Interviews •Analysis | Phase 3: Core Category | Theory Generation |

Sample of questions asked in Phase 1 interviews:

1. Describe the development of your career in this field?

2. What has shaped you professionally over the past decade?

3. What is your role in the office?

4. How would you describe yourself as a professional?

5. How does your position define you?

6. Can you describe what changes you've seen as a result of internationalization efforts on your campus?

7. In what ways has a career in international education changed in the past decade?

8. Tell me a bit about your outreach efforts on campus?

Sample of questions asked in Phase 2 interviews:

9. It seems as we've [international student advisors] have missed a step somewhere in the field. With our heads buried in computers and the regulatory manuals

we've gone from SEVIS implementation to suddenly not being a part of the larger internationalization? What do you think about that?

10. Did you ever have an "aha" moment when you started to see yourself as a professional in this field rather than just being in a job?

11. One of the major themes that is rising to the top is that campus-wide internationalization efforts can take on a very top down feeling. Is this true for your campus?

12. One participant shared the story of how her colleagues and she were left out of a campus-wide initiative to win a coveted internationalization award. She felt that her office which is the Office of International Student and Scholar Services was not seen as integral to the larger internationalization effort on campus. How does that story resonate with you?

13. Let me tell you a personal story and get your reaction: While participating in a faculty committee on developing a MA program in international education, I was informed by one faculty member that what I did - manager of an international services office - had nothing to do with international education. This professional disconnect between how I was seen on campus and how I viewed myself was striking for me.

14. I'd like to get your reaction to this one comment that was made: It seems as if International students don't have anything to do with internationalization.

15. Tell me a little about your office's relationship with Study Abroad?

    a. How would you, if possible, describe difference in the larger campus perception of your office and Study Abroad?

16. One phrase that seems to be repeated across the research was: *They just don't get what we do.* Can you comment on that?

17. There seems to be this imprecise space that international student advisors occupy. Not really a good fit anywhere in the traditional hierarchy of academic structure. It seems as if advisors are really occupying a new space in higher education arena. Can you comment on this?

Appendix E: Email on Findings to Participants

Dear Colleague,

I hope the busy spring season is going well for you! I can't believe how fast time is passing and that it's is already time to make plans to go to NAFSA. You may have wondered what happened to me and my research. I have been head high in interviews, transcriptions and data analysis for the past few months. The response to participate in the study was great and the interviews yielded wonderful stories of professionalism and dedication to our field.

As I mentioned in the interview, I would be following up with you when I developed what would be my theory on the professional identity of international student advisors. Given the time of year and your busy schedules, I thought it might be easier to send you an email with a brief explanation of my findings. At your convenience, and if you have time, please take a couple of minutes to let me know what you think either by a reply to this email, a Skype chat (kathysparaco) or by phone (916-962-0875).

I will endeavor to be brief here, so keep in mind that what I am giving is a *much* abbreviated version of my research. I know it's been a while since we spoke so let me quickly remind you of my research focus. The research on international education is an emerging area in scholarly literature, so my research sought to give voice to the experience of international student advisors as well as develop a theory that explicates the development of their professional identity within the context of U.S. higher education. The following research questions framed the study:

1. What encompasses the lived experience of international student advisors amid the complex and changing landscape of U.S. higher education?
2. What emergent concerns might be important in the experiences of individuals who are international student advisors?
3. In what way have the personal constructs of professionalism and professional identity for international student advisors been developed?

These questions are intentionally broad and, hopefully, convey a *what's-going-on-here* feeling that is appropriate in a grounded theory method. You may recall when we spoke that I told you a bit about my chosen methodology which is grounded theory (GT). GT is a systematic but flexible inductive approach to analyzing data to create theory that is specific to the studied phenomenon. Theory in this study is defined as a way of understanding or making sense of the world in order to have the practical insight needed to guide action. My research interest was inspired by listening to the experience of advisors, so this endeavor is both deeply personal with a strong desire to be meaningful to those in our field.

After interviewing nearly 30 colleagues across the U.S. and then analyzing the data, I came up with numerous codes that were grouped into three main thematic categories. These themes were labeled: *the student first; not being invited to the table;* and *they don't get what we do*. The labeling of these themes is taken from the language of the participants.

The first theme, **the student first**, may seem self-explanatory. All of the participants had had a transformative international experience prior to entering the field. Whether it was studying abroad, traveling, or being an international student in the U.S., the participants shared many stories on their personal challenges and rewards of living outside of his or her home country. The experience and lessons learned of living overseas left a strong impression. This experience was often times **the** catalyst in seeking a career which was grounded in commitment to international students. The connection to international students led to a deep sense of mission that, in many ways, transcended the connection to the institution: their employer.

Not being invited to the table emerged as a way to understand the common experience of disenfranchisement across interviews. Participants spoke at length about their frustrations at feeling alienated, and even invisible in a profession that has historically lacked shape and continuity within U.S. higher education. There was general enthusiasm for the attention internationalization efforts were receiving on campus at the highest level but also dismay at the feeling that their work was not seen as integral to those efforts. As one participant stated, "there is a rush to get into internationalization without thinking about who on campus can support it".

Finally, *they don't get what we do* was a refrain heard again and again in nearly every interview. Many of the participants spoke with pride about their knowledge base and skill with advising. The reality that they were responsible for the legal status for students was taken very seriously by all of the participants. However, it was also suggested that the overly regulatory, paper-focused, administrative side of working with international students is what many participants felt kept the advisor invisible and undervalued on campus. The complexity of the position, solitary nature, and desk-bound work contributed to a feeling of separateness from the rest of campus.

As I mentioned earlier, the purpose of the research was to give voice to international student advisors as well as articulate a theory on professional identity. In approaching theory making, I chose to utilize interpretive theory as a way to think of out the box a bit. After listening to so many stories with such strong similarities, I deliberately stepped back from all of the details to take a broader view and asked '*what makes us tick*'?

The aforementioned themes led me to think about the advisor within a professional work environment where he or she may feel somewhat marginalized at times but also has a very clear sense of purpose. Amidst all of the challenges within the field we work, the question of '*why stay in this field*' kept coming up. I think, and this is the essence of my theory, that it has a lot to do with our own experiences as having been a non-national living in a new culture as a young adult. We all may agree that this experience is integral to our own ethos, but I would also suggest it is what sets us apart in our work in the culture of higher education.

What is suggested from this research is that the earlier transformative international experience of being an outsider or non-national in another country is the key to how the advisor positions oneself and overcomes the challenges of his or her work environment. Living, working or studying overseas may in fact have been what shaped the personal

resolve of the advisor and now contributes to the fortitude to stay in a position that often times may feel like a professional outsider. As a culture, academia can be foreign and difficult to navigate for many. The theory in this study suggests that the international student advisor is not only connected to the international student in his or her experience of being an international in U.S., but, in fact, he or she is occupies an analogous position within the culture of higher education.

I can imagine what you are thinking *'did she just say that we are somehow international students on campus?'* Yes in fact, my theory labels the advisor as the international in academia. In my attempt to be brief here, I am just providing you with a snapshot of what my theory on professional identity will entail based on the data and findings. The interviews were opportunities to understand what it was that led an individual to choose his or her career as well as to understand where the participants saw themselves in the context of the institution. I relied on the principles of identity theory to understand how an individual constructs meaning for his or her identities and how the larger context of culture influences ones sense of self. A central pillar to identity theory is the idea that the individual is impacted by his or her environment but also acts as an agent to shape the environment as well. The participants demonstrated a clear commitment to the student population they served but it is often times only when the advisor is off campus and interacting with other international student advisors that he or she experiences a true sense of community. NAFSA was spoken about in many of the interviews as a being a professional lifeline. Often feeling alone in their work, the participants spoke about the integral role their participation in the national or regional conferences played in developing a professional identity. The participants indicated that it was in these organizations where they were able to connect to their community and establish a professional sense of place that in many ways was missing for them on their campus. This sense of belonging to a larger community of like-minded professionals played a critical role in a sense of belonging and value. Identity theory suggests that in joining groups an individual is able to reduce uncertainty as well as improve one's sense of self-image.

I have just skimmed the surface but I told myself that I would keep this email to fewer than two pages and I have not! I will stop here to let you get back to your work but I am curious if what I have written resonates with you in any way. My intent is not to be negative but to let the data speak for itself. Let me know what you think or if you need clarification on some points. Again, I recognize that despite being an incredibly long email I am being very brief here.

This research has been very illuminating on a personal level and I wish I had known way back when I started what I now know through this research. I would to thank you again for your participation in my research study and all of your attention to my questions.

If you don't have time to respond to this email, I completely understand and want to wish you the best. If you do have time, I greatly appreciate any thoughts you might want to share.

All the best,

Kathy