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The elephant in the room: Deconstructing the place of conservatives in the student affairs profession

Jodi Fisler
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**THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM:
DECONSTRUCTING THE PLACE OF CONSERVATIVES IN THE
STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSION**

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

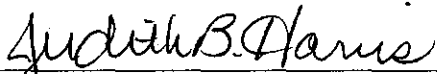
by
Jodi Fisler
December 2010

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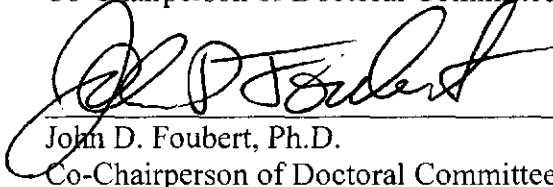
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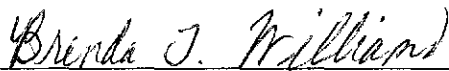
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THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM:
DECONSTRUCTING THE PLACE OF CONSERVATIVES IN THE
STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSION

Abstract

The student affairs profession places considerable emphasis on the values of diversity, inclusiveness, and social justice as part of its mission to foster the holistic development of college students. Many vocal conservative critics point to these values as evidence of the liberal worldview that they claim dominates the higher education landscape. This critical, phenomenological study was designed around the premise that higher education, and, specifically, student affairs, is characterized by a liberal ideology that privileges those in the profession who identify as liberal. The study explored the perceptions and experiences of 12 self-identified conservative student affairs professionals in order to better understand the nature and impact of the hegemony that operates within the field. The findings then served as the basis for a deconstruction of the lived ideology of the profession.

The premise of the study was affirmed by the experiences of many of the participants. Intent aside, majority status alone appears to confer certain privileges on liberals, allowing them to speak or act in ways that leave some conservatives feeling devalued and marginalized. The study identifies specific manifestations of liberal privilege, as well as a variety of strategies used by participants to respond and/or cope.

The study findings reveal that participants differed considerably in how, and to what degree, they experienced student affairs as a hegemonic culture. Possible reasons for this are discussed, along with recommendations and avenues for further inquiry.

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**THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM:
DECONSTRUCTING THE PLACE OF CONSERVATIVES IN THE
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Chapter One

Introduction to the Problem

The student affairs profession has long concerned itself with educating and developing students as whole persons, rather than simply as intellectual vessels (American Council on Education, 1937; Evans, 2001; Loy & Painter, 1997). To that end, practitioners are expected to embrace values, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect the profession's commitment to "enhancing the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of each individual within post-secondary institutions" (ACPA – College Student Educators International, 2010b, p. 1). This includes, among many other goals and expectations, a commitment to developing their own multicultural competence, embracing diversity and access, guiding students toward responsible citizenship, and advocating for social justice (ACPA, 2010b; NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 2010a).

As self-evident and beneficial as these expectations may seem to some, they also have their detractors. Hillsdale College, for example, which ranked fourth in the 2009 edition of *Princeton Review's* (n.d.) list of politically conservative student bodies, denounces in its mission statement the "dehumanizing, discriminatory trend of so called 'social justice' and 'multicultural diversity,' which judges individuals not as individuals, but as member [sic] of a group and which pits one group against other competing groups in divisive power struggles" (Hillsdale College, 2009, Aims section, ¶ 2). Although many, if not most, student affairs professionals would likely dispute Hillsdale's decidedly negative characterization of multicultural diversity and social justice, the position taken by Hillsdale has many supporters outside of higher education. This position is often reflected in the work of self-identified conservative writers and contributors to conservative websites, who identify an emphasis on

multiculturalism and social justice as a hallmark of contemporary liberal ideology (D'Souza, 2002a; D'Souza, 2002b; French, 2010; S. Miller, 2003). Psychological research has affirmed the conventional wisdom that politically conservative individuals are less concerned than liberals about social justice, although findings suggest that this may not be true of religious conservatives (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Janoff-Bulman, Sheikh, & Baldacci, 2008).

Some conservative activists, perhaps most notably David Horowitz (e.g., David Horowitz Freedom Center, 2010; Horowitz, 2006), have devoted considerable attention in recent years to documenting and opposing the liberal orientation of higher education (Bérubé, 2006; Messer-Davidow, 1993). Most of that attention has focused on faculty and the perceived efforts of faculty to impose liberal political views on students. The classroom is only one part of a student's college experience, however. Comparatively less emphasis has been placed on evaluating the ideologies of student affairs administrators, even though policies governing student life and extra-curricular programs have been the target of strong criticism as well as legal action by some national conservative, Christian, and civil libertarian organizations (e.g., Alliance Defense Fund, 2010; Christian Legal Society, n.d.; Foundation for Individual Rights in Education [FIRE], 2009). Much of this criticism has been directed at campus speech codes, diversity awareness initiatives, programs aimed at students from underrepresented groups, and policies that require religious student organizations to open their membership to gay and lesbian students (e.g., Bollag, 2005; Downs, 2005; French, 2007; Kors & Silvergate, 1998; S. Miller, 2003; O'Neil, 1997; Schmidt, 2006). For student affairs professionals, who are expected to advocate for social justice and embrace the values of diversity and multiculturalism (ACPA, 2010b; NASPA, 2010e), this illustrates a potentially significant dilemma. Where and/or how do conservatives fit into the profession of

student affairs?

Journalistic reports and essays, as well as empirical research, suggest there is a silencing effect in some areas of higher education, with conservative professors and administrators reluctant to talk about their religious and/or political views or to advise promising conservative students to pursue careers in academia—at least not without carefully weighing the risks of doing so (Brooks, 2003; Jacobson, 2004; Moran & Curtis, 2004; Tierney, 2004; Tobin & Weinbert, 2006). Most of these accounts describe the experiences of faculty, but it is reasonable to think that a similar climate exists within the less-studied domain of student affairs. Indeed, given that the task of building “supportive, inclusive communities” (Blimling, Whitt, & Associates, 1999, p. 157) is considered a key responsibility of student affairs administrators, it is possible that the pressure to conform to perceived norms, particularly regarding diversity and multiculturalism, is felt more acutely in student affairs than it is among faculty. This phenomenological study aims to give voice to conservative student affairs professionals, who may see themselves as somehow apart from the normative values of their profession or who may believe they are perceived to be that way by others due to their political opinions and/or religious values. Their lived experiences will serve as the basis for a critical examination of the normative liberal ideology of the profession. In this way, the “elephants” in the room (the elephant being a common symbol of the Republican Party and, by extension, a convenient pun to symbolize conservatives generally) will draw attention to the more metaphorical elephant, namely, the implicit—and sometimes explicit—ideological norms that create a potentially uncomfortable environment for conservative student affairs professionals.

Justification for the Study

An undertaking of this kind is worthwhile for a number of reasons. First, self-reflection can be beneficial to any organization (Bryson, 1995; Fullan, 2001). For student affairs professionals, a group of people who claim to want to respect and celebrate differences (ACPA, 2010a, 2010b; El-Khawas, 2003; NASPA, 2010c; Talbot, 2003), it is important to understand the ways in which they may end up alienating others without intending to do so. If student affairs practitioners hope to foster respect for differences among students, integrity demands that they should “live according to their professed values” (Fried, 2003) and work to set that example themselves.

Second, to the extent that liberal student affairs professionals intentionally alienate conservative colleagues because conservative values or opinions are seen as negative, it is necessary to bring that bias to light. Recent studies indicate that political affiliation is growing among incoming college students, with more students than ever before identifying themselves as conservative and liberal (Pryor et al., 2006; Pryor et al., 2008). This sets the stage for possible clashes among student groups that administrators will have to mediate. Conservative student groups are increasingly supported by outside organizations that want to promote conservative values on campuses (Field, 2007). If student affairs professionals want to avoid being seen as irrelevant or out of touch, and if they truly hope to support all of the students on their campuses effectively, they will need to be prepared to deal with the concerns of conservative students. Understanding the issues of conservatives among their professional ranks may help administrators to serve their students better as well.

Finally, the same argument that supports the value of cultural diversity applies to many other types of diversity as well. The quality and effectiveness of work or study groups

are enhanced when people bring an array of knowledge and perspectives to bear in solving problems and understanding or interpreting ideas (Blimling, 2001; Fullan, 2001; Haidt, Rosenberg, & Hom, 2003; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Sunstein, 2003). Diversity of values and morals, however, has been shown to be less desired than other types of difference, and also more detrimental to group effectiveness (Haidt et al.; Jehn et al.). It remains to be seen if conservative members of the student affairs profession represent, on balance, the kind of diversity that poses a threat or the kind that offers potential for greater success. It behooves the profession to open itself broadly to people who share a commitment to the holistic education of students. If members of minority groups are made to feel unwelcome in student affairs, they may leave the profession entirely, taking with them whatever talents, energy, and ideas they might otherwise have contributed. If they do not feel comfortable voicing their honest opinions, those perspectives will not be taken into account when decisions are made. Although this may not seem like a great loss to those who fear or disagree with the perspectives those professionals might bring, having a wide range of views to consider offers the possibility of more complete knowledge, more innovative ideas, and as a result, better programs and services for college students.

Definitions

In defining work roles in student affairs, some authors make a distinction between student affairs *professionals* and student affairs *practitioners* on the basis of education, job function, or other criteria (Hansen, 2005). I use the terms *professional*, *practitioner*, and *administrator* interchangeably in this study to refer to people who have received a graduate degree in college student personnel, higher education administration, or another related field, and who work in a professional (non-clerical) position within a division of student affairs or

student services in a college or university.

Defining the ideological terms that are at the heart of this study presents a much greater challenge. I accept that there is probably no definition of *conservative* or *liberal* that can capture every person who self-identifies with one of those terms. As much as popular discourse implies that there are clear distinctions between liberals and conservatives, the world is far more nuanced. Political philosophers have discerned multiple branches of liberal and conservative thought, including, for example, traditionalism, libertarianism, and neoconservatism on the right, and classical liberalism, welfare liberalism, and populist perfectionism on the left (Berkowitz, 2004; Paul, Miller, & Paul, 2007; Sullivan, 2006). One recent study identified two distinct strains of ideology among students who identified as conservative, with one strain characterized by a “libertarian” orientation, combining fiscally conservative and socially liberal views, and the other characterized by a “communitarian” combination of social conservatism and fiscal liberalism (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2008). The communitarian strain was associated with politically conservative evangelical Christians, whereas the libertarian strain was associated with members of the College Republicans. This suggests that the term *conservative* can apply to individuals and groups that have distinct ideological patterns. Even within a given strain of ideology, there is likely to be considerable variation in people’s opinions on specific issues based on the unique constellation of experiences that shape each individual.

Despite the fact that ideology cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy, psychologists have examined the characteristics that predict political ideologies and have found that conservatives and liberals appear to differ in significant ways (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Janoff-Bulman et al., 2008; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, &

Sullo way, 2003; Jost, Napier, et al., 2007; Lakoff, 2002). In a meta-analysis involving more than 22,000 individuals worldwide, Jost, Napier, et al. found that conservatism was positively correlated with instability in the social system, fear of death, intolerance of ambiguity, a need for order, and a fear of loss. Conservatism was negatively correlated with openness to experience, tolerance for uncertainty, cognitive complexity, and self-esteem. Janoff-Bulman et al. found that self-identified conservatives were more likely to make moral judgments on the basis of what they perceived as negative outcomes (avoidance motives), and liberals were more likely to base their judgments on perceived positive outcomes (approach motives).

Additional research on morality has led to a theory of moral foundations, which posits that there are five foundations on which people base their moral judgments: harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity (Haidt & Graham, 2007). Whereas liberals tend to base their morality primarily on the harm/care and fairness/reciprocity foundations, conservatives tend to use all five. This means that harm/care makes up a greater portion of the liberal sense of morality and authority/respect plays a greater role for conservatives, which is consistent with Lakoff's (2002) metaphorical conceptualization of liberals as "Nurturant Parents" and conservatives as "Strict Fathers."

The negativity of the language used to describe conservatism in some of this research is striking. The research itself offers interesting insights into the nature of ideological differences, but in defining *liberal* and *conservative* for this study, I prefer to use more neutral terms that individuals might actually use to describe themselves. Self-identified liberal and conservative writers who have tried to capture the essence of the differences between liberal and conservative ideologies have described *conservative* as placing high

value on self-reliance, merit, morality, tradition, self-discipline, personal responsibility, respect for authority, and social order, and *liberal* as emphasizing equality, diversity, social justice, pluralism, compassion, and the empowerment and fulfillment of others (D'Souza, 2002a; Lakoff, 2002; Sullivan, 2006). I recognize that these descriptions are oversimplified; however, I believe they represent accurately, albeit in broad strokes, how conservatives and liberals tend to paint themselves and each other—in mixed company, at least.

The terms *conservative* and *liberal* are closely linked to the terms *right* and *left*, respectively. Although the terms in each pair are commonly used interchangeably to describe (or discredit) people on either side of the ideological spectrum, they are not synonymous. The political left encompasses socialists and communists, who may be far more radical in their views than many self-proclaimed liberals; likewise, the political right contains factions, such as neo-fascists, who are far removed from what is considered mainline conservatism in the United States. In using *liberal* and *conservative* to refer to left-leaning and right-leaning political ideologies, respectively, I do not intend to suggest that these terms accurately reflect all of the political views that are properly classified as *left* and *right*. I will use these terms as general descriptors, as they are commonly used in the mainstream U.S. media, unless a more precise distinction is necessary for a particular example.

I have chosen to use the terms *ideologically conservative* and *ideologically liberal* in order to provide space for both political and religious orientations under a single term. It is certainly possible for a person to hold conservative views in one of these ideological domains and liberal views in the other. Contemporary discourse and stereotypes, however, commonly conflate politics and Christian religion in particular, and this perception has at least some

support in research (Bolce & De Maio, 1999; Janoff-Bulman et al., 2008). For this reason, I believe the prevailing orthodoxy in student affairs applies to religion as well as to politics, with the result that religiously conservative Christians—those who accept the Bible as the true and infallible Word of God and believe in strict adherence to the laws of their faith—will encounter at least some disadvantage regardless of their political views. Conservative adherents to other religious faiths may certainly experience dissonance with the normative values of the student affairs profession as well, but I have chosen to limit my investigation to conservative Christians because their faith, more than any other, is so commonly associated with conservative political views in the United States today. In this paper, therefore, *ideology* refers to both political and Christian religious thought unless otherwise specified.

Clearly, ideology is no simple matter. Analysis of a survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (2005) identified no less than eight beliefs- and values-based political typologies, adding depth and complexity to the traditional left, right, and center positions of the political spectrum. Such a framework would probably capture the ideological diversity within the student affairs profession much more accurately than the conventional conservative-liberal dichotomy. I confess, however, that I will perpetuate that dichotomy in this study by focusing on a perceived tension between “conservative” professionals in a “liberal” field. I have chosen to do this because, in my experience, most people in the U.S. continue to conceive of political ideology as a linear spectrum anchored by liberalism on one side and conservatism on the other. Most of the existing literature on political ideology relies on this spectrum as well, as evidenced by the literature cited in this chapter and the next. Furthermore, I believe that using familiar terms and concepts to define this aspect of my study will allow readers to follow my argument more easily. This may be

particularly useful in the next chapter, as I explicate other challenging concepts that provide the foundation for this study.

Chapter Two

Foundations of the Present Study

Discussions about diversity in education are frequently informed by critical theories, such as social dominance theory or critical race theory, which describe the mechanisms of oppression that keep certain groups at a disadvantage (e.g., Howard, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2000). During the past several decades, a strong critical research tradition has emerged in the social sciences, illuminating the ways in which dominant groups wield power over others. Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) described critical research as inquiry that seeks to empower; to transform; “to uncover the winners and losers in particular social arrangements and the processes by which such power plays operate” (p. 307-308). I have chosen to situate this study within a critical paradigm, namely deconstruction, which I will describe more fully below.

Before I explain the epistemological and ontological assumptions of deconstruction, however, I must confess my apprehension about using a critical paradigm as the basis for this particular study. Critical research has most commonly been used to expose and address injustices experienced by traditionally underrepresented groups, defined primarily along lines of race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). There is a long and pervasive history of discrimination against members of these groups, and the impact of that discrimination extends far beyond any single, narrowly defined domain of life, such as the workplace. In choosing a critical paradigm as the basis for a study of ideological conservatives in student affairs, I in no way intend to equate the experiences of conservatives with those of historically oppressed groups or to trivialize the painful experiences of those whose lives have been deeply affected by widespread prejudice

and injustice.

I have chosen to use a critical approach because it seems best suited for the study of an underrepresented group within a given social context, and I believe there is something of value to be learned from the experiences of ideological minorities within the student affairs profession. Although the language of critical research (e.g., liberation, oppression, power) seems somewhat excessive with reference to this study's focus, my aim in conducting the study is consistent with the dimensions of critical research: to examine the socially-, politically-, and culturally-influenced realities of student affairs professionals in order to gain structural insights that could serve to strengthen the profession (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

Deconstruction as Research Paradigm

Deconstruction as a research paradigm is grounded in the belief that nothing can be known except in its relation to the assumptions, references, and power structures that imbue it with meaning (Lather, 2003). Knowing something, therefore, means constantly examining and re-examining the frameworks (e.g., cultural, ideological, political, etc.) through which we have come to know it. Frameworks can and should be scrutinized, changed, and expanded, but because there are always other frameworks, no matter how hard we try to understand the world without one, objective knowledge cannot exist. "The deconstructive shift," Lather (2003) wrote, "is from the real to the production of reality effect" (p. 260).

Unlike other critical paradigms, such as feminism or queer theory, deconstruction has no inherent agenda other than its own process and intent—that is, the examination of implicit frameworks (Lather, 1991b; Lather, 2003). Because its ontology asserts that no objective reality exists, it cannot be the goal of deconstruction to expose "real" underlying mechanisms

of power and domination (Lather, 2003). Rather, deconstruction allows us to recognize and push the limits of our understanding: “to disrupt, to keep the system in play, to set up procedures to continuously demystify the realities we create, to fight the tendency for our categories to congeal” (Lather, 1991a, p. 156). This study of conservatives within student affairs is therefore not meant to unmask or overturn an oppressive liberal power structure, but to reveal complexity and conflict, raising questions about what is valued in and by the profession, who is included and excluded, and why.

Derrida’s example of hospitality (Caputo, 1997) may be useful in further demonstrating how deconstruction applies to my inquiry into ideological conservatives in the academy. The act of hospitality means, for instance, opening my house to a guest. But unless I am prepared to relinquish all control over my house, my hospitality is conditional. (I would not want my guest to feel free to treat my house as her own if that meant putting her dirty shoes on the dining table or painting the bedroom hot pink.) My hospitality is a gift that I may revoke if I feel the need, in which case I am not being truly hospitable. If I do relinquish all control over my house, then hospitality is no longer possible because the house is not mine to give. True hospitality, therefore, is impossible, but hospitality is nevertheless considered an ideal worth pursuing. “Hospitality really starts to happen when I push against this limit, this threshold, this paralysis, inviting hospitality to cross its own threshold and limit, its own self-limitation, to become a gift *beyond hospitality*” (Caputo, 1997, p. 111). The same dilemma is present in groups of any size in which there is some notion of insiders and outsiders, powerful and powerless. Like the homeowner, group members have the power to open the group to others, but doing so either means letting outsiders in only under certain conditions or completely giving up control over what it means to be part of the group in the

first place. In the case of student affairs, the recognition and active inclusion of diverse members—the expansion of hospitality—is a key goal and is evident in the programs, structures, and statements of the national professional organizations (ACPA, 2010a, 2010b; NASPA, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010e). How far can that circle of inclusion expand before the profession gives up the keys to its own house? Could it embrace people who are proudly anti-Semitic or who believe that women have no business getting a university education? I suspect it could not, and indeed, I believe it should not. There are other people, however, whose beliefs and values are far less extreme and yet find themselves uncomfortably at odds with fellow members of the profession. Where should the boundaries of inclusion and hospitality lie?

I accept the deconstructivist position that true inclusivity is impossible (Caputo, 1997). The very notion of a group is meaningless if there are no limits, expectations, or conditions for membership. With that in mind, I am interested in exploring some of the ideological experiences and perceptions of those “outsiders inside,” with hopes of encouraging the student affairs profession to recognize, probe, and perhaps press on beyond its own limits to cross its own threshold of inclusivity.

Through a Lens of Hegemony

Within this paradigm of deconstruction, I have chosen to frame my analysis with a modified version of hegemony theory. The concept of hegemony is grounded in the work of Karl Marx, who theorized that social roles are dictated by a fixed economic base and a legal and political superstructure that arises out of that base (Williams, 1977). Significant social change then, in Marx’s view, is driven primarily by conflict among economic classes, resulting in changes to the economic foundation. As the foundation shifts, it destabilizes the

superstructure that shapes a day-to-day reality in which the working class is kept subordinate to the ruling bourgeoisie. Marx's work paved the way for future theorists to apply the term *hegemony*, previously understood as political domination, to conditions in which the dominant force was an economic class rather than a monarch, an army, or other political ruling body (Bocock, 1986; Williams, 1977).

The development of hegemony as a broader social concept is arguably most closely associated with the work of Antonio Gramsci (Bocock, 1986; Brookfield, 2005; Jones, 2006; Williams, 1977). Gramsci departed from Marx's idea of a static economic base as the foundation for all other elements of society. Instead, he understood the base to be in constant flux as a result of various economic, social, and political forces vying for influence within the system. Gramsci also redirected Marx's emphasis on an economic ruling class and instead posited a system of domination created and reinforced, in large part, by the institutions and conventions of civil society, rather than simply by mechanisms of a state or economic system. In Gramsci's theory, therefore, hegemony represents a form of domination that (1) relies on the entire culture, rather than just an economic base, to determine how power is distributed, and (2) encompasses not only a formally stated ideology with clearly articulated meanings and values, but also the entire body of tacitly understood meanings and values that are conveyed through societal norms (Williams, 1977). In other words, hegemony is expressed not only through official policies or intentionally oppressive practices, but also more subtly, through the simple practices of everyday living. This unconscious aspect of hegemony allows it to flourish without much need of external enforcement. The hegemonic culture just becomes "normal" to the point that people living within the system, even those who occupy subordinate statuses, may not even realize that it is there (Brookfield, 2005;

Williams, 1977).

The idea that hegemony operates through the daily systems embedded within a culture rather than through formal structures alone opens the door for everyday expressions of resistance. Subordinated groups or individuals do not need to overthrow a government in order to wage a challenge against the dominant class; they can attack hegemonic structures in much smaller, more localized ways that match the subtlety of hegemonic expression. As Williams (1977) explained, “[Hegemony] does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own” (p. 112).

This recognition of *emergent* elements represents one of Williams’s contributions to the work of Gramsci (Snedeker, 2004). Emergent values and practices are those that arise in opposition to those of the prevailing hegemony. Although the presence of opposing ideas may threaten the hegemony, it does not disprove it. In fact, the emergent serves to define the hegemony all the more clearly by distinguishing what falls within the accepted parameters of the system from what is deemed to be on the outside (Williams, 1977).

Williams (1977) was careful to acknowledge that it can be very difficult to distinguish the truly emergent from something that is simply new within the existing hegemony. Mere difference or innovation does not necessarily imply a threat to an established power structure. Identifying the emergent is further complicated by the fact that a dominant group’s common response to an emergent threat is to co-opt it, making room for the emergent within the dominant, thereby still controlling the role of the opposition and preventing it from mounting a truly threatening challenge. A key point for Williams is that “no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant

culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention” (p. 125). Much like Derrida’s example of hospitality, the theory of hegemony contends that true inclusivity is impossible. A hegemonic class can try to incorporate what it will for the sake of its own preservation, but there must always be limits that will continue to define it, and there will always be ideas, values, and practices that fall outside of those limits and shape the boundaries of the dominant class as well as those of possible emergent classes.

Williams’s treatment of hegemony is attractive as a conceptual framework for this study because it acknowledges the dynamic nature of hegemonic structures, as well as the emergent elements that serve to challenge the prevailing dominance. I would further expand the fluidity of Williams’s theory to recognize the ways in which individuals may experience multiple hegemonies in the various contexts of their daily lives. While a national culture may reflect a particular brand of hegemony, people may feel the effects of different hegemonic systems in their local communities, their schools, religious institutions, and workplaces. I contend that hegemonies are frequently nested within other hegemonies, and that the hegemony in one context may fuel the emergence of counter-hegemonies in another, as people who are dominant in one context challenge their subordinate status elsewhere. I will provide examples and discuss some of the varied manifestations of hegemony in the next section.

Hegemony Manifested

Perhaps because of its roots in Marxist thought, which postulates struggles between oppressed classes and a dominant class, hegemony has been embraced by many academics writing about historically underrepresented groups, particularly regarding issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, and class (e.g., Anderson, 2005; Asante, 2006; Brookfield, 2005;

Kosut, 2006; Maher & Tetreault, 2007). In many cases, the word *hegemony* is absent, but an author's language clearly indicates acceptance of its basic premises. Maher and Tetreault, for example, referred to the "silent laws" that determine the allocation of power within higher education and sought to expose "the persisting powers of the dominant voices to continue to 'call the tune' and to marginalize women, men of color, first-generation college students, and gays and lesbians, among many others" (p. 4). Similarly, Chesler, Lewis, and Crowfoot (2005) asserted that "even as race, gender, and class operate in ways that benefit some and subordinate others, dominant American discourses about individualism, opportunity, and freedom undermine the ability to attend to such divisions" (p. 9). In these examples, as in many others, even without explicit reference to hegemony, it is recognized that unarticulated and unseen cultural forces serve to reinforce privilege for members of a dominant group at the expense of others.

Hegemony can be expressed in any number of ways. McIntosh (1998), for example, offered an extensive list of the ways in which she experienced privilege as a White person, including such prosaic examples as knowing that "flesh colored" bandages would be likely to match her skin tone. This is an excellent example of hegemony at work in a racial context because it illustrates how something as ordinary as a bandage box can reinforce—however unintentionally—a message that flesh is supposed to be a pale tan.

In an academic context, hegemony guides and is reinforced by accepted forms of discourse and knowledge production (Asante, 2006; Kosut, 2006; Redding, 2001; Scheurich & Young, 1997; Wilson, 2006). Kosut recalled her own experiences as a working-class doctoral student, feeling judged and belittled by professors and fellow students for her use of colloquial language, her mispronunciation of foreign words, and her unfamiliarity with many

literary and cultural references. Her time in graduate school provided an education that extended far beyond her subject matter and into the norms, expectations, and prejudices that serve to maintain a “class ceiling” (p. 247), keeping students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds out of the advanced ranks of academia. Hegemony has also been recognized at an even deeper level, in the very foundations of academic research, privileging Eurocentric ideas about knowledge and knowledge production over Afrocentric and other culturally-influenced epistemologies (Asante, 2006; Scheurich & Young, 1997).

The potential for bias in academic research extends beyond the domains of race and culture. In an example particularly relevant to this study, Redding (2001) described the liberal hegemony in psychology, a discipline that has contributed significantly to the theoretical foundations of student affairs (Loy & Painter, 1997). Redding argued that this hegemony effectively dictates what kinds of research questions get asked, how results are interpreted and used, and how quality is evaluated. (Consider as an example the negative language used to describe the research findings about the characteristics of conservatives, as discussed in the previous chapter.) Redding’s observation that unpopular findings are more carefully scrutinized and held to a higher standard of rigor was also noted by Halpern, Gilbert, and Coren (1996), although neither observation was made on the basis of formal research. Other research has raised questions about the applicability of Kohlberg’s theory of moral development (which is frequently cited in the student affairs literature) to Mormons and possibly other religiously conservative groups, who, for theological reasons, exhibit moral reasoning patterns associated with lower stages of the development model (Richards & Davison, 1992). This illustrates how a theory may set up a pattern of bias against a group that does not fit the assumptions on which the theory was based.

Concerns over privileged epistemologies are closely related to another form of hegemonic expression: the privileging of secular ways of knowing over spiritually-influenced research (Dillard, Abdur-Rashid, & Tyson, 2000; Shahjahan, 2005). Shahjahan argued that the tools of quantitative, positivistic research (e.g., standardized interviews and surveys) are incompatible with spiritually-driven research in the social sciences. Furthermore, researchers who eschew the notion of a value-neutral, objectifiable, and controllable universe in favor of a more complex, spiritually-centered view may have difficulty getting their work accepted by colleagues, review boards, and journal editors. This concern is similar to the concern expressed by Redding (2001) with regard to sociopolitical bias in the research and peer-review process in psychology. Such issues are key to the concept of hegemony because they illustrate how a dominant way of understanding and behaving can perpetuate itself, influencing what knowledge people may access and how they are expected to substantiate their knowledge claims.

Hegemony in Specific Contexts

At this point, I would like to return to my earlier assertion about multiple and nested hegemonies. As the previous examples demonstrate, people can experience hegemony in specific contexts, such as graduate school or a particular field of research, and the nature of the hegemony may be different for different people. As a working-class doctoral student, Kosut (2006) perceived a class-based hegemony in her interactions with fellow students and professors. As a devout Muslim, Shahjahan (2005) experienced hegemony based on spirituality in social science research. McIntosh's (1998) exploration of racial privilege grew out of her efforts to help male colleagues understand their gender privilege. At any given time, in any given human interaction, there may be several hegemonic systems at play,

granting varying degrees of privilege or disadvantage to each actor.

In the case of a nested hegemony, an individual is part of a hegemonic system that may itself be distinct from the prevailing hegemony of a larger community. Examples of social bodies that can have hegemonic power over their members include religious organizations, corporations, gangs, clubs, fraternities and sororities, and even academic communities. Some writers and researchers have noted—and, in some cases, justified—an aversion to religion and spirituality in the culture of U.S. higher education, while at the same time they and others describe the many ways in which Christianity is imbued in the culture of many campuses and in U.S. society as a whole (Clark & Brimhall-Vargas, 2003; Clark, Brimhall-Vargas, Schlosser, & Alimo, 2002; Hollinger, 2002; Nash, 2001; Schlosser, 2003; Schlosser & Sedlacek, 2003; Seifert, 2007; Shahjahan, 2005). In other words, there appears to be a secular hegemony in the academy (especially in the realm of knowledge production), but that secular hegemony is arguably embedded within a broader, nation-wide Christian hegemony.

On a smaller scale, a student may experience the hegemonic power of a campus (expressed, perhaps, through rituals, honor codes, and the top stories in the campus newspaper) and then encounter a different hegemony within the confines of his fraternity. The fraternity's hegemonic impact on the student may be no less powerful for being a smaller organization, especially if the fraternity is a more important locus of identification for that student. The hegemony of the fraternity is probably very limited in scope relative to the campus or society as a whole, simply because there are fewer people involved. Regardless of its size or overall social impact, however, I assert that any social group—even one that is a sub-group of a larger organization or culture—may be governed by its own hegemony as

long as some members have power or privilege and can determine the explicit or implicit rules by which others gain power or privilege within that group.

Consequences of and Responses to Hegemony

The unequal distribution of power in a hegemonic system creates, in effect, classes of people (Williams, 1977). Whether an individual identifies as a member of a privileged or an unprivileged class, hegemonies carry consequences for both groups, as well as for the larger society, as I will explore further in this section.

Stigma

Members of subordinate classes are sometimes identified in psychological literature as having a *stigma* (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005; Levin & van Laar, 2004; Pachankis, 2007). Stigmas are visible or invisible characteristics that are devalued by the surrounding culture and can produce a state of isolation, stress, and a damaged self-concept on the part of the stigmatized person (Levin & van Laar, 2004). The effects of possessing a stigma and how an individual manages those effects are influenced by a number of factors, including the nature of the stigmatized characteristic (e.g., whether it is visible or invisible, how devalued it is); the nature of the stigmatized person (e.g., personality, coping skills, degree of identification with the stigmatized group); and the nature of the situation(s) in which the stigma is salient.

People with an invisible stigma face unique challenges (Clair et al., 2005; Pachankis, 2007; Quinn, 2004). Because their stigmatized characteristic or identity is not readily apparent, they have the opportunity to decide when, how, and to whom they will disclose their stigma. This may seem like an enviable luxury, but research indicates that people with invisible stigmas face difficulties of similar magnitude in comparison to those with visible

stigmas, although the difficulties may differ in kind (Clair et al., 2005; Pachankis, 2007; Quinn, 2004). Those with visible stigmas may be concerned about how others will respond to them, but they do not have to worry about whether they are projecting cues that might reveal the stigma unintentionally. The effort to maintain a concealed stigma has cognitive, affective, and behavioral ramifications and can lead to emotional distress, long-term health problems, social isolation (even from others with the same stigma), shame, and extensive self-monitoring, among myriad other effects (Boesser, 2004; Pachankis, 2007; Quinn, 2004; Sanlo, 1999; Yoshino, 2006).

Much of the literature on invisible stigmas concerns the very personal and often delicate subject of sexual orientation. The effect of managing a stigma, however, can be seen in groups based on political and religious affiliation as well. In a study of more than 400 auto workers in the predominantly Democratic city of Detroit, for example, Republican workers were more likely to identify one another as friends than were Democrats (Finifter, 1974). The proportion of Republican-Republican friendships was even higher within strongly Democratic sub-groups, such as Blacks, Catholics, low-wage earners, and long-time union members, leading Finifter to conclude that Republicans in this strongly pro-Democratic setting sought each other out for social support and to reduce the cognitive dissonance they experienced as a result of being “political deviants” (p. 607). Theologically conservative Christians in a study of social workers described their experiences in the profession using terms such as “closeted,” “witch hunt,” “isolated,” and “walking in a mine field, always careful who I open up to” (Ressler & Hodge, 2003, pp. 136, 137). Regardless of the source of the stigma, the degree to which the effects of stigmatization are felt appears to depend on the salience of the stigma in a given situation, the potential threat of being

discovered, as well as the potential consequences of discovery (Pachankis, 2007).

Passing and Covering

In managing a stigmatized characteristic or identity, many people choose to *pass* (Anderson & Holliday, 2004; Boesser, 2004; Button, 2004; Kroeger, 2003; Macauley, 2006; Yoshino, 2006). Passing refers to a person's successful effort to keep a known trait or identity invisible to others. Passing does not require keeping the stigma hidden at all times and from all people, although it certainly can take that form (Button, 2004; Kroeger, 2003). The key element to passing is that it is an attempt to prevent at least some people from knowing about a stigma. *Covering*, on the other hand, involves keeping a stigmatized identity muted, rather than silenced (Yoshino, 2006). This may be expressed in the way people speak, the way they dress or wear their hair, the names they use for themselves, or how much they talk about what they did over the weekend. A gay man might be "out" to his co-workers, for example, but he still might choose not to share in their conversations about dating for fear of making his colleagues uncomfortable or reminding them too much of his sexual orientation.

Either stigma management strategy—passing or covering—entails suppression of a person's unique nature. Yoshino (2006) described covering as a new frontier in civil rights law, through which irrational expectations or demands to cover can be overturned in order to allow people the freedom to be their authentic selves. Yoshino and others have argued that when some people are forced or coerced to mask aspects of themselves, all others suffer (Boesser, 2004; Goodman, 2001). The hegemonic imposition of particular standards as "normal" inhibits all people from exploring the full range of options for self-expression and self-fulfillment. It also causes people to fear one another's differences, fear for their personal

safety, and fear for friends and loved ones who might run afoul of the acceptable norms (Boesser, 2004). Members of the dominant group are also harmed by a culture of discrimination. They are given a distorted view of their own and others' cultures, they experience isolation from those who are different, and they may bear the financial costs of lost customers and staff, to name only a few of the possible negative psychological, social, intellectual, moral, and material outcomes (Goodman, 2001).

Cascades and Group Polarization

The fear of expressing one's true self in unacceptable ways has other effects in the domain of ideological difference. Sunstein (2003) described a variety of scenarios from research on group dynamics in which people tended to withhold or discount personally-held information in order to conform to the perceived expectations of a group. By not sharing what they knew, group members made it difficult for others in the group—and the group as a whole—to act on the basis of complete information. This research indicated that people in group contexts frequently form and perpetuate opinions on the basis of limited information or the presumably reliable opinions of an influential few. Sunstein called this effect a *cascade*. If driven by inaccurate or incomplete information, a cascade can result in poor decision-making, which can negatively affect the entire group.

A similar result was found to occur in the context of group deliberations (Sunstein, 2003). When a group of *like-minded* people gathered to discuss an issue, they generally espoused a more extreme position at the end of the discussion than they had before. Sunstein posited that this process of group polarization occurs because people closer to the ideological extremes are more likely to feel confident in their information and may be able to convince others of the same, thereby producing a cascade. Members with minority views may be less

inclined to speak up and face the potential ridicule of the others who seem so sure of their positions. The vocal members of the group essentially reinforce each other in the opinions they held at the outset, and they leave such interactions even more convinced of those opinions than they were at the beginning.

This same dynamic can help to reinforce hegemony. If people feel silenced or refrain from speaking out against a group norm out of fear of what others in the group will think, a hegemonic system can continue unchecked, even though some members of the system may privately be inclined to oppose it. The less those people question the norms, the more it appears that the entire group supports the status quo, making other people even less likely to question the norms, creating a cycle of silence. Those who support the hegemony may be quite justified in perceiving the prevailing ideology as “normal” or “just common sense” because it genuinely appears that everyone agrees. The Detroit auto workers mentioned earlier appear to have succumbed to this silencing effect: compared with Democratic co-workers, the Republican minority reportedly discussed politics far less often in the largely Democratic community outside of the factory, by a margin of 14-21 percentage points (Finifter, 1974, p. 613). (It should be noted, however, that this difference was not tested for statistical significance.) In an example from an academic context, Sunstein (2003) described the hostile reaction students face on some campuses when they violate the standards of “political correctness” and openly espouse conservative views. One student was quoted as saying,

It took only a few months of such negative interactions for me to stop speaking up and start nodding along with a vacuous smile on my face. To tell people I was a Christian or a conservative was to be the target of mean-spirited rants—by the same

“open-minded” people who scolded me for not embracing diversity. (p. 138)

Those who do resist the pressure to conform may serve as the catalyst for a new emergent structure that can challenge or even topple the existing hegemony.

Hegemony in Student Affairs

Applying the concept of hegemony to the status of conservatives within the student affairs profession (or elsewhere) may seem inappropriate initially. Political beliefs do not define a class in the economic sense of the word, and there appears to be little or no research on how political beliefs define a distinct social identity akin to race or gender. Furthermore, any suggestion that conservatives represent a subordinated group in the United States may seem absurd, particularly to liberals, given the sizable number of conservatives elected or appointed to positions of power during the past several decades, as well as the finding that self-identified conservatives have consistently outnumbered self-identified liberals since at least the 1970s (American National Election Studies, 2005). Recent evidence suggests that this trend might be shifting nationally (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2007), but this is why I have expanded Gramsci’s and Williams’s explications of hegemony to include the possibility of nested hegemonies. Trends and statistics about the values and ideologies of people nationwide will not change how life is experienced by individuals within their own specific contexts. How the major political parties fare in national or even state elections may be of little practical consequence to liberals in rural Kansas or to Christian conservatives in Provincetown, Massachusetts, who may experience social isolation or other burdens as a result of ideological differences with their neighbors.

To claim that the concept of hegemony is a valid framework through which to understand student affairs, it must be demonstrated that there is a culture within the

profession and that the culture implicitly and/or explicitly privileges certain groups (in this case, liberals) over others (conservatives). This is a difficult task, given that researchers within the field do not often turn the investigative spotlight on themselves. Some research exists that addresses the values of the student affairs profession, but there is very little formal inquiry to document how those values are expressed in practice to shape the informal—yet no less real—standards and expectations of the profession. Research conducted in other helping professions (e.g., psychology and social work), however, indicates that ideologically conservative individuals face ridicule, isolation, and lack of support from colleagues and educational institutions, as well as discrimination in the graduate admissions process that may prevent them from entering their desired profession in the first place (Gartner, 1986; Hodge, 2007; Ressler & Hodge, 2003; Ressler & Hodge, 2005).

In the absence of such research within the student affairs profession specifically, I will make a case for the existence of a liberal hegemony using inferences drawn from available literature published within and about the profession, as well as primary documents, such as mission statements and conference programs, which admittedly have not been formally or systematically analyzed.

The Mission and Values of Student Affairs

For as long as there have been students attending residential colleges, there have been people responsible for looking after their well-being, as well as their intellectual growth. Initially, faculty served in both of these roles, but over time, student affairs evolved into a separate, specialized domain within higher education to oversee the non-academic aspects of student life (Loy & Painter, 1997; Nuss, 2003). In 1937, the American Council on Education approved *The Student Personnel Point of View* (SPPV), a document that laid out the mission

and principles of student affairs practice and is now considered one of the foundational documents of the profession (Evans, 2001; Loy & Painter, 1997; Nuss, 2003; Sandeen & Barr, 2006). The SPPV and other professional statements that have followed during the past 70+ years have consistently addressed, among other principles, respect for the unique worth of each individual, and the value of “civil discourse, communication, and diverse communities where assumptions and beliefs should be examined and questioned” (Sandeen & Barr, 2006, p. 8). Today, the core values of the two national student affairs professional organizations include, among others, terms and concepts such as diversity, fellowship, spirit of inquiry, collaboration, and free and open exchange of ideas (ACPA, 2010a; NASPA, 2010a).

Literature about student affairs reveals different notions about the appropriate role of student affairs in the overall mission of higher education. In the early years, student affairs professionals—or student personnel workers, as they were once called—lacked a coherent sense of purpose or function (Rhatigan, 2000). Deans of men and deans of women assumed a wide variety of responsibilities: they offered vocational guidance, psychological testing, and personal counseling; they oversaw extracurricular activities; they enforced standards of conduct (Evans, 2001; Loy & Painter, 1997; Nuss, 2003; Rhatigan, 2000). As the field became professionalized in the early 20th century, student affairs administrators claimed a more integral role in the educational function of colleges and universities (Evans, 2001). In the 1960s, the profession embraced a theoretical framework, drawn primarily from psychology and sociology, and its efforts began to focus more on actively and intentionally promoting students’ development in psychosocial, cognitive, and moral domains (Loy & Painter, 1997). The emphasis has shifted again in recent decades to focus on formal as well

as informal student learning, expressed through collaborative initiatives with faculty, living-learning communities in residence halls, and service-learning programs, to name just a few examples (Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh, 2006; Moore & Marsh, 2007; Whitt, 1999).

Some members of the academic realm within higher education disapprove of the efforts of student affairs administrators to assume a more intentional role in student learning. The National Association of Scholars (NAS) issued a scathing condemnation of student affairs practitioners and, indeed, the profession as a whole, for usurping the role of faculty by asserting themselves as “equal partners” in higher education (National Association of Scholars [NAS], 2008, ¶ 10). The NAS based its criticism on the *Student Learning Imperative* (ACPA, 1996), a statement that affirmed the role of student affairs in fostering student learning and development. Additionally, the NAS cited a controversial diversity education program at the University of Delaware as an illustration of “misguided functionaries” (¶ 3) imposing a decidedly liberal agenda through coercive means. The organization went on to say, “In short, the ‘student learning imperative’ aims at winning converts to an orthodoxy. The Imperativists offer thought reform, not education” (¶ 5).

Values of the Profession

This raises an important question about the place of values in education. Although there is some debate in higher education circles about the advisability and feasibility of value-neutral education on the academic side of university life (Butin, 2006; Fish, 2003; Nash, 2001; Spacks, 1996), there seems to be little doubt among student affairs professionals that values education is a central part of their mission, and that certain specific values should and do characterize the profession (Fried, 2003; Nash, 2001; Sandeen & Barr, 2006; Young, 1997; Young, 2003; Young & Elfrink, 1991a, 1991b). Studies have revealed strong

agreement among student affairs professionals regarding the importance of clarifying the essential values of the profession, and communicating those values in graduate education programs (Tull & Medrano, 2008; Young & Elfrink, 1991a, 1991b). Young and Elfrink (1991a) identified eight values that were deemed essential by the respondents in their study: altruism, equality, aesthetics, freedom, human dignity, justice, truth, and community.

Young and Elfrink's (1991a) study was conducted nearly 20 years ago, but the values they identified were reaffirmed in a more recent study (Tull & Medrano, 2008). The eight values, furthermore, are consistent with the missions, values, and ethics statements of the two major student affairs professional associations, as presented on their respective websites today (ACPA, 2010a, 2010b; NASPA, 2010a, 2010e). Clear guidance on how to apply these values in practice, however, is still lacking. The personal qualities and professional behaviors that Young and Elfrink's (1991a) respondents associated with each of these values were generally ambiguous enough to seem self-evident (e.g., honoring the legal rights of students, treating others with respect), but on closer reflection are clearly open to interpretation, particularly when they come into conflict with other behaviors that are also considered desirable. Legal challenges have been mounted, for example, against universities that require recognized student organizations to abide by the university's nondiscrimination policy, a requirement that sometimes pits the legal rights of gay students against the legal rights of evangelical Christian students (Bollag, 2005; Lipka, 2005; Schmidt, 2010).

Philosophies of Knowledge

Young (1997; 2003) has acknowledged the complexity inherent in applying the values of the profession in practice. Much depends on how one chooses to define the terms of the values themselves. Does *equality* refer to equality of opportunity or equality of

outcome? Is *freedom* about the freedom *to do* something (e.g., freedom of speech) or freedom *from* something (e.g., freedom from harassment)? Does *justice* refer to procedural justice, distributive justice, or corrective justice? The answers to these questions are critically important in determining a course of action in countless professional situations. Keeping in mind that hegemony is largely about controlling a discourse and the tacit meanings that give life to a formal ideology, a significant question for the purposes of this study is whether the profession offers guidance on how members ought to understand these essential terms.

Student Services, a highly popular student affairs textbook that its publisher claims “has become a classic reference in the field” (Jossey-Bass, 2010, Description section), contains a chapter in which Young (2003) described the philosophies that have guided the profession over time: rationalism, empiricism, pragmatism, and postmodernism. This chapter, assuming it can be accepted as normative, offers a telling view of the profession’s *lived* values and stands as strong evidence for the politically liberal undercurrent that now shapes the profession.

Briefly, Young (2003) described rationalism in education as engaging in the search for eternal and universal truths through logic and classical texts, with the aim of fostering an intellectual elite. Empiricism demands testing hypotheses and gathering evidence to support truth claims, prizing objectivity over emotion and subjective assertions. Pragmatism focuses on what works; students are expected to participate actively in their own learning, combining knowledge with practical application to contribute to the betterment of society as well as themselves. Postmodernism understands knowledge to be subjective and contextual, values intuition as a source of truth, and calls for the examination of established knowledge in order

to expose the “false objectivity [that] sustains economic, political, and social hegemony” (p. 95). Young (2003) asserted that the student affairs profession has been influenced by all four of these philosophies, but identified pragmatism and postmodernism as the two that currently have the greatest influence.

In listing the values that follow from each of the four philosophies, Young’s (2003) chapter offers descriptors—particularly for rationalism and postmodernism—that are remarkably congruent with terms used by D’Souza (2002a), Lakoff (2002), and Sullivan (2006) to describe *conservative* and *liberal*. (Recall that I relied on D’Souza, Lakoff, and Sullivan in defining these terms in the previous chapter.) Values Young (2003) ascribed to rationalism include freedom, intellectual excellence, tradition, and individual responsibility, while postmodern values include the centering of subjectivity, mutual empowerment, and caring. The values of postmodernism are also shaped by a recognition of hegemony, as evidenced in the quote above, as well as an active commitment to the exposure of hegemony through deconstructive analysis. The explicit association of student affairs with postmodernism and hegemony is probably sufficient by itself to mark the profession as liberal, given hegemony’s conceptual roots in Marxist socialism.

It is evident from Young’s (2003) further description of the applied values of the profession that postmodernism is indeed the primary philosophical influence, even though this is rarely stated explicitly. The value of community is defined as promoting mutual empowerment and rejecting “early conceptions of community [as] homogeneous, reflecting the hegemony of elite, private, liberal arts education” (p. 100). Equality, according to Young (2003), has shifted from a focus on individual talents to the status of disadvantaged groups. Justice is specifically defined in terms of corrective justice, “caring above and beyond the

strictures of law, for example, to provide affirmative programs for oppressed minority groups” (p. 101). Any student of the profession reading Young’s (2003) chapter would receive a very clear message about how the values of the profession ought to be understood and applied, and beyond that, which philosophical worldview is most appropriate for a person working in student affairs.

Some might argue that I am placing too much importance on the ideology expressed in a single chapter of a single textbook. In response, I assert that the examples from this chapter are simply among the most obvious instances in which the normative interpretation of professional values is revealed. I also believe that an introductory textbook, which by its very nature aims to orient readers to professional values and norms, is a very good source of evidence for the profession’s dominant discourse. Professional organizations are another. A review of 13 philosophical statements that have guided the work of the student affairs profession since its early history—most written by recognized leaders in the field and/or in association with national professional associations—revealed a strong and consistent emphasis on pragmatism (Evans, 2001). The final section of that review, however, advocated a shift in the philosophical orientation of student affairs, calling on professionals to “view their role on campus through a critical lens, to interject their professional values into their work, and to become change agents” (p. 376), particularly with regard to “traditionally disenfranchised students” (p. 376). Evans (2001) acknowledged that many professionals were already engaged in advocacy and in applying a critical theoretical lens to their work, and she appealed for an institutionalization of these values and a corresponding new philosophical statement from the profession. She later continued to call upon student affairs colleagues to assume advocacy/activist roles as “the conscience of higher education” (Evans & Reason,

2003, p. 5) and used a paragraph from the American College Personnel Association's "Statement of Ethical Principles and Standards" to justify the view of social justice activism as a professional responsibility. This is further affirmation of the growing trend toward postmodernism in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, as described by Young (2003).

Although the profession has not produced a new, formal philosophical statement of the kind reviewed by Evans (2001), and although Evans and Reason's (2003) subsequent appeal to the profession might suggest a lack of response to the initial call for values-driven activism, the influence of postmodernism and, by extension, liberal politics, is evident nonetheless in the discourse of student affairs professional organizations today. In defining their goals and values as associations, NASPA and ACPA, the two major national student affairs professional associations, promote the advocacy role of student affairs professionals and even assert a specific policy position in favor of affirmative action (ACPA, 2010a; NASPA, 2010b, Goal C section, ¶ 2). The associations do not explain what they mean by *affirmative action*, but given how the issue of affirmative action is conventionally—if not always accurately—accepted as a marker of political affiliation (Jacobson, 2004; Jaschik, 2007; Sunstein, 2007), the associations' articulated position in favor of affirmative action appears to indicate a desire, or at least a willingness, to identify with a liberal political agenda.

The Meaning of *Diversity*

The frequent mention of diversity, inclusion, and pluralism on the ACPA and NASPA websites is another means by which the profession marks its discourse as liberal, given that such terms are themselves among the values that I have used to define the term *liberal*. There is little doubt that diversity is a key area of interest for student affairs, even beyond the

expressed values of the national associations. A discourse analysis of more than 1,000 non-scholarly publications, websites, conference programs, and other student affairs literature from the calendar year 1999 revealed that “Multiculturalism & Diversity” constituted 16% of the professional discourse, second only to “Student Learning,” which was the theme of that year’s annual conference (Love & Yousey, 2001). This study’s data are more than ten years old now, but an informal examination of recent ACPA and NASPA conference programs suggests that interest in multiculturalism and diversity within the field remains high (ACPA, 2005, 2006; ACPA/NASPA, 2007; NASPA, 2008).

The politically liberal connotation of diversity, inclusion, and related concepts is evidenced in part by the derision such terms receive from self-proclaimed conservative writers and bloggers (see D’Souza, 2002b; French, 2007; Leef, 2010). In theory, this need not be the case. Conservative critics of higher education often call for greater diversity in academia as well, but their interest is primarily in diversity of thought and political opinion, as opposed to the cultural diversity that has long been the concern of student affairs administrators (de Russy, 2010; El-Khawas, 2003; Horowitz, 2003; Sandeen & Barr, 2006; Students for Academic Freedom, 2007; Young, 2003). The word *diversity* in and of itself is not restricted to any particular type of difference (Talbot, 2003). The next step, therefore, in understanding the nature of the hegemony that governs student affairs is to look at how a word like *diversity* is defined in practice.

A web page explaining “NASPA’s Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity” states that the association “recognizes and appreciates diversity in relation to, and across the intersections of, race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, veteran status, age, socioeconomic status, and disability” (NASPA, 2010c, ¶

1). One notices that diversity of political views or “intellectual diversity” (Horowitz, 2003) is not included among this rather extensive and specific list, suggesting that conservatives may have some justification for thinking that intellectual diversity is a low priority on college campuses.

The practical meaning of *diversity* is also apparent in how it is used in the professional literature. In the article “Student Experiences with Diversity at Liberal Arts Colleges,” for example, Umbach and Kuh (2006) described three means through which students experience diversity on campus: structural diversity, diversity-related initiatives, and diversity interactions. At no point in the article did Umbach and Kuh specify what *diversity* meant by itself. Each of the three forms of diversity encounters were described with reference to race and ethnicity, and the authors apparently saw no reason to explain or justify that decision. It is also telling that the reader was apparently expected to understand that the title of the article referred particularly to diversity of students’ backgrounds. If the focus of the study had been student experiences with political diversity, the authors likely would have felt the need to include the term *political* in the title for the sake of clarity. This is only one example of many in which the word *diversity* is used in tacit reference to diversity of background characteristics, and more specifically, to diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation (e.g., Maher & Tetreault, 2007; Milem, 2003; Orfield, 2001; Talbot, 2003; Talbot & Kocarek, 1997).

Even if it is the case that the concern for diversity within student affairs indeed prioritizes cultural and sexual differences, does that necessarily mean that difference based on conservative ideology is met with hostility? Little formal research exists to address this question adequately. A recent study of evangelical Christian students at two public

universities revealed that most participants felt that their religion was granted less respect than others on campus (Moran, Lang, & Oliver, 2007). Although most of the experiences shared by these students illustrated the antagonism they perceived in the classroom and from fellow students, some also spoke about their negative experiences with staff outside the classroom. This may reveal benign neglect or lack of awareness on the part of student affairs administrators, who are at least partly responsible for fostering a respectful campus climate and purportedly strive to do so for other underrepresented groups, or it could reflect a blatant lack of concern. Either way, the environment for the students in this particular study was perceived to be uncomfortable. The same may be true for politically conservative members of a campus, as evidenced by personal essays and journalistic accounts (e.g., Brooks, 2003; Jacobson, 2004). Attitudes about ideology and ideological diversity within student affairs are further reflected in the title of a roundtable discussion at the 2007 ACPA/NASPA joint conference: "Conservatives in Student Affairs?" (ACPA/NASPA, 2007, p. 55). The question mark in the title of the program suggests the sense of conservatives and conservative ideology as invisible within the profession, as does the stated aim of the session to "address the way that conservatives fit in the liberal field of student affairs" (p. 55).

Thus far, my discussion of diversity has dealt with the ways in which the practical definition of the term effectively excludes conservatives. There is a deeper, more philosophical level of exclusion, however, and this is arguably where hegemony is most deeply rooted. The emphasis on diversity (as it is understood within student affairs), coupled with a postmodernist philosophy, has led to a focus on historically disadvantaged groups (e.g., African Americans, women, gays and lesbians) and a concern with social justice that runs contrary to the conservative view of people as individuals with personal responsibility

for their own success or failure. Ironically, student affairs professionals have long been concerned with developing the student as a whole person with individual worth and integrity (American Council on Education, 1937; Evans, 2001; Nuss, 2003). The postmodernist influence is evident, however, in the profession's emphasis on viewing individuals *in context*, bringing background characteristics and historical oppression to the fore in a way that many conservatives reject (Bérubé, 2006; D'Souza, 1991, 2002a, 2002b; Young, 2003). If people do not accept the postmodernist tenets of subjective realities and culturally- rather than legally-propagated oppression, it may be difficult for them to understand or accept the emphasis student affairs places on addressing the issues of particular social groups.

Student Affairs as Emergent

I offer the examples above to show how the culture within higher education, and specifically within student affairs, represents a hegemony that favors liberal ideologies and frames conservatives as Other. The embrace of postmodernism in student affairs, however, itself represents an opposition to an earlier hegemony. Young (2003) explained that in an institution guided by postmodernism, "programming decisions are not made on the basis of financial control or even majority rule. These are artifacts of oppression instead of symbols of democracy in action" (p. 96). Postmodernism, in other words, regards concepts like majority rule as mechanisms of oppression in a competing hegemonic system that subordinates members of minority groups.

Thus, student affairs has become part of an emergent movement, promoting a fundamental shift in perspective and values that threatens the prevailing hegemony (Williams, 1977). It challenges the hegemony of a White, male, heteronormative, rationalist establishment and creates a nested hegemony that aims to dismantle those privileges on

college campuses and perhaps beyond. In doing so, however, the profession must confront the reality that true inclusivity is impossible. True inclusivity demands tolerating the intolerant, which even the most ardent postmodernists are loathe to do (Fish, 1997). Like the student quoted by Sunstein (2003) who felt he could no longer express his conservative or Christian views, conservatives may be seen as representing aspects of a hegemony that many have worked long and hard to overturn. Such a characterization may be unfair, particularly in light of my earlier assertion that the term *conservative* can mean many things, which is why a study of this kind is important. If conservatives are to be situated outside the boundaries of what is acceptable to the prevailing discourse, they should be situated there for well-founded reasons.

Many would argue that student affairs still has much work to do in dismantling the racist, sexist, heterosexist, classist hegemony that the postmodernist movement has sought to challenge (Iverson, 2007; Patton, McEwen, Rendon, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Reason, Broido, Davis, & Evans, 2005). Conceiving of student affairs as an emergent force is not to suggest that the hegemony it opposes has been successfully toppled. I believe that the tension between postmodernism and rationalism simply reinforces the characterization of hegemony by Williams (1977) as a dynamic system, constantly defending itself against threats to its own dominance. In the case of a nested hegemony, such as the one manifested in student affairs, the process is multi-directional: the emergent is continually challenging one hegemonic system, as well as being continually challenged by forces within the hegemony it has itself become.

Values Congruence and Ideological Fit

It is quite possible that individuals who truly do not share the values of the student

affairs profession simply do not enter the field, or do not stay long. Research indicates that ideological fit and values congruence are strongly associated with job satisfaction and turnover in student affairs, as well as in other work contexts (Ellis, 2001; Hughes, 2004; Jehn et al., 1999; Nestor, 1988). Of course, as I have discussed elsewhere in this proposal, *values* and *ideology* can mean many different things, and these studies were not consistent in what they actually examined. To the extent that ideologically conservative people remain in the profession, it may suggest that the values and ideologies of at least some conservatives are, in fact, largely congruent with those of the profession as a whole.

It may be that the way in which professionals—conservative or otherwise—experience their work in student affairs has less to do with the nature of the profession than it does with the particular institution where a person works. A series of studies involving seven types of academic institutions (e.g., liberal arts colleges, historically Black institutions, religiously affiliated colleges, etc.) revealed that student affairs work differs considerably across institutional types with regard to the nature, pace, and rewards of the work (Hirt, 2006). Of course, there is tremendous variety among institutions within each category as well, as Hirt (2006) acknowledged. Perhaps the most important conclusion for the purposes of this study is that institutional type matters more to one's professional experience than one's subfield or job title.

This argument has been made on a smaller scale as well. Looking at student affairs cultures, Hughes (2004) noted that earlier studies involving *fit*—the level of congruence between an individual and an organization—did not take into account the ways in which practitioners' fit with a given institution may have differed from the fit they experienced within the more localized environment of their own department. In a qualitative case study

of professionals working in various student affairs offices at a single institution, Hughes concluded that philosophical fit (defined, in this case, in terms of the professional paradigm that practitioners use to guide their work) was more important at the departmental level than at the institutional level. This is an important finding for the present study. It may be that the experiences of ideologically conservative professionals are influenced less by the hegemonic pressures imposed from the field than by the specific climates of the campuses or offices in which they work. A study of conservative students at two types of institutions yielded similar findings at the student level, with those at an elite private university describing a much more respectful environment than those at a large multi-campus public institution, even though students at both types of institutions perceived themselves to be in the ideological minority (Binder & Wood, in press).

I began this study fully expecting to find differences in people's experiences based on the cultures of their particular institutions or offices, but I also hoped to probe how those cultures interact with the profession overall, assuming that student affairs work at any institution is defined, at least to some degree, by the values and expectations of the wider professional community. I also sought to explore how conservative professionals define their ideologies and the degree of values congruence they perceive at the various levels of their professional work. In the next chapter, I describe the methods I used in investigating these issues.

Chapter Three

Research Strategy and Methods

A phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of participants who are directly affected by the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In this study, I examined how self-identified conservatives in student affairs experience their places within the profession and how they make sense of those experiences. Given the lack of previous research on this topic, I thought a phenomenological strategy would be the best way to begin to understand how ideological diversity is experienced within the field.

Identifying Participants

The core of a phenomenological study is in-depth interviews with people whose lived experiences shed light on the research question (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Accordingly, I relied on individual interviews as my primary form of data generation. I sought to identify 10-15 participants who represented different aspects of the student affairs profession—current professionals, future professionals, and educators of future professionals—in order to gain insight into the various ways the orthodoxy of student affairs is expressed and reinforced.

My participant group ultimately consisted of 12 people. Most of them were currently working as practitioners in some area of student affairs, representing a range of positions and years of experience, as I will explain in greater detail in the next chapter. Two had previous experience working in student affairs and, at the time of the study, were working in an academic capacity; one of these two taught courses in a graduate-level student affairs preparation program. Another participant was a master's student nearing the end of her first year of a college student personnel program. Two participants were enrolled in doctoral

programs in higher education administration while also working full-time in an academic or student affairs setting.

Professionals in the field are my primary interest, which is why they constituted the largest percentage of the participant pool. I was pleased to have graduate students and a professor among the participants as well, first, because they represent key functions in the process of developing new professionals, and second, because I expected they would have valuable insights on how the orthodoxy is transmitted to the next generation of the profession. Given the possibility that conservative professionals do not stay long in the field, including graduate students among my participants offered the additional benefit of reaching people who may perceive the ideological divide but have not yet been overwhelmed by it to the point of leaving the profession.

I identified most of my participants through personal networking. I created a web page with a summary of my research project and its expectations for participants (see Appendix A), and I sent this link to colleagues who told me they knew of people who might be interested. In this way, information about my study could be shared in a relatively discreet manner, without my own colleagues having to share names of people who may or may not have been comfortable being identified to strangers as conservative. In some cases, I contacted individuals directly on the recommendation of colleagues who knew them and knew that they identified openly as conservative. I also sent information about the study to people in the field whom I had met previously and who had expressed interest in my topic, to authors of relevant professional literature, and to several people in key leadership positions in student affairs professional organizations. In addition to direct personal appeals, I posted a notice to the student affairs group on the LinkedIn professional networking website and on

several professional electronic mailing lists related to diversity and multiculturalism, inviting people to look at my web page and pass the information along to anyone they knew who might be interested in participating in my study.

Approximately 20 people contacted me to volunteer or request further information. Some were not included in the study because they did not quite fit the parameters I had established, or because I was unable to secure the required approval from their institutional review boards to include them in my sample. I maintained a list of four alternate candidates in case one of the 12 participants decided to drop out of the study, but fortunately, this precaution proved to be unnecessary. Once each participant's involvement had been confirmed, I sent them a consent form (see Appendix B), which I asked them to sign and return to me before our first interview.

Generating Data

I conducted 3-5 individual interviews with each participant, stopping when I reached *saturation*, the point at which no new themes emerged in the analysis of the interview data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I also assigned participants to groups of 3-5 members and conducted one focus group interview with each of the three groups. Each participant had at least one individual interview before his or her focus group interview, and at least one individual interview after the group interview. This allowed me to follow up on any new ideas that had been brought forth by the group. Each individual and group interview lasted approximately one hour. Interviews were conducted over a span ranging from three to eight months, depending on the participant's availability and the progress of data analysis between interviews.

I used Skype (Version 4.2), an Internet-based video- and audioconferencing tool, to

call participants at whatever telephone number they preferred. All of the Skype interviews were done using the audio feature only; none of the interviews incorporated video. Using Skype had the practical benefit of being geographically neutral, making it possible for me to include participants from around the country. Making the calls via Skype instead of a telephone also allowed me to record and save the interviews directly as digital sound files, and I used the Pamela Call Recorder (Version 4.5) for this purpose. I used an ordinary digital recorder as a back-up for most interviews as well. Six individual interviews were conducted in person because I happened to be in sufficiently close proximity to those participants on at least one occasion. I used the digital voice recorder alone to capture those interviews.

There may have been some disadvantage to interviewing at a distance in that I was not able to use participants' body language as a guide in my interpretations, but there may have been advantages as well, particularly with regard to participants' self-disclosure (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2003). Rosenbaum, Rabenhorst, Reddy, Fleming, and Howells (2006) found no difference in participants' willingness to disclose sensitive or stigmatizing information in a telephone interview as compared with an in-person interview, and the rate of participation was actually higher when participants were interviewed by telephone rather than in person or in writing. It should be noted, however, that Rosenbaum et al.'s study used a sample of college students and a structured interview, which is very different from the kind of phenomenological interviews that I conducted. Nevertheless, Rosenbaum et al.'s results echo research cited by Cohen et al. (2003) and lend validity to my own perception that using a telephone format probably did not discourage participation or hamper participants' willingness to talk about sensitive subjects.

The content of the interviews was shaped through the use of an *interview guide*. An

interview guide is a list of questions or topics to be explored with each participant, giving focus and consistency to the interviews across all of the participants (Patton, 2002). Because the interview guide approach leaves the interviewer “free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject” (Patton, 2002, p. 343), or explore additional topics raised by the participant, it effectively provides a balance of structure and flexibility in the process and content of the interviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

In the individual interviews, I explored participants’ career choices; social and professional relationships; perceptions of the culture of the profession and of institutions where they have worked or studied; and specific examples of how ideological differences have manifested themselves in the context of participants’ professional lives. (See Appendix C for the complete interview guide.) It was not necessary to ask each participant about every topic in the guide. When participants initiated discussion of the interview guide topics without my prompting, I did not ask them to address those topics again unless I felt that doing so would yield more complete information. I developed topics for the focus group interviews and subsequent individual interviews on the basis of themes that emerged from analysis of the data generated in the earlier interviews.

Throughout the interviews, I checked my understanding of what participants told me by restating key points and asking for verification (see Appendix D, section I). I made verbatim transcripts of most of the interviews myself, and enlisted the aid of a trusted volunteer outside of higher education to transcribe the rest. I carefully reviewed all transcripts done by the volunteer, checking the full text of the transcripts against the audio recordings and correcting them as needed. I then prepared a written summary of the content

of each interview to be reviewed and, if necessary, corrected by the participants (see Appendix D, section II). (In one instance, I discovered just after the interview that the recording software had failed. I immediately wrote down everything I could remember and used that “brain dump” as the basis for the summary sent to the participant.) These measures—making verbal restatements and written summaries—are forms of *member checking*, which lends credibility to the study by ensuring that the researcher has heard and understood the data accurately (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Verifying the accuracy of the data, furthermore, helps to maintain the study’s *fairness*—the balanced, unbiased representation of all participants’ views (Lincoln, 2001)—and provides assurance to both the participants and others reading the research that “the researcher is accountable to those sharing their words, lives, and experiences” (Manning, 1997, p. 102). I will discuss further measures for achieving fairness in a later section of this chapter.

Conducting focus group interviews allowed me to generate additional data while also giving participants an opportunity to gain new perspectives by talking with others who shared similar, relevant characteristics (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I suspected that conservative professionals in student affairs rarely had such opportunities to talk with one another about their experiences and perceptions of being conservative in the field. Several participants affirmed this during the group interview or the individual interviews that followed. One said, “I have never been at a conference, of the dozens I’ve been at, and had a conversation like this.” Others used terms like “enriching” and “enlightening.” The focus group interviews, therefore, contributed to the study’s *educative authenticity*, or the extent to which participants learned about others’ perspectives on the research phenomenon through their involvement in the study (Lincoln, 2001). In some cases, the group interview also

helped participants to clarify some of their own thoughts and feelings, which I then explored with them in the subsequent round of individual interviews.

In addition to individual and group interviews, I asked participants to send me publicly available samples of *material culture*—objects or documents “produced in the course of everyday events” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 197)—that somehow captured their experience of being conservative in student affairs. If an artifact could not be e-mailed or scanned and sent as an e-mail attachment, I asked the participants to send me a photograph of the item or, at the very least, to describe it in sufficient detail for me to understand what it was and ask relevant follow-up questions about its relationship to their experiences. Participants’ artifacts included such items as office decorations, a book by a conservative university professor, articles from a campus newspaper, and a graphic of the Fox News logo. In two cases, participants happened to send me articles or items that tied into things we had talked about, but they did not identify those items specifically as the artifacts they had chosen to represent their experiences. Because they did not provide any other material culture sample, and because we had talked about the significance of the items they had sent, I regarded those artifacts in the same way as the other participants’ items for the purposes of analysis.

In an effort to capture participants’ insights between our scheduled interviews, I sent each of them a small digital voice recorder at the beginning of the study, along with a postage-paid return envelope. The recorders were intended as a courtesy, not as a requirement of the research study. I hoped that this format would increase participants’ ability to document their reflections, even in the limited spare time afforded to student affairs professionals. All but one participant returned the recorder at the end of the data generation

phase of the study, although none of the participants had used them.

Analyzing the Data

There are many ways to conduct a deconstructive analysis, none of which are prescriptive (Lather, 1991b). Indeed, a carefully structured set of methods would seem like a violation of the deconstructive goal to “keep the system in play” (Lather, 1991a, p. 156). The distinguishing features of a deconstructive analysis are commonly contained in the researcher’s assumptions and intent (as described earlier), and in the reporting of the results, rather than in the particular methods of analysis (Lather, 1991b). I have chosen to use a primarily holistic analysis strategy, which involves identifying “connections among the data in the actual context” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 274), because this seems most consistent with the epistemological foundations of the paradigm. The intent I bring to this study—to interpret my participants’ experiences through the lens of hegemony theory—will shape the nature and content of the analysis at each stage in the process.

My analysis began as soon as I began to generate data with the participants. I recorded my initial impressions of most interviews either immediately following or within a few days of the interview, and I reviewed these notes periodically during the formal analysis stage to make sure I didn’t overlook anything that was valuable. Using the verbatim transcripts and qualitative data analysis software from Atlas.ti (Version 6.2), I conducted a *microanalysis*—a “line-by-line analysis”—wherein I identified and labeled concepts discussed by each participant (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 57). A sample of a coded interview is presented in Appendix E. I used these labels to look for patterns and themes that emerged across multiple cases.

Conducting the microanalysis allowed me to fully immerse myself in the data.

Through the process of coding, as well as in the later stages of analysis, I read and re-read the transcripts and summaries of the interviews, reviewed documents and artifacts provided by the participants, and listened to the original audio recordings to get as much information as I could from each participant's words, tone, and inflections. I made notes—also called *analytic memos*—to help form conceptual connections among the data, and interpret the emerging themes and patterns in terms of hegemony theory. (See Appendix E, section III.) I also maintained a journal in which I recorded my observations and reflections about the data, as well as feelings the might have influenced my interpretations (Maxwell, 2005). (See Appendix F for sample journal entries.) These methods—immersion in the data, analytic memos, and journaling—are the tools of holistic analysis that allowed me to deconstruct the means by which power is asserted and hegemony is maintained in the context of my participants' professional lives.

Limitations

Of course, like any study, this one has its limitations. First, the nature of the research paradigm and study design means that the results cannot be considered generalizable to the broader population of all conservatives who work in student affairs. These are 12 individuals telling their own stories. Their data have been analyzed systematically, but they still represent only 12 perspectives on a phenomenon that may be experienced by hundreds (or more).

The participants in this study were volunteers, which means they may have had particularly strong feelings or other personal motivations for responding to the study invitation. I do not believe, however, that anyone was exaggerating their circumstances in an effort to promote a personal agenda. (I believe the results presented in the next chapters will

bear this out.) My impression, having talked with each person for several hours, was that they were all speaking genuinely and, for the most part, dispassionately. It should be noted as well that two participants became involved in the study as the result of a direct invitation from me, rather than as a result of seeing the study announcement and contacting me on their own initiative. Other than the differences one would naturally expect to find among individuals with unique personal histories, I do not think there were any particularly noteworthy differences between the experiences and perspectives of those who *offered* to participate and those of the participants who *agreed* to participate.

Even though I believe all of my participants were being as honest with me as they could, the data are still entirely self-reported. As one participant noted in reference to her own interviews, what people talked about and the emotions they expressed during a given conversation were very likely influenced by their mood and whatever was going on in their lives at that particular time. Furthermore, it is possible that some people might sincerely claim to behave in certain ways, but their behavior might be perceived differently by an outside observer. Would I agree, for example, with those who said that their personal opinions and values play no role in how they work with students? The geographical distribution of the participants precluded any observational component that might have allowed me to check my participants' impressions against my own.

It is possible that participants' data might also have been influenced by their assumptions about my ideological orientation. Two had had significant interactions with me prior to their involvement in the study, and it is very likely that they already had a sense of my worldview, including my political identification, before the study began. Several other participants asked at the beginning of the interview process what my motivation was for

conducting the study or where I saw myself on the ideological spectrum, to which I explained that I did not want to disclose my own views until the study was over. In one case, a participant told me at the end of our last interview that she had actively chosen to believe I was conservative in order to allow herself to feel safe and to be as honest as possible. In another case, I realized a participant may have interpreted something I said as an indication of a conservative identity (which I did not intend but could not fully correct). After that exchange, I noticed that the participant spoke more freely and assertively about frustrations he had encountered. Others said they still did not know where I stood by the end of the study, although they could see justification for guessing either way. I trust such assumptions (whether correct or not) had relatively little impact on the overall nature or quality of the data, but I accept that it is possible, and even likely, that participants' assumptions might have affected what they chose to talk about and how they framed their answers.

Similarly, it is possible that assumptions or observations made by participants during the group interview might have influenced the directions those conversations took. It is reasonable to believe that people's personalities were as much in effect in the group interview setting as they are in their professional lives. Given that not all of the participants were conservative in the same way, it is possible that those who were more conflict-averse might not have expressed disagreement or might have avoided saying something contrary to another participant's views for fear of either shutting others down or setting themselves up for an uncomfortable challenge. In a follow-up individual interview, one person said of the group interview experience, "Even if I wasn't agreeing with what was being said, I didn't want to say anything that would make them feel like they shouldn't be sharing what they were." Another participant, from the same group interview, made an interesting observation:

I didn't think everyone would speak to it but I think virtually everyone did, the notion that conservatism or a conservative approach in higher education has embedded within it a higher value placed upon individual student accountability....I agree with that to a large extent, but also found it interesting that—to include myself—to a person, every single person rang in on “Yeah, that's right. Yeah, absolutely.”

I had been struck by this observation as well, because individual accountability had not emerged as a particularly significant theme in the individual interviews I had conducted previously with most of those participants. The participant for whom it was highly significant, however, was the first to introduce himself during the group interview, and each of the other participants echoed his commitment to individual accountability when their own turn came. This may be an indication that the group interview did exactly what I hoped it would do: namely, bring elements of people's views and experiences to the fore that they might have neglected to discuss in the individual interviews. I must also acknowledge the possibility, however, that the dynamics of the three groups may have resulted in some aspects being more heavily emphasized and sounding more important than they actually were.

Safeguarding Quality

Sound interpretations, rather than true interpretations, are the best I can hope for in a deconstructivist study as defined by Lather (2003). According to the ontological assumptions of this paradigm, there is no such thing as an objective, true interpretation of reality, because it is impossible to divorce ourselves from the lenses through which we see the world. Still, there are a number of measures researchers can take to safeguard the quality of their data and analyses, and to make the rationales of their interpretations as transparent to their readers as possible.

The validity of research findings is determined by the extent to which a researcher satisfies three expectations: first, that the data are accurate; second, that the analysis is done correctly; and third, that the conceptual framework that undergirds the analytic techniques is sound (Carspecken, 1996, p. 57). I will address each of these concerns in turn to demonstrate the ways and extent to which my study met these expectations.

First, sound interpretations naturally must be based on sound data. I intentionally generated data from a variety of sources and through multiple methods—a technique known as *triangulation* (Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002; Schwandt, 2001). The different sources of data affirm or check one another, ensuring that conclusions are not based on one particularly unusual case. Using multiple methods also increased the likelihood that the themes and connections I discovered in the data were not just the result of some random circumstance.

Member checking the data with the participants at several points throughout the study helped to confirm that I had understood their perspectives and experiences accurately. After I had drafted the profiles presented in chapter 4, I sent each participant his or her own profile for a final member check. One did not respond, however, despite repeated attempts to contact her. (See Appendix D for samples of member checking at various stages of the study.) Member checking throughout the course of the data generation and analysis phases allowed me to make necessary adjustments along the way so that I was able to draw conclusions with greater confidence.

Participants in a project such as this must feel confident that their involvement in the study will not have negative consequences for their personal or professional lives. To that end, I carefully abided by the standards of confidentiality and informed consent required by the law and my institution's review board. I also secured permission (or a waiver) from the

review boards at my participants' institutions. All participants signed a consent form (see Appendix B) that clearly described expectations for their participation in the study, as well as their rights as participants, and I invited them to ask questions and discuss any concerns they had.

All participants were asked to choose a pseudonym. These are the only names used to refer to them throughout the study. When I had cause to print e-mails from participants, I blacked out all identifying information and used the pseudonym to identify the document. Of course, e-mail is not a confidential medium and breaches of computer security present a threat to confidentiality. I asked during initial conversations with all of the participants if they would be comfortable communicating about the study and conducting member checks by e-mail. Most preferred to communicate electronically. For the one participant who was not comfortable with e-mail, I sent hard copies of the member check summaries and asked about any necessary clarifications during our next interview.

Generating data until thematic saturation is reached is a way of achieving *prolonged engagement* with research participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Prolonged engagement—interacting with participants over an extended period of time—contributes to the soundness of data by giving the researcher an opportunity to explore thoroughly the experiences and perspectives of the participants, thereby allowing for greater accuracy in the researcher's interpretations (Carspecken, 1996). I conducted multiple interviews with each participant, with each interview building on information shared in earlier interviews. As I came to know them better over the course of the data generation period, the sense of trust between at least some of my participants and me also increased, resulting in richer data on their parts and deeper understanding on mine.

The second criterion for validity involves the quality of the analysis. Because I used a holistic approach primarily, the quality of my data analysis is reflected largely in the memos and journal entries I have written to document my thinking about the data. (See Appendix E, section III for sample memos and Appendix F for sample journal entries.) I hope that the journal serves as a window through which anyone might observe and evaluate my analytical process.

In addition to the journal, I wrote a Researcher as Instrument statement (see Appendix G), or what Maxwell (2005) termed a *researcher identity memo*, prior to the start of the study. This statement describes events in my personal and professional experience that led me to pursue this research topic. It also documents values and biases that might have affected my interpretation of the data. Writing this memo—in addition to keeping a journal of my reflections about the study—made me, I hope, more conscious of my biases and better able to perceive and minimize their impact on the processes of data generation and analysis. This memo also allows any interested reader to evaluate the study's findings in light of my background, acknowledged values, and expectations for the study.

The third validity criterion concerns the conceptual foundation of the analytic technique. Throughout these introductory chapters, I have tried to present the conceptual basis of my decisions in a clear and concise manner. I designed the study to be consistent with the research paradigm and critical lens, and I endeavored to maintain that consistency throughout the research process. I trust that my conceptualization is sound, or if not, that my presentation of it is sufficiently transparent as to reveal to the reader whatever flaws there may be.

I have maintained a careful record of all transcripts, e-mails, memos, and other

documents related to the study, which may be reviewed as necessary by anyone interested in assessing the quality and rigor of my data generation, analysis, and ethical safeguards. A file of these documents will be saved electronically for at least five years following the completion of the study in order to allow a reasonable amount of time for the results to be published and for a participant or an interested reader to request a research audit.

One final measure of this study's quality is its *authenticity*, which includes fairness (described above), ontological, educative (also described above), catalytic, and tactical authenticity (Lincoln, 2001). *Ontological authenticity* describes the "extent to which research participants [become] more aware of their own thinking" (p. 45). This was achieved through the interview process itself, as well as through member check procedures that essentially summarized and repeated back what the participant said for his or her confirmation or clarification. Several participants commented that they spent more time thinking and reflecting on their circumstances and beliefs as a result of the interviews. One discussed a new kind of self-awareness that emerged from the process: "How did I come to this definition of conservative for myself? Because really, until you asked that question in our last one-on-one,...I hadn't thought about it." Another participant found that speaking her views and having them reflected back to her allowed her to be even clearer in her own mind about what she felt:

I think I'm a little bit more resolute in what my feelings are than I probably knew (laughs). But, you know, when you ask direct questions, it definitely causes you to know and own your statements....When you read it or when you hear yourself saying it in a very direct way,...for me it just provides confidence because that's exactly how I feel.

Educative authenticity, as previously mentioned, refers to how much participants learn about others' thinking as a result of the study. The group interviews were the primary means by which participants could learn about others' perspectives. Most participants spoke about how valuable it was for them to be able to engage in conversation, listen to, and ask questions of other conservatives, especially given that opportunities for interaction among conservatives are so rare in higher education and in student affairs, specifically. For some, talking with other participants provided validation that they were not alone in feeling as they did. One said, "I just thought it was nice...to commiserate....Just to share ideas and talk and see that there really are others out there who have had similar experiences." Others were intrigued by hearing others talk about things that were not part of their own experience:

There were some issues that were talked about [in the group interview] that I hadn't really come in contact with here....Just never has come up, never would occur to me that it would. But it apparently has in some of their experiences, and so that made me kind of wonder, would I ever be in a position where I would be expected to have an opinion on that?

In other cases, hearing from other participants prompted reflection on how to cope more effectively with one's own circumstances.

I forget which person it was, but someone was like, "I know more stuff and when I talk, people usually stop talking because they realize I know more than them." So that was a neat strategy to hear. It made me think about what ways I could do that, so I can feel more confident when I'm in those conversations.

In a final measure to enhance educative authenticity, I will send each participant a link to my published dissertation so that they can learn from all of the other participants (not just those

who were part of their own group interview), and also see how their own experiences and perspectives relate to the larger phenomenon.

Catalytic authenticity is the degree to which participants are inspired to take action as a result of the research study, and *tactical authenticity* is judged by the “ability and willingness of the researcher to provide training in community organizing and civic skills for those who might wish to take action, but who have no idea how” (Lincoln, 2001, p. 46). Although social change is generally the goal of a critical study, I do not find these two criteria to be commensurate with a deconstructivist approach. As I explained in an earlier section, deconstruction claims no particular agenda other than its own process (Lather, 2003). It is intended to raise questions and explore and challenge assumptions, but the end result of deconstruction is not necessarily to pick up a banner and lead the troops in fighting for a particular expression of change. That said, I did see evidence of catalytic authenticity from several participants. At least three began to speak more openly about their conservative identification in the presence of colleagues, sometimes for the first time, and they attributed this directly to their involvement in the study. One said, “I think participation in this has kind of made me feel like ‘you know, don’t be a jerk about it. Just say it!’” Those who expressed a new sense of commitment to educating themselves about political issues in anticipation of engaging in conversations (as illustrated by the last quote in the educative authenticity segment above) were also demonstrating catalytic authenticity.

Although it is not my aim specifically to empower conservatives in student affairs to organize themselves in opposition to the liberal orthodoxy, I do hope that through publications and conference presentations, I will be able to present the results of this study to a broader audience and generate productive discussion among student affairs professionals

about the nature of the hegemonic system and the limits of inclusivity within the profession.

Change may well come of this, and to the extent that it does, I hope that change will move the profession toward a more conscious and well-considered fulfillment of its mission.

Chapter Four

The Participants

The 12 individuals—eight women and four men—who participated in this study represented a wide range of views and professional experience. All held (or were actively pursuing) a graduate degree in college student personnel administration, higher education administration, or a closely related field. Several held or were actively pursuing doctoral degrees. The group was largely homogeneous with regard to race, religion, and sexual orientation. I did not ask participants to identify themselves in any terms other than their ideological orientation, but based on either direct statements or inferences made from what they said in the interviews, I was able to determine that they were all White. Most referred specifically to being religiously and/or culturally Christian or at least having been raised as Christians, and no one specifically identified with a religion other than Christianity. All made at least passing references to current or former romantic relationships, all of which were heterosexual.

In order to better safeguard the confidentiality of my participants, I have chosen to identify their locations in terms of which region they fall into according to the structure used by NASPA, one of the two major professional organizations for student affairs. NASPA organizes U.S. states and territories into seven regions, as follows (NASPA, 2010d):

- Region I: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
- Region II: New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands
- Region III: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi,

- North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia
- Region IV East: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin
 - Region IV West: North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming
 - Region V: Utah, Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, Montana, Washington
 - Region VI: Arizona, California, Hawaii

At the time of the interviews, participants were spread among five of the seven regions. Regions I and VI were not represented.

It may be helpful for the reader to know something about each participant's background in order to better contextualize the findings presented in the next chapter. What follows is predominantly a distillation of the key issues and experiences discussed during each participant's interviews. My intention in this section is to let my participants speak for themselves, with relatively little commentary or analysis from me, either about their stories or their personalities. A more comprehensive cross-case analysis will follow in chapter 5.

In the interest of maintaining confidentiality, the profiles that follow include only fairly general descriptions of some aspects of the participants' circumstances. All of the names are pseudonyms. Descriptions of campus sizes are based on the classification standards established by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (n.d.). Information about a participant's institution, position, and number of years in the field reflects the participant's situation at the time of the interviews. The feelings and opinions depicted in the profiles likewise represent what the participants thought and felt at the time. As part of the grand member check, participants received copies of their respective profiles and were invited to make corrections and/or request modifications to the level of detail used

to describe their circumstances.

Participant Profiles

Alex

As I retire, sort of one thing that I certainly want to pass along to the folks that are coming up behind me... is to always to continue to strive for balance and not let one perspective or another dominate the agenda.

The concept of balance is woven throughout the fabric of Alex's nearly 30-year career as a student affairs professional. Although her life, her environment, and her professional circumstances have at times been marked by a lack of balance, the importance she places on that quality comes through strongly as she reflects on her experiences now.

Alex is on the verge of retirement, having spent almost her entire career at a single institution—a small campus within a state university system in Region V. She is largely responsible for having built the student affairs program at her institution, and she leaves the university as a highly respected and popular administrator among the students, her colleagues, and the community beyond the university. She began her career in student affairs as a residence hall director and continues to value the relationships with students that her small campus environment allows her, even in her upper-level administrative role. She loves advising the student government and is proud of the commitment her students consistently demonstrate toward keeping the campus open to diverse religious and political organizations. As a former candidate for political office, Alex believes strongly in civic engagement, and it is a source of considerable disappointment for her that the current chancellor—the senior executive administrator on her campus—has done so little to promote genuine political engagement on campus.

Alex identifies as a conservative primarily because of her views on fiscal issues, and she is drawn to the Republican Party because it better represents her fiscally conservative values. She describes herself as being moderate on social issues, even to the point that she has found herself advocating for positions that other professionals in her region considered too permissive. She acknowledges that her stands on some policy issues make it hard for people to ascertain her political affiliation, but she doesn't mind that.

Whatever I believe shouldn't enter into the fact of what's policy on the campus. It's what's benefiting the students. And so, I think that I step back from my ideology sometimes just to look at what seems to be the best balance.

Alex's political views rarely come up in her daily professional life. Her colleagues have become aware of her conservative political affiliation over the course of her career, but the culture of her institution discourages people from talking openly about politics, and Alex has preferred to keep a particularly low profile in that regard. As much as she supports political engagement among students, she does not like to see it among faculty and staff. "You know, I do like the fact that you don't necessarily have to know where someone's at politically. You don't immediately judge based on what you see. And I like that bit of separation that you can get."

The chancellor on Alex's campus, however, has no qualms about making his political leanings known. He has long been actively involved in the local Democratic Party and frequently brings his political interests into the campus realm, sending announcements to the staff about the Democratic Party picnic and displaying campaign paraphernalia in spite of a university policy of non-partisanship. Alex's relationship with the chancellor has been tense at times due to their political differences, but she describes their professional relationship as

“really positive” now after so many years of working together. “We just agree not to talk about politics generally.”

Alex finds very little ideological balance within her institution. She laughed as she recounted the story of a student who came to her for help after trying without success to find a faculty advisor for a new chapter of the Young Republicans. The student, who was unaware of Alex’s political values, was clearly uncomfortable about divulging the nature of the organization as he asked about the possibility of seeking an off-campus advisor. Alex was able to assist him in the end, but it was clear that the Young Republicans did not have ardent fans among the faculty who were willing to offer their support. To Alex, the incident demonstrated how “we’re really out of whack in regard to balance.” Fortunately for Alex, the more conservative orientation of the region beyond her immediate environment has allowed her to achieve her own sense of balance, which has been an important factor in her ability to work successfully at the institution for so many years.

As cities go, Alex’s city is quite small, but it plays an important role in the political life of the state. Alex describes the city as a liberal enclave within the generally more conservative state. The political dynamic is complex, however, with people in influential positions in the city tending to remain politically neutral, at least publicly, in order to better navigate shifting political currents. At the same time, the small-town character of the city makes it difficult to escape notice. People know who attends which community events and who supports which organizations. On the whole, the culture of the region is independent enough that most people don’t seem to care much about how others affiliate, but that is not true of all individuals. Alex has been reluctant to put political signs in her yard or on her car, for example, out of concern for vandalism or professional retaliation from the chancellor or

other members of the campus community. The artifact she chose to illustrate her experience as a conservative in student affairs was a photograph of her local Republican women's group, which appeared on the back of the group's fundraising cookbook. Alex is barely visible in the back row, half hidden behind another member, because she did not feel ready at that time to have her political affiliation generally known around town.

The chancellor at Alex's institution has been outwardly dismissive of her associations with influential Republicans in the past, including Republican governors, making snide comments such as "you and your Republican friends" rather than seeing those connections as an asset to the university. Alex believes that political differences with the chancellor were a key factor that kept her from being allowed to compete for the position of vice chancellor for student services, the senior-most student affairs position on her campus, despite having performed successfully in the role as an interim. The chancellor's executive leadership team is a tight-knit group of politically like-minded people, and Alex simply did not fit the mold. The bright side to being in a lower ranked position is that Alex has actually felt a bit freer in expressing criticism of institutional policies because she does not need to maintain the appearance of solidarity with the chancellor and other vice chancellors, as she did when she served as interim vice chancellor.

For much of her career, Alex had been able to keep her political affiliation muted by focusing her energies on her job and her family. She was a single mother, which didn't allow her many opportunities to go out to community functions that might have drawn attention to her political interests. After many years and several bouts of serious illness, she recognized the need for greater balance in her life. She began to explore interests outside of work, and she met and married a man who was more conservative than she, and who was much more

vocal about it. People who hadn't known her political views before came to assume she must be conservative, given the strong views of her husband. The tensions with the chancellor began in earnest at this time, but having a source of emotional support at home and better work-life boundaries made it easier for Alex to deal with the professional frustrations she faced on campus, as well as in her activities in the larger professional arena beyond the university.

Alex has been highly involved in regional professional organizations over the years, including service in senior leadership positions. She began her involvement at a time when the student affairs professional leadership was largely made up of older White men. Since then, she has seen the professional organizations transform as they have adjusted to the needs and interests of an increasingly diverse membership. On the whole, she sees the shifts as positive and reflective of the ways in which the profession has become more open and inclusive of different kinds of people and perspectives. At the same time, she is frustrated with the political correctness she perceives, particularly with regard to ethnic and cultural minority groups, and a lack of openness to different (and specifically, conservative) ideas and values. There is no question in Alex's mind that issues surrounding identity are crucial for traditional-aged college students and it is important for student affairs educators to be knowledgeable about them, but she believes the professional associations—through their professional development programs, convention keynote speakers, and interest-based subgroups—have moved too far in that direction at the expense of providing more practical information that has more immediate relevance to the work that most student affairs educators do on a daily basis. The concern for Alex, again, is balance.

Although Alex greatly appreciates her professional organizations for the networking and mentoring opportunities they have provided her over the years (and which she considers to have been essential to her longevity in the field), she feels even more reluctant to disclose her political views within those organizations than she does in her home institution. The fact that her institution is located in a conservative-leaning state provides a buffer of sorts against the liberal attitudes of the faculty and senior administrators. Such balance is lacking in the professional associations, and Alex feels that she would have risked being denied valuable opportunities if she had identified openly as conservative or Republican. “People make assumptions about that. You know, it’s just another thing I didn’t think needed to be on the table. I wanted to be known for who I was and the leadership skills and traits that I had.” She knows of very few conservatives who are actively involved in the associations, and her experiences with association meetings have conveyed obvious messages that members are assumed to align with left-leaning political views.

I had to make choices each time, depending on what it was we were talking about, whether to take on the issue or not. And every time I have, it’s always—by my colleagues individually because of my personal long-term relationship with them—it’s always been accepted really well. But I also would pick and choose my battles.

Although Alex has been able to disclose her political opinions to particular individuals without adverse consequences, she feels that the student affairs professional groups she has worked with, as a whole, are not very accepting or supportive of conservative views, or even aware of the presence of conservative colleagues. She offered the example of a regional professional meeting she attended during the period of the 2008 presidential campaign, which took on the air of a political rally for Barack Obama. “They just so assume

that everybody in the room is a supporter. There is absolutely no thought to the fact there might be somebody who feels differently.” Faced with such circumstances, Alex has often chosen to stay silent. She reflected that a larger conservative presence in the profession might have empowered her to voice concerns and challenge the implicit (and explicit) messages and assumptions more frequently.

Her impending retirement brings Alex a sense of freedom that she has not felt before. The rather chaotic state of institutional politics on her campus makes the timing of her retirement especially favorable. She is looking forward to being able to voice her opinions about politics—institutional as well as national—more openly and honestly once she is no longer associated with the university. She intends to stay abreast of what goes on at her institution and do what she can to hold the university accountable from the outside. At the same time, she is eager to begin a new chapter in her life, defining herself independently from the university and creating a life marked by a different kind of balance.

Jim

If the law and policy says that this is appropriate behavior or this is not, then that's what I do. You know, "render unto God what is God's; render unto Caesar what is Caesar's." And my work life, that belongs to Caesar.

Jim is a genial man with a big, open personality and a ready laugh—the kind of person that other people like to be around. It is a quality that has no doubt served him well in his nearly 20 years as a student affairs professional, from his early days as a resident director to his current position as the senior student affairs officer at a small, rural public university. In addition to various positions in residence life, Jim's career has also included several years overseeing campus life and auxiliary services. Like Alex, Jim is active in the profession

beyond his own campus as well, having served for many years on a regional advisory board for a national professional organization and recently assuming a senior regional leadership position for the same organization.

Jim grew up in Region II, under conditions that he described as “third-world.” He worked extremely hard to pull himself out of near-poverty and to avoid the self-destructive paths taken by the majority of his childhood peers. His ability to emerge from such bleak circumstances with four college degrees, including a doctorate in higher education administration, instilled in Jim a firm belief that success is possible for anyone who is willing to devote the necessary effort. That belief is at the core of Jim’s conservative ideology. He believes people are capable of managing their own lives and do not need the government to either take care of them or tell them what to do. Along with that, Jim believes that people should be free to enjoy the rewards of their own efforts. “From a fiscally conservative standpoint, I don’t like the idea that a lot of the things that I work for go to support other people who aren’t willing to do that.”

A second major influence in Jim’s conservative worldview is his devout Christian faith. His views on such questions as abortion and homosexuality derive from a strict interpretation of the Bible, which he sees as the source of knowledge about fundamental and universal Truth. Jim is concerned about the way in which contemporary society has de-emphasized ultimate truth in favor of a system of morality based on whatever happens to be popular at the time. He was dismayed to hear President Barack Obama deliver a speech in which he said that the United States was not a Christian nation. To Jim, this is a misguided denial of the Judeo-Christian foundations of the country, foundations that he feels should be embraced and reinforced, not repudiated. He believes the world would be a much more

peaceful place if only more people would follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Bible.

Jim has never worked at a Christian college, but he thinks he might enjoy looking to a small Christian school if he ever decides to apply for a college presidency. In the meantime, his current institution suits him very well ideologically. In fact, of all of the participants in the study, Jim appears to enjoy the greatest degree of ideological congruence with his work environment. The administration is strongly conservative, and there is a healthy religious presence on campus, despite being a public university. Jim's own student affairs staff is quite diverse, but even there, he describes the staff as leaning slightly to the right on the whole.

Jim's career moves have taken him to a number of small public and private institutions around Region II, but none more than about five hours driving distance from where he was raised. This geographical limitation is entirely self-imposed and quite intentional. Jim wants to feel comfortable in his professional environment, and he believes that staying within a slim geographical radius is the easiest and best way to find a good institutional fit. All of his professional experiences have been at decidedly conservative campuses where Jim could feel at home and talk openly about his views without fear of repercussions. "That's the reason I look for the kinds of institutions that I do. I'm very open....If somebody walks in and says 'well, how do you feel about this?' Well, here's how I feel."

Jim does not say that student affairs is overwhelmingly dominated by people with liberal views. In reference to one of the major national professional associations, he remarked, "I think there are as many different points of view in [the association] as there are members." He perceives leftward currents within higher education generally, however, which he often sees reflected in publications like the *Chronicle of Higher Education* ("like

fingernails on a chalkboard”) or in pockets of liberal activism among faculty, particularly in the humanities. He acknowledges the possibility that relatively liberal attitudes might be a byproduct of the kind of critical thinking rightfully encouraged on college campuses, but he also recognizes that this has consequences for conservatives. “Higher education for the most part is a liberal community. Now, should it be? I don’t know....But I think that we have to kind of dance around our personal values a whole lot more than the liberal-leaning people do.”

Even though the strongest liberal perspectives within higher education tend to show up more on the academic side of campus, student affairs presents challenges of its own. Despite intentionally choosing to work at campuses that largely mirror his own values, Jim has felt challenged at one point or another at every school and in every position he’s ever held. Counseling a pregnant student about her options, distributing event announcements on behalf of a gay-lesbian student organization, hiring certain entertainments acts for campus programs—situations like this often entail a conflict between Jim’s personal values and what he believes is appropriate conduct as a professional.

The decisions that I make professionally are not always the decisions I would make personally....As a social conservative and a Christian conservative, I don’t believe in abortion. I cannot support homosexual lifestyles....But it’s not my place to impose my value system on the institution.

Jim manages this conflict by compartmentalizing his professional and personal lives. His personal life is guided by his faith and religious values, and his professional life is guided primarily by laws, policies, and best practices within the field. Students have the right to free speech and they have a right to assemble and form organizations based around common

interests. Student affairs professional associations place a high value on being inclusive of gay and lesbian members. In his role as a campus administrator as well as in his capacity as a professional association leader, Jim firmly abides by these laws and policies and, in fact, he often defends them in the face of complaints from more conservative quarters. If asked for his opinion, Jim will gladly offer his own perspectives honestly, but he is adamant about maintaining a clear separation between his personal and professional self in any situation where the two might be at odds. "If I didn't operate that way, Jodi, either A) I would be fired or B) my head would explode. You know, I mean, how else can you operate?...If you don't separate church and state, how else do you operate?"

The extent of Jim's ability and desire to compartmentalize was reinforced to me when we talked about what he might provide as an artifact for this study. After talking about some of his frustrations with liberal media and liberal trends in society outside of higher education, he suggested that he might use as his artifact an article from *Time* magazine that exemplified the irritatingly liberal slant he perceives. I responded that when we talked about the artifact he could explain how it related to his experience as a conservative professional in student affairs. Jim replied, "See, that's hard to do where it ties into my role as a professional because I try to keep those things so very separate. So it's a little bit harder for me." He never was able to come up with an artifact that he could relate specifically to his experiences in student affairs, even though we spoke at length about the ways in which liberal policies and attitudes troubled him on a broader societal level.

Compartmentalization has allowed Jim to focus on the aspect of student affairs that first ignited his passion and sustains it to this day: the ability to form strong relationships with students and to have a meaningful impact on their lives. He knows about a quarter of his

student population by name, and many more know him. He is very proud of the fact that many students come to him for guidance, even when they know that he disagrees with their values and life choices. That is a sign to him that they trust him and feel a sense of shared respect.

Jim takes his role as an educator very seriously. “When college students graduate...they report back that 60-70% of what they learned in college they learned outside of the classroom. Well, outside of the classroom is our classroom. That’s pretty cool, isn’t it?” He tries to be a model of honesty and integrity, two values he considers to be of the utmost importance. He believes that students should have the opportunity, as he did, to shape their own beliefs based on their values and what they have been exposed to, not because someone else told them what was right or wrong. He encourages students to consider a variety of viewpoints before deciding for themselves what they think. Above all, he hopes that students graduate with a better sense of not only who they are and what they think, but why. Jim believes that educators—whether professors or student affairs practitioners—should facilitate that process as neutrally as possible. No one should use their professional role as an outlet for personal activism.

Politics should have no place in a work environment, in Jim’s view, including on a college campus. He shares Alex’s attitude that it is fine and appropriate for students to be politically active and to express themselves openly about their beliefs, but he would prefer that faculty and staff keep their views to themselves. As long as people are permitted to display signs on campus during election seasons, Jim believes, also like Alex, that all perspectives should be equally welcome and respected, not just the most popular one. Jim has seen examples of faculty who have used their positions in ways that he thought were

inappropriate—to advance their views on abortion or evolution, for example—but he is pleased that he has not encountered anything similar in student affairs. He reflected on the possible reasons for this:

You know, we're taught differently. We're taught to be accepting, we're taught to help students work through problems whether we agree with problems or not. I think that's why....I guess I think we are probably much more in tune with diversity and people's issues and people's problems and all that sort of thing and, honestly, I think that helps make us really good administrators....We learn a lot about how people are different and all the different ways that people are different and I think that serves us well.

Jim dislikes efforts by anyone—conservative or liberal—to present one side of a story and to suggest that it is the only acceptable view. This attitude is reflected in the fact that, although he is conservative and leans Republican in his voting pattern, Jim is a registered independent. He does not think that either the Democrats or the Republicans get things right all of the time, and it is important to look at all sides of an issue before making a decision. He is most sensitive to this in the realm of national politics, but he has also experienced a similar dynamic at professional conference sessions, where a presenter will sometimes offer data to support only one side of an argument rather than offering a full spectrum of data and allowing room for discussion on different aspects of the issue at hand.

It bothers Jim greatly that people today seem less interested in making room for a range of perspectives than in converting others to their particular points of view. Even more troubling is the negative judgment so often cast upon those who disagree, as though having a different perspective makes someone less of a person and less worthy of respect. Part of the

problem, Jim believes, is that people fail to make a distinction between tolerance and acceptance. Some people think that tolerance is the same as accepting (i.e., fully endorsing) a view that they do not share. Others make a distinction between the two concepts, but reject tolerance for falling short of full acceptance. Jim both makes the distinction and sees value in each:

You know, I think sometimes we tend to want people to accept us, whatever our beliefs, whatever our values system. And I cannot do that. I can tolerate....When we tolerate each other, I work with you, I love and support you, I will see you through whatever it is you need to be seen through, I will help and work with you and support whatever it is that you want to do, but it doesn't mean that I have to place personal value in what you believe. And I think there's a real...expectation out there that if we don't quote-unquote "accept" somebody with no questions asked, that we are mean, awful, horrible, bigoted, unaccepting people.

For Jim, tolerance is what allows diverse people with disparate views to co-exist peacefully. He may disagree fervently and fundamentally with some of his students and colleagues, but that disagreement does not translate into differential treatment or differential personal regard.

My job is not to push my values system on anyone else and I think it's that frame of mind that has kind of carried me through everything. If I was so wrapped up in my belief system that you either agreed with me and accepted my values or we had nothing else to say to each other, good Lord. You know, I'd have been in big trouble years ago.

Instead of advancing his own values, Jim's goals are to understand others and the frames

through which they see the world, and to cultivate an appreciation for tolerance among his students while they engage in the process of developing their own worldviews.

The tension between tolerance and acceptance also manifests itself in Jim's experiences with student affairs professional associations. In the governance structures of the national student affairs organizations, as well as in the topics that are frequently addressed at conferences, there is great emphasis placed on diversity of personal identities (i.e., those based on gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, etc). Alex had similar observations from her professional association experiences, which she and Jim discussed during a group interview. Although Jim appears to disagree more strongly than Alex with the values that form the basis for some of the subcommittees and advocacy groups, both agree that their associations devote more attention than they should to value-laden "who we are" issues at the expense of more practical "what we do" issues. Jim and Alex both accept, however, that matters related to personal and group identities are of great concern to the organizations. As such, they tolerate the attention those issues receive even as they disagree with it. But, Jim wonders, is tolerance enough in the eyes of his fellow association members?

Whether I'm in agreement or not...shouldn't matter, doesn't matter. It is what it is.

And that's probably the biggest struggle that I have, is trying to have a conversation with somebody where I have to look at them and say "I don't accept this" yet still not feel like I'm being bigoted at something.

What bothers Jim perhaps more than anything is the double standard he observes, whereby conservatives are judged harshly for being intolerant of certain liberal values while liberals are given a free pass when it comes to judging conservatives. "If you're a liberal, you're supposed to accept the values of everyone around you except for the conservatives.

And if you're a conservative, you're supposed to accept the values of everyone around you, period." It is a charade on the part of liberals, a display of "intolerance masquerading as acceptance....They're accepting of everybody's viewpoint as long as it agrees with theirs." Fortunately for Jim's professional satisfaction, he sees this double standard as being a problem in society generally more than in student affairs specifically.

When it comes to his work, Jim is pretty well content. To the extent that he encounters disagreements with colleagues or conflicts with his personal values, he sees those as a normal part of any workplace. Living and working where he does minimizes the conflict of values he might otherwise encounter as a conservative student affairs professional, and by separating his professional and personal values, Jim is able to maintain a sense of integrity in those relatively infrequent times when conflicts arise. Although he did not express particular concerns about the number of conservative professionals in student affairs, he thinks that having a greater conservative presence on campuses would allow students to get "more than just one side of the story." He would like to see people of all ideological affiliations set aside the all too common stereotypes about liberals and conservatives, as well as the knee-jerk reactions that accompany them. Through his participation in the study, he hopes to show his liberal colleagues in the field "that we're not all bad, hideous, closed-minded, awful people that are out there. We just happen to march to the beat of a different drummer, just like everybody else does."

Sean

I think student affairs is one of the most accepting groups of different ideologies....It's like the perfect model of being accepting to all and to everyone....But I think by...doing that, ...the one ideology it can really start to push away is a conservative

ideology. Especially conservative ideology that is...framed on religious and spiritual...values.

When we began our interviews, Sean was approximately two years into his first post-master's position, working in a career counseling office at a large private university in Region III. Before our final interview, he took a new position in career services at a medium-size public university, also in Region III. Because both schools were his "current" workplace at some point in the course of the interviews, I will refer to them as Private U. and Public U., respectively, to avoid confusion. Most of the observations and experiences he related were based on his time at Private U., as well as in graduate school.

Sean was raised in a "classic military community" in the southern United States, where he was surrounded by conservative religious and political perspectives. Having earned an associate's degree and then a bachelor's degree in finance, he entered the business world and spent several years working as a consultant. During this time, he was also actively involved as a youth minister for his church, first as a volunteer and then on a paid basis. He loved his work with the church youth, and he also remembered fondly the relationships he had had with his advisors in college, who had helped to make his undergraduate experiences so meaningful. He decided that he wanted to shift his career focus to higher education and, specifically, student affairs. After being turned down for a number of positions in the field, he realized that he needed to go back to school and get a master's degree.

Sean completed his master's degree in higher education administration at a medium-size public university in Region III, where he also held an assistantship in career services. Although he entered his graduate program with the aim of eventually getting a position in student activities or advising student government, he soon discovered that career services

offered a better fit. Aside from the opportunity it provided to bridge his commitment to students and his business background, Sean found that career counseling was a much easier environment ideologically as well.

Sean is a devout Catholic. His religious values guide his views on social issues, such as abortion and birth control, which are the most common sources of ideological tension for him in higher education. He is also strongly influenced by capitalism in socioeconomic matters. Like Jim, he believes people should work for what they get, and should not look to others to provide for their needs. He acknowledges the apparent contradiction between the capitalist value of “let the strongest survive” and the Christian value of “loving thy neighbor”—a value he holds most dear—but he reconciles the two by explaining that compassion and charity belong in the private sphere rather than being expressed through government-run social programs and entitlements.

Sean doesn't hide the fact that he is Catholic, but he doesn't talk about it much at work. None of his colleagues at Private U. were very religious, so religion never came up naturally as a topic of conversation. He was also mindful of the supervisors training he received when he began at Private U., where he was told clearly that supervisors should not discuss religion with their staff members or display religiously-associated symbols, such as Christmas trees. Knowing that his own supervisor would have been given the same direction, he refrained from discussing his religious values with anyone in the office, even on the rare occasion when they had some bearing on his professional work.

With students, Sean is all the more concerned about maintaining appropriate boundaries with regard to religious convictions. In his work as a youth minister, he regularly talked with young people about faith values—his own as well as theirs—and he could freely

talk about his desire to live God's Word. Now, as a student affairs professional, Sean still wants his life to be an expression of the love and power of Jesus Christ, but he is circumspect about articulating that to students out of fear of making them feel uncomfortable and violating institutional or professional standards. When faith has come up in conversations with students, Sean sometimes has found himself "going with" the conversation and slipping back into his role as a youth minister. When that has occurred, he has caught himself and then wondered if he should redirect the conversation and "moonwalk back" to safer territory or if the situation at hand is one where a discussion of faith is appropriate.

Aside from wanting to be respectful of people who might hold different religious views, Sean has felt that his job might be in jeopardy if he were to speak about his religious values with students. In one case, as a graduate student, Sean led a group of students on a university-sponsored service trip. Over the course of the long drive to the service site, he and the students shared a lot about their lives, including their faith. As it turned out, all or nearly all of the students seemed to have a similar religious background, and over the course of the week, they reminisced about Christian summer camp and sat around a piano singing worship songs. It was a wonderful experience for Sean, made all the more meaningful by the spiritual camaraderie that existed among the group members. At the same time, he felt concern about the possible consequences.

I got worried because if there happens to be one student amongst the 12 that went on the trip...that felt uncomfortable, I could probably lose my job. I don't know. I mean, you feel that way, that that could happen.

Sean has never had his job threatened specifically, and most of the antagonism he has witnessed toward conservatives at both Private U. and Public U. has come in the form of

“classic snide comments about something Bush or the Republicans have done.” In fact, his colleagues at Private U. were generally tolerant of his ideological differences. During the 2008 presidential campaign, it became clear to his co-workers that Sean did not support Barack Obama. While others wore Obama pins and talked about going to Obama rallies, Sean stood by and said nothing. When someone asked if he was going to a rally, he had a choice to make: either explain that he was not an Obama supporter or lie. He chose the former. His colleagues teased him good-naturedly about being a Republican from that point on. They also teased him about his conservative style of dress, his business background (which they related to his conservative politics), and his resistance to recycling.

In a way, Sean felt that joking about political differences around the office offered a way for him and his colleagues at Private U. to connect with one another around issues even when they disagreed. Despite having a good working relationship though, Sean “wouldn’t [have been] caught dead” sporting a McCain campaign button or bumper sticker at Private U, and he usually played the role of “passive listener” when conversations turned to political affairs or other controversial issues. This has been true at Public U. as well. He wishes that everyone at a university could feel equally free to be as open as they like about their political views, but that just hasn’t been his experience as a conservative thus far in his career. Being the only religious person and the only Republican in an office brings with it a sense of alienation as well. “You feel...left out....You don’t think the same way, and some of the things that are important to you are not important to the rest of the office.” Although people at Private U. might have been open to hearing Sean’s point of view on current national or local affairs, they didn’t necessarily seek it out because it was so often the exception to an otherwise unanimous consensus. (This has not been the case with work-related issues. At

Private U.—and now at Public U.—Sean readily voiced his opinions on work issues, even when he held a divergent view. He feels that his colleagues and supervisors respect his professional opinions, and they see diverse views in that context as contributing to the effectiveness of the department.)

Sean's impression that universities are unsupportive of conservative religious and political perspectives comes largely from the culture of higher education, rather than from direct expressions of animosity toward conservatives. That culture is evident in the way topics are discussed and the kinds of decisions that are made or tolerated. When newly elected President Barack Obama loosened restrictions on research involving embryonic stem cells, for example, Sean's supervisor at Private U. sent an e-mail to the career counseling staff telling them to spread the word to students about opportunities emerging as a result of the changed policy. As he had done throughout the election season, Sean stood quietly alone against his colleagues' enthusiastic support. In this case, however, the request that he advertise stem cell research opportunities presented him with a moral dilemma. To disregard the e-mail would be unprofessional. To share information about opportunities in stem cell research would be to enable and tacitly endorse the destruction of human life. Rather than draw even more attention to the ideological differences with his colleagues by raising his objections with his supervisor, Sean decided to "let [the request] slide by" under the assumption that his supervisor would not follow up—which, in fact, he didn't. This response reveals a key difference between Sean and Jim. Jim's reliance on the law and his ability to compartmentalize his professional and personal lives allows him to act with a certain degree of equanimity in cases such as this, where his personal values conflict with professional expectations. Sean's tactic of simply not acting on his supervisor's request demonstrates his

unwillingness, or at least uneasiness, with setting his personal moral values aside in professional settings.

The stem cell incident illustrated to Sean how the values of an institution can be expressed through what it will permit, as well as through the manner in which people in positions of authority talk about issues. Whether by sharing information about stem cell research opportunities, or making birth control freely available at the health center, or restricting the display of Christian religious symbols, college administrators communicate values and convey messages about what is deemed appropriate, or at least acceptable, for students as well as for society as a whole.

The stem cell e-mail was an unusual example of a moral conflict arising in the course of Sean's work. Like Alex, Sean finds that his political views are rarely relevant in the course of a normal work day. The unusualness of the incident is one of the reasons he feels comfortable working in career services as opposed to other subfields within student affairs. Although conversations about values frequently come up in one-on-one counseling with students, Sean finds that career services is generally much more involved with practical concerns than with identities and values issues. Professional conferences and literature, for example, often address topics like employer relations, recruitment, and the state of the job market, none of which is likely to generate much moral dissonance. In other areas of student affairs, Sean believes personal values are much more transparent. He realized in graduate school that if he were to work as an advisor of student activities or student government, as he had originally planned, the attitudes of students might very well lead to frequent cases of ideological and moral incongruity. Students seemed to have become so much more liberal since his own days as an undergraduate. Sean struggled with how he would be able to

reconcile his role as an advisor with activities or policies that directly contradicted his moral values. This highlights again the difference between Sean and Jim with respect to compartmentalizing personal values and professional responsibilities.

If there's a bill on the table to fund birth control out of student activities fees, and if I were working in student activities as a director of student activities, ... what would I do? I really don't know....[Should I] let it go through and let the students ultimately make the decision and let due process run its course?...It's hard to say when you're kind of in a personal conflict with something but also you know that it's...your professional role... to ...not censor.... Yeah, I really don't know.

The increasingly liberal attitudes of students derive, in Sean's view, from the liberal values and opinions of university faculty and administrators. He believes that the predominance of liberal professors and administrators creates a kind of groupthink that reinforces those views and perpetuates those attitudes among those coming up through the educational system. Sean witnessed this in his graduate program, where faculty often expressed liberal political views. When a professor made a liberal political comment, Sean noticed most of the students in the class nodding their heads in agreement. As one of the very few conservatives in his graduate program, Sean often refrained from participating in class discussions. His graduate program, like his work environments at both Private U. and Public U., was characterized by the same kind of homogeneity and insularity that he perceives in higher education generally. "Everybody just assumes everybody around them just thinks the same way."

Sean thinks his experience applying to graduate school offers additional evidence of the self-perpetuating ideology in higher education. "I didn't have the easiest time getting into

programs. Everything I had in terms of experience and scores...were perfectly fine....But I think I didn't fit the mold of ...what they were necessarily looking for." Once he was accepted and started in a master's program, Sean found that, despite a fair degree of visible diversity, his graduate school classmates were remarkably similar to one another. They had been highly engaged undergraduates, many had worked as RAs, and they had decided to enter student affairs directly after getting an undergraduate degree (or very soon thereafter). Sean suspects that many graduate admissions committees look for students like that, who already resemble what they consider to be the ideal student affairs professional. Although he acknowledges that many conservatives may not feel called into student affairs as a profession in the first place, he thinks that the lack of conservatives in the field may also be attributed to the reluctance of admissions committees to give equal consideration to applicants like him, with nontraditional educational and life experiences. He sees it as another manifestation of the inward-facing "ivory tower" mentality that is so often ascribed to the academic side of higher education, and which he considers to be both strange and short-sighted.

The liberal orientation of higher education is mirrored by the conservative orientation Sean experienced in the corporate world. Both areas are characterized by a strong degree of ideological homogeneity, but there are some key differences. Whereas it was never considered appropriate to make political comments in a business setting out of concern for possibly offending a client, "higher education is an environment where opinions fly." Universities are supposed to be places where competing ideas can be discussed and analyzed, whether in classrooms or in co- and extra-curricular settings. Sean appreciates the exposure he has gained to liberal beliefs as a result of working in higher education, particularly with regard to the value of diversity. He has come to better understand liberal points of view, even

if he continues to disagree with them. “Working in higher ed and student affairs has really kind of opened me up to being more diverse in my way of thinking and awareness. I’d say that’s helped me. But I guess it’s almost gone to an extreme though.” He still feels like he works in a silo; he simply has traded the conservative silo of the business world for the liberal silo of higher education.

Sean recognizes and also appreciates the fact that student affairs, as a profession, aspires to be all-inclusive. He thinks it is a worthy goal. He also thinks that some values are just incompatible with others, and that by affirming certain values, others are necessarily going to be repudiated. “I think that’s just naturally life...But I think...traditional conservative Christian values...tend to be the most...visible and easily stepped on because they are so common....So I guess there’s no way around it.” When it comes to ideological conflicts on college campuses, Sean believes conservative Christian values will inevitably lose out because they are simultaneously so common beyond the world of higher education and so uncommon within it.

Sean’s apparent equanimity on this point should not be mistaken for indifference. He has strong feelings about some of the policies he has encountered at the universities where he has studied and worked thus far, and he has not seen much openness to conservative perspectives on those campuses. Even if colleagues and senior administrators were to invite and listen respectfully to conservative views—which might be seen as an improvement—that would not be enough for Sean to consider a campus open or supportive of his values. Sean wants to see senior administrators model support for conservative ideas by actively embracing them, not merely creating a space for them to be aired. When conservative values are enacted at least as often as liberal values, Sean will feel that openness has been achieved.

Sean does not believe that conservative policies will ever be implemented voluntarily on college campuses because the liberal culture of most institutions is so strongly entrenched. The only way colleges are likely to move in a more conservative direction is if they are forced to do so by public referenda and state legislative mandates. As much as Sean would love to see citizens and churches mobilize in a grassroots movement to that end, he would not feel comfortable joining in such an effort himself. "I'm in this field now. If I were to go and try to push something like that to [the state] and to the legislature and something like that flops, ... I'm kind of hanging out there." In the future, he might consider seeking a position at a Christian college, where the institutional culture might provide a better match for his values. For now though, he is content to minimize conflict and stay focused on helping students, which was what motivated him to enter the profession in the first place.

Marty

I think that it would be fun to have other people who share similar ideas and are like-minded. I think it would be ... interesting to ... not be the token Republican, to have fun discussing issues and to have camaraderie with others with a like-minded nature.

Marty holds a senior administrative position with a national higher education professional organization. She is also a non-tenured faculty member who teaches student affairs-related courses in an educational leadership program at a large, urban, public university in Region V. She grew up in a conservative family and is proud to call herself a conservative to this day, placing primary emphasis on fiscal responsibility and traditional social norms.

Marty happened upon a career in higher education and student affairs through an assistantship she held while she was pursuing her master's degree in another field. In that

assistantship, she served as a combination of enrollment counselor, dean of students, residence life advisor, and first-year student experience coordinator for approximately 500 students attending the state's flagship university. The assistantship grew into a full-time job, which Marty kept through her master's and doctoral programs. She loved the opportunities for student contact that her job provided, but as her family grew, she decided that life as a faculty member offered greater flexibility and better prospects for a satisfactory balance between work and family. Her current position is her first faculty appointment.

Working in the academy presents relatively few challenges for Marty, despite the liberal ethos she perceives on her campus and on college campuses in general.

I don't necessarily have anyone telling me that I need to act a certain way or do a certain thing, but I would say that the expectation is just that I am liberal....That's just kind of an unstated rule, I guess.

Although she violates that rule, Marty's professional experience has been largely unaffected. In fact, she rarely thinks about ideological differences with her colleagues. The solitary nature of academic work and the non-controversial nature of her research interests keep political differences on the periphery. Discussions of current events among colleagues occur fairly infrequently. When they arise, it is most often in the context of casual interactions, which might just as easily be about the latest celebrity news. When conversations turn to political affairs, Marty finds that her faculty colleagues are generally "amused"—in a good-natured sense—to hear her conservative perspectives. "They enjoy hearing different viewpoints and they are surprised when somebody actually admits that they do have a different viewpoint. Especially in such a liberal setting."

In spite of the generally open reception she has received as a conservative in her

department, Marty still feels the need to be careful. Like Sean, she often refrains from volunteering her opinions on political issues, for example. She will talk about her views if someone asks, but she usually prefers to stay silent if a group of colleagues is engaged in a conversation about a topic on which she has a conflicting position. Rather than getting into a discussion where she might feel pressure to apologize for her beliefs (“which is ridiculous”), she avoids the situation. She does not think that having a different perspective would be a professional liability necessarily, but she does not care to find out.

I want to have friendly interactions with my colleagues and want to keep it relatively light if it’s in an informal setting and I don’t think that there is any reason to...focus on negative issues or things that I find disagreeable....I certainly do not want to burn any bridges because I do want to get tenure eventually. I think that it’s important for me to...not be challenging.

Liberals, she believes, do not need to concern themselves as much with how their views might be perceived because they have good reason to suspect that their views will be shared by those around them. This echoes Jim’s comment about conservatives needing to “dance around” their personal values more than liberals do.

The impact on Marty of being conservative in a liberal environment has less to do with the effects of negative forces than the absence of positive ones. Although no one actively excludes her from participating in conversations, she lacks a certain freedom of self-expression that more liberal colleagues might enjoy. She also misses the sense of camaraderie that comes from engaging with like-minded people. As Sean said, being the only conservative in a group can be lonely. Even if she does not see being conservative as a definite liability to her career, Marty does perceive that sharing the views of her colleagues

would be a definite asset. Having a common set of ideological views and values opens the door to making deeper connections that can facilitate networking and other professional opportunities. In an affective sense, Marty also thinks it would be fun to be able to share in others' excitement about current issues and political candidates, especially during a vibrant presidential race such as the one that took place in 2008. She enjoyed the group interview in this study for the rare opportunity it provided for her to talk with senior-level administrators who had similar experiences and shared similar views. For the most part, such conversations serve the purpose of affirming shared perspectives, rather than just providing an opportunity to vent. Marty is content enough in her situation that she has little need to air frustrations. Illustratively, she and her graduate assistant—coincidentally the only other conservative in her department—have never commiserated about challenges related to being conservative in higher education.

Marty's sense of being the "odd one out" among her faculty and staff colleagues—both now and as a student affairs professional—comes from more than just her political affiliation. Differences in professional and personal values and working style may be much more relevant than politics. A strong work ethic and self-mastery are two of Marty's most important values. She demands a very high level of effort from herself, and she hates to waste time. She is aware that every minute she spends at her job is time away from her children, so she wants that time to be well spent. She contrasts this to the attitude she saw in student affairs, where people were willing to settle for less than 100%, and where meetings often included "touchy feely" activities that seemed to have relatively little value. In her current position, she thinks the most important differences with her colleagues are her relative youth and the fact that she has small children. Her faculty colleagues are older and in

another stage of their lives. There is little common ground for close friendships. As a result of these differences in values and circumstances, Marty's professional and personal lives are silos, entirely distinct from one another. She did not choose her profession for its social potential, however, and she has never considered her job to be a source of personal friendships, so she is not especially troubled by the lack of social connections available to her through her work.

As a faculty member who teaches courses on student development theory and multiculturalism in a higher education graduate program, Marty is responsible for helping to prepare future generations of student affairs educators. The prospect of doing so was one of the aspects that attracted her to a faculty role, in fact. She believes strongly in the value of student affairs and would like to see greater respect for student affairs in universities, as well as active partnerships that bridge student affairs and academic programs. She tries to blend the two in her courses by encouraging her students to conduct and evaluate research and, conversely, to find practical applications of research and theoretical work. She sees her conservative worldview as having little or no influence on her teaching, either in terms of content or approach. She simply introduces the theories from the student development textbook and leaves the job of interpreting those theories to her students. Her course on multiculturalism is similarly unaffected by her personal ideology. The only sense in which she thinks it might possibly be relevant is in the fact that she considers diversity to be about all kinds of differences, rather than just about race. (Political diversity has never come up, however.)

Given that Marty's research interests have little to do with politics or other potentially controversial topics, she sees no obvious ideological patterns in the literature she reads. She

will sometimes disagree with the recommendations authors make based on the findings of their research, and she recognizes the role her conservative values may play there, but that does not suggest anything inappropriate or flawed in the research itself.

Where Marty sees the most glaring evidence of a liberal worldview is in the topics and keynote speakers featured at professional conferences. She agrees with Alex and Jim that, in her experience, the organizations to which she belongs have grown increasingly liberal in their program offerings over the past several years. This makes sense to her because she recognizes that the members of those organizations are predominantly liberal, and the associations are probably correct to think that liberal conference speakers will generate greater enthusiasm from their members. Still, Marty is struck by the extent to which a liberal political ideology pervades gatherings that really should have nothing to do with politics. Shortly after the election of Barack Obama in 2008, Marty was at a professional meeting where a member of the organization wished everyone a “Happy Obama Day” to the cheers and applause of the other members present. Marty respected the fact that people were celebrating and refrained from saying anything. At the same time, she wished the group could recognize that not everyone was necessarily as excited as they were. It was a moment that illustrated the unstated expectation about how higher education professionals should align politically. It also bears striking resemblance to Alex’s experience at her regional professional gathering, where the event took on the atmosphere of an Obama campaign rally, again, with no apparent thought that others in the room might hold a different view.

Marty had anticipated that the 2008 presidential campaign would bring an onslaught of political fervor to her very liberal institution. She recalled the campaign of 2004, when she was a graduate student and felt uncomfortable by the extensive array of John Kerry items in

the office of one of her professors. That display was dwarfed by what she saw around campus for Obama in 2008. “I just felt bombarded from all sides with Obama paraphernalia....It seemed like every office had his picture up, had a sign up, had something related to the election, but in a very liberal sense.” Even though she had expected it, Marty was troubled to see such blatant support for Obama, considering that the policy of her public university forbids expressions of political support by faculty and staff while on campus. Although the university administration issued a reminder about the policy, nothing more was said or done to enforce it. To Marty, there seemed to be a double standard at play. “I just felt like...it was okay to break the rule if you were supporting a Democrat in office. Or nobody called you to task on it.” This mirrors Alex’s experience at her institution, where the chancellor himself violated the university’s stated policy for faculty and staff regarding campaign paraphernalia. For Marty, the 2008 campaign affirmed the commitment she had already made after her experience in 2004: to avoid making her office an uncomfortable place for students through the inappropriate expression of personal beliefs.

Marty speculated about the effects of having so few openly-identified conservatives working in academia and student affairs. For students, the absence of respected conservative voices on campus may suggest that a liberal worldview is the only real option. “The cool thing to do is to have a liberal mindset. And if there’s nobody espousing other views, then you don’t know that it’s okay to think something differently or feel something differently.” Sean expressed similar concerns about the impact of the dominant liberal culture on students. In terms of the effect on her personally, Marty agrees with Alex that having a more vocal conservative presence among her colleagues would be empowering, and “maybe I wouldn’t feel like I had to take the silent road as much.”

Marty does not blame anyone for the fact that she often prefers to “take the silent road.” A liberal professor suggested to her once that conservatives do not enter or remain in academia because the environment is unwelcoming to them. Marty disagrees. In her opinion, most people who believe in capitalism simply want to get a more lucrative return on their educational investment than a career in academia or student affairs can offer. The academy has never seemed hostile to her, and she does not see her relationships with either students or colleagues as having suffered because of ideological differences. The pervasive liberal ethos is palpable to her, but she accepts this as a reflection of the ideological orientation of the people who make up the majority of the field. It aggravates her at times, and she certainly recognizes the ways in which her work environment could be more personally rewarding and affirming if there were more people who shared her conservative values and opinions. Overall though, she feels a high degree of satisfaction with her professional life as well as her prospects for continued success in the future.

Chelsea

I honestly believe that as a professional it's your job to encourage students to find their own beliefs, their own values, their own identity. So, whether or not I'm in the majority or the minority on any given issue, it's not my place to come right out and put it on a t-shirt and be like “I believe that x is wrong or right.”

Chelsea is in the second semester of a master's degree program in student affairs at a large public institution in Region IV East. Through her graduate program, she also works in an assistantship in residence life at a small private college nearby. She began her graduate work immediately after completing her bachelor's degree, so she is the youngest participant in the study, as well as the newest to the profession.

Chelsea's introduction to student affairs came through her involvement with a living-learning program as an undergraduate. She participated in the program during her first two years and then worked as a peer mentor for the same program in her junior and senior years. She developed close relationships with her supervisors, who later helped guide her through the process of finding and applying for student affairs graduate programs.

Going into student affairs was a departure from Chelsea's original plan. Having been raised in a conservative family that placed heavy emphasis on the value of self-reliance, Chelsea chose what she considered to be a practical major, business administration, and expected to start working after college or perhaps pursue a degree in another very practical field, law. She had an epiphany just before her senior year, however, and she realized that the corporate environment was not a good fit for her. She preferred "the human aspect" of her work as a peer mentor to the profit-driven culture of business. She wanted to have an impact on people's lives in a deeper way than what she thought the corporate world could offer.

It came as no surprise to Chelsea that she would be in the ideological minority in higher education and student affairs. Growing up, she had absorbed the message from conservative talk radio, as well as from her parents, that college campuses tended to be liberal in their political orientation. Based on her own experiences, Chelsea thinks claims of liberal bias in higher education are "overblown." She did, however, detect subtle undercurrents at her undergraduate institution—a large public university in Region IV West—that suggested liberal attitudes were considered more acceptable and were encouraged more than conservative ones. She perceived, for example, that the Young Democrats received more favorable treatment by university administrators than the College Republicans did.

Similar undercurrents of a liberal worldview are evident in Chelsea's graduate program as well. Although she finds the content of her courses to be ideologically neutral, her professors sometimes offer asides about national events and policies. Although the interjection of her professors' political views into Chelsea's classes seems to be more tangential and superficial than it was in Sean's graduate classes, Chelsea nevertheless finds these asides to be both unnecessary and irritating. Such commentaries from a professor reveal not only the professor's own political views, but in many cases also an apparent expectation that everyone in the class will naturally agree. "I think there's just an assumption that everyone is more of the liberal persuasion."

As was true for most of the participants, Chelsea found that the 2008 presidential election cast ideological differences into starker relief than usual. On one occasion, Chelsea's class spent a portion of its instructional time watching the inauguration of President Barack Obama. "It wasn't really even a question of 'should we...postpone part of class so that we can watch the inauguration?' It was 'oh, well, we're going to watch the inauguration because we all want to.'" Chelsea decided it wasn't worth raising an objection. She accepted that the inauguration was an important historic event, even if it was not relevant to the subject of the course. Nevertheless, watching it with her class was awkward:

When some of my classmates and my professor are getting teary-eyed and very emotional as...President Obama was swearing in, it's kind of uncomfortable to me because I feel like I'm expected to have those same emotions and feelings, and I don't.

Chelsea identifies strongly as conservative, but she dislikes being labeled as a Republican. "I don't like to be boxed in with every other Republican that exists because I

definitely don't...ascribe to...everything that the Republican Party outlines." She finds that people often make negative assumptions about Republicans and what they value, whereas the term "conservative" is more flexible. For Chelsea, being conservative is about valuing personal and fiscal responsibility, honoring traditional roles and values, focusing on what is practical, and being independent. Like Jim, she believes people should have the freedom to make their own decisions, for which they then bear responsibility. She believes in hard work and in doing one's best, two values that she hopes to model and promote in her students. She cares about students as individuals and strives to support their development according to their unique needs. It frustrates her that people frequently misinterpret her emphasis on self-efficacy as a lack of concern or compassion for others. "It's very hard to articulate that it's not that I don't want people to have things or have experiences. It's that I'm very much a fan of people achieving things on their own and being...independent."

This value on independence is evident in Chelsea's approach to her work in student affairs and it represents a key difference between Chelsea and her more liberal colleagues. Whereas Chelsea believes that it is important to help people to a point where they can then help themselves through their own determined efforts, she finds that her classmates and colleagues are inclined to help above and beyond the point where it is necessary or even beneficial. She appreciates and admires the strong commitment to students that she sees among the professional staff at her assistantship site, but at the same time, she thinks applying more "tough love"—for parents as well as students—would force students to grow up and learn to handle their own problems.

I feel like some of my more liberal colleagues are all about, "Well, let's just talk it out...let's kind of do some more observations and then...we can brainstorm about it,

and then if we don't come up with a solution, then...we might bring in a third party.”

Whereas I'm sitting at the end of the table going, “Just say no! Just tell the student no and if it's not better in a week, then we can come back and revisit it.”

Beyond her own institution, Chelsea was struck by the lack of attention devoted to discussions of students' independence when she attended her first national student affairs convention. Although she enjoyed the convention and attended several programs that she found interesting and useful, the program offerings collectively revealed a discernible difference in values and priorities. As Alex, Jim, and Marty have found with their own conference experiences, Chelsea noted the overwhelming representation of liberal social concerns (specifically, issues related to sexuality and gender identity) and comparatively little attention to topics that would be more generally applicable to her day-to-day work.

At almost every time breakdown there was a session involving progression of what I would consider more liberal ideologies on campuses [e.g., safe spaces for GLBT students, gay marriage, gender-neutral bathrooms].... I thought there would be more sessions on how to successfully get the students out from under mom and dad's wing. I thought there would be more sessions on, especially given the economy,...how to be fiscally responsible, how to better manage our resources, how to seek community partnerships to bring in better funding and opportunities for students. And I was surprised at the relatively few number of those types of workshops that were being offered.

Another area that can highlight differences in values is student development theory. As a conservative for whom preserving tradition is important, Chelsea sometimes has a different perspective on the theories taught in her classes. Whereas she sees these theories as

tools for understanding the many ways people experience and interact with the world, she has the sense that her professors have a clearly defined view about which is the most desirable developmental position. She feels that she and her classmates are expected to embrace a very liberal attitude for themselves, and also to encourage that same attitude among the students whom they serve as student affairs professionals. “I think it’s kind of expected that we move students toward a more liberal or progressive mindset, ideology, way of life, however you want to look at it.” In a class session focused on women’s identity development, for example, Chelsea was mildly offended by the professor’s suggestion that a woman who wanted to take a traditional path of getting married and being a stay-at-home mom was less developmentally mature than a woman who wanted to remain single and pursue a career. Chelsea would like to see such underlying assumptions addressed openly so that discussions of theories might occur in ways that are more even-handed and respectful of diverse perspectives.

In her own professional life, Chelsea refrains from discussing her political views and affiliation with students. Like Marty, she does not take extensive measures to hide her opinions—she will talk about them honestly if she is asked and if the context seems appropriate—but she does not display her beliefs on her car, her clothing, or her Facebook profile. She also declines to participate openly in political campaigns and other community political events. She believes it is important to give students the space to figure out for themselves what they value and what they think without the influence of her example. Like Jim, she will help students explore their values, and she will encourage them to educate themselves and to participate in the political process generally, but she feels it would be inappropriate to try to win them over to her position. This is the same attitude and approach she uses with people generally:

I'm not an activist and I'm not very vocal about why other people should adopt what I believe because I think what you believe is very personal and what you value is personal and we can have a conversation about that, but I don't believe that I should be preaching to you about that.

Consistent with her belief in the very personal nature of people's values, Chelsea is uneasy with required courses and mandatory training sessions that essentially instruct people in what the professor or presenter thinks they should or must believe. Such programs—which usually relate to multiculturalism in some way—do not give people the space to learn about issues while also maintaining their own values systems. In Chelsea's view, value-laden questions are better addressed through informal conversations among trusted classmates and colleagues, rather than through formal presentations in settings that are not conducive to open discussion and genuine, respectful sharing.

Chelsea's primary frustration with current approaches to diversity and multiculturalism is the way in which tolerance and acceptance are conflated. She defines "tolerance" as openness to the existence of other beliefs and practices, while "acceptance" refers to a willingness to adopt a belief or practice oneself. In both her frustration and in the distinctions she makes between the two terms, Chelsea sounds a lot like Jim. She acknowledges that it is valuable and important to learn about other cultures and perspectives, but that does not necessarily mean that people must endorse others' beliefs or embrace them as they would their own.

I think as a professional working with students, you do have to tolerate. You do have to do whatever you can to help the student as an individual succeed. That doesn't mean you always have to agree with what they're doing or how they do it.

Chelsea has frequently found herself in situations where people assume they know what she will or will not tolerate or accept on the basis of her identification as a conservative. She is cautious about discussing her political views with faculty, classmates, and colleagues, partly out of concern for the way in which they might “pigeonhole” her on the basis of their stereotypes. When it comes to political ideologies, Chelsea finds that people seem to lose all sense of nuance, as though “liberal” and “conservative” represented absolute categories with sharply defined boundaries. Her own positions are far more complex than that. As a former debater with an interest in political issues, Chelsea understands the importance of researching all sides of a question in order to make a well-reasoned argument. She works hard to educate herself and to appreciate the intricacies of an issue; she wishes more people would do the same. She would enjoy having thoughtful and friendly arguments with people about current events, if only she could trust that expressing her opinion on one aspect of a policy would not be met with an avalanche of potentially erroneous assumptions about everything else she believes. She has experienced enough of that, as well as of the dismissive or aggressive comments from people who claim she “just [doesn’t] understand.” Avoiding the conversations entirely is usually easier.

As she looks ahead to her professional life after graduate school, Chelsea expects that being conservative will influence her career choices in two ways. First, she knows—as Sean also discovered—that certain functional areas would pose greater challenges for her than others. She is not interested in live-in positions where she would be responsible for upholding a university’s value system at all times, day and night. Having a distinct personal life, separate from the world of the university, is important to her. Second, she plans to limit her job search to geographical regions that are traditionally more congruent with a

conservative ideology. Jim has used this strategy quite successfully to find compatible work environments throughout his career.

Overall, Chelsea is comfortable in her chosen field. She is similar to Marty in that she does not perceive student affairs to be overtly hostile to her as a conservative, even though she has sometimes felt “slighted or just...shoved out of the way a little bit” by the liberal attitudes that are evident in her graduate program and in the field more broadly. She thinks she would enjoy being more engaged in her national professional association if there were opportunities that suited her political values and experiences. As it is, she is content just to attend the conferences. She would appreciate having more conservatives in the field to exchange thoughts and to serve as models and mentors to others who, like her, are just learning to navigate the liberal undercurrents within student affairs. She is passionate about her work, though, and if smiling quietly at not-so-funny jokes and “[keeping her] mouth shut a little bit on occasion” is the price she has to pay for the thrill of seeing a shy and awkward student blossom into a confident, successful adult, that’s a trade she’s willing to make.

Allison

I do not feel the need to advocate on behalf of other Republicans. Because, again, I don't think political viewpoint has anything to do with my work. But my political perspective is part of who I am. So I can't check the button at the door either.

Allison is one of very few conservatives on her large, urban, public university campus. She has spent her career in Region III, working at a number of small private liberal arts schools before taking her current position as an associate director overseeing student activities. She has been in the field for 12 years, and she continued to work full-time while earning her doctoral degree a number of years ago. She is also very active in the profession

beyond her campus, including service in a senior leadership role in a national professional association.

One of the first qualities that stands out in talking with Allison is her very strong sense of confidence about expressing herself and being who she is. This is probably a natural part of her personality that was also further developed, at least in part, by her upbringing. Allison grew up living a “white picket fence life” in an affluent Midwestern community. Her parents were strongly conservative in their political views—and Allison acknowledges that influence on her own ideology—but her parents were also committed to teaching their children to think for themselves. From religious and political views to fashion and her favorite sports teams, Allison was never permitted to follow her parents’ or anyone else’s lead without being able to articulate convincingly her own reasons for doing so. Consequently, Allison developed a drive to learn as much as she could about topics that interested her. That drive continues to this day. Allison believes that the confidence she feels in expressing herself comes largely from knowing that the views she holds are well-considered and well-substantiated.

Allison considers herself a “true conservative,” which she is careful to distinguish from the current version of the Republican Party. As Chelsea, Jim, and Alex also expressed, identifying as conservative should not imply agreement with all aspects of the Republican agenda. A truly conservative ideology, in Allison’s view, focuses on the appropriate size and role of government. She believes in the ability of individuals to manage their affairs without government intervention. She believes that the federal government should be relatively weak and that states should have full responsibility for any functions not specifically granted to the federal government by the Constitution. Religion plays no part in Allison’s definition of

conservatism. She dislikes the influence of the Christian conservative wing of the Republican Party and she disagrees with the religiously-based socially conservative views that have come to be associated with Republicans. Although she is loyal to the Republican Party, Allison retains her strong sense of independence in her voting decisions, casting her vote for the candidates she deems most qualified and congruent with her own values, regardless of party affiliation.

The self-assurance that Allison demonstrates when she talks about her political values takes on an added measure of passion when she talks about her work in student affairs. She believes that people are fundamentally good, and that every student she encounters has something of extraordinary value to share with the world, which she hopes to help them develop. Her political philosophy is clearly reflected in her approach to her work. When she advises her student organizations, she is concerned primarily about the integrity of a group's process and the students' ability to justify their actions, rather than the actions themselves. She believes in holding students accountable for their decisions and enforcing consequences in developmentally appropriate ways to help students understand the necessary balance between freedom and responsibility. When she challenges students to reflect on their views and values, and when she pushes them to consider other perspectives in their decision-making, she is teaching them to be more effective citizens in the democratic society that she herself values so highly.

You know, you move 1200 students into a residence hall and tell them to create a community and, like, it's a big experiment in democracy... And so if we can figure out how to make it work here in a bubble, in a higher ed bubble, then there's hope for the United States to be able to figure out how to make it work as people learn how to

interact with one another.

Allison believes it is essential to understand and respect diverse views, as well as to maintain tolerance for conflict. She doesn't mind other people voting for a different candidate or taking a different position on an issue, but she would like people to make their political decisions on the basis of information and knowledge, rather than what they were raised to think or what is popular. She shares Chelsea's commitment to educating herself on the various facets of current issues. The fact that she spends considerable time and effort doing so and will also question other people on the reasons for their beliefs often makes people reluctant to discuss politics with her. Her aim in asking questions, however, is not to change anyone else's views, but rather to learn, to refine her own positions, and to encourage others to do the same. She agrees with Jim that people in the United States generally have lost the ability to agree to disagree, and that the fear of disagreement keeps people from engaging productively with one another.

I really value that discourse [with people who think differently], but there are a lot of people who will just retreat from those conversations... We're not supposed to, you know, as a country, or in the south, you're not supposed to talk about sex, money, or politics. Well, how are we supposed to learn about those things if we don't talk about them?

As much as Allison enjoys engaging in spirited dialogue around political issues, she does so only under appropriate circumstances. Although this resembles how Sean, Jim, and Chelsea approach the issue of professional boundaries, Allison's notion of professionalism goes a step further. She considers it unprofessional, for example, to spend time at work having conversations that are not work-related, regardless of the topic of conversation. She is

fairly circumspect about revealing her political affiliation with students unless she has the time to explore and challenge students' assumptions about what it means to be conservative. This was particularly important for Allison during the 2008 presidential campaign, when any vote for John McCain was perceived by many of her students as a racially-motivated vote against Barack Obama. As a White woman advising predominantly African American student organizations, Allison was sensitive to the possibility that her political preference could be misinterpreted. She refrained from sharing her vote with students until the night of the election, when an appropriate opportunity—a teachable moment—presented itself and she could talk about her perspective more fully and in a way that also conveyed her genuine appreciation of the historic milestone that had been achieved with the election of the first African American president, even if she had not voted for him.

Allison is aware that most people probably assume that she is a Democrat, largely due to her views on social issues. She uses the term “liberal” to describe those views, although she considers her positions to be consistent with her conservative values favoring limited, unobtrusive government. “I’m a contradiction to a lot of people about what it might mean to be a Republican and I’m starting to actually take a lot of pride in that.” What bothers her is the sense that concern for diversity and equity is associated with a liberal political perspective.

As an educator, it’s part of my responsibility to educate about difference and diversity and the sociological impacts of...segregating populations. But I don’t think any of those are uniquely liberal values. In my study of politics, you know, the Democratic Party has adopted all of those as their [sic], like they belong to them. And I just disagree with that fundamentally....Those are just good tenets of an educational

environment around discourse.

Allison doesn't mind colleagues and students making an erroneous assumption about her political affiliation. In fact, she enjoys keeping them guessing sometimes. She doesn't lie, however, or hide her views on issues where her conservative ideology would become evident. She resembles Jim and Marty in that regard, but considering the fact that she is on a liberal campus (unlike Jim) and a full-time practitioner (unlike Marty), the ease with which she expresses her political opinions is more unusual. Allison simply doesn't see her political views as being important enough in her professional life to either actively promote them or hide from them.

Although she acknowledges that being a Republican in higher education is unusual, Allison thinks that fellow professionals are interested in her political affiliation only because it suggests a fundamental difference from themselves or from the norm (an assumption that is generally dispelled once she clarifies her political philosophy, with its socially liberal views). In the same way that Marty's colleagues regard her conservatism with good-natured amusement, Allison finds that people regard hers with benign curiosity. That curiosity aside, Allison perceives that political opinions are considered largely unimportant in student affairs, and that genuine political dialogue is undervalued. "I don't think that student affairs, beyond the cultural competence conversation, is really engaged with any kind of political viewpoint." Allison thinks that it would be beneficial, in fact, for professional leaders to actively promote *more* political dialogue in order to raise awareness of national, international, and regional issues and policies that may have a significant impact—directly or indirectly—on students and, by extension, on the work of student affairs educators.

Although she will share her views if asked and has no fear of being identified as a

conservative, Allison also sees no need to self-consciously identify herself that way, unless she has some specific purpose in mind. To the extent that her conservatism is evident in her work, it is expressed naturally as a result of who Allison is. "I have the opportunity to influence men's and women's lives on a daily basis and that comes through my conservative viewpoint and my conservative perspective. It doesn't mean I have to talk about it every day." Being conservative is an important part of how Allison sees herself, but she doesn't consider it relevant enough to her work to make a special point of labeling herself. She observed that difference during the group interview and commented on how others seem to desire the support and emotional validation of other conservatives in a way that she does not.

On the whole, Allison has felt very little frustration as a result of being conservative in student affairs. There are people who make a standing joke out of the fact that she is a Republican, which Chelsea and Sean experienced as well. Allison gets annoyed at those jokes sometimes, but the jokes remain just that: a minor annoyance. She has never encountered overt hostility for being conservative. (During the group interview, she was both shocked and saddened to hear some of the examples of hostility shared by other participants.) She realizes the possibility that her political affiliation might alienate someone or keep someone from initiating a professional relationship with her, but she is not aware of that ever happening and even if she were, it would not change her behavior. Integrity is a strong value in Allison's life. If someone has a problem with her because of who she is, she sees it as that person's problem, not hers. If that person happened to be a boss, she would speak up against anything that she considered inappropriate and, if necessary, she would leave that job. She is not inclined to internalize conflicts of that nature or to become emotionally attached to them. She simply deals with whatever circumstances exist, and then moves on.

Beyond not needing other people to understand or agree with her point of view, Allison actually prefers to be around people who think differently and who have different experiences. In that sense, her current institution provides a good fit for her, even though she is the only conservative in her office and she perceives her campus overall as a place where conservatives are marginalized. She enjoys being able to share her enthusiasm about her work environment with her more conservative friends and neighbors, who find it hard to believe that she can be happy working where she does. Indeed, Allison thinks that it would be very difficult for her to return to working at a small private institution with a more uniformly privileged student body now that she has experienced the excitement of working at such a vibrantly diverse institution.

Far from wrestling with her status as the lone conservative, Allison is thriving. Her confidence, complemented by socially liberal views and an attitude of staunch independence, appears to shield her from the concerns expressed by Sean, Alex, and some of the other participants who follow later in this chapter.

Patrick

I have never ...shared my heartfelt opinion related to faith, politics, education...and not either gained a friend, gained a more solid relationship, or at least stayed at the same level of relationship.

Patrick has spent his entire career in residence life and now serves as the director of housing at a small, religiously-affiliated institution in Region III. In his 15 years in the field, he has worked at a total of four institutions—two public and two private—all with markedly different political and religious cultures. His current institution has only recently transitioned into a residential undergraduate university, which means that Patrick is heavily involved in

shaping institutional understanding of student affairs and integrating that perspective into the life of the university.

Patrick was the first member of his family to attend college. As the son of an enlisted military father and an immigrant mother, he spent much of his childhood living in very humble circumstances. Whenever his father was deployed, Patrick, along with his mother and siblings, went to live either with his father's family in a poor, rural part of the U.S. or with his mother's family in a poverty-stricken part of her native country. What the family lacked in material wealth, however, they made up for in love and emotional support.

Patrick's upbringing was "drama-free" and rich with meaningful experiences.

Like many first-generation college students, Patrick's family was not in a position to educate him about U.S. higher education or campus life. Most of his impressions came from television and Hollywood movies. He had to learn a lot on his own during his first year as an undergraduate. Patrick is very proud to have come so far, from knowing absolutely nothing about the actual college experience to holding a graduate degree and serving in a senior administrative position in a university, where he can help provide a supportive environment to students making their own transition to college.

Patrick's career in student affairs began the summer after his first year as an undergraduate. By taking a job as a resident assistant (RA), he was able to earn money and get free housing, which was very important given his family's limited financial means. The purely utilitarian motives that led him into the field were soon overtaken by genuine passion for the work he was doing. He abandoned his plans to become a secondary school teacher and instead went to graduate school for a master's degree in higher education administration, during which time he continued to support himself through positions in residence life. Since

his first post-graduate position, which was conveniently located at his own graduate institution, his career moves have been motivated largely by his interest in finding an environment that supports his conservative values and his commitment to living out his Christian faith.

Patrick was baptized as an adult, and he now sees his faith as the central organizing force in all aspects of his life. He identifies himself, first and foremost, as a Christian. He believes in absolute Truth, expressed as God's Word through the Bible. The mission and culture of his current institution are very well-suited to his spiritual aims, and Patrick is pleased to be able to talk openly with students and colleagues about the spiritual dimensions and implications of what they do. This aspect of Patrick's experience is unique among the participants in this study. All of the other participants who identified strongly as Christians, including Jim and Sean, work at public or secular institutions where they need to be at least somewhat careful about bringing their religion or religious language into their work.

Although Patrick truly appreciates the support he feels when it comes to integrating his work and his faith, he is concerned that his institution's extreme emphasis on developing students in a religious sense comes at the expense of other forms of development, including emotional, psychosocial, and even intellectual. Having been raised and educated in secular environments before adopting a conservative Christian faith, Patrick often finds himself caught in the middle between the secular humanist approaches that shaped his own professional development and the values and practices of his very conservative Christian campus.

Though his conservative values are strongly supported by his religious views, Patrick is quick to make a distinction between political conservatism and religion. "Christian doesn't

equal conservative and vice versa, but a lot of times they do end up holding hands.” He also challenges the association between conservatism and particular political parties. In his view, a conservative person might affiliate as easily with the Democratic Party or the Green Party as with the Republican Party. Although other participants also addressed the distinction between being conservative and being Republican, Patrick was particularly assertive on this point. Being conservative is a lifestyle. That lifestyle may inform and be informed by politics and religion, but it is essentially a separate domain.

Patrick defines conservatism in terms of two main dimensions: financial and social. In financial terms, it is about living within one’s means, whether as an individual, an institution, or a nation. In social terms, it is about living one’s life to the fullest but with a sense of modesty and respect for oneself and one’s community. In addition, he sees a conservative ideology as characterized by a belief in the existence of absolutes and, accordingly, by a tendency to seek (if not always to find) the absolute right way to think or behave in any given situation.

Patrick likes to think of himself as an “unconventional conservative.” He admits that, in some ways, this is difficult to do: “I often joke with friends that if you were looking for a stereotype of the 21st century White male conservative, you’d probably find him in looking at me.” Many aspects of Patrick’s lifestyle and values overlap with what people generally assume to be true of conservatives. He is middle- to upper-middle class, White, straight, married with a child, and devoutly Christian. He owns guns and is a staunch supporter of the military and law enforcement. He holds traditional views about sex and sexuality. At the same time, however, Patrick often presents a challenge to others who presume to know what he thinks about particular issues on the basis of those conservative values. In contrast to some

conservatives, he sees himself as “nationalistic without being isolationist, very pro-American without the assumption that America is the way it’s got to be.” Though he believes responsible people have the right to own and carry guns (even on a college campus), he often surprises colleagues with his equally strong views about the need to uphold existing gun control laws. Unlike many conservative Christians he knows, he still enjoys a good beer on occasion, and he has no objection to people expressing themselves through body art or through unconventional styles of dress or music.

Bucking the conservative stereotypes has created dissonance for Patrick at times, particularly among his conservative Christian colleagues. It frustrates him that many of the political and religious conservatives he knows display “a very myopic, a very narrow, and a very judgmental view as it relates to issues of diversity.” When his colleagues make jokes and derogatory comments about gay men or people of certain ethnicities, they are surprised when Patrick challenges their behavior. The implicit assumption is that it is okay to tell such jokes among other conservatives behind closed doors. For Patrick, however, the jokes have nothing to do with being either conservative or Christian and, in fact, represent just the opposite of what should be expected from those striving to live a Christ-centered life.

Like Chelsea, Patrick believes it is valuable to learn about people who are different, and it is important to respect them, even if he disagrees with what they think or how they live. As a housing director, he would like to see students and parents take advantage of the opportunity to learn from roommates who have different values, rather than requesting an immediate room change if a roommate turns out to be gay or to practice a different religion. When such a situation arose early in his tenure at his current institution, Patrick shared this view with a colleague.

I was authentically coming from, “Well, you don’t have to value it, believe it, bless it, or want to see it grown in the American culture, but if someone is a Wiccan, at the very least if you’re living with them, you’re going to learn a heck of a lot about their lifestyle and what they do. You don’t have to buy into it or promote it or say it’s okay, but you’re going to learn a lot from that exposure.”

Patrick was taken aback when the colleague took the side of the parents and claimed that there was “nothing to learn there except to be taken away from your faith.” He saw it as another disappointing example of a colleague taking a path of avoidance and judgment, rather than one of understanding and respect.

Differences with regard to diversity exist with liberal professional colleagues as well. Whereas conservatives may inappropriately pass harsh judgment on those who violate their sense of what is right and wrong, Patrick sees liberals as throwing out the question of right and wrong entirely, espousing instead a philosophy based on “infinite shades of gray.” Everyone is on a spectrum, everything is relative, and people are responsible for deciding for themselves what is right and wrong. The influence of this philosophy is evident to Patrick in conference programs, journal articles, and training workshops related to multiculturalism, where participants are expected to move in the direction of accepting everyone else’s worldview and lifestyle on equal terms with their own. Respectful tolerance, apparently, is not enough.

I’ve never been in a diversity or multiculturalism training session in which someone has said, “You know, sometimes things are just different and we don’t like that. And it’s okay to not like that. It’s okay to voice that you don’t like that.” Never been in a situation like that. It’s always been centered around, “We must first identify

differences, then appreciate the differences, and then three, best case scenario, integrate and start to value the differences.”

Patrick does not value all differences. He shares Jim’s belief in ultimate truths, as well as his concern about morality based on popular vote. He also recognizes the distinction between tolerance and acceptance, which was articulated by both Jim and Chelsea, and applies that distinction in his dealings with other people. He acknowledges that differences exist and he sees value in learning about them, but at the end of the day, he believes that some ways of thinking and behaving are good, others are not, and what is not good should not be actively promoted. This is one of the key differences he sees in how he approaches his work in student affairs now, as opposed to before he became a Christian. As a young professional, he saw journals, conferences, and professional associations as sources of authority, and he made a concerted effort to integrate whatever research or recommendations he encountered in literature or professional development programs, regardless of how he felt personally. Now, he considers journal articles and conference sessions through the lens of his faith, and he integrates only what is congruent with his spiritual foundation.

Patrick’s desire to live a Christ-centered life sets him apart from many student affairs colleagues in other ways as well. His decision to refrain from excessive social drinking after he became a Christian cost him some friendships at the institution where he worked at the time. On a deeper philosophical level, he finds secular humanism to be inadequate as a professional paradigm. Though he finds great merit in secular humanism, Patrick disagrees with the basic assumption that people can find answers to all questions through research or other human activities. In his view, knowledge must also be guided and informed by faith. Although the infusion of Biblical language and concepts into everyday professional

discussions is commonplace on his current campus, colleagues at regional professional gatherings often raise their eyebrows at even fairly mild references to Patrick's Christian worldview. The fact that Patrick makes open reference to spirituality of any kind may be unusual, but the fact that he interjects a *Christian* spirituality is particularly noteworthy and, for some, problematic.

I find that if an academician or a student affairs colleague wants to say, "Well, as the Buddhist would point out, [...]" [then people respond] "Oh, that's a great insight. Thank you for having that worldview." But if I were to point out, "Well, as the first-century Corinthians would say, [...]" it tends to be, "Okay, well, we can't talk about the Bible now because this is not a religious discussion." So that seems to be very interesting, how often I have to mask the faith belief just because it tends to be centrist to the Christian point of view.

For colleagues who are not conservatively Christian, religion and spirituality generally seem to be regarded as something people do on a given day of the week or at certain times of the year, rather than an organizing principle of daily life. Whereas most student affairs professionals talk about student development in terms of students' years on campus or perhaps a few years beyond that, Patrick thinks about human development from an "eternity perspective." He views his actions in terms of the impact they will have on his soul and on all of humanity beyond his physical life on earth. He incorporates that perspective into his professional work and his conversations with students as well. It is an approach and a language that can make some people uneasy though. Some of the reactions Patrick encounters when he refers to his faith in professional settings seem to be based on the suspicion that such all-encompassing religious views necessarily go hand-in-hand with

socially conservative politics. In particular, Patrick finds that conversations about conservatism often get reduced to his views on homosexuality (which are more nuanced than most people expect). Again, like Chelsea, he frequently finds himself “pigeonholed” by people who assume they understand the totality of his views on the basis of only limited information.

Patrick has a genial and outgoing personality, and he loves to talk with people about faith, politics, or anything else. To Patrick, adhering to a firm code of morals and absolute right and wrong does not ever mean shutting down dialogue. He is open about his own views, but he very much wants to talk with people in ways that put them at ease and invite ideas to flow freely from all sides. He carefully avoids projecting a “my way or the highway” attitude when expressing his opinions, because he views his opinions as just that: his opinions. “I try to find some spiritual congruence and some well-reasoned ways of getting to those opinions, but they’re still just my opinions.” Patrick is even open to shifting his views if someone can show him a way of thinking that he finds to be more consistent with his spiritual values. He is like Allison in this regard (although Allison’s measure is her political philosophy rather than spiritual values), and he has received similarly positive responses from others. Patrick’s sincere interest in hearing and considering other people’s perspectives has allowed him to form many strong relationships with professional colleagues across lines of ideological difference. Although opportunities for deep dialogue are relatively rare, the outcome of such discussions has always been neutral at worst and, more often, genuinely favorable.

I’ve never lost a professional opportunity, a professional development opportunity, a colleague, a promotion, [or] a placement at a school, because I’ve been very overt with, “Well, I’m a Christian and this is what I believe,” or “This is what I think about

diversity,” or “This is what I believe about student sexuality or student sexual practices or options.”...I’ve always found myself in fascinating dialogues simply because I offer a different perspective.

Although Patrick never faced any real difficulty being conservative in student affairs early in his career, he has grown more confident in expressing himself and engaging in productive dialogue as he has gotten older. As a young man in graduate school, it was often easy for people to dismiss his conservative opinions as evidence that he had not really experienced enough of the world to know any better, or that he had not yet differentiated himself from the beliefs of his family or childhood teachers. Now, as a seasoned professional with a graduate degree and a mortgage, he finds that his views are taken more seriously.

Patrick believes strongly in the power of dialogue. Some of his best experiences in student affairs have come from conversations prompted by his unusual point of view. He would like to see other conservatives in student affairs have the confidence to speak openly about their perspectives, if only to demonstrate the diversity of thought that exists among those who call themselves conservative. He neither envisions nor desires a conservative takeover in student affairs or in society generally, as he thinks liberals fear (and as Sean might welcome). Rather, he would like to see more room for all kinds of viewpoints to be shared and discussed. People may never agree with one another, and that’s fine. People have a right to their opinions, even if others think those opinions are wrong. The important thing is for everyone’s perspectives to be given and received with respect.

Charlotte

While I would love to think that being open to difference and that dialogue is a value of our field, my experience has been that it’s not. My experience is that we’re open to

dialogue as long as you fit within these certain parameters.

Charlotte's first exposure to student affairs came as an undergraduate, when she worked as a resident assistant (RA) and was heavily involved with the residence hall association (RHA) at her large, state university. Although she disliked the bureaucracy and lack of autonomy she experienced as an RA, she loved planning events and advising younger students through the RHA. She decided against putting her communications and public relations major to work in corporate America and chose instead to pursue a career in student affairs. She has since worked in residence life and housing at four institutions in Region IV East, including a small, private liberal arts college and three large public universities. Her current position, which she has held for approximately two years, is as an area coordinator at a large, urban campus where her responsibilities include coordinating the residence life judicial process and overseeing student volunteer initiatives in her section of the university.

Charlotte considered herself to be a liberal Democrat when she entered college. Her family was very liberal and she hadn't thought enough about her own views to identify herself any differently. She began paying attention to politics for herself during the 2000 election season, the first presidential race in which she was eligible to vote. The more she read and listened, the more she realized that she preferred what the Republican candidates had to say. She also began to notice how her opinions and values differed from those of other students in ways that were consistent with a conservative philosophy.

Like several other participants, Charlotte's conservatism is driven largely by her belief in small government and localized authority. She also values fiscal conservatism, which means she favors low taxes and spending within one's means. She is bothered, for example, by how freely her institution spends money throughout the year, only to implement

a spending freeze in the last month of each fiscal year because resources have run dry. She considers her measured approach to change to be reflective of her conservative values as well. Rather than embracing change for its own sake, she believes in asking questions and seeking reliable data to guide change efforts.

On social questions, Charlotte's ideological values are more mixed. She acknowledges the existence of social privilege, but she objects to affirmative action as a way to address it. She believes in individual responsibility and hard work, but also feels it is important to ensure equal opportunity and to support people in achieving their goals. She would like to "stop out" of the workforce once she and her husband start a family, but she plans to return to her career when her children are old enough to start school. She is pro-choice, and she supports same-sex marriage. Her constellation of views broadly resembles those of Alex and Allison, who also identified as conservative in terms of fiscal policy and scope of government while holding relatively liberal opinions on social issues.

Breaking with the political identity of her family wasn't easy, and to this day, Charlotte generally avoids political discussions with her parents. She will sometimes discuss politics with her husband's family, but because they are more conservative than she is, she finds that can get uncomfortable too. Her mother-in-law sometimes questions how Charlotte can work where she does, and she sometimes tells Charlotte that her campus is making her liberal. Preferring to avoid confrontation on either side, Charlotte usually listens more than she participates when political conversations arise. It is a strategy she has used through much of her professional career as well, as have Alex, Sean, Marty, and Chelsea.

Charlotte's ideology—political and fiscal conservatism laced with socially liberal threads—has never been perfectly compatible with any of her work environments. All of her

institutions have been characterized by a liberal sensibility, and this is especially true of her current university. Although she supports some of the institution's policies, such as those governing domestic partner benefits and family leave, she struggles with the commitment to race-based affirmative action that is evident at all levels of the university. Charlotte expects she would encounter this type of struggle no matter where she worked, though. A good fit is "really hard to find as a conservative in student affairs unless you work at some of the very, very conservative schools," and Charlotte thinks those schools would be too conservative for her. Fortunately, finding a good institutional fit is a relatively low priority. "I want a job that's going to let me do what I want with my life, and fit isn't as important to me."

In some ways, Charlotte's current department provides about as good a fit as she has ever experienced. Hers is an unusual residence life department in that its members are predominantly male and highly independent. Rather than focusing on group bonding, empathy, and consensus-building, the professional culture of the department is very task-oriented and business-like in a way that suits Charlotte's own preferred work style. At least two other colleagues are also conservative, which surprised Charlotte initially. She can count on two hands the number of conservatives she has encountered in the profession overall. She was one of the few participants in the study who had any conservative colleagues in her immediate work environment.

Having conservative colleagues—both of whom are men—has caused Charlotte to reflect on the intersection of gender and political identity, especially in her work environment, where male privilege is evident. "I think there's a different stigma for a guy to be conservative than a woman....And maybe it's because most of the...conservatives I know are men." The conservative men in Charlotte's department appear to have an easier time than

she does, although she isn't exactly sure why.

They don't think about or worry about the things that I do when it comes to sharing political views or speaking out or even just...negotiating the day-to-day politics of our department....That can be a leadership style. It also could be a privilege standpoint of "[name]'s not going to say no to me," kind of thing.

The culture of her current department notwithstanding, Charlotte has always felt like an outsider in residence life. She suspects that, in some ways, her sense of alienation may have more to do with her personality than her political values (although the two sometimes overlap). She finds, for instance, that she is always asking questions and challenging her colleagues on why things are done as they are. Though she considers asking questions to be an important professional value and she does not feel the need to change in that regard, her questions sometimes give the impression that she is not in agreement with what others are doing. Additionally, in contrast to many student affairs professionals, Charlotte does not bring work home or check her office e-mail over the weekend. She asserts, "I work to live; I don't live to work." She aspires to maintain the work-life balance that Alex discovered was so important to her in the middle of her career.

Charlotte's desire to take time away from her career when she has children is a reflection of the balance she seeks between her professional and personal life, but it is also an expression of her conservative values related to family. Unfortunately, she has found no support for that choice among women she has met through regional professional women's networks. "The answer I always get is, 'Why would you want to do that? You can make it work. Higher ed is so flexible, you can do it all.'" It is deeply disappointing to Charlotte that the views of women in the field are so limited and that there is no one who can help guide her

in the direction she prefers.

Of course, espousing a conservative political ideology makes Charlotte stand out all the more. She finds that other professionals often don't quite know how to react to a conservative in their midst. "I feel like the overarching assumption is everyone is liberal and then it's like, 'Oh, you're not. Okay.' And then just don't talk about it anymore." She would like to be able to have conversations with people about some of the philosophical and values-driven differences that become evident at conferences and other professional meetings, but she feels that others are uninterested or uneasy about having those conversations.

Having perceived early on that identifying as a Republican carried a certain stigma in student affairs—a stigma also felt by Alex, Sean, and Chelsea—Charlotte, like the others, chose to downplay that part of herself for much of her career:

I don't know if this is true, but I've always felt like in student affairs we are open to all sorts of things if you think like us. And since I don't on several things, I kept my mouth shut. I felt like it was easier.

Only in the last two years or so has she started identifying openly as conservative. "I guess I got tired of keeping quiet and feeling like I needed to smile or nod at jokes or things that I didn't find funny." She made her first public declaration of being conservative on her Facebook profile. (This is unusual among the participants, many of whom avoid using Facebook entirely or at least refrain from identifying themselves politically there.) With the 2008 presidential primary races ramping up at that time, being "officially out" allowed Charlotte to feel more at ease in explaining her relatively subdued reaction to Barack Obama's candidacy, which had generated intense fervor on her campus and in the surrounding area. Since then, she has continued to grow in her self-assurance about

identifying openly as a conservative. “I think I’ve just become more confident in where I’m at in the field and realizing that if that’s going to hurt me professionally, then that’s probably not an institution I want to be a part of.”

Charlotte has never experienced open and direct hostility or discrimination as a result of being a conservative. She is good at what she does and she believes that counts more with her colleagues and supervisors than any ideological differences. Still, she is aware of dissonance between her values and those of the field, and there are ways in which she senses judgment, either about her own views or about conservative positions in general. Facebook offers one illustration of this. Whereas her liberal colleagues, staff, and students will post political comments regularly and without any negative response, Charlotte sees the postings of a conservative friend generate a flurry of strong reactions. As a result, Charlotte finds herself shying away from expressing her views through that medium out of concern for drawing fire from those who would disagree.

The favored status of liberal political views at Charlotte’s institution was evident to her during the 2008 presidential election. “We were promoting going to specific political events, not just promoting the election in general....We really weren’t doing anything to promote the other side or the other opinions or conversations out there. And I really struggled with that.” Given the strong support for Barack Obama that was evident everywhere on campus, Charlotte was pleased that, during the campaign, her colleagues and staff adhered to the university’s policy forbidding employees from wearing or displaying political paraphernalia. The day after the election, however, was another story.

Several of the staff members wore Obama t-shirts to work. And nothing was said to them. And to me, if the election had gone the other way and I had worn a McCain-

Palin shirt, I would have been reprimanded...I know I would have been. But because Obama won...and that was the popular person to win, nothing was said.

This experience mirrors the double standard perceived by Alex and Marty on their campuses as well during that time.

A similar kind of non-response reveals values and priorities more closely related to Charlotte's day-to-day work. Charlotte finds that there are people in student affairs who hold very strong beliefs, particularly on topics related to diversity, and who regard their professional positions as opportunities to advance causes that are important to them. In cases in which a position or office is designed to advocate for a certain group (e.g., veterans, GLBT students, students of color), Charlotte sees nothing wrong with people in those roles taking an activist approach. When a position or office is meant to serve the entire student body, however, she feels that activism on behalf of one particular group is inappropriate. She is bothered further by the fact that people in authority so often look the other way and allow such activism to continue.

Where I get concerned is when I see my housing colleagues, in my opinion, losing sight by becoming focused on things they're passionate about. And I don't think that they shouldn't be passionate. But it just has to have a time and place. And my perception is that because it's around these diversity issues that no one would ever tell them they needed to refocus.

Charlotte believes that her identification as a conservative Republican sometimes leads fellow professionals to make assumptions about her attitudes on specific issues, especially with regard to diversity. Specifically, she is concerned that people often associate being conservative with being racist, and they consequently read racist motives into her

views on things like affirmative action. This is reminiscent of Allison's concern about revealing to her African American students that she had supported John McCain over Barack Obama. Jim, Chelsea, and Patrick made similar observations about the tendency for people to assume they (or conservatives generally) are racist or hold otherwise bigoted views. Perhaps ironically, the mistrust is particularly noticeable when Charlotte tries to incorporate the needs of students of color into her work. "I throw out an idea of doing some stuff to try to get more students of color involved in leadership positions and the reaction I got was almost like, 'Really? Why would *she* want to do that?'"

When diversity is discussed on Charlotte's campus, she finds it is defined almost exclusively in terms of race. There is also an implicit assumption that students of color all share similar beliefs and have the same needs. In her usual way of questioning the status quo, Charlotte is most often the person to challenge that assumption and to suggest that her colleagues consider other types of diversity, such as abilities or socioeconomic status, in their understanding of multiculturalism. She thinks that being conservative—an unacknowledged minority group on her liberal campus—may make her more aware of the ways in which the needs of students with various other underrepresented identities are overlooked on her campus.

Charlotte feels that her questions—particularly those pertaining to diversity and multiculturalism—are unwelcome by her colleagues. "When I have challenged those questions, I've felt very attacked and very isolated, and that I wasn't supposed to raise those questions and viewpoints because it was outside of the parameters of dialogue." She will voice questions and opinions with her immediate staff, with whom she has developed a high level of trust and mutual respect, but she avoids participating in planning multicultural events

or engaging in diversity-related discussions with most others because “it just gets complicated.” For a person who has almost always been willing to talk with colleagues about her thoughts on professional issues, and who more recently has begun to share her personal political views as well, Charlotte’s reluctance to get involved in conversations or activities in this one area is notable.

Over time, as she has become more knowledgeable and confident in herself as a conservative, Charlotte has found it increasingly unsatisfying to remain quiet on political issues, including issues related to diversity. In some ways, however, developing the freedom to express herself has actually made her circumstances more difficult.

I’m trying to figure out where the place is to express that voice, where it fits, and that’s what’s made it harder. When I wasn’t exactly sure about my views, or I was okay with them and I just didn’t tell anybody, it was actually easier.

She is more forthcoming with her views now than she once was, but she feels that she still has a considerable way to go before she is where she wants to be. She admired the confidence Allison projected during the group interview and aspires to develop a similar degree of confidence herself. She would like to be able to serve as a voice for the conservative students and staff who come to her to vent their frustrations, but she doesn’t feel quite ready for that. “I don’t know that I’m at a place to be an advocate yet when...I still find myself shying away from conversations [because] I don’t want to get attacked.”

Charlotte believes that the best course she can take right now is to take more time to educate herself about current issues. “My biggest concern is feeling like I don’t have enough information to really be very vocal in when I’m in the minority opinion.” Debates inevitably arise when she expresses a conservative view, and Charlotte feels pressure to have as much

knowledge as possible to defend her position. In that sense, being a conservative in student affairs has actually been good for her. “I think it’s really forced me to know who I am and what I believe more.” Allison—with her drive toward educating herself on all sides of an issue and arriving at her beliefs accordingly—was a model to Charlotte in this regard as well.

In an effort to feel more comfortable, Charlotte and her husband are also making plans to leave their current location. Like Jim, but to a lesser extent perhaps, Charlotte has come to recognize that the ideological orientation of her environment can have considerable bearing on the level of stress she experiences. She feels she could handle working at a very liberal institution if the ethos of the community outside of work were more congruent with her own ideology, but working *and* living in very liberal environment has felt overwhelming. “I don’t need to be someplace that’s really, really conservative, but I need something that’s at least neutral.” She hopes she can stay in student affairs, but true to her “work to live” attitude, finding the perfect job is less important than finding a place where she can raise a family and enjoy her life.

Andrew

Am I a staunch conservative, you know, George Bush, Rush Limbaugh kind of person? I’m not. I’m definitely not. But I take a conservative stance on certain issues, and I think that makes me stand out in higher ed sometimes, makes me stand out like a sore thumb. But what’s interesting is many of my friends, because I work in education, assume automatically that I am extremely liberal....And I really don’t address it. I laugh it off and dismiss it. But it’s just interesting because many times they’re incorrect.

Andrew proved to be a unique participant in this study in two significant ways: first,

he is not currently working in student affairs, and second, he does not actually identify himself as conservative. Although either of those points might have disqualified him as a participant had I realized them before we began our interviews, I am grateful that they were unclear to me long enough to keep Andrew in the study. He offers valuable perspectives that lend depth and complexity to this investigation into the experiences of conservatives in the field, even if he does not choose to embrace that particular label (or any other). The fact that ideological differences were a large part of Andrew's reason for leaving student affairs also adds an element of interest to his story.

Andrew was raised in a rural part of the northeastern U.S., with a family that was socially conservative but politically indifferent. He studied communications and business as an undergraduate at a medium-size public university, where he also worked as a resident assistant. He took a job in broadcasting after college, but soon discovered that he felt uninspired by the work he was doing. His undergraduate experience working in residence life came back to him, and he decided to change course and pursue a career in higher education. He held an assistantship as a residence hall director while he earned a master's degree in higher education administration, and he spent the next nine years working full-time in residence life at public and private institutions in Regions IV East and IV West. He is currently working on the academic side of higher education, teaching courses and managing leadership programs in the business school of a large, religiously-affiliated university in Region IV West. He is also nearing the completion of a doctoral program in higher education administration.

Andrew loved a lot of what he did as a residence life professional, but after more than a decade in the field, he decided, "that was enough....Philosophically, it just didn't fit

anymore.” Andrew found that residence life administrators were too often focused on retaining students as customers, rather than holding them accountable for their behavior. Keeping their business was a higher priority than educating them about the consequences of their actions. Although Andrew generally felt supported by supervisors in his own efforts to set high expectations for student conduct, he saw himself as the exception rather than the rule in that regard. He wanted to be in an environment where concern for individual responsibility was shared more broadly. Being in an academic position has suited him well. The promise (or threat) of grades offers a natural system of checks and balances for students who are testing limits and learning how to handle their own independence. Students can easily see the connection between their choices (such as whether to attend class) and their level of achievement. Accreditation requirements also give faculty and administrators incentives to uphold academic standards, which further reinforces the culture of accountability in academics.

Personal responsibility is a central value in Andrew’s life. In fact, it is the basis of his “selectively conservative” ideology. His ideology cannot be easily characterized, however, using standard definitions and labels. “I think I have relative [sic] conservative leanings and I’ve never really labeled myself like Republican, conservative, in that traditional fashion....I would say it’s been more my friends and colleagues who have labeled me that.” Indeed, even Andrew’s friends have difficulty pegging his ideology accurately. His conservative business friends generally assume him to be liberal, while his education colleagues have perceived him to be conservative. His example illustrates the relative nature of the terms themselves. Within the context of his business school, Andrew believes that he probably stands to the left of most of his colleagues, at least on some issues. Amidst a group of young student affairs

professionals, his centrist or center-right views placed him far to the right of his peers. Although he sees himself as residing happily somewhere in the middle, it is the conservative aspects of his value system—and the assumptions others make because of it—that have generated the most tension for him in higher education.

As is true for several other participants, the most common sources of tension for Andrew are found in issues related to diversity. One challenge stems from the perception on the part of liberal colleagues that a conservative ideology indicates insensitivity to the needs of underrepresented students. Allison, Charlotte, Chelsea, Patrick, and Jim have all felt the impact of similar assumptions. Andrew explains:

I got into this field...for many reasons, including my compassion and my care for young people and my desire to see them...thrive. And I think it's often a misconception that to hold people personally accountable means that you don't care about their diverse background.

Whereas colleagues might choose to make allowances because of students' disadvantaged circumstances, Andrew believes that having high expectations, and then working with students to meet those expectations, is also an expression of care. Though he believes that nurturance is important, he doesn't believe that it should be the "default" approach, as it seems to be in student affairs.

I think far less often we close the door and sit down and have a good heart-to-heart, one-on-one with the student and say, "Is this really a product of your illness or your disability, or your lot in life, or your divorced parents, or your race or your sexual preference? Is it really a product of that or is it really more a product of the effort that you're putting into solving your problem?" You know, sometimes it is the former,

and maybe even often. But I think sometimes, and maybe even often, it's the latter. Far from being dismissive of a student's struggles, Andrew sees his philosophy of personal responsibility as encouraging students to focus on what they can control about their circumstances and to do whatever is in their power to succeed regardless of the hand they've been dealt.

Andrew considers his approach to be consistent with a conservative ideology with regard to problem-solving. He finds that conservatives tend to focus their attention on individual, autonomous actors, while liberals interpret the world more in terms of groups and systems. The liberal orientation of student affairs professionals, coupled with the inclination to nurture, translates into an emphasis on collective, group-oriented solutions to student concerns, such as creating resource centers or other external structures for even just a small number of students, rather than working with students as individuals and helping them to help themselves. This perspective is consistent with views expressed by Marty and Patrick, as well.

Enacting a philosophy of personal responsibility can be "tricky," especially where diversity-related issues are concerned. One of the central tensions in Andrew's experience is how to be supportive of diversity while still holding people accountable for their own actions, or lack thereof. Like Allison, Charlotte, and others, Andrew acknowledges that discrimination and oppression exist in various forms in today's society. He understands that as a White, straight male, he has a role to play in addressing those injustices, and he takes that role seriously. At the same time, he is frustrated when he sees students or colleagues who claim to champion particular social causes sitting back passively, even when the struggle involves their own empowerment.

There are people saying “I want these rights and I want my voice to be heard,” but when the tough decisions come up, sometimes people are looking at their shoes and they’re not taking individual responsibility....I understand that there are just terrible things from our history that have happened, that...middle-aged White people, straight White people like myself should step up and should help, and I’m honored and flattered to do that. But at the same time, if I’m working with students or with colleagues of color or of alternative lifestyles who want their voice to be heard but aren’t willing to roll up their sleeves, I feel the need to challenge them on that.

In a similar vein, Andrew is frustrated by what he considers to be “politically correct” approaches to diversity, which involve “making superficial choices in order to not offend people.” As a young professional in residence life, Andrew was not convinced that using certain words instead of others (“man” and “woman” instead of “boy” and “girl,” for example) actually made a difference to any student’s feeling of comfort in the residence halls. Yet language use was heavily stressed during his residence life training. (Out of concern for his job security, Andrew kept his reservations to himself.) Instead of little things that might make people feel better about themselves in the short term, Andrew favors powerful measures that are more likely to achieve lasting results. He sees it as an expression of his conservative philosophy to expect people to take risks and make tough decisions in the effort to uproot entrenched injustices. In the same way that Allison’s socially liberal views challenge people’s notions of what it means to be conservative, Andrew’s approach to diversity—and the fact that he sees his approach as an illustration of his conservatism—might puzzle those who consider social justice to be a liberal concern.

Challenging the status quo is a responsibility that lies with professional associations

and journals, as well as with individual practitioners. Unfortunately, although Andrew finds the student affairs and higher education journals to include high-quality research, he thinks “they tend to be safe.” He has never seen an article questioning whether the current, liberal-oriented approaches to diversity are truly effective, for example. Likewise, though he appreciates the issues discussed at national student affairs professional conferences (which he still attends on occasion), he agrees with Charlotte, Chelsea, Marty, and Jim that the measures proposed to address those issues usually have a liberal quality that is not reflective of his philosophy.

I like the openness and the diversity, and the excitement of saying, “We want diversity and we want these things and we want...this, that, and the other thing.” A lot of things I believe in. But the path for getting there,...I disagree with the path.

At this stage of his life and career, Andrew generally feels comfortable talking openly about his conservative values on matters related to his work. With age has come greater self-awareness, maturity, and openness to different perspectives, both on his part and on the part of his professional peers. He thinks friends and classmates would describe him as “fairly disarming” in how he challenges people to consider alternative perspectives. He sees his conservative philosophy as his contribution to the diversity that characterizes higher education today, and he feels that his perspective is appreciated by and large, even if people don’t necessarily agree. Like Patrick, Allison, and others, Andrew doesn’t demand agreement; he seeks respect, and he gives that respect in return.

Ironically, because I value diversity and because I want a diverse campus, I share my leanings and what I think is the right strategy, and sometimes people perceive that as being wrong or as being a philosophy that doesn’t value diversity. And that’s fine.

That's fine.

To the extent that his professional opinions and values suggest a particular political ideology as well, Andrew doesn't mind. He resembles Allison, Alex, and others in this regard, but with one very important difference. Whereas other participants will correct misperceptions and speak honestly about their opinions if asked, Andrew absolutely refuses to engage in conversations about his personal political views. When he was younger, he enjoyed engaging in political conversations and taking a more traditional conservative position in those discussions. That did not sit well with some of his friends and colleagues, who saw Andrew's conservative opinions as "old boys' network, old school, stuffy, not open." After being "hammered" painfully on a few occasions by people he trusted, Andrew decided several years ago that politics, like religion, is a purely private matter. Whether he is talking with students, colleagues, friends, or family, he will speak only in general terms—about the significance of an election or piece of legislation, perhaps—and he will use his active listening skills, honed through his training in student affairs, to stay in a conversation without committing himself to one position or another.

Keeping politics out of his professional work is very easy for Andrew to do in his current role on the academic side of the university. Political and social issues rarely come up in his interactions with his business school colleagues or in his work with students. Maintaining such a clear separation in student affairs was much more difficult.

On the academic side...we're not dealing with where people eat and sleep and their basic needs. I think in residential life and in student affairs we are, so personal issues related to social issues hit a little more close to home and a little more close to work. Still, Andrew does not rule out taking a position in student affairs again at some point

in the future. He misses some of the opportunities he had in student affairs to work with campus-wide diversity events, for example, and he misses the unpredictability that working in student affairs entails. "I miss the quiriness and the students coming to me to share their wacky issues and, you know, looking for resolution, seeking counsel, those sorts of things." He still wishes that the profession would concern itself more with personal accountability, but given the right institution or the right position, he would enjoy being part of that world again.

Michelle

Sometimes [even] individuals who are very tolerant and are very accepting don't realize what they're doing. Sometimes you just have to point it out. ... So I try not to make assumptions about even an individual who's doing something [that offends me]. They're probably just not thinking.

Michelle has had a long career in higher education and has worked in a number of different areas of the university outside of student affairs. Her current position, which she has held for only a few years, is situated in a student affairs department at a medium-size, public institution and involves counseling students on all aspects of college life.

Michelle grew up in a working-class neighborhood in the northeastern United States. Much of her childhood was marked by being in the minority in one sense or another. At a time when the nuclear family was the unquestioned norm, Michelle was being raised by older members of her extended family. She stood out for being a Christian at her elementary school, where most of the students and teachers were Jewish. In middle school, she stood out as one of only three students in the school who were not Black. These early experiences taught Michelle a great deal about people whose backgrounds were different from her own,

and they played an essential part in shaping who she is today.

Michelle spent many years working in blue-collar jobs before moving to Region III, where she has spent her educational and professional career. She began her post-secondary education at a community college, and earned her bachelor's and master's degrees while working full-time and raising a family. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in higher education administration.

When I asked Michelle about the ways in which she identifies as conservative, she began by talking about the ideological differences she perceives between the southern region where she currently lives and the northeast, where she was raised. Her observations hearken back to Andrew's experience of being seen as liberal by friends in the more conservative world of business, and seen as conservative by those in the more liberal world of education. "The...Republican mindset in [northeastern state] is significantly more liberal than here. ...That person would be a Democrat here." Indeed, Michelle's views on many issues are more typical of Democrats in her area, and she is very uncomfortable with what she considers to be some of the more extreme aspects of southern Republican ideology. She continues to identify as conservative, however, and to affiliate with the Republican Party, primarily because of her opinions on fiscal policy issues. "We can't help anyone if we're not solvent. And so we have to start there."

Michelle's fiscal conservatism, in combination with her experiences as a non-traditional student, provides the basis for a perspective on student affairs that is decidedly unusual for a student affairs professional. Michelle was largely unaware of student affairs until she began working in her current position, and she suspects that some members of her division have an inflated sense of the value of student affairs work. Although she

acknowledges that the services and programs administered by student affairs can enhance students' college experience, she sees many of those activities as luxuries rather than an integral part of a college education. She questions the value of devoting funds—particularly in difficult economic times—to activities that are peripheral to the essential academic mission of a university.

I didn't come to college looking for resources, study abroad, or any of the other elements that student affairs promotes... That would have been a burden to have that added on top of everything else I was trying to do. My intent was to show up for class, do what was required, and leave.

Michelle is especially skeptical of the student development goals that are heavily emphasized in her department and in the profession generally. Unless an institution makes it clear from the outset that certain beliefs or values will be cultivated as part of its mission (such as at a religiously-affiliated college), she believes it is inappropriate to push students toward particular inclinations of mind and heart, or to decide where they should be developmentally. "I struggle with that concept.... We're here for the purpose of educating students," which, in Michelle's view, means providing an academic education above all else.

Whereas Michelle sees extra-curricular programs as generally harmless, if unessential, she finds the emphasis on student development (in specific directions) to be simply wrong, regardless of whether she personally agrees with the values that her department seeks to promote. She believes that all individuals should be free to hold their own opinions, and it would be presumptuous of student affairs educators to try to change them. "I'm tolerant of others... Any kind of indoctrination, one way or the other, I think is not appropriate. ... Some call it a... flaw in our society, this emphasis on the individual,... but I

believe that.”

Michelle is aware that her perspective on student affairs, and specifically student development, is unusual for someone in her position. Aside from the isolation she feels by virtue of disagreeing with how her department conceives of its mission, she also feels that the nature of the work she does—meeting individually with students behind closed doors—sets her apart from many of her colleagues. She doesn’t fully grasp much of the work done by others outside her department, nor does she think others understand what she does either. She is fairly comfortable with the fact that she does not feel like she is part of the student affairs world, however, as long as she can continue to work with students in meaningful ways to help them achieve their goals. Like everyone else in the study, she loves what she does and she is grateful for the opportunity to do it, even though her work environment can be challenging at times.

The incongruity Michelle experiences in her office is evident in other ideological differences with her colleagues. She is the only Republican among her immediate professional colleagues, although she was careful not to reveal that to anyone when she began in her current position.

Once I started to work in student affairs, I personally was concerned that if I did that it might be detrimental to my longevity in student affairs; that...I had to just go along to get along, to be part of the program and just be...quiet if you want to keep your job. Not that I think that I would be fired because of it, but I think that opportunities might be limited and people might perceive me differently if they thought that I didn’t believe in...what I think liberals consider to be appropriate for someone in this field. More than any of the participants I have introduced thus far, Michelle’s experiences

as a graduate student in higher education administration have justified and perhaps reinforced her apprehensions about identifying openly as a conservative in academic circles. An outspokenly liberal professor once announced to Michelle's class that anyone inclined toward conservative or Republican ideology should get out of education because such people have no future in the field. Michelle was shocked, but saw no benefit in confronting such a blatant example of bias. She felt the risk of speaking up in that case was simply too great. "Had I confronted that in the classroom, I'm not sure what would have happened. ...I really didn't want to take the chance. Professors have power when you're a student. ...They have power over opportunity." In another instance, a professor singled Michelle out as the "resident Republican" to represent an extreme right-wing view in a class role-playing exercise. It was very uncomfortable for Michelle, who feared that her classmates—future professional colleagues—would form a lasting impression of her on the basis of an ultra-conservative view that she herself did not in fact hold. Fortunately, Michelle's relationship with that professor was characterized by sufficient trust that she was able to turn the uncomfortable experience into something positive. In future classes with that professor, she was able to share her actual opinions freely, and with a sense of assurance that the professor would respect her even if they disagreed. In the classroom, as in her professional life, Michelle—like Alex and Chelsea—tries to choose her battles wisely.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Michelle was deeply disappointed—although not entirely surprised—to find that a senior-level staff member in the office was actively campaigning for Barack Obama among colleagues during work time and asking them to help sway the votes of others on the staff, all without any evidence of disapproval from anyone higher up. This is a more blatant example of the inappropriate campaigning (and

administrative inaction) observed by Marty and Alex on their campuses during that period as well. It was an uncomfortable time for Michelle, who very deliberately “kept [her] mouth shut” throughout the election season. Discussing politics would have been uncomfortable for Michelle under any circumstances, having been raised in a culture that considered politics, sex, and religion to be inappropriate topics for conversation. Knowing that her political affiliation would be unpopular with senior colleagues made Michelle all the more careful to keep her opinions to herself.

The political climate in Michelle’s office is different from what she has experienced in any of her previous workplaces. To the extent that political ideology was ever apparent in her previous work environments, people tended toward conservative views, or at least toward the pragmatic. It didn’t matter what people believed about issues that were irrelevant to their work; the important thing was whether they did their jobs well. In student affairs, however, Michelle has noticed that people are far more likely to talk about ideology, perhaps because some issues that relate closely to the work of student affairs—particularly where questions of identity and diversity are concerned—also have political overtones. Her observations are similar to Andrew’s reflections regarding the difference between academic and student affairs.

You can’t really avoid those kind of conversations in student affairs. Which is interesting, because you could live for years in other departments and never have a conversation [like that]. Successfully navigate and have good working relationships with people and it’s not quite as – there aren’t as many landmines in settings like that....And the reason for that, I’ve concluded, is that it is actually part of the job of student affairs and that’s why it’s discussed here.

In truth, even in her current role, political ideology is rarely part of Michelle's daily work. This was true for Alex, Allison, Sean, and other participants as well. As was also true for other participants, however, the weight of liberal expectations is present. These expectations are communicated at staff meetings, through Facebook posts, and other interactions with colleagues. The pressure is sufficiently strong that Michelle has felt the need to draw a very clear boundary between her professional life and her private life in order to avoid sharing aspects of her life outside of work that might create problems for her at the office. Even her husband has scaled back on his associations with local conservative political leaders in order to help Michelle maintain a low profile at work. The precautions she takes to avoid revealing her conservative identity are among the strictest of all of the participants. It saddens her to think that such measures are necessary in the supposedly enlightened environment of a university, but she considers the impact on her professional satisfaction to be relatively minor, on the whole.

Unlike Allison, Jim, and other participants who will share their views if asked, Michelle is a fairly private person, and she is not inclined to broadcast her beliefs in public under any circumstances. She does not disclose her political affiliation to students, for example, and she can't imagine using a social networking website like Facebook as a tool to express her political or religious views. She is amazed by the extent to which colleagues in higher education will use Facebook as a forum for their personal beliefs, and she is bothered by the "smugness" that characterizes many of those posts, as if everyone reading them is naturally expected to agree.

Michelle, like Andrew, is frustrated sometimes by the amount of talk devoted to diversity in student affairs and higher education generally, when the actual efforts made

toward inclusivity seem far too often to be little more than token efforts. Even those efforts are limited to the types of diversity that are recognized as important at that particular point in time. As other participants have also observed, conservatives and Christians are seldom taken into account. Michelle was reminded of this during a mandatory staff training session on sexual orientation and gender identity. The program allowed no opportunity for attendees to discuss any objections or concerns they might have had with the material, suggesting that all participants were assumed to be comfortable with the basic ideas of homosexuality and gender variance, or that their level of comfort was irrelevant. To Michelle, the message was clear: if you work here, this is what you must believe. Even though the training session did not conflict with her own beliefs, it troubled Michelle greatly to see that there was so little room for different values and opinions.

Like Sean, Michelle's faith is a central guiding force in her life, and represents yet another way in which she feels she is different from her professional colleagues. She would very much like to be able to express that part of herself in her office, particularly at Christmas, but the complete absence of religious imagery anywhere in the office, including in people's private office spaces, has conveyed to her that any displays of her Christian beliefs would be firmly frowned upon. Even her favorite picture from a family wedding remains at home because she is afraid that someone might perceive the cross in the background as a potentially offensive and inappropriate expression of her religious values.

Although questions about the appropriate treatment of religion at public universities are relatively common in higher education, Michelle senses that conversations with students about religion are generally permissible as long as they don't involve mainstream Christianity. This recalls the dynamic described earlier by Patrick, wherein references to

Christianity are valued less than references to other religions during professional conversations. Michelle's own interactions with students are affected by the apparent double standard she perceives in her office. Michelle shies away from talking about religion with Christian students or using religious language in her work with them, even when students have told her that religion is an important part of their lives. On the other hand, she feels perfectly comfortable talking with students of other religious faiths about their traditions and the meaning they draw from their spiritual practices. Discussing religion with non-Christian students seems appropriately respectful of diversity, but Michelle fears that a similar conversation with a Christian student would be seen as compromising the value her office places on inclusiveness. "I think that...[mainstream Christian] faiths are often associated with a more, I think, a more right-wing ideology and then that is not consistent with the culture at the university. And so...that's where I run into a problem."

Michelle sees great value in diversity, broadly defined. When people feel free to develop and contribute their unique perspectives—which encompass all aspects of their identity, personal history, cultural heritage, and belief systems—social groups (e.g., communities, institutions, other social organizations) benefit from an inherent system of checks and balances. These checks and balances give integrity to the process of setting goals and making decisions. Without that, Michelle believes that groupthink tends to set in, giving people excuses to shut themselves off from others who are different. "[Diversity] keeps from having a lot of walls. It helps to break them down. ... We build walls around us when we are not able to hear others and we're so busy saying how right we are, we're not hearing anything." The nature of the groupthink makes no difference to Michelle. She is just as frustrated by groups of Republicans reinforcing each other's sense of self-righteousness as

she is by what she has experienced in liberal circles within higher education. Michelle acknowledges that it can be difficult to create a sense of trust that is deep enough to allow people to feel secure expressing diverse points of view on the job. Unfortunately, the realities of any work environment make it unlikely, especially in a period of economic instability, that people in subordinate positions will voice significant opposition to those who have the power to eliminate their jobs.

The desire to break down walls and encourage dialogue among people who are different is consistent with the very high value Michelle places on being open-minded and accepting people, no matter who they are or what they believe. Growing up among people who held strongly negative views about others of different racial and religious backgrounds, Michelle learned that her love for those people didn't have to change simply because she came to believe they were wrong. Now, as an adult, she exudes a remarkable sense of compassion, characterized by a firm resolve to withhold judgment, to understand people's circumstances, and to separate people from their behavior and beliefs, even when those beliefs may have an adverse effect on her personally.

While...it's not the reputation of Republicans, I think that I am...more open-minded and accepting of people and their differences than most of the people who I work with, who happen to have a different political perspective. I try not to make assumptions and I try to think about...how they make their decisions...and why individuals come to the conclusions that they do.

Although she does not use exactly the same language, Michelle's sentiments echo the assertions made by Jim, Chelsea, and Patrick about distinguishing tolerance from acceptance. She can try to understand what someone thinks without necessarily agreeing with it.

Michelle applies this same principle to social institutions and organizations, such as higher education and student affairs. She understands that the research she reads, which consequently guides practice, is grounded in assumptions and frameworks that were readily accepted at the time the research was conducted. She is comfortable in the realization that things change, and the aspects of the field that contradict her own ideological framework may not last forever.

We've got to have historical perspective on thought in general. You realize that how we see things and how we think changes a lot. Right now we have a certain way of looking at things, and I look at a lot of the things that go on in student affairs and I think, in long range perspective, this is just a snapshot. This just happens to be where we are right now.

The problems Michelle encounters in her work environment are not constant, and she has been able to use her "go along to get along" strategy to manage her circumstances effectively. She generally gets along well with her colleagues and supervisor. She feels very little trust, however, either within her immediate office or among her student affairs colleagues more broadly. She would like to be able to ask questions and have sincere conversations about the values and practice of student affairs work or about different approaches to diversity, but she feels strongly that such discussions would be discouraged. In the same way that Alex feared that identifying as conservative might have limited her opportunities in her professional organization (and perhaps did cost her a promotion at her institution), Michelle fears that identifying herself openly as conservative or as a Republican could have a negative impact on her career. Like Alex, she would like to be judged by the quality of her work, and not have those judgments filtered through the lens of what others

assume “conservative” means.

Casey

Over the last several years, as I question what the heck am I doing staying in higher education,...I'm reminded that there are many students on this campus that need a voice that I have, that others don't have on this campus....So I've been affirmed by students and staff alike that there is a purpose for me here and that I'm valued here. And so that's kind of what keeps me going, although there are days when it's like, "Are you kidding me? I work for this institution, are you kidding me?"

Casey has worked in student affairs, and specifically in residence life, for the past 20 years. She has spent her career in Region IV East, working at a number of public universities and one small private college before taking her current position as an assistant director of housing at a medium-size public university. Although she served as director of housing at two previous institutions, she enjoys being at the level of assistant director, where she can supervise staff and work directly with students while also maintaining a certain degree of distance from university politics.

In her personal politics, Casey and her husband are active members of the local Republican Party. Like Sean, she is also a devout Catholic and considers her faith to be an integral part of what it means to be conservative. Accordingly, she is pro-life and holds traditional views regarding marriage and sexual activity outside of marriage. Casey's conservatism is also closely tied to traditional values in terms of family, work ethic, patriotism, and individual freedom and responsibility. She agrees with Sean, Jim, and Chelsea that everyone needs to work hard for what they get, rather than looking to others to support them through entitlement programs or handouts.

Casey was actually not aware of herself as a conservative for many years. She was first eligible to vote in 1980, when Ronald Reagan won his first term as president. For the next 12 years—a substantial part of Casey’s young adult life—the country continued to be governed by Republican presidents, and being conservative just seemed normal. The election of Democrat Bill Clinton in 1992 proved to be a defining moment in her life. Through the shock and dismay she felt over the outcome of that election, Casey realized for the first time how conservative she was, and she began to identify herself consciously as a conservative from that point on.

A self-described introvert, Casey is content to stay out of the spotlight. Like Michelle, she prefers to talk with people directly rather than broadcast information about herself through Facebook or other such impersonal means. That said, she also takes no pains to mask who she is or what she believes. In contrast to most other participants, who refrain from displaying their political views publicly (whether as a result of their professional and/or personal values or out of concern for possible negative consequences), Casey’s car sports a McCain-Palin bumper sticker, she walks with the Republican Party in local parades, and she campaigns on behalf of Republican candidates outside of work. Her husband, who works at the same institution and is the extrovert in the family, is very vocal about his conservatism on campus and on Facebook, as well as in the local community, which naturally leads people to assume (correctly, in this case) that Casey shares similar views. That has empowered her in a way, and she has developed a greater sense of comfort and confidence over the years about standing up for what she believes. Although she doesn’t look for opportunities to spar with others over politics, in her own soft-spoken way, she can be remarkably courageous about speaking up on behalf of her views if she feels that circumstances warrant it.

Being known as a conservative on her campus has caused Casey a considerable degree of tension and frustration at times. She and her colleagues, who are much more liberal, have noticed that Casey has been treated differently by some senior administrators. On one occasion, for example, Casey submitted an evaluation of one of her resident directors that included some suggested areas for improvement. Although she and her fellow assistant director had discussed all of the evaluations together and considered them all to be fair, a senior administrator called this particular evaluation into question. Casey believes the reason was that the resident director was African American and that the senior administrator did not trust Casey to provide a fair evaluation of a Black staff member. “None of the other evaluations were being questioned. None of the evaluations that my colleague did were being questioned.” Casey vented to her supervisor “that if my colleague had done that evaluation it would not have been questioned....And [the supervisor] agreed with me.”

Issues related to diversity are a common source of irritation for Casey, as they are for nearly all of the other participants in the study. All too often, Casey has felt the judgment cast by self-professed liberals who assume that because she is a White, conservative Christian she must necessarily be a “sexist, racist, homophobic bigot” who could contribute nothing of value to diversity-related discussions. She has attended mandatory diversity training programs in which presenters have advocated for inclusiveness while making snide and irrelevant comments about prominent Republicans. As troubling as it is to hear outside speakers engage in such politically-charged rhetoric with a captive audience (let alone in the context of a program about respecting differences), it is disappointing to Casey that the audience members—her faculty and staff colleagues—provide validation to the presenters by laughing and applauding. In the same way that Sean realized how the senior administration

can convey a strong message through what it does and does not support (e.g., advertising stem cell opportunities, restricting the display of religious symbols), Casey recognizes that the kinds of speakers her university chooses to bring—as well as the response of her colleagues to those speakers—both communicates and reinforces the culture and values of the institution. It saddens her that the diversity council at her university is so like-minded that they do not realize how the tone and approach of some of their programs alienate many people in the audience who otherwise might be interested in learning what the programs set out to teach.

I mean, you could see it around the room. You could just see who they were shutting down.... It wasn't effective for people that 1) thought differently, or 2) maybe weren't as educated on topics of diversity that they might want to be. But [the program committee] certainly didn't create a safe environment to explore that or ask questions and help them learn.

Diversity programming is but one example of what Casey perceives as the hypocrisy of higher education and student affairs. She also recalls the flurry of political activity by faculty and staff on her campus a few years ago, when a ballot initiative banning same-sex marriage came before the voters in her state. Despite clear guidelines from the state that public university employees should not engage in political campaigning on campus, there was an overwhelming array of buttons, signs, and letters in the school newspaper by faculty and staff who opposed the initiative. As Marty, Charlotte, and Alex experienced on their public campuses during the 2008 presidential campaign, the administration of Casey's university said nothing in response to the obvious disregard for state policy. When Casey herself felt moved to write a letter in defense of a student who had expressed support for the

marriage initiative—and who had been harshly criticized by faculty and staff in the campus newspaper as a result—she faced strong reproach and resentment from her supervisor and many colleagues, who questioned the appropriateness of a housing department representative taking such a position. (Casey did not claim to speak on behalf of her department, but her affiliation appeared at the bottom of her letter in accordance with the paper’s policy.)

Casey perceives a similar double standard in the kinds of activities and attitudes implicitly supported by her department. She has long wanted to participate in the national Right to Life march, for example. She would love to talk about it with her colleagues and put out a call for any students who might like to join her, but she is confident her colleagues and senior administrators would frown upon it. Taking students to a gay pride march, however, would seem perfectly acceptable. Casey also notices how staff members are advised to be mindful of the personae they project on Facebook so as to remain as approachable as possible to students who might seek their help. Yet, at the same time, staff—including supervisors—engage frequently in Facebook banter that is politically one-sided and derogatory toward conservatives, with no apparent regard for the possible effect such banter might have on conservative students. Charlotte’s experience with Facebook is very similar, as is her perception of the double standard. The quote that introduced Charlotte’s profile earlier in this chapter captures the same frustration that Casey articulates here: “The thing that drives me crazy is the hypocrisy of...being liberal while preaching inclusivity and being open to differences, but only to differences that are important to them or that they deem politically correct.”

Casey has reason to believe that conservatives on campus are, in fact, affected by the behaviors and attitudes communicated by her department. Students sometimes seek her out

specifically because they feel comfortable talking with someone who shares their values and who they think will understand them. Casey has been approached by conservative resident directors on occasion as well, when they encounter their own frustrations and need to talk them through. She has heard from students who want to apply for RA positions but fear they would have to renounce their values in order to work in housing. As she has tried to reassure those students, she has also tried to challenge her colleagues to remember “that our goal and our responsibility in residence life is to create a welcoming and inclusive community for everybody, but it isn’t to believe the same thing.” Allison, Jim, Patrick, Chelsea, and Michelle may have used different words (e.g., agreeing to disagree, tolerance versus acceptance), but their message was essentially the same: people do not have to agree with one another in order to be respectful of each other’s views and values.

The frustration Casey feels at work has been more pronounced at her current institution than at other campuses where she has worked. In fact, for the first half of her career, Casey was unaware of any serious ideological differences with colleagues or with the culture of student affairs and higher education. Her focus was on developing herself as a professional, and the only politics that mattered were institutional politics. Then, shortly before her epiphany about being conservative in the early 1990s, she had an encounter with a presenter at a professional development session on diversity. Casey used the word “lady,” a word that seemed natural and harmless to her, but one that the presenter considered terribly offensive. She was taken aback by the intensity of the presenter’s reaction and left the group feeling attacked, hurt, and belittled for not sharing the presenter’s views. It was the first time she felt that she was clearly outside of the mainstream culture of student affairs.

The memory of that incident remains with Casey to this day as a vivid illustration of

the difference between impact and intent. In training staff, as well as in her own interactions, Casey often reminds herself and others that words can mean different things to different people, and it is important to be sensitive to the impact words and actions may have on others, regardless of intent. At the same time, Casey believes that this distinction between intent and impact should also be acknowledged by those who find themselves in the position of being offended. She feels that society has gone “overboard” in affirming perceived impact and expecting people to take responsibility for that impact, without assigning a corresponding responsibility to consider the intent behind an offensive act.

Now, I’m not going to lie. I know people intentionally say very mean things about people, and that’s just wrong. But I think more often than not, the intention is not hurtful or bad....And I wish somebody would take that next step to say, “When you said that to me, I know it wasn’t your intention to hurt me, but just so you know, it did.” And have a conversation about that rather than go off and tell everybody else what an awful person I am because I said whatever I said.

It concerns Casey that her conservative views will be interpreted by others as evidence that she is a bad person and that she would treat some students with less respect than others. It is the one way in which she feels the prejudices of others might have a direct negative impact on her own work. She feels grounded enough in who she is and what she believes to accept the fact that some people might dislike her for her views, but she worries that some of those people—as a result of their own prejudices and erroneous assumptions—will make some students think twice about approaching her if they need help.

Casey has developed strong and supportive professional relationships with her immediate colleagues in the central housing office, including her supervisor, and she feels

she can trust them not to judge her negatively and not to prejudice others against her because of her political and religious values. Their differences have led to some passionate exchanges, especially during the fervor over the same-sex ballot initiative and Casey's letter to the school newspaper, but she knows that those colleagues respect her and know her to be fair.

Sadly, she does not feel the same level of trust with others on her campus or even in her own department. Among the resident directors who work under the supervision of the central housing office, Casey is cautious about calling attention to her conservative identity. She has sensed hostility, or at least frostiness, from some of the resident directors in response to her political views. Casey recalls how some of the resident directors rolled their eyes when she talked excitedly about having met a well-known Republican political figure over the previous weekend. It was an important event in her life, and the resident directors' reaction stung. Casey wished the staff could have just been excited for her even if they didn't share her feelings about the person. Now, she usually refrains from talking with colleagues about what she does in her personal life. In this sense, she is like Michelle, whose lack of trust in her colleagues has also caused her to draw a very clear line between her professional and personal lives.

Casey doesn't expect others to agree with her views (although that would certainly be welcome at times); what she wants most is to be acknowledged as having a right to her opinion, and to be regarded as no less of a person because of it. One example of an affirming response occurred several years ago, when Casey served on a leadership committee in a professional organization. The chair proposed that the committee issue a public statement supporting a liberal position in a current political controversy. The other members agreed

readily. Casey took a deep breath and raised her hand, saying that she respected the opinions of the other committee members and hoped that they would be equally willing to express their support on an issue of pressing concern to conservatives. The response was a deafening silence, followed by some awkward discussion about what such a conservative concern might be. Casey had made her point and didn't press the matter further. A few days later, she received a note from the chair of the committee acknowledging the courage it took to speak up and thanking Casey for making a difference. She still has that note and keeps it in a handy location where she can read it whenever she needs an emotional lift. It represents a time when she felt heard and valued, despite having been the only conservative in the room and having challenged her fellow committee members to think about their actions in a new way. Such times don't come often.

Casey has more or less resigned herself to feeling isolated in student affairs. She does not socialize with colleagues outside of work because they have so little in common. She also finds herself pulling back from her professional organizations, even at the regional level where she used to be highly involved. She herself isn't certain whether the change in her level of engagement is attributable to the fact that she is older and finds the professional conferences to be less relevant to her level of experience, or if it is a response to an increasingly strong liberal ethos filtering down from the larger professional organization to the regional association. Casey decided several years ago to distance herself from the larger association because she just couldn't abide by the positions and values it promoted. Much like Alex, Jim, and Marty (and also noted to some degree by Andrew, Patrick, Charlotte, and Chelsea), Casey believes the associations, like the profession generally, have "taken political correctness to the extreme," focusing on the needs of a very small population to such an

extent that they lose sight of the bigger mission to help all students learn and grow. It felt hypocritical to continue her involvement with the organizations when she could not in good conscience support their approach. Although she has maintained closer connections with the regional organization—in part because she was so committed to it for so much of her career—she feels ready at this point in her life to move on.

Casey has considered moving on from her current institution as well. She would like to be able to do the work she loves in a place that is more congruent with her worldview. She suspects, however, that most of the challenges she faces in her present job would exist to a similar degree on most campuses these days. An even more compelling motivation to stay is the realization that she has an important role to play on her campus, as a source of support for conservative students (and staff) who do not feel they have a voice. “That’s the bottom line why I entered this profession over 20 years ago. It was for the students.... And now it’s even more clear that it’s the conservative students at this point.” Whether by serving as a sounding board, providing a sympathetic and non-judgmental ear, or by writing a letter to express concern over a disrespectful presenter at a university-mandated workshop, Casey is glad to be able to remind others that people who work in higher education and student affairs are not all alike. It isn’t easy, and it involves taking risks. By demonstrating that it is possible to be open and accepting while also holding conservative values, however, Casey hopes to challenge negative assumptions and labels, and move the people around her toward an attitude of more genuine inclusivity.

Austen

Conservative is something you can hide from and escape from or lie about, which then adds a lot of stress and a lot of guilt. So when you’re honest about it, people may

still make fun of you, but then it's out there. And you're at least owning who you are, and there is a sense of relief when you do that.

Austen first began working in student affairs as a classified employee at a medium-size community college in Region V, where she was finishing her associate's degree. She continued her education for four years through a distance education program while also working for her community college in various capacities within student affairs and student services. Upon completing her bachelor's degree, she received a call from the dean of students at the community college asking if she would serve as interim director of student life while the permanent director was on leave. Austen agreed and soon fell in love with the work she was doing. She enrolled in a student affairs master's program at a large public university in her state, where she took a graduate assistantship as a resident director. She decided to stay in her resident director position after graduation in order to gain more experience with the structure and politics of a four-year research institution before one day going back to a community college setting. Including the years of her assistantship, she has been in her current position for more than three years.

Austen grew up in a very rural area, in a family with modest financial means. She was home-schooled by her mother, who taught her according to an accredited Christian curriculum, and had lived a rather sheltered life before leaving home to attend her community college several hours' drive away. The transition to college was difficult for her. She remembers vividly the homesickness and disorientation she experienced in her first several weeks there. She also remembers the relationships she developed with professors and mentors and the tremendous growth she experienced as a result of their care and support. Those memories are a large part of what motivates her as a student affairs professional today.

She considers it “an honor and a privilege” to be able to contribute to such a transformative part of so many students’ lives.

Austen, like Casey, describes herself as an introvert. She is also deeply reflective about herself, her experiences, and the world around her. Our interviews marked a period of self-discovery for her in many ways, especially with regard to her understanding of her conservative identity. Coming at a time in her life when she was feeling very isolated and unsettled, participation in the study offered her an opportunity to process her experiences and refine her ideas about what it means to be conservative and, in particular, what it means to be a conservative student affairs professional. She approached her involvement in the study with an extraordinary sense of purpose. She reported new insights each time we talked, and additional insights often emerged during the course of the interviews themselves. Unlike other participants, who seemed to have a relatively stable sense of their own identities and their places in the world, Austen’s interviews were characterized by an almost palpable sense of movement. They were less about her state of being than about her process of becoming. Although her story, like the others I have already presented, attempts to describe her circumstances and perspectives at a particular period in time, I hope this narrative also conveys the change and growth she exhibited *within* that period (and has, I have no doubt, continued in the time since).

It was difficult initially for Austen to explain what “conservative” means to her. On one level, she recognizes it as a political term describing someone who affiliates with the Republican Party. As a political conservative, she believes in states’ rights, local control, limited government, and limited federal spending. She is also strongly pro-military. Being a Republican, however, doesn’t get at the deeper and more essential meaning of conservatism

in Austen's view. That meaning, the personal meaning, is much harder to articulate.

Conservative is just what Austen *is*. Having grown up in a community where there were "elephants running through people's blood," conservative is what everyone around her was. Being conservative is not just about what she thinks, but rather how she sees herself. It is one of the most salient aspects of her identity, encompassing her moral values, her faith, and her love of family.

Going to college challenged Austen to truly examine her beliefs for the first time. Her professors introduced her to new ideas and helped her to question the origins of her views and the rationales behind them. Most importantly, they provided a supportive space for her to explore and eventually develop her own belief system.

I thought that being gay was a one-way ticket to hell when I came to college. I don't think that anymore, but I don't because my faculty created an environment where it was safe for me to be judgmental and where they cared enough about me...that they could talk to me in ways that protected my dignity about my being judgmental.

And...I think that's what allowed me to really grow.

Inspired by Peggy McIntosh's (1998) essay "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," Austen began to think a lot about power and privilege as an undergraduate, and she developed a strong commitment to social justice work. Her family and others in her hometown saw her new beliefs and attitudes as liberal, but Austen doesn't agree with that characterization. Although she recognizes that her attitudes about social justice are not part of a conventionally politically conservative agenda, she believes, like Allison, that her beliefs are consistent with her personal definition of conservative. At most, she considers her views on social justice to be "middle of the road."

In the years that Austen worked at the community college, she often found herself in the middle. This aspect of her experience is reminiscent of Andrew, whose ideology places him somewhere to the left of his friends in business and to the right of those in education, and Charlotte, who is more conservative than her own family and more liberal than her husband's. In Austen's case, she was the conservative voice among her colleagues at her community college, challenging them to be mindful of their attitudes toward conservative ideas and people. Then she would go home and have similar conversations with friends and family, only this time asserting the more liberal perspective. Being the go-between wasn't always pleasant for her, but both environments were respectful enough that Austen never felt threatened in her sense of who she was. Graduate school would mark a momentous shift in that regard.

Most of the stress Austen feels as a conservative in student affairs began when she moved to her current institution to begin her master's program. For the first time, she perceived that being liberal was an expectation of the field, and that being conservative "was not just different, but was actually bad" in the eyes of her professional and academic colleagues. Coming from the protective and insular "cocoon" of her conservative home town, it was shock for Austen to suddenly be in a position where everything she considered herself to be was associated with attitudes she didn't endorse. "I've spent three years living in an environment...where being conservative and being Republican is synonymous with being intolerant, homophobic, racist, and somebody who doesn't care." Unlike when she was working at the community college, going back and forth between her more conservative family and friends at home and her more liberal colleagues and friends at work, Austen now finds herself consistently on the margins, "wearing a mask" and trying to assimilate into a

culture that seems unwilling to accept her for who she is.

The experiences of other participants—Andrew, Casey, and Charlotte—suggest that residence life is an area of student affairs where ideological differences may become especially problematic. The fact that Austen’s job is a live-in position only compounds her stress. In living where she works, the boundaries between professional and personal become blurred. She is never really off duty, and every interaction with a student or a colleague is a work interaction that demands her professional face. The mask she wears never comes off.

Part of the emotional upheaval Austen felt in her first year as a master’s student stemmed from the disparity between her expectations about her current institution and the reality she discovered early in her time there. She had been nervous, but also very excited, by the prospect of joining a community that placed high value on being inclusive. She knew she wasn’t perfect with regard to her own cultural competence—and she acknowledges that no one is ever perfect in this regard—but she was eager to learn and continue her development as a social justice ally. She had looked forward to meeting many different people and getting to know them for who they were as individuals. She believed that an inclusive campus would not put group identification over personal attributes or judge people according to stereotypes and generalizations. It was a great disappointment for her, then, to find that the housing department where she worked took a tokenist approach to multiculturalism, and offered opportunities on the basis of race or other identity categories rather than on personal interest and suitability. Even more troubling was that the institution’s aspirations regarding inclusivity so clearly did not apply to conservative Christians like herself. Austen had been prepared for the possibility that people in her graduate program might doubt that someone with as much privilege as she enjoys could be a true social justice ally. Still, she had hoped

she would be able to follow the advice of a mentor and show people, just by being herself, that conservatives can in fact be strong social justice advocates. Unfortunately, she felt she never got the chance to do that. During an especially turbulent period in her first year, she asked in her journal, “How is it possible to show that you’re an ally when everything that you are is being attacked?”

Austen’s experiences in her graduate program, at her job, and in the student affairs profession generally have communicated to her—both implicitly and explicitly—a message that being conservative is inconsistent with the work she loves to do. At the institutional level, as well as at regional and national conferences and other professional gatherings beyond her campus, she has perceived—like most other participants—that student affairs professionals are consistently assumed to be liberal. (As we talked about that, Austen realized with some uneasiness that she makes that assumption as well.) She has heard people at all levels speak about religious values and political views as part of what constitutes diversity on college campuses, but those are obviously not priorities for the profession, based on the utter lack of attention they receive in journals and at conferences. She finds that all the talk about embracing diverse worldviews is just that: talk.

On her own campus, Austen has had colleagues and even supervisors make hurtful and derogatory comments about conservatives in her presence. Some of the comments are careless, but some are quite intentional, at least in their content, if not their impact. About a year after she began in her current position, a professional colleague whom she trusted and in whom she had confided about being Republican told Austen that she considered it impossible for a Republican to do good work toward social justice. The colleague presented her view in very stark terms: either Austen wasn’t a true conservative or she wasn’t actually committed

to being a social justice ally. Austen was stunned, particularly hearing this from a colleague who specialized in multicultural affairs.

In her first year as a master's student, Austen was part of a class discussion on gay student development theory that suddenly grew very heated. A member of the class made a statement about the hatred Christians feel for gay people, which affected Austen and a few others in the class very deeply. Rather than engaging the class in a productive discussion about the strong views and emotions surrounding the topic, the professor made a comment about Christianity being an obstacle to creating inclusive environments. Austen felt again that her conservative identity had been repudiated and, furthermore, that her classmates had been affirmed in their prejudices.

I think it was in that class that it really became clear to me—by the way the faculty member responded to it and the way other people responded to it—that open-mindedness went [only] so far and that there was a right way to think and a wrong way to think.

Before graduate school, Austen had often engaged in difficult conversations about sensitive topics. She considers those conversations essential to the advancement of social justice because they give people opportunities to examine their views and learn from the perspectives of others. She always knew that delicate conversations could lead to hurt feelings, and she would routinely establish ground rules to help people feel safe expressing themselves, but she never shied away from dialogue out of concern that people might feel offended. At her current institution, as a graduate student as well as in her role as a resident director, Austen has heard people talk a lot about the importance of honest dialogue. Whenever she has been part of a class or a group where such discussions might take place,

however, she has felt that conservatives and conservative views are treated with so much disdain as to prevent any meaningful dialogue. This is another example of the double standard described by Jim, Casey, Michelle, and Charlotte, whereby openness to diverse perspectives is advocated, but certain perspectives are implicitly or explicitly shut out. As a result of this, Austen feels timid now in a way she never has before. Aside from fearing that she would be attacked for espousing conservative values, Austen also feels the concern voiced by Michelle, Sean, and Andrew, that expressing who she really is might jeopardize her job and/or her future career prospects.

Austen has also found it increasingly difficult to participate fully in diversity training programs. As important as she believes it is to confront her prejudices, she does not want to admit them publicly for fear of confirming stereotypes others might hold about her as a conservative. She is saddened by that and also upset by the implications of her silence for a socially just society. “By not having those conversations, I am then perpetuating a society that is not healthy for everyone and that is not inclusive.” She is still deeply committed to social justice and she continues to work toward it in her own way—incorporating cultural competence into her staff training and publicity materials, for example—but she is wary of getting involved in more direct and obvious ways. In the same way that Charlotte avoids participating in diversity-related programming activities, Austen does not work on diversity projects within her housing department. She also chooses not to serve on the department’s diversity committee, which she did at her community college, partly because she disagrees with the approach her department takes to diversity efforts but also because she does not feel safe around the people who tend to serve on those committees.

Another aspect of the fear that keeps Austen from sharing her conservative identity is

her suspicion that people will not allow her the same space to grow that her undergraduate professors did. At her current institution, she feels as though there is an expectation that, having earned a master's degree, she should have learned everything she needs to know to avoid doing harm. Making mistakes is no longer acceptable. Austen considers herself still very much a work in progress. She knows that she will probably cause harm to someone, despite all of her best intentions, but she worries that her supervisors will not take her efforts and intentions into account when they evaluate her or serve as references for a future career opportunity. She also worries that people can be unforgiving when it comes to views with which they disagree. Experience has taught her not to express a conservative opinion, lest she find herself in a corner, pushed to debate positions that she might be happy to discuss but is not yet ready to defend.

Once it's out, how you feel about something, you don't get to take that back and change your mind necessarily....So when I say [something], this is going to be the permanent imprint in that person's life. Will they allow me to change or not? Will they allow me to grow or not?...Will they hear what I have to say, or will they just argue with me?

Being in an environment in which she feels pressured to mask her true identity has affected Austen in many different ways. She has noticed that she sometimes makes passive-aggressive comments in conversations with colleagues who have said hurtful things to her in the past. Even though she feels uncomfortable speaking up directly, she can feel herself becoming inwardly defensive when people around her talk about "the Republicans," "conservative Republicans," or "conservative Christians." When others talk and make jokes about Republicans and Republican politicians, Austen's desire to fit in has, at times, led her

not only to stay silent about who she is (as other participants often do), but to suggest she is something she is not. The effort comes with an emotional price though.

Sometimes, even against what I wanted or who I am, I would join in in those conversations and essentially mock who I am and what I believe. And then I would regret it and feel like an awful person afterwards.

Integrity and authenticity are profoundly important values to Austen. Her greatest stress and anxiety at this point come less from external forces than from her internal struggle to live an authentic life. She knows she needs to find a way to bring her words and her actions into alignment with her values, whatever the real or perceived risks might be. She musters courage for that effort by keeping her attention focused on students, much as Casey does.

Austen is very concerned about the impact of anti-conservative attitudes on students. She knows that a good number of the students at her current institution come from rural, conservatively-minded parts of the state, just as she did. She thinks about her own experience as an undergraduate and compares it to the environment she sees for conservative students where she now works.

Rather than meeting them where they're at and giving them experiences that will allow them to...challenge themselves about how they think, I think that sometimes, very frequently, we send them messages that what they think is wrong and that they are bad.

Austen knows that students pick up on the prejudices of the people around them. Conservative students have talked to her and, in fact, have sought her out, even though she doesn't share with them that she is conservative. The 2008 presidential election was a

particularly challenging time on her campus, when being a Republican meant walking around with “a scarlet R on your forehead.” Austen tried especially hard to remain neutral and create a climate on her hall where all students could feel safe and respected. Students have vented to her at other times about how being conservative or Republican is so often associated with all of the various “-isms,” ““as though we’re the sole perpetrators of those things.”” Austen understands exactly what they mean. She has heard those associations herself on countless occasions from colleagues, classmates, professors, and even from a professional development speaker addressing the subject of inclusivity. It is an aspect of her experience that is shared by nearly all of the other study participants as well.

Austen feels the need to be strong and to stand up for her students, even if she is wary about standing up for herself. Thinking about the possible risks to her career makes her nervous, but she feels she must come to terms with that in order to serve her students and live a life of integrity. “My goal is to reach a place where I don’t feel timid. Because if I’m timid about advocating for me, then I’m timid about advocating for my students, and that to me is professionally and personally unacceptable.”

Shortly before our final interview, Austen attended a student leadership conference about social change. She felt deeply moved by one of the presenters, who spoke eloquently and sincerely about people building inclusive communities by sharing pieces of themselves with others. Students began standing up to share things about themselves. One young man stood, declared himself to be conservative, and continued, ““and I still care about every person in this room, no matter how you identify.”” Austen was awed by the student’s courage and inspired by the power of that session to bring people together and generate meaningful sharing. It stood in stark contrast to other experiences she has had, where professors or

presenters—despite their stated intentions—have actually said more to discourage genuine, open dialogue than to foster it. The conference also inspired Austen to take a risk of her own when she returned to campus, publicly identifying herself as a conservative in front of all of her department colleagues at a university workshop. It was a very big step for her to name her values and her conservative identity. Even though some of her colleagues might have known or at least suspected that Austen was conservative, the achievement was more about being true to herself than informing others. “It is profound that I’m able to name those; that I can say this is who I am. Because it’s a step to not being ashamed of it.” The affirming response of people in the room made the moment a positive one all around.

Austen realized in talking with Allison, Charlotte, and Casey during their group interview that everyone is on a developmental spectrum in terms of how comfortable they are identifying openly as a conservative in professional settings. She was heartened to see that there was actually a spectrum, as opposed to distinct groups of those who were comfortable being open and those who weren’t. A spectrum not only suggests the possibility of incremental movement, but also allows Austen to locate herself somewhere on the same plane with others who share many of her values, experiences, and emotions. She felt like she belonged.

Being able to tell her stories in the context of this study has helped Austen to understand a lot more about herself and where she fits in student affairs. She would like to encourage other conservative professionals who might be going through similar experiences to find people to help them process those emotions and reflect on who they really are. She feels that engaging in that process has encouraged her to take the necessary steps to bring her personal and professional lives into alignment, and consequently, to begin regaining her

sense of authenticity.

Chapter Five

Hegemony at Work

The previous chapter provided a fairly detailed account of the experiences and perspectives of each of this study's participants. In this chapter, I will look across all of the cases for the lessons that can be drawn from their collective story. I will begin by reviewing the theory of hegemony and placing the data within that framework. Next, I will look at how participants have responded to their positions in the hegemonic system and the impact the system has had on them personally and professionally. Finally, I will consider some of the characteristics that have enabled participants to manage—and in some cases, to thrive—as conservatives in the student affairs profession. Throughout the chapter, the nature of the hegemonic system as it operates in student affairs will be re-examined and refined.

Hegemony Reviewed

Williams (1977), whose treatment of hegemony formed the primary theoretical foundation for this study, understood hegemony to be closely related to both culture and ideology. Two essential characteristics distinguish hegemony from these conceptual cousins. First, hegemony deals with the distribution of power and influence in a society or culture. There is no hegemony without privilege and dominance of one class over others. Second, hegemony is defined by its *wholeness*, the pervasiveness of an ideology within a social system. The ideology of the dominant class becomes so embedded in the culture that its workings may be entirely or nearly imperceptible to those who live under its influence. Its impact, however, is no less real.

Hegemony as Culture Plus Power

Let's begin with the first point, hegemony as the distribution of power and influence

within a culture. How were power and influence evident in my participants' experiences in student affairs? One marker of a relatively low degree of power is the scarcity of conservatives in my participants' work environments. With the exception of Jim and Patrick, all of the participants perceived themselves as being in the minority in their workplaces and classrooms, and in the profession generally. In some cases, participants knew or strongly suspected that they were the *only* conservative in the office or department where they worked. To the extent that there is strength or comfort in numbers, people who identify as liberal may enjoy an obvious advantage over conservatives in that regard. Some of the manifestations of this advantage are discussed throughout this chapter.

Although a stark imbalance in the number of conservatives in my participants' work environments may indicate a corresponding imbalance of power and influence, numbers alone are hardly sufficient to make the case for hegemony. Majority status is not a precondition for dominance, as we know from societies such as apartheid-era South Africa (Giliomee, 2009; Lodge, 1983). It is conceivable that a group could be in the minority and nevertheless enjoy a substantial degree of power and influence relative to others within the social organization. I saw no evidence of this in my participants' experiences, however. Not a single participant talked about a conservative ideology carrying privilege in student affairs. At best, those who felt extremely comfortable in their situations talked about being conservative or Republican as a neutral or relatively unimportant aspect of their professional experience. In other cases, it was perceived unambiguously as a stigma.

Although stigmatized characteristics of any kind may be a source of considerable concern, invisible stigmas present unique challenges to those who carry them (Clair et al., 2005; Pachankis, 2007). Concealing part of one's identity or assessing when it is safe to

disclose a stigmatized trait demands a certain degree of energy and can exact a psychological and emotional toll. This was particularly evident in Austen's case, but several other participants also discussed the uncertainty they felt about revealing their conservative identity to others. Charlotte used the word *stigma* specifically:

I guess I kept it quiet because I felt I would be chastised or...a lot of assumptions would be made about my views on things. Because when you say "Republican" or "conservative" in student affairs, I think there's a stigma.

The stigma associated with being conservative was evident through many participants' use of the terms "out," "coming out," or "being outed" in reference to the disclosure of their conservative identities to others. The language of "outing" is powerful in part because of its contemporary association with the very well documented stigma of being gay, although it has come to be used more casually in reference to other kinds of invisible characteristics as well. Some participants used this language to draw a conscious—though sometimes tongue-in-cheek—parallel to the experience of gay people or others whose stigmas are more widely recognized. Charlotte, who first disclosed her conservative identity via her Facebook profile, talked about how she told her friends what she had done. "I'm like, 'Well, it's official now. I've put it on Facebook, so now I'm officially out.' You know, like, joking. But in some ways it was kind of true, you know?" Although the use of such language might appear to some as a minimization of the often highly emotional decision to come out as gay or lesbian, I did not perceive any such disrespect from my participants. Rather, I believe the comparison was used (intentionally or not) to convey the nature of the stigma they perceived against conservatives within student affairs and the degree of anxiety some of them felt in making the decision to be open about their ideology.

Another telling illustration of this stigma came in my first interview with Casey. After exchanging greetings, she thanked me for doing the study and told me that I was “a brave person.” I asked her why she thought so, and she explained:

I think in higher ed or on college campuses, I think to be identified as a conservative and having conservative values and beliefs is-- I have not found it to always be a friendly environment or a welcoming environment to do that. So, I think it's kind of nice that somebody's taking a look at the fact that we certainly have a lot to offer the students that come to our campuses as well.

Implicit in Casey's statement is the sense that other people do not think conservatives have a lot to offer students. This, combined with the fairly small number of openly-identified conservatives Casey has encountered in her career, suggests a relative lack of power and influence compared to more liberally-oriented people in the field. The term “brave,” furthermore, implies a degree of danger and a perception that conservatives are, at least in some way, vulnerable. Casey's experience of being treated differently from her liberal colleagues by a senior administrator in her division is but one example that justifies this perception.

The sense of devaluation associated with being conservative or Republican was often reinforced by supervisors and others in positions of authority over the participants. From Alex's chancellor, who spoke contemptuously of “you and your Republican friends,” to Michelle's graduate professor telling the class that Republicans had no place in the field of education, to supervisors at other participants' institutions who engaged in anti-conservative banter on Facebook or in staff meetings, the bias against conservatives was palpable to many participants. The fact that it came from people in authority added an element of threat above

and beyond the discomfort some people felt in response to similar bias from professional peers.

Supervisors and professors have the ability to influence the course of a person's career. Michelle's comment about faculty applies equally well to supervisors: "They have power over opportunity." Austen spoke about her fear that identifying as a conservative might color how she was perceived by her supervisors and might negatively affect their decisions regarding promotion or their letters of reference for other positions. Michelle and Andrew (when he worked in student affairs) were likewise reluctant to express their conservative views out of concern for their job security. Alex, who believes her lost promotion was a direct result of political differences with her chancellor, offered the most concrete example of the negative consequences others feared. Alex's concern also extended to the level of her professional association, where she felt that her political identification might have deterred others from considering her for valuable leadership opportunities.

It may be that none of the professors or administrative leaders involved in the various examples above would have allowed their ideological biases to influence how they regarded or evaluated their individual colleagues/students. Nevertheless, it is easy to understand why anti-conservative comments from a person in authority might prompt feelings of mistrust or uneasiness on the part of conservatives in that environment. It is a strong indication of the power that liberals can exercise over conservatives in classrooms, as well as in professional settings.

It might be argued that the power in these situations comes from the supervisor's or professor's position, rather than from their ideological orientation. A conservative supervisor, one might say, would have similar power over the job security and opportunities

available to a liberal supervisee. This is undoubtedly true to a certain extent. Any supervisor has a considerable degree of power over the people he or she supervises. In thinking about power and hegemony, however, one must ask how entrenched that power is if the supervisor espouses a worldview that is different from most others in the environment. A conservative supervisor might well have the ability to hinder the career path of a supervisee with whom he or she disagrees politically, but in the absence of other conservatives to support that supervisor's view, the impact would likely be less severe. Michelle addressed this phenomenon in the inverse. When her liberal supervisor tried to enlist Michelle's help in changing a fellow staff member's vote during the 2008 presidential campaign, Michelle believed that those actions were tacitly supported by the culture of her institution.

People who work for the institution represent the values of the institution, in general. Certainly not every single person....But in general, I think that...there's a culture, [and] it's social theory that we tend to bring in people like us,...who are going to fit....I would say the individual behaviors are perceived by the individuals to be acceptable. And that's why they do what they do.

Although she felt that her supervisor's behavior was appalling, Michelle did not trust that other more senior administrators would find it as inappropriate as she did, and she said nothing. Had the ideological tables been turned and had Michelle's supervisor been in the minority, the situation would very likely not have occurred in the first place, and if it did, Michelle might well have felt more secure raising her concern with someone else in her department, just as Casey's conservative junior colleagues have come to her as a sounding board when a situation feels uncomfortable to them. Sharing the worldview of the majority allows people to feel confident about asserting their values more broadly (and perhaps in

inappropriate ways). Being in the minority, however, increases the likelihood of marginalization if a person goes too far in expressing an unpopular view.

Hegemony as Ideology Plus Wholeness

Michelle's observation about the perceived acceptability of inappropriate individual behaviors provides an excellent segue into the second essential characteristic of hegemony: ideology plus wholeness. As Williams (1977) explained, hegemony goes beyond a conscious and formalized belief system to include "the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values" (p.109). The power of the dominant class is evident in what goes unstated, and in how appropriate values, beliefs, and behaviors are defined *in practice*. A belief or practice, therefore, does not need to be formally institutionalized in order to carry weight. If it is embedded within the institutional culture, the belief or practice will be perpetuated naturally—and often unconsciously—by the individuals who make up the institution, and the system of dominance will reinforce itself.

Assumptions of liberal ideology. One assumption articulated by several participants was that everyone in higher education and student affairs is ideologically liberal. As Casey said, "There's an expectation if you're working in higher ed that you must be liberal. You must look at the world a certain way." Strikingly similar statements were made by participants at different institutions, with different professional organizations, from different parts of the country, with varying years of experience, in the context of graduate school classes, and in the context of the workplace. Marty underscored the tacit nature of the cultural norms in her experience: "I don't necessarily have anyone telling me that I need to act a certain way or do a certain thing but I would say that the expectation is just that I am liberal....That's just kind of an unstated rule." Consistent with the pervasive nature of

hegemony and its influence over all members of a social group, Austen not only observed the standard assumption that everyone in student affairs is liberal, but discovered (with some uneasiness) that she herself had been making the very same assumptions about others:

In grad school,...many of us did not share our identities surrounding conservative or liberal....And I assumed, unless somebody talked to me, that they were liberal. So I did the same thing that frustrates me about other people....I didn't even realize that until now. I did it too.

The assumption that everyone in student affairs or higher education is liberal appears to feed a corresponding lack of awareness or consideration of conservatives, as several participants experienced. Chelsea's professor and classmates did not discuss whether it was appropriate to watch Barack Obama's inauguration during class time because, as Chelsea perceived, it was assumed that everyone would want to watch it. No one appeared to consider whether Chelsea or anyone else in the class might feel uncomfortable watching the event in that setting. When Alex's professional association meeting took on the air of an Obama campaign rally, her fellow attendees presumably did not consider (or perhaps did not care) that some in the room might find it awkward. Similarly, when speakers or colleagues at professional gatherings make disparaging comments and jokes about Republicans, they reveal an assumption that people in the room are likely to find the joke funny, or that those in the room who would not find it funny don't matter. Simply by being in a student affairs setting, it is assumed, as Michelle said, "you must be part of the collective thought process," and consideration of other points of view becomes unnecessary. The fact that so many participants in different professional contexts shared similar experiences suggests that conservatives and conservative views are commonly disregarded or overlooked entirely.

Professional associations and publications. The professional associations and the literature they produce serve as another vehicle by which norms and values are shared and reinforced. Several participants talked about going to conferences and finding that many, if not most of the programs were infused with liberal values, either in the choice of topic (e.g., gender-neutral spaces, same-sex partner benefits) or in the approach to addressing particular issues (e.g., underage drinking, students working in the sex industry). Likewise, keynote speakers often reflected liberal interests and values. Jim observed that when speakers are invited to present on the basis of their “personal agenda,” as opposed to a concrete issue directly relevant to student affairs, “if you lined them up and then categorized them, I think it’s probably five to one with a liberal slant.” Marty, who holds a key administrative leadership position in a different professional organization, made a similar comment about the liberal orientation of keynote presenters at her association’s conferences. She believes this is understandable because most of the members of the organization are liberal and, therefore, would be more drawn to a conference featuring a speaker they admire and want to hear. Again, we see the impact of the majority’s values in shaping the experience for everyone in the profession.

The imbalance—or perceived imbalance—in the numbers of liberals and conservatives in student affairs makes it possible for dominant values and attitudes to be perpetuated with very little conscious effort. I suspect the liberal orientation of conference sessions and journal articles is due to the likely fact that, as Marty noted, most of the people submitting conference proposals and manuscripts share those liberal values. In other words, the hegemonic system is reinforced by the cumulative impact of individuals doing what is both appropriate and natural to them. Malicious intent may not be involved, yet the overall

effect may be similarly powerful in conveying what is accepted and, by inference, what is acceptable within the professional community.

It is important to note, however, that conservatives are not entirely shut out of the professional culture of student affairs. Most participants were able to glean at least some benefit from going to regional or national professional meetings, whether that benefit was in the form of networking or practical information directly applicable to their job performance. Alex, in particular, spoke of her professional association as one of the factors that contributed to her longevity in the field. That said, Alex was frustrated by the increasing emphasis her association has placed on “warm and fuzzy” issues related to diversity and identity at the expense of more practical aspects of student affairs administration, a sentiment strongly echoed by Jim. The difference in what people consider to be an appropriate balance between “who we are” (identity and values) and “what we do” (practical knowledge and skills) in professional training and development is part of what characterizes the hegemonic system within student affairs. (Indeed, those who share the dominant values of the field might very well disagree with Jim’s assessment that diversity is not a key aspect of “what we do.”) The concern over an imbalance that tips in favor of values issues indicates that those who hold liberal values are likely to get far more out of a professional conference than those who do not. This may be evident in what is *absent* from professional gatherings more than in what is present. Although not all conference programs are values-based, those that are values-based are perceived as overwhelmingly liberal. None of the participants spoke of a values-related conference program that reflected their conservative values. Whereas conservatives may be served adequately at a cognitive level through programs that deliver useful information, liberals may be nourished at an affective level as well, with programs that affirm their values

and even inspire them to implement particular programs or create change on the basis of those values.

Need to educate oneself. When Chelsea, Charlotte, and Austen identify themselves as conservative or express a conservative point of view with colleagues, they have come to expect that they will be challenged to defend their positions. This has generated a certain degree of stress for Charlotte and Austen, in particular, because they do not always feel adequately prepared to engage in political debates. Charlotte feels like she needs a more comprehensive grasp of facts and evidence in order to be able to defend what she believes more effectively to others. Austen, on the other hand, feels like she needs more time and space to clarify what she believes even for herself:

And then there's the [feeling, if people know I'm conservative], "So, I'm going to have to justify this and I'm going to have to explain this over and over again." And in that justification and in that explaining, there's not necessarily a whole lot of time for me to fully develop kind of how I think about everything. Like, I know that—and I've had the experience before—that when I say "Oh, I'm conservative," then "Oh, well how do you feel about abortion? How do you feel about gay rights?" You know, "What do you think about this?"

Allison has also experienced this, but it is a source of pride for her that she is sufficiently well-informed on current issues to know what she believes and to engage confidently in such discussions. Rather than generating further conflict, Allison has found that being able express her views and stand her ground has actually made her experience easier:

When I get asked why I am a Republican, I'm able to articulate that very well and

people are kind of like, “Oh, well okay,” and then there’s no additional question about it. But if you don’t have that confidence or you don’t have the ability to articulate it at that level, then probably you wouldn’t want to bring it up because you don’t want people to challenge it.

Some participants perceive that they have gained something of value from the experience of being in the ideological minority. Because they are surrounded by views that differ from their own, Sean, Michelle, and Marty have found that they now understand liberal opinions better, even if they do not share them. Like Allison, Charlotte believes that the need to educate herself has helped her to be a more self-assured conservative. The benefit comes at a cost, however, and it is a cost that members of the dominant ideological class do not need to bear.

I think [being conservative in student affairs has] really forced me to know who I am and what I believe more. Because I think, when you don’t believe what the majority believes, you—well, for me—I feel like I need to know why I believe that. I expect to be questioned and I expect to be challenged, so I try to prepare myself for that. But sometimes, it’s made me a little bitter, ’cause it’s frustrating sometimes.

Activism. Another example of the pervasiveness of a liberal ideology in student affairs is the tolerance demonstrated for activism around liberal values and political views. Most of my participants explicitly stated that they did not see their professional work as an outlet for political or social activism. Some engaged in political campaigning or other types of political or religious outreach outside of work, but most were fairly quiet about their ideological views even in their private lives. Most of those who discussed their lack of activism also expressed a strong view that *no one* should feel free to use their professional

role as a platform for a given ideological agenda. Yet, many have encountered other professionals who seem unconcerned about the appropriateness of promoting their favored views. As Charlotte said, “I think there are people who are in student affairs because they have very strong beliefs and they want to...not enforce, but convey their beliefs to whoever [sic] they can and they use their positions as a catalyst.”

Although Charlotte thinks that certain kinds of activism may be appropriate depending on a person’s position, she is concerned when she sees people in residence life or other generalist roles focusing their energies mainly on particular subpopulations of students (e.g., students of color or gay students). Of even greater concern to her, and to other participants as well, is the way supervisors and other senior leaders enable those who go too far in their activism and, in some cases, even engage in such activism themselves. This was most evident during the 2008 presidential campaign, when many participants saw colleagues and supervisors openly displaying Obama campaign paraphernalia in clear violation of university policies, apparently without admonishment. (Because similar displays on behalf of conservative candidates or viewpoints were exceedingly rare in my participants’ experiences, it is difficult to know whether the policy violations were ignored because the displays supported the liberal positions or because the institutions simply were not inclined to enforce the policies, regardless of the content of the views expressed.)

Activism can take more subtle forms as well. Michelle, for example, said she does her best to avoid discussions within her office about the department’s mission statement because some of the values-oriented goals favored by her colleagues feel to her like an infringement on individual autonomy.

I think...wanting to put a piece in [the mission statement] about how we’re going to

cultivate students' attitudes, that really bothers me. I did not go to [undergrad college] as a student to have my attitude adjusted...I think that we're making ourselves be more than what we should be.

That liberal-oriented people can infuse their values into their work more overtly, and perhaps even feel supported in their activism by colleagues and institutional and/or professional leaders is further evidence of the hegemonic system that encourages—or at least tolerates—a particular brand of liberal activism. Taken along with the other ways in which liberal expectations are integrated into the practical life of student affairs, this activism serves as yet another mechanism by which conservatives are effectively marginalized in the field.

The double-standard of inclusiveness. Perhaps ironically, many participants have found tension and a sense of exclusion to be especially palpable at events dealing with diversity and inclusiveness. Austen related her experience of a professional development lecture on inclusiveness in which the speaker described his circle of friends. He mentioned four characteristics specifically: none of his friends were racist, none were homophobic, none were conservative, and none had voted for George W. Bush.

I thought that it was very interesting that those four things were put together....So I expected kind of a tie-in, like “hey, these are individuals that may not be in my friends base but that I need to branch out and build relationships with.” And there was never that follow-up. And I was like, “hm.”

For Austen, as well as for some of the resident assistants who attended the presentation, the association of conservative and Republican affiliation with racism and homophobia was frustrating and seemed to suggest that only conservatives would be prone to racist and homophobic attitudes.

Casey shared similar frustrations with diversity workshops at her university, where presenters made jokes about then-president and vice president George Bush and Dick Cheney and generally, in Casey's view, alienated several people in the audience by "telling us what bad White people we were." In a later interview, when I asked Casey how she thought the student affairs profession might be different if there were more conservative professionals in the field, she returned first to the topic of diversity training:

That's a good question....I wonder what diversity training would look like....I'm confident there would be some, but I think it might be more representative...and more inclusive. I think that, [sigh]...I continue to find it ironic that inclusivity is preached but yet, only being inclusive of...the groups they deem appropriate or more marginalized... 'Cause I don't feel included [small laugh].

Jim characterized this as a double-standard that exists in contemporary U.S. society generally, rather than just in higher education. "If you're a liberal, you're supposed to accept the values of everyone around you except for the conservative's. And if you're a conservative, you're supposed to accept the values of everyone around you, period." Jim's comment is similar to Patrick's observation that religious or spiritual perspectives are welcome in professional conversations as long as the perspective does not derive from traditional Christianity.

In many cases, the conflict participants experienced stemmed more from the manner in which diversity and multiculturalism were approached, rather than from hurtful comments or from the inclusion or exclusion of certain groups in training sessions. Patrick, Chelsea, Michelle, and Jim, in particular, spoke about their belief in the value of learning about other people and other ways of thinking. Their concern comes from the perception that learning

about and tolerating differences is not sufficient; rather, people in student affairs are expected to actively embrace various kinds of difference on equal terms with other beliefs, including their own. Chelsea explained:

Looking at the value that every culture and every ethnicity brings to higher education I think is very useful and very powerful because we do have a more diverse student body now than we used to. But if you approach it from the angle of “Well, you have to accept everyone and love everybody...,” I don’t quite agree with that because I think that’s a personal judgment that needs to be made.

Others shared Chelsea’s view about the importance of personal judgment, as well as her sense that the professional culture within student affairs demands a certain conformity of thought with regard to diversity. For Patrick, the concern is “just that assumption that there is value in things that are different and experiencing things that are different, no matter how they rub up against your values or your morals.”

The response to people who violate these assumptions and expectations can be quite intense, as both Casey and Austen have discovered. Although none of the participants felt that their actual values and views would prevent them from working effectively with students, some found that their colleagues drew different conclusions. When Casey wrote her letter to the student newspaper in support of a student who had been “just slammed” by faculty and staff for writing a piece in favor of the proposed state ban on same-sex marriage, her colleagues asked her, “How can you work for housing and not be inclusive and accepting?” Although she tried to explain, it was difficult for Casey’s colleagues to understand her view that valuing traditional marriage did not imply hatred for gay people. Austen, Charlotte, and other participants also felt that their conservative views were

interpreted by colleagues as suggestive of a lack of commitment to serving all students equally. Casey perceived the double standard here as well, since conservative students are also among the people student affairs professionals are expected to serve. In response to the colleagues who questioned how she could work in housing and not be inclusive with regard to marriage rights, she asked, “Well, what about these people that have another point of view? Do they not deserve to be treated with respect and be included?”

Responses to Hegemony

Earlier studies on stigma and marginalization have identified a variety of ways people respond to being in the subordinate class in a hegemonic system (see Anderson & Holliday, 2004; Boesser, 2004; Button, 2004; Clair et al., 2005; Kroeger, 2003; Levin & van Laar, 2004; Macauley, 2006; Pachankis, 2007; Yoshino, 2006). Some of these responses may be viewed simultaneously as symptoms of hegemony and as coping strategies for dealing with it. My participants employed most of these strategies to varying degrees, and many used more than one, depending on the particular situation. Some of the examples provided below to illustrate their different responses may seem to fit equally well with more than one strategy. This is because the distinctions among the strategies are somewhat fluid and reflect differences in degree or context, rather than clear-cut and mutually exclusive categories.

Passing

Passing, described as an effort to hide a stigmatized characteristic (Yoshino, 2006), is one response to hegemony that is fairly extreme. People who choose to pass may need to go to considerable lengths to avoid disclosing their stigmatized identity, including lying or pretending to be members of the dominant group. Austen admitted that she sometimes joined her colleagues in anti-conservative mockery in order to protect her professional image.

She described those efforts as “assimilating, acting,...wearing a mask or performing.” Charlotte decided to be more open about her conservative identity when she “got tired of keeping quiet and feeling like I needed to smile or nod at jokes or things that I didn’t find funny.” Sean recognized the option to pass during the 2008 presidential campaign and rejected it.

So when you’ve got 17 out of 18 [people in the office] all going to an Obama rally or wearing their Obama pins...around the office,...you’re pretty much required to either go and, you know, wave the Obama flag even though you don’t [agree], or you say [something]. So I just pretty much said “I’m not an Obama supporter.”

For Sean, being honest about his views was more important than trying to fit in with his colleagues. Austen and Charlotte came to similar realizations as passing became a wearisome and unsatisfactory response to the challenge of bearing a stigmatized trait.

Covering

A less extreme identity management strategy is covering. A person who covers downplays the existence or significance of a *known* devalued trait, rather than trying to hide the trait entirely (Yoshino, 2006). Alex explained that she does “a lot to be pretty low-key” about her politics, both in her home community, where people know she is a Republican, and at the larger level of her professional association, where she has been more cautious about disclosing her views. Casey is much more open than Alex about her Republican affiliation, yet she has learned to keep her private life more or less to herself during staff meetings to avoid the disapproving responses of some of her colleagues.

In an effort to avoid being seen as argumentative or to avoid creating unnecessary dissonance, several participants talked about “choosing their battles” carefully. For those

whose colleagues knew they were conservative, this may also be a form of covering. By not reminding colleagues of their conservative views, participants can shield themselves from conflicts that might hurt them in some way later on. Marty's faculty colleagues know she is conservative, and Marty feels that her ideology has had little impact on her professional experiences and relationships thus far. Nevertheless, she revealed some apprehension about drawing attention to the ways in which she differs from her colleagues, particularly given that she hopes to get tenure one day:

I've had dinner recently where a group of faculty were talking all about how wonderful Obama is and how great his policies are, and I found it best to just keep my mouth shut, rather than be confrontational or to say anything that would make me be seen as a liability.

Avoidance

Marty's statement above reflects another strategy that was very common among the participants, one that I call *avoidance*. Unlike passing and covering, I see avoidance as side-stepping the question of whether a stigmatized trait is known to others or not. By avoiding certain topics or situations, people can avert the need to pass, cover, or disclose before such a choice becomes necessary. Alex was able to develop a reasonably good working relationship with her chancellor because they agreed not to discuss politics. Michelle avoids conversations about her department's mission and goals for student development, and Charlotte and Austen avoid sitting on certain diversity-related committees where they think their conservative orientation (if not necessarily their views on the relevant issues) might generate conflict. For her final project in a class on student development theory, Chelsea chose not to address a theory over which she and her professor disagreed. Many participants

choose not to use Facebook, or are very deliberate about what they post with regard to their ideological identities and opinions. (This is in contrast to many of their Facebook “friends” and colleagues, who freely post politically-tinged comments.) This is another illustration of avoidance and, in some cases, covering.

Andrew provided the most sweeping example of avoidance. Having made a conscious decision to refrain from talking about his personal political views with anyone under any circumstances, Andrew does not need to make many smaller situational decisions about when to disclose his views or to whom. It is interesting to note, however, that Andrew—like Sean, Patrick, Charlotte, and others—does not take special pains to avoid all conflict. When he has a differing point of view on a topic that is relevant to his work, he will share that view because he is confident that his perspective—*because* it is different—contributes something positive to the discussion at hand. Not all of the participants were as comfortable as Andrew in this regard, especially when the discussion involved some aspect of diversity, but in general, participants had a higher tolerance for challenging others and contributing an alternative point of view in situations that were clearly related to their professional responsibilities.

Acceptance

In some instances, participants revealed an attitude of resignation or acceptance that their values were not the dominant values of the field. They were not necessarily happy about it, but they also did not find it worthwhile to object strongly enough to threaten the prevailing hegemonic structure. As I noted earlier, my participants are not activists for a conservative cause. Referring to his newly-assumed leadership position in his professional organization, for example, Jim asserted:

Because I do go to conferences and such that challenge my belief systems sometimes, I also have an idea of what current practice is and what best practice is in terms of what's going on on campuses. And I'm certainly not going to come up and do anything that's going to fly in the face of all that....If there are opportunities to provide alternative points of view, I will, and given the opportunity to do so, I certainly will. However, again, neither my institution nor [the association] are personal platforms for which I am to use to...force my belief system on other people.

It is sign of tolerance for the dominant professional culture that Jim is willing to compartmentalize his personal values, adapting himself to the environment rather than finding ways to move the culture into greater alignment with himself. He is prepared to offer alternative perspectives *given the opportunity*, but does not plan to use his position as an opportunity to pursue fundamental change.

Another illustration of acceptance comes from Casey, who is wary of having meaningful conversations with conservative colleagues about the struggles and frustrations she encounters on her campus. The few conservatives in her department are junior to her, and Casey feels that she has a professional obligation to support the mission and values of the institution in her dealings with junior staff, even if she personally has some qualms about how the mission and values are enacted. To the extent that Casey tries to exert influence among her colleagues on her campus or beyond, it is with the intent of making space for conservative opinions to be heard, not to necessarily replace the dominant liberal values with conservative ones.

Resistance

It is interesting that Casey, in spite of her apparent acceptance of the dominance of liberal values, also presented some of the clearest examples of resistance. In writing a note to her chancellor objecting to mandatory training sessions at which Republicans were ridiculed, and in suggesting that the professional association leadership committee on which she served might consider taking a public stand on a conservative cause to balance its stand on a liberal issue, Casey demonstrated considerable courage and determination. Although she does not expect that voicing her objections will lead to a major cultural shift within her institution or the profession, it is nevertheless important to her to raise awareness about the presence of people with alternative points of view and to perhaps make the environment more comfortable for those individuals. Her presence and willingness to speak out have had at least some effect on her department in the area of staff training, although Casey believes that change is limited to the areas where she is directly involved, rather than reflecting a broader sense of ideological inclusiveness among her colleagues.

Sean provided an interesting example of resistance, albeit of a different sort. When Sean's supervisor sent an e-mail to the staff asking them to tell students about newly available opportunities involving stem cell research, Sean felt conflicted between his pro-life moral values and his role as a professional. Rather than speak up, as Casey and others did, Sean exercised his resistance *silently* by simply disregarding the request. In this way, he refused to perpetuate the dominant value system even if he did not feel comfortable challenging it directly.

None of the participants in this study engaged in the kind of active resistance that might pose a significant threat to the hegemonic system. Sean referred to it briefly when he talked about the public and state government needing to be involved in order to change the

culture, or at least the policies, of the university with regard to issues like funding for birth control, but even Sean was not prepared to put his professional future at risk to take up that cause. Casey feels that she has been able to effect some change in her department, but only in the areas for which she has direct responsibility.

Impact of Hegemony

The hegemonic dynamic at play in student affairs has a number of consequences. Most are borne by individuals, as my participants' stories show. Other, more indirect consequences have the potential to negatively affect the performance of a department or the overall campus environment for students as well as staff and faculty.

Woundedness

As I talked to some of the participants, I was struck by a strong sense of woundedness. The negative interactions they have had with colleagues in the past have left scars that continue to influence how they react and behave. Charlotte, for example, talked about why she does not participate on committees planning diversity-related events:

Many times people are incredibly passionate, and often times...it becomes less about the event, and political ideologies come out and I know I'm going to feel uncomfortable because I'm probably not going to agree. And again, I could be wrong, and I haven't done this per se, but my perception is that if I voiced a dissenting opinion, I would be outcast of the group and probably wouldn't be invited back next time there is an event anyway, so I just shy away from it.

Charlotte's anticipation of rejection is quite strong and the easiest way for her to deal with that is to avoid putting herself in the position where she might be vulnerable. Austen likewise chose not to take a class on spirituality and faith development. After her very

emotionally-charged experience in an earlier course on student development theory, “I didn’t want to sit through another class where I was going to be told that my faith was unimportant and everybody else’s beliefs systems were the important ones.” In response to some very negative experiences talking about politics with work friends, Andrew has resolved to avoid talking about his own political views entirely. In each of these cases, the wounds may not be fresh—the original incidents occurred at least two or three years earlier—but the lasting changes in attitudes and behaviors suggest that the blows were powerful and the psychological and emotional effects still linger.

Loss of Camaraderie

In several cases, participants talked about the absence of personal friends among their work colleagues. Marty spoke about her professional life and her personal life as being “complete silos.” Much of that has to do with the fact that she and her colleagues are in very different stages of life, but Marty also spoke somewhat wistfully about the lack of like-minded colleagues with whom she could share the excitement of an election, for example. Casey and Michelle also talked about the fact that they do not socialize with colleagues. In Michelle’s case, this makes it easier for her to keep her political affiliation a secret. Casey wondered if having more conservative colleagues would make her more inclined to socialize with colleagues outside of work. Although no one talked about camaraderie on the job being a necessity, having such relationships would likely make the work environment more enjoyable and also reduce the sense of isolation and “otherness” that some experience in their workplaces.

Lost Contributions

Charlotte's avoidance of diversity-related committee work illustrates the very real possibility that hegemonic dynamics may result in the loss of potentially valuable contributions from otherwise dedicated professionals. Austen speaks passionately about her commitment to social justice, yet like Charlotte, she has come to avoid formal diversity efforts within her department because of the rejection she has felt from fellow social justice advocates. Alex has kept her political identification hidden from her fellow professional association members throughout her career because she feared that she would not be considered for certain opportunities if people knew she was conservative. Considering that Alex has received high praise and recognition from her association for her professional excellence and commitment to the organization, one must ask what the cost might have been to the association if Alex had shared her views and been denied those opportunities (thus justifying her fears), or if she had simply decided to direct her energy and talents to an area of her life where she believed her views would have been more welcome (or at least not a liability).

Resistance to Learning Opportunities

Another consequence that has implications for both the individual and the profession generally is an increased reluctance to participate in potentially valuable learning opportunities. Austen's decision not to take a class on spirituality development is one example. Chelsea made a similar decision with a class on multiculturalism. Casey saw it among some staff members at her institution who visibly shut down during a mandatory diversity training session that demeaned conservative leaders and values. By taking an approach to diversity education that demands acceptance of certain liberal values, or by assuming that everyone in an audience or classroom—even a student affairs classroom—

already shares a liberal worldview and political orientation, professors and speakers risk alienating people who might otherwise be receptive to, or at least willing to consider what they are trying to teach. In such cases, it may not be only the conservatives who suffer a lost opportunity; their more liberal colleagues are also denied a chance to consider their own views more deeply and possibly stretch their thinking in the face of different perspectives.

Impact on Students

If practitioners are resistant to participating in certain kinds of professional development programs, it stands to reason that this may have an indirect and adverse effect on students, although the extent of this effect would be difficult to measure. Several participants expressed concern about the more directly traceable consequences of hegemonic pressures on the students they serve. Austen has helped at least one conservative student on her housing staff to work through frustrations generated by a diversity speaker, while Casey has tried to reassure potential applicants for RA positions that it is indeed possible to work in housing and also hold conservative values. Austen, Casey, and Charlotte, in particular, want to be able to stand up on behalf of conservative students and be a voice of support for them within the campus administration. The fact that Casey is sometimes approached by students who have housing concerns and want to speak with someone who shares their values is evidence that having openly conservative administrators may make offices and departments appear more welcoming and accessible to that population of students.

Michelle and Jim are also concerned about efforts they sometimes see on their campuses to push students toward a particular point of view or set of values. They (and other participants) would like conservative students to feel they are respected and have as much right to their opinions as anyone else, even as they may also try to encourage those

students—and all students—to examine different perspectives and arrive at their own conclusions.

It is important to note that the participants in this study differed considerably in the degree to which they experienced the hegemonic effects of the dominant ideology within their profession. Some perceived or exhibited only one or two—if any—of the types of impact described above, and to only a minimal extent. Others were affected far more deeply and in a multitude of ways. Why might this be so? The next two sections will address this question, looking first at the nature of the hegemonic system itself, and then at the personal qualities and circumstances that play a significant role in how the participants experience that system.

Revisiting the Parameters of Hegemony in Student Affairs

The central role of diversity and diversity-related issues in my participants' experiences offers a key insight into the contours of the hegemony within student affairs. The data from this study suggest that describing the hegemony in terms of liberal and conservative ideology may be overly simplistic. In fact, my discussion of the terms *liberal* and *conservative* in chapter 1 predicted this. Allison, for example, perceives very little dissonance and has suffered no ill effects as a consequence of being a conservative student affairs professional. Although she acknowledged that traditionally conservative values are not very well received in the profession, her own socially liberal views allow her to blend in quite easily—and genuinely—with the dominant values of the field. She noted, “I don't really disagree fundamentally with a lot of the things that people get riled up about politically [in student affairs],” such as gay rights, equal access, and social justice. Allison observed that political interests within student affairs appear to be limited to the areas of diversity and

cultural competence, an observation that is consistent with the high salience of diversity-related concerns in participants' professional lives. It is also consistent with comments made by Alex, Marty, and other participants who find that politics is largely irrelevant in their daily work, although "political correctness" and identity issues serve as sources of frustration. This leads to the possibility that the hegemony in student affairs is more appropriately defined in terms of specific attitudes and views related to diversity, rather than in terms of liberal or conservative identification. In this sense, someone like Allison might actually be considered part of the dominant group in the hegemonic system, despite her strong sense of identification as a conservative.

A second, related difference that appears to illuminate the borders of the hegemony is the balance between "who we are" (i.e., identities and values) and "what we do" in practical terms. The emphasis on identities and values that many participants observed suggests that many professionals consider these areas to be an important part of what student affairs "does," rather than a deviation from it. While none of the participants disputed that identities and values are important to some extent, especially when working with traditionally-aged students, the frustration articulated by Jim, Alex, Chelsea, and others is in the level of attention given to these areas relative to the attention given to practical issues. Chelsea touched on this when she spoke about a course in her graduate program dealing with multiculturalism and diversity that she saw as perpetuating the double standard of valuing all cultures but the majority culture. "I think there are a lot of other things that are relevant to the field, particularly relevant to working with students, that would be much more appropriate." Presumably, Chelsea's professors do not consider this class—or their approach to teaching it—to be a waste of students' time. Taking this example as illustrative then leads

to the possibility that the hegemony is defined not only by people's views on issues related to gay rights and social justice, but also by the relative prioritization of those issues in the overall scope of student affairs work.

Even if we accept that the hegemony must be understood in more nuanced terms than political identification alone, we cannot escape the reality—as depicted frequently in the data—that people are often judged negatively on the basis of their conservative political identification or on the assumption that holding conservative views on one issue necessarily implies holding conservative views on another. Participants who hold liberal views on social issues like gay rights and equal access sometimes (or even often) feel strained in their interactions with colleagues, despite their agreement with the majority's values. Austen shares the dominant approach to diversity, and understanding “who we are” is important to her. She very much wants to be an effective social justice advocate, yet she has been met with suspicion and outright hostility on more than one occasion when she has identified herself as a Republican, a Christian, or a conservative. A large proportion of Austen's difficulties stem not from her own sense of dissonance with the hegemonic worldview, but rather from the rejection she feels from others who consider conservative values and political opinions to be incompatible with those dominant values.

The approach to diversity and inclusiveness within student affairs could be described justifiably as a liberal approach. The emphasis on addressing social injustice and dismantling hegemonies (concepts grounded in Marxism), and the acceptance of an ever-broader array of identities and values are consistent with a liberal philosophy and interpretation of the world. As the examples of Austen and Allison illustrate vividly, however, this approach cannot be linked exclusively to political liberalism, defined in contemporary practical terms by

affiliation with the Democrats or other left-of-center political organizations. It is possible to identify as a Republican or conservative and still share the values and aims of social justice advocates. Because social justice is more commonly associated with political (and religious) liberalism, however, the privilege of dominance appears to extend indirectly to people who identify as liberal, while those who identify as conservative must overcome at least some measure of skepticism. The participants' experiences suggest, therefore, that within higher education and the student affairs profession at least, conventional modern stereotypes work in favor of those who are (or are assumed to be) liberal and against those who are (or are assumed to be) conservative.

Mitigating Factors

This guilt or innocence by association allows us to understand some of the dynamics at work in the study participants' experiences. It also accounts for some of the differences in participants' level of struggle. It cannot be the entire story, however. Why, for example, should Allison feel so little hegemonic impact even *after* identifying herself as a conservative, while Michelle and Austen feel the effects so much more strongly despite staying silent?

One obvious answer to this question is personality. Allison is an extrovert with a very strong sense of herself. She enjoys engaging in spirited discussions on controversial issues, and she is not afraid to have her opinion challenged. She does not take it personally if people question how a Republican could espouse the views that she does and in fact, she appreciates the opportunity to educate people about the diversity of thought that exists among Republicans. Patrick, who is also very outgoing, is also able to enjoy discussing emotionally-charged topics with people who are diametrically opposed to him ideologically.

Both Patrick and Allison seem largely unaffected by the hegemony in their professional lives. Austen, Michelle, and Casey, on the other hand, are all very introspective. Conflicts and hurtful encounters appear to leave deeper marks and prompt more serious reflection for them. This gives at least the impression of greater struggle as they process their experiences and come to terms with how they perceive themselves within the society of professionals.

Another obvious element that would predict a person's level of comfort is the degree of institutional or regional fit he or she perceives. This is where the idea of nested hegemonies is perhaps most evident. As I discussed in chapter 2, I believe it is possible for hegemonies to be nested within and alongside other hegemonic systems that are defined by different parameters. This means that the effects of working as a conservative within a liberal profession may be offset to varying degrees by the culture of an institution or region, which may itself be hegemonic in a different way. Hughes's (2004) research, which found that a good philosophical fit at the departmental level was more important to the quality of a person's professional experience than the fit at the institutional level, supports this assertion and was further affirmed by the findings of the present study. Although my research did not distinguish between the culture of a department and that of an institution, the participants' stories do suggest that having a comfortable ideological fit at a local level alleviates the tension people might otherwise perceive within the larger professional community. Jim, for example, has been very much at ease throughout his career, largely because he has specifically chosen to remain within a conservative region of the country, and the institutions where he has worked have mirrored that conservative culture. He still feels bound by the expectations of the profession, but he is in an environment that supports a relatively conservative interpretation and application of those expectations. Alex's discomfort at her

institution was buffered by the more conservative orientation of the surrounding community, which allowed her to maintain a sense of overall professional satisfaction. In contrast, Austen, who has experienced much more difficulty, works at an institution that she perceives as very liberal, in a part of the country that also feels very liberal. Based on these and other similar findings, I maintain that ideological (in)congruence at the smaller, local level is arguably the single most significant factor influencing a person's comfort in his or her professional circumstances.

The all-encompassing nature of Austen's live-in position further exacerbates her level of stress and discomfort. Although no one else expressed the same level of anxiety as Austen, the participants who worked in residence life and housing generally seemed to wrestle more with values conflicts than did participants in other functional areas. As Andrew explained, "there are a lot more social issues associated with [meeting students' basic needs]." Being on the academic side of the university—where the issues are less personal and accountability is more naturally enforced—alleviates some of the pressure Andrew felt in student affairs. Sean, likewise, has found that working in career services generates fewer conflicts (and anticipated conflicts) for him than student activities or student government advising, where values and values-driven policies are a more integral part of the work. Where a person works within the profession, therefore, can be an important determinant of how acutely the hegemony is experienced.

In cases in which study participants experience conflicts with the dominant culture and its values, having trusting personal and/or professional relationships appears to facilitate their ability to manage those conflicts. Marty, Alex, Charlotte, and others valued the opportunity to vent their frustrations with spouses, friends, and family. Although having

these sources of emotional support does not seem to lessen the participants' experience of stress, it does permit them to cope more effectively. Austen, who does not have that support in her immediate environment, exhibited the greatest degree of stress, while Allison, who feels little impact from the hegemonic system, expressed no inclination or need to seek out similarly-minded friends.

In summary, it *is* possible to manage and be successful as a conservative in the student affairs profession. Depending on one's personal attributes and professional circumstances, however, that success may come relatively easily or at a considerable cost. Those who disagree with the dominant values of the profession with regard to diversity, in particular, may struggle with a legitimate philosophical difference, while others who actually share those dominant values may find themselves alienated on the basis of negative stereotypes. The next chapter presents concluding thoughts on this tension and asks a number of questions to shape ongoing reflection and dialogue.

Chapter Six

Final Thoughts

I began this study with an assumption and a question. In chapters 1 and 2, I defended the assumption that the student affairs profession is a hegemonic system in which liberal values and ideas are dominant and identification with a liberal worldview is privileged. I then set out to discover where and how conservative professionals fit in the student affairs profession, given their disadvantaged position. In the previous two chapters, I presented the results of my efforts to answer that question, first through the stories of the participants, and then by relating those stories to the theoretical framework that gave structure to the inquiry. In this final chapter I will address the theoretical and practical implications of my findings, and explore some of the questions that remain to be considered in the future.

The essential characteristics of hegemony are the unequal distribution of power within a culture or social group and the pervasiveness of an ideology in the daily operations of that social system (Williams, 1977). I argued in chapter 2 that hegemonic power does not operate only on the grand scale of an entire society. Smaller regions and social systems may also exert considerable influence over the lives of their members, and the dominant values of those systems may be wholly or partially at odds with the dominant values of the society within which those smaller systems operate. I maintained that such a lower-level hegemony—what I called a *nested hegemony*—was evident in the case of student affairs, a profession that is grounded in a liberal philosophical tradition and espouses values that are commonly associated with a liberal worldview. The nature of the professional culture, as revealed through such sources as professional association mission statements and professional literature, suggested that within the narrowly-defined domain of this profession,

people who identified as conservative or who espoused conservative views and values would find themselves at a disadvantage. Indeed, the participants in this study offered ample support for my premise, as the previous two chapters illustrated.

It can be argued easily that every professional is likely to encounter situations that generate some degree of internal or external friction. Standards of professionalism and the practical realities of leadership and interpersonal dynamics often necessitate compromise, delicacy in expressing one's views, or even a willingness to set one's personal views aside (at least publicly) in support of a team. Although I agree that this is true, the fact that liberally-oriented educators may also be confronted at times with moral dilemmas or with colleagues with whom they disagree does not change my fundamental view about the hegemonic influences within student affairs. Even if the micro-level experiences of a particular individual do not reflect all of the expectations of hegemony theory, macro-level patterns are still discernible that support the theory's validity.

In the same way that student affairs may be regarded as a nested hegemony within the larger U.S. society, individual institutions may exert hegemonic power as well. A person with liberal values may be as uncomfortable at a conservative Christian college as some of my participants are in their own work environments. Having a good ideological fit with one's institution is an important factor that mitigates a person's experience of hegemony in the profession, as several of my participants demonstrated. It is important to ask, then, how difficult is it for someone with conservative values to find a good ideological fit in higher education, and in student affairs in particular, compared to someone who is liberal? Those who are conservative and Christian have an array of religiously affiliated schools from which to choose, and there are regions of the country that are more naturally supportive of Christian

religious values, even at public institutions. Secular or non-Christian conservatives would probably find their options considerably more limited. Furthermore, even if a person finds ideological congruence with a particular institution, how easy is it to form comfortable professional relationships and engage in professional development and networking opportunities at regional and national levels? My participants touched on these and related questions, but additional research is warranted in order to understand these dynamics more fully, especially in comparison with the experiences of liberals in the field.

Whether a hegemonic system operates at a broad, societal level or in a nested domain of life, it is always somewhat fluid. Williams (1977) described hegemony as a dynamic system that “has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified” (p. 112). Hegemonic forces are constantly being resisted in ways both obvious and subtle, and sometimes this process results in a new emergent structure that gathers enough strength and momentum to challenge and eventually even dismantle the existing structure of dominance. Contemporary advocates of social justice, for example, are quite open about their intentions to disrupt what they perceive as the prevailing hegemony in U.S. society, a hegemony in which power is distributed on the basis of race, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, class, and religion, among other factors (see Applebaum, 2009; Chesler et al., 2005; Howard, 1999; Iverson, 2007; Patton et al., 2007; Reason et al., 2005). To the extent that the student affairs profession has embraced the values of the social justice movement, it may be considered part of that emergent force fighting against the hegemonic structures in the larger society.

Conceptualizing the student affairs profession as a culture with its own hegemonic structures of power opens the door to the possibility of an emergent counterforce developing

within that nested hegemony. Might conservatives within the profession constitute such an emergent movement? Although that is certainly a possibility, I would not make such a claim on the basis of this study. The participants in this study, by and large, expressed no ardent desire to change the fundamental values or philosophical underpinnings of student affairs, even though some acknowledged that they felt challenged by at least some of those values as they are commonly put into practice. If more conservatives were to begin to identify themselves openly and assert alternative beliefs about the nature and application of professional values, it is possible that something akin to an emergent movement could arise. Insofar as my research encourages people to think about the dominant professional discourse as hegemonic and gives voice to the personal identities, values, and views that are invisible or not fully accepted within it, this study might be seen as contributing to an emergent, resistant element within the professional hegemony. I realize this is a possible outcome, but dismantling the student affairs hegemony has never been my intention.

The fact that some individuals within a given social organization would find themselves marginalized because of their divergence from the society's established norms is hardly surprising, taking for granted Williams's (1977) assertion that "no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention" (p. 125). Social groups must be defined in some way, if identity as a group is to have any meaning. The individuals who make up a group, however, are complex and unique, and will differ in how closely they adhere to the norms of the group culture. Every social group, therefore, must consider how to deal with the variability within its membership. Even a society that values pluralism and inclusiveness is not exempt from this because it will inevitably have to address the problem of how to include people who reject pluralism as an

ideology (Nash, 2001; Nash, Bradley, & Chickering, 2008). Likewise, those who embrace the value of tolerance must decide how willing they are to tolerate the intolerance they perceive in others.

Pushing the boundaries of inclusiveness, therefore, can change where the margins lie, but cannot erase them completely. Relative power and privilege will always fall to some class of people, however that class is defined. This means that even if a social system takes great pains to serve all of its members at a basic level, not everyone will feel equally *nurtured*. Professional conferences that offer a variety of programs will almost certainly feature something that the conservative participant will find interesting or useful. In that sense, the participant is being served adequately. But how often does that conservative professional leave a conference feeling inspired? How does this compare to the experience of his or her liberal colleagues? This question is clearly beyond the scope of the present study, but it suggests one possible avenue of inquiry for future researchers. It is also possible that conservatives are not the only group to feel the inhibiting effects of the professional hegemony. Additional research is needed to more fully understand the nature of the professional hegemony in student affairs and the positions of different groups in relation to it.

If we accept as true that full inclusivity is impossible for any social community, it would be unfair to criticize the student affairs profession for failing to achieve it. I believe the reason some people perceive student affairs to be hypocritical in this regard is because the value of inclusivity is so prominent, despite being so problematic. Even if we can imagine a state of passive inclusiveness, where everything is accepted without judgment, this type of inclusiveness is incongruent with the kind of group- or issue-specific advocacy that some participants observe in their more liberal colleagues and that is, on at least some issues,

encouraged by the national professional organizations (ACPA, 2010a; NASPA, 2010b, Goal C section, ¶ 2). I believe it is important for professionals and student affairs leaders to be conscious of what is truly meant by “inclusive” (in practice, as well as in theory), and to consider the implications and impact of those lived realities.

In the case of this study’s participants, the sense of “otherness” that some people feel—and that other participants have noticed, even if they don’t feel personally affected by it—is due only partially to what they as conservatives actually believe. Stereotypical associations that conflate conservative values with bigotry are also a significant factor in the judgment and suspicion participants have experienced. This seems to indicate an all-or-nothing mentality, whereby a person who disagrees with the fundamental idea of a national healthcare system, for example, is assumed to harbor hateful feelings toward people who are gay. This stereotype, like all stereotypes, is an oversimplification that ignores the infinite complexities of human experience. It also deserves to be challenged and examined, just as stereotypes about race and gender are challenged and examined throughout much of U.S. society today.

Given that hegemony is frequently associated with the concept of oppression (see Anderson, 2005; Howard, 1999; Young, 2003), it is reasonable to address the question of whether I consider conservatives in student affairs to be an oppressed group. I do not. Even though some of the participants in this study struggled in their circumstances and felt concern for their career prospects because of their identification as conservative, every one of them spoke about how much they loved working with students and how much satisfaction they derived from their jobs. Even those who struggled most also acknowledged that their discomfort was not constant. For most participants, it also was not pervasive in their lives

outside of work. No one feared for their personal safety at work or anywhere else as a result of identifying as conservative. Perhaps most importantly, most people referred in one way or another to their ability to choose how to manage their circumstances. Some choose to live and work in certain parts of the country or to work in certain functional areas within student affairs. Some have considered leaving their institutions. No matter how frustrated they were, they were aware of the possibility of choosing a different path. This freedom to make choices illustrates the general sense of autonomy that my participants enjoy, even within the domain of their professional lives.

Having said that, I do not wish to ignore the aspects of my participants' experiences that are inhibitive, and in some instances severely so. There is an imbalance in the degree of comfort many of my participants feel about expressing their political or religious identities in professional settings, compared to the apparent freedom of their liberal colleagues. There are unwritten rules and norms that affect participants' experiences and sometimes make them feel constrained in how they do their work or interact with colleagues. People around them speak—knowingly or unknowingly—in pejorative terms about leaders they admire and values/opinions they espouse. As hegemonic systems go, this one seems to have a comparatively weak impact for most people. Nevertheless, no one questioned why this kind of research might be interesting and, in fact, several expressed gratitude that someone was finally trying to fill this gap in the professional literature.

Recommendations

This study was never intended to expose an oppressive liberal regime. My aim has always been to raise awareness and encourage dialogue by pointing out the ways in which liberal values and attitudes are privileged in the specific context of student affairs. I hope

that this research will prompt people to think about the prevailing ideology in the profession, to become aware of how it manifests itself in practice, and to consider more fully the possible ramifications of that lived ideology. What people do with those reflections is another question entirely. I would, however, like to offer three suggestions.

1. **Confront stereotypes.** If there is conflict among people or ideas, those conflicts should at least be genuine, based on actual points of disagreement rather than on assumptions about what people believe. “Conservative” and “liberal” can mean many things to many people, and people who identify themselves with opposite terms may in fact share a great deal in common. Confronting stereotypes, therefore, allows for more effective and genuine communication. Furthermore, if people judge others on the basis of labels and stereotypes, rather than understanding one another as the complex beings that they truly are, I believe everyone suffers. Stereotypes deny others their full humanity by ascribing negative (or positive) characteristics that they may not, in fact, possess. This is in direct conflict with the expectations of national student affairs professional associations, which call for members to “[enhance] the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of each individual” (ACPA, 2006), “[be] aware of personal bias,” and “[engage] in complex thinking beyond or across categories” (NASPA, 2010c). For the same reasons that we try to challenge and dispel stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender (among others), we should strive to understand people as they are, beyond the label of their ideological affiliation.

2. **Develop greater tolerance for conflict.** Much has been written in recent years about the state of civility in U.S. American society, and specifically, the incivility that appears increasingly to characterize public discourse (Abramsky, 2010; Herbst, 2010; L.

Miller, 2010; Tugend, 2010). Unpleasant though uncivil exchanges might be, it would be a mistake to use the fear of incivility as an excuse to avoid all conflict. Under the right conditions, conflict can be very productive. Herbst (2010) advocated for a “culture of argument” (p. 126) in which citizens are skilled in the art of civil debate and persuasive argumentation, as well as in the practice of “hard listening” (p. 126), through which people take in and attempt to understand the arguments of others. This will not always be comfortable, of course, especially considering that it takes time and effort to develop such skills and some people will be better than others at putting them into practice. Having the courage to engage in conversations and express dissenting opinions is essential, however, if people are to learn about different points of view and, consequently, better understand and refine their own. The participants in this study who spoke about being challenged when they expressed their views also acknowledged that the expectation of challenge forced them to educate themselves more and to think more about what they believed. This is a good thing, although it would be better if it were happening in both directions. It seems unfair that only the conservatives should feel the discomfort of having to defend their positions or, to cast it in a more positive light, that only the conservatives should enjoy the benefit of understanding more fully their own and others’ points of view. All members of a society should share in the responsibility for creating a “culture of argument, and the thick skin that goes along with it” (Herbst, 2010, p. 148).

3. **Create safe environments for dialogue.** The other side of developing the courage to speak out is creating conversational environments in which people feel safe articulating competing views. The skill of hard listening that Herbst (2010) advocated is one means of trying to open up space for the respectful exchange of opinions. Engaging in

“moral conversation” (Nash, 2008; Nash et al., 2008) is another. Moral conversation represents an effort to put the ideals of pluralism to work in practice, while yet acknowledging that even pluralism has its limits. The guiding principles and assumptions of moral conversation are intended to help participants engage in respectful conversations about controversial topics. All opinions are given space to be heard. Participants are asked to be willing to question everything, including their own biases about the topic, and also to be willing to “find the truth in what they oppose and the error in what they espouse” (Nash et al., 2008, p. 22). They are also asked to assume that others are speaking with positive intent, and to try to understand the underlying narrative that shapes each person’s perspective. Moral conversation is by no means easy, as those who use it will attest (Nash, 2008; Nash et al., 2008), but it holds great potential for allowing participants to share sometimes very passionate and divergent views with a sense of respect, humility, and acknowledgement of what others have to offer.

It may be difficult to establish the parameters of a moral conversation in casual settings, such as at the office water cooler or on Facebook, where it is difficult, if not impossible, to establish ground rules for conversation. I believe it is possible though for an individual to take the principles of moral conversation to heart and strive to apply them to any interaction. One never knows when a casual conversation will turn to something controversial, and modeling the assumptions of moral conversation may allow for a productive exchange of views where there might otherwise be either a tense confrontation or an awkward silence.

Lingering Questions

Not everyone sees moral conversation and civil discourse as positive strategies. At

least some critical social theorists, researchers, and activists view politeness and tolerance as tools that perpetuate the oppression of minority groups within the larger society (Applebaum, 2009; Herbst, 2010; Nash et al., 2008; Marcuse, 1965). According to this view, limiting the expression of conservative and regressive views is necessary because those views are supported by the hegemonic status quo and members of the dominant class are predisposed to be sympathetic to them. Granting those views an equal place in the public discourse, therefore, does nothing more than establish a false equivalence between just and unjust ideas, which does little to help the cause of justice (Marcuse, 1965). Creating the proverbial level playing field, therefore, means actively promoting the needs and perspectives of those who belong to oppressed groups and actively restricting the expression of views by already privileged members of society.

This argument highlights the tension between macro- and micro-level conditions. It is one thing to observe patterns of oppression from the level of an entire society and determine that, in the cause of fairness and equality, one group should be given more room and encouragement to flourish than another. Reducing that to the level of the individual is another. Telling one person “you may express your opinion” and telling another “you may not” does not look at all fair or compassionate in that limited context, and it is easy to understand why people whose views are stifled might feel resentful. Furthermore, restricting the expression of certain views does not help those who hold them to understand why others find those views objectionable and to consider their beliefs in light of new information. The sense of certain ideas being off-limits may be especially difficult for those who are trying to decide what they believe, as students often do during their undergraduate years. How can they explore different ideas and their implications if they do not feel that they can question

freely? This is clearly a question that student affairs professionals must consider if they are to effectively foster students' development in all dimensions of their lives.

Taking the view that conservative opinions must be suppressed in service to the larger interests of society also raises a number of interesting questions. How is one to regard those individuals who share the ideals of a just society, but hold different opinions on the best path for achieving that aim? It is possible, as some of my participants illustrate, to apply philosophically conservative approaches to essentially liberal goals. Would restricting the expression of those ideas really advance the cause of social justice? Is it wise to alienate anyone who believes in the ultimate goal of ending oppression simply because their worldview may suggest different causes and solutions to social inequities? This again seems to be a problem of preconceived notions and suspicion about the fundamental aims of people who identify themselves as conservatives.

I also wonder if the people who would object to the recentering of White, straight, culturally Christian people (as this study undoubtedly does) would feel differently about it if political and ideological orientation were understood as an identity, rather than as a mere constellation of opinions that can easily shift. Researchers have begun to explore the effects of genetic and environmental influences on political attitudes and ideology development, and findings suggest that approximately half of the variability in our political ideologies may be accounted for by genetic factors (Alford, Funk, & Hibbing, 2005). Indeed, several participants spoke about their conservatism as being a core part of who they are. When a person's conservatism is perceived as a central and highly salient aspect of his or her identity, hostility toward conservative ideas and values can potentially strike at a much deeper level than a relatively simple cognitive disagreement. Much more research is needed to

understand the intricacies of ideological development, but if in fact there is something relatively constant that might be called an ideological identity, would that change the nature of our conversations about ideological differences?

I realize that many of the questions and conclusions I have offered here will be troublesome to at least some readers. Critical research is guided by a desire to address social inequalities and oppression, and White conservative professionals are an unlikely group to qualify as disadvantaged. Within the limited domain of the student affairs profession, however, the belief in social justice and other views associated with it have taken on hegemonic power. My interest has been to explore the dynamics of the hegemonic system and the experiences of those who are at a disadvantage within it.

That said, this study is not a conventional “emancipatory project” (Lather, 1991a, p. 154). Even as I describe the hegemonic forces in student affairs that privilege liberals over conservatives, I am not trying to emancipate conservatives per se. If I have set out to emancipate anyone through this work, I hope to emancipate everyone from the effects of thinking of one another in terms of stereotypes and categories. If a reader feels hostile or defensive in response, I invite that person to see that reaction as an opportunity for deeper reflection and engagement. I feel I have gained a great deal from listening to my participants’ stories and trying to discern their larger significance. The process has challenged me, at times in significant ways. Although, as I have stated previously, I do not presume to tell anyone else how they should respond to the findings of this research, I do hope that this study will make room for the sharing of more stories and the asking of more questions.

Let the conversations begin.

Appendix A

Recruiting Summary/Website Text

Calling all conservatives in student affairs!

I am doing a study on the experiences of conservatives in the student affairs profession. If you identify as conservative and you are a practitioner, experienced graduate student, or faculty member in student affairs, I'd like to talk with you.

(By "experienced graduate student" I mean any student who has completed at least one year of graduate coursework in student affairs, college student personnel, or a similar program, and who has at least one year of professional experience in a student affairs setting. Graduate assistantships count.)

What would I ask of you?

- 4-6 interviews by phone or Skype, scheduled at your convenience
- 1 group interview, also by phone or Skype, with other participants in the study
- Send one publicly available artifact that you believe illustrates your experience as a conservative in student affairs
- Review interview summaries at your convenience (to make sure I don't put words in your mouth)

That's pretty much it. I'll even send you a personal voice recorder to make it easy for you to remember your thoughts and experiences between interviews. (Sorry, I'll want that back at the end.)

What's in it for you?

- A **confidential** opportunity to share your experiences as a conservative working or preparing to work in student affairs. (Your real name will never be used in the results.)
- A chance to contribute to new knowledge in the field
- The undying gratitude of a humble doctoral student

If you are interested or have questions, please call me at [phone number]. You can also e-mail me at jxfisl@wm.edu, but please understand that I can't guarantee your confidentiality in cyberspace. When you contact me, please tell me what position you currently hold, the name of your institution, and the number of years you have been in student affairs.

Thanks for reading, and I hope to hear from you!

Jodi Fislér
The College of William & Mary
Cell phone: [phone number]
E-mail: jxfisl@wm.edu

THIS PROJECT WAS APPROVED BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2009-01-28 AND EXPIRES ON 2010-01-28.

Appendix B

Participant Informed Consent Form

Study title: “The Elephant in the Room: Deconstructing the Role of Conservatives in the Student Affairs Profession”

Researcher: Jodi Fisler, Doctoral Candidate, The College of William and Mary

The nature and purpose of this study have been explained to me and I have been given an opportunity to ask questions. I understand that I will be asked to participate in a series of 4-6 individual and group interviews, conducted via Skype or telephone and scheduled at my convenience, over a period of approximately six (6) months. These interviews will focus on my experiences as a self-identified conservative in student affairs. I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded. I will also be asked to provide one or more publicly available artifacts that I believe represent my experiences as a conservative in the profession. A small voice recorder will be provided to me in case I have experiences or reflections that I would like to capture between interviews, and these recordings will be considered part of the data.

I understand that I will choose a pseudonym, which will be used to identify me throughout the study and in any published results. Other identifying characteristics will also be masked in the results to further protect my anonymity. I am aware that I may refuse to answer any question asked, and I may withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty, by notifying the researcher in writing or via e-mail. My participation carries no reasonable risk of harm. I am aware that I may report dissatisfactions with any aspect of this study to the Chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee, Dr. Michael Deschenes, 757-221-2778 or mrdesc@wm.edu. I am aware that I must be at least 18 years of age to participate. My signature below signifies my voluntary participation in this project, and that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Date

Signature

Print Name

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH THE APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone: 757-221-3966) ON [INSERT DATE].

Any questions in regard to this project should be directed to: Jodi Fisler, [phone number], jxfisl@wm.edu.

Appendix C

Interview Guide for Individual Interviews

- I. Background Information
 - A. Work history
 - B. Educational background
 - C. Reasons for entering the profession

- II. Conservative ideology
 - A. What does “conservative” mean to you?
 - B. How and why do you identify as conservative?
 - C. To what extent does your ideology factor into job choices?

- III. Values
 - A. What values are important to you in your work?
 - B. Which values, if any, do you hope to instill in students?
 - C. Have you ever experienced a conflict between your values and what is expected of you in your work? If so, please tell me more.

- IV. Professional/Institutional culture
 - A. How would you describe the ideology of your institution? Your department?
 - B. How receptive is your institution/department/office to your ideological views?
 - C. How receptive do you find the profession to be to your ideological views?
 - D. Professional conferences
 1. Which conference(s) do you attend?
 2. When, if at all, were you aware of ideological differences at professional conferences? Please provide examples.
 - E. Professional literature
 1. Which professional publications, if any, do you read?
 2. What is your perception of the ideological bases of the research/essays included in the journals? How, if at all, do those perceptions influence your reading and/or use of these journals?
 - F. When you consider your experiences as a conservative in student affairs, what specifically, if anything, would you change about the profession generally or your institution in particular? What does your ideal vision of the profession look like?

- V. Experiences (on the job and/or in graduate school)
 - A. When and how, if at all, have you been aware of differences between your

ideology and your colleagues' ideologies?

- B. Where/When is the difference in ideology most apparent?
- C. Please provide examples of ideological disagreements on the job and/or in graduate school.
- D. How did/do you respond to these situations, professionally and personally?

VI. Relationships

- A. How, if at all, has your ideology affected your relationships with colleagues? With supervisors? With students?
- B. How open do you feel you can be about your beliefs/opinions at work? Why do you feel this way?
- C. What effect, if any, does your position as a conservative professional in student affairs have on your relationships outside of work?

Appendix D

Member Checking Samples

I. During the interview

a. Allison

Allison: ...But I think that there are some things that people would automatically put together that they do know about me that would probably put me in that category. But I don't hide it by any means. I don't hide my conservatism by any means, but it's just it depends on when it comes up in conversation and when it doesn't.

Jodi: Okay. So, I guess, if I'm restating this correctly, it sounds like you don't seek out the opportunities to share that. If they come up in conversation, you will talk about it openly and if people ask you, you'll talk about it. But it's not something you naturally gravitate towards.

Allison: Right.

b. Andrew

Jodi: Okay. Looking at our last interview as well as the group interview, it sounds like a lot of the frustrations you've experienced have had to do with diversity in some way. And I'm hearing that diversity is very important to you, but it's also been the source of some tension, whether it's about questioning the value of politically correct terms or how to be supportive of minority group concerns and also wanting to hold those groups accountable without being perceived as insensitive, etc. Is that an accurate perception on my part, or have our conversations overemphasized the extent to which diversity issues play into your experience as a conservative in the field?

Andrew: No, you are accurate. And I appreciate the way you articulated it back to me because that is accurate.

c. Casey

Jodi: So, it sounds like, you said you have a good, respectful relationship with the people you work with most directly in your office. And that's different -- I'm just restating what I've heard you say -- it sounds like that's different from the interactions that you've had with some people outside of your immediate office.

Casey: Yeah. Well, that would be correct.

II. Post-interview summary

Marty – Interview Summary #1

I stumbled into student affairs while I was a master's student. My master's was in communications, but I started with an assistantship to help pay for school and that turned into a full-time job, which I kept through my masters and PhD program. I worked for [a branch campus of a state institution], helping to orient their students coming from [a large city]. (I was based in [that city] and did my work from there.) Essentially, for those 500 students, I was the enrollment counselor, dean of students, residence life advisor, and first-year student experience coordinator all wrapped into one. It was a great learning experience. I didn't anticipate becoming a faculty member when I started my PhD. I got into student affairs because I liked the student contact and I couldn't imagine giving that up. Then I had children and decided that the faculty life offered better balance between work and family. I also like the idea of being able to prepare future generations of student affairs practitioners.

It's hard to describe what the term "conservative" really means. It's a philosophy that is open to a lot of different ideas. To a large extent it's about being financially responsible and supporting traditional social norms. I'm sure my conservative values system was influenced by the fact that I grew up in a conservative family. Being conservative has not factored into my job choices at all though. In fact, if I had thought about it in that way, I probably would not have chosen to go into higher education as a career.

I teach courses in student development and diversity/multiculturalism. I'm one of only two faculty members with a background in student affairs, so it made sense that I was asked to teach them. I'm not aware of my conservative views influencing how I teach those classes. I do think it's important to incorporate more than race into my diversity class. Diversity includes all kinds of things, including sexuality, religion, veteran status, etc. That may not be related to being a conservative, but it is a basic belief that guides how I teach the class. Political diversity never comes up in class or in conversations with my colleagues. My colleagues talk a lot about diversity, but I'm sure they never mean me.

My goals for my students are that they retain the knowledge they learn in my classes and know how to apply it. I think practical application is very important. I teach using a lot of case studies and I encourage students to put their knowledge to use in writing their papers. I never liked writing term papers just for the sake of writing. I also want my students to be critical thinkers and I try to model that for them as much as possible.

On the whole, I'm pretty open about my opinions. I don't shout them from the rooftops, but I will talk about them if people ask. My students know I am conservative. One of them likes to make fun of Rush Limbaugh and other conservatives, probably just to get under my skin. My department is fairly accepting of my views, even though I am clearly in the minority. I recently had lunch with my dissertation advisor and he said that his one regret was that he hadn't succeeded in turning me into a liberal Democrat. I hadn't been aware that that was ever an expectation or a hope. My faculty colleagues in the department seem more amused than anything else about my conservative views. We haven't had any real ideological

conflicts related to work. Our disagreements only become apparent when we discuss current events informally.

My graduate assistant is also conservative. We joke sometimes about the fact that we are the only two conservatives in the entire department and we ended up working together. We talk about current events sometimes, but I have never given him advice about being conservative in higher education, nor has he ever asked.

I teach at a public institution, and we are not supposed to have political paraphernalia around our office spaces. That is not enforced though, and there are a lot of people with Obama stickers, pictures, etc. During the 2004 election, I went to see one of my professors in his office and he had John Kerry things everywhere. He probably didn't intend to make me uncomfortable, and he probably didn't know I was conservative, but it did make me uncomfortable. It has made me more conscious about not making my students uncomfortable when they come to my office now.

My professional values include a strong work ethic and self-mastery. I want to give 100% to my work when I'm on the job because I know that every minute at work is time away from my family. I'm not a big fan of the "touchy-feely" aspects of student affairs, like ice breakers and group activities. I hate wasting time at meetings, and I've been surprised by the lax work ethic I've seen in student affairs. I attended a student affairs retreat once and the director talked about aiming for 80-90% accuracy in record-keeping. That really infuriated me. We should always be striving for 100%. Maybe that doesn't have anything to do with being conservative and maybe I'm just more of a perfectionist than I should be. Still, I always put 110% into my work and I was so frustrated that my colleagues would think that it's okay to strive for 80%. I approach my work very seriously. I always dress professionally, for example. It's things like that that make me feel like I don't really fit in with my colleagues.

In my experience, higher education and student affairs are not overtly hostile to conservative views. I've never felt uncomfortable in the academy. Working alone in my office, I don't think about the ideological differences at all. When I'm at a faculty or staff meeting though, in a crowd of liberal colleagues, that's when I feel like the odd one out. I attended [a professional conference] shortly after the election and everyone in the elevator was excited about Obama's win. One of the people even wished me a Happy Obama Day. I let it go because it wasn't a big deal, but there was a part of me that wanted to let them know that they shouldn't assume everyone was as excited about it as they were.

As the director of a major professional organization, my responsibilities are more about logistical arrangements for the national conference than the content of the programs or influencing policies. The program committee has engaged a very liberal keynote speaker for this year's conference, someone I certainly would not have chosen. Still, given that most of the conference attendees will be liberal, it's probably a good fit. I find liberal keynoters to be pretty typical at conferences like [names of two associations]. The organizations seem liberal primarily because the majority of their members are. I see them as moving even more in that direction over time.

My dissertation advisor asked me recently why there aren't more conservatives in ~~student affairs~~ **the academy** [per Marty 5/8/09]. He thinks it's because they don't feel welcome, but I disagree. I think it's because people who believe in capitalism and spend all that time getting an advanced degree will want to put it to more lucrative use. Still, I thought it was interesting that he even raised the question.

III. Summary e-mail exchange

a. E-mail to participant – May 6, 2009

Hi [Marty],

Here is the summary from our interview a couple of weeks ago. After we hung up, I discovered to my dismay that something had gone wrong with my recorder and the entire file was lost. Fortunately, I realized it soon enough to do a brain dump before I forgot everything. Between my memory and my notes, I hope I was able to reconstruct most of what we talked about. Please take a careful look at the summary though. If there is anything that doesn't sound true to your experience, feel free to modify it as you see fit.

Would you like to schedule a second interview now? I'm going out of town from May 19 to June 4, but we can either look at next week or aim for the week of June 7. Either is fine with me.

Have a good evening,

Jodi

b. E-mail response from participant – May 8, 2009

Hi Jodi –

You did a great job with the transcription. My only suggestion is in the last paragraph, "My dissertation advisor asked me recently why there aren't more conservatives in student affairs" and it should be "more conservatives in the academy" (meaning all of higher education, not just student affairs). I think the "academy" was his exact wording.

The week of June 7 is fine with me for the next interview. It looks like I am pretty much free the whole week, so let me know what time works for you.

Thanks much.

[Marty]

IV. Grand member check e-mail exchange

a. E-mail to participant – June 27, 2010

Hi [Chelsea],

At long last, I am sending you a draft of your profile for my dissertation, which is based on the conversations we had last year as well as the clarification you sent me last week. My adviser thought it would be more effective to write the profiles in the present tense, even though I know your circumstances have changed since we did the interviews. (The introductory paragraphs of the chapter will explain that the profiles reflect where people were at the time.)

Please review the draft at your earliest convenience and correct it as you see fit. I want to make sure that it reflects your perspectives and experiences as faithfully as possible, and that you are comfortable with the level of detail. If I've left out anything that you think is important, let me know and I will add that in. If you think it would be easier to talk directly, feel free to call me at [phone number], or send me a quick email [sic] and I'll be happy to call you.

I'm sorry that it's taken me so long to get to this point, and I appreciate you hanging in there with me. If all goes according to plan, I expect to defend the final product late this fall or early spring. I'll keep you posted! In the meantime, best of luck again with your job search!

Jodi

b. E-mail response from participant – July 3, 2010

Hi Jodi!

I've reviewed the draft, and it looks great! I made a couple of comments, but you did a great job capturing everything from the interviews. I hope my comments are helpful, and I hope you're able to stay on track with your process. Let me know if you need anything else as you continue working! :-). Sorry it took me a whole week to get back to you!

[Chelsea]

c. E-mail response to participant – July 4, 2010

Thanks for getting back to me, [Chelsea], and for clarifying those two points. The bit about political campaigning was based on your experience working on a campaign as an undergrad. I didn't realize the extent to which you have refrained from that since then. (This is exactly why I run these profiles by people before writing my final conclusions!) I'll revise it this week and send it to you for one last (I hope) read-through. If you OK the revised

version, I'll only need to send it to you again if my advisor requests major edits, which I don't anticipate.

I hope you're having a terrific 4th!

Jodi

d. E-mail to participant – July 12, 2010

Hi [Chelsea],

I am attaching a revised version of your profile. I have marked the paragraphs where I made substantive changes according to your comments. (I made a couple of little editorial corrections in other paragraphs too, but nothing that changes the content or tone.) If you have additional comments or clarifications/corrections, bring 'em on! I'm feeling happily motivated this week. :-)

[Personal note deleted here.]

Jodi

e. E-mail response from participant – July 13, 2010

Hi Jodi-

[Personal note deleted here.] This draft looks great! I didn't see any other corrections to make! Looks good to me!!

-[Chelsea]

Appendix E

Sample Coded Transcript

I. Transcript

The codes used in the interview below are listed and defined in section II of this appendix (p. 241). The memos, which are indicated by a notebook icon in the margin of the transcript, are provided in section III (p. 245).

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P83: Charlotte 11-06-09 transcript.rtf

Page: 1/12

001 Jodi: This is probably our last interview. Hard to believe. From this point basically the only thing after today that I may have to contact you for, would be a clarification or something like that which we could probably do over email. So this will probably be our last time to really talk in depth, one on one. So I wanted to ask first of all, if you've had any new experiences or insights or reflections since the last time we talked.

002

003 Charlotte: I wouldn't say experiences but I've definitely been doing a lot of reflecting. I'm really trying to think about ways I can— 'cause my biggest concern is feeling like I don't have enough information to really be very vocal in when I'm in the minority opinion. So trying to think about ways I can be more vocal, be more confident and there's— I was at a wedding a couple of weeks ago. And a colleague, although much more senior colleague, he's a director of housing at another state institution in Illinois who's a very vocal person but also is a very vocal conservative person. We've always had a good rapport but never really talked much in depth and I kind of said to him, "Hey, when we're at a conference in a couple weeks, I want to talk to you about how you establish yourself as being a very vocal conservative person in student affairs and how you wrestle with the people who are—you know, the majority in the field not thinking the way you do and how you balance that." 'Cause he's always was like, "yeah, you know, you gotta speak up more." and I said, "Yeah, I'm not a director of housing, I don't get to do that," I always said to him. "I haven't been in the field 20 years." But I'm just coming into that reflective mode of how do I get myself to a place where— 'cause I'm a vocal person except on this one issue. You know?

☒ Hegemony, negotiated / Used to construct
☒ Personal / institutional/organizational
☒ Response to participation

☒ Institutional / organizational
☒ Hegemony, negotiated / Used to construct
☒ Institutional / organizational

004

005 Jodi: Yeah. So how did he respond to your asking that question?

006

007 Charlotte: He was like, "Of course we can talk, anytime." I haven't taken him up yet. I'm gonna see him in person in two weeks, instead of like calling him or setting up a phone chat. I figured, you know, when I see him at a professional conference, it's a place where we usually chat anyway. Try to find a moment when we can chat a little bit about that, either at a meal or many of these conversations happen at the bar after the day's session are done. Both are OK settings for me.

☒ Relationships / Other conversations

008

009 Jodi: So you're hoping to find out from him how he manages his environment, being conservative and working in student affairs.

010

011 Charlotte: Yeah, and he's obviously a career person. He's a

☒ Relationships / Other conversations

director, actually an associate VP/director of housing. He's been doing this for a good 20+ years if not longer, and just kind of get his perspectives on it.

012

013 Jodi: Do you think that your situation would be easier if you had more seniority or you were higher in the rankings?

014

015 Charlotte: [Sigh] You know truthfully, I don't know. Because I've never, ever felt any backlash from it, the few times I have been outspoken, but most of the time, up until the last couple of years, I haven't really talked about that, my political views or feeling more conservative. I haven't really spoken up about that. So I don't know if it would make a difference or if it's really more just being in a different institution. Or if it even really matters at all. It most certainly might not.

016

017 Jodi: Is the person that you know, is he at a different kind of institution than you are?

018

019 Charlotte: Yes, he's at a rural institution and it is-- I wouldn't call it a conservative school. It's still a public, land grant type school. But it's in a rural area, it is more conservative, it is not in an urban area, it's not very diverse. Not that those things automatically make something liberal, but I know those are some of the factors at his institution. I sometimes wonder if the biggest difference is, I don't know what it is, I can't pinpoint it, I think there's a different stigma for a guy to be conservative than a woman. I can't-- I don't know if I can articulate why. It's just this gut feeling I have about it. And maybe it's because most of the people, conservatives I know, are men. Other than our phone chat, I know of two other women that identify as conservative.

020

021 Jodi: I know you said you can't quite put your finger on it, but how do you see that, I guess, how do you see that in practice, the difference?

022

023 Charlotte: I guess, it may be a lot based on department, but there is a lot of, an incredible amount of male privilege in my department. And even in our field. Our association that I'm most involved with is pretty male dominated in the leadership ranks. So I don't know if it's just a general feeling of male privilege that I see, that I think makes it easier to be a dissenting voice. It may be unique to my situations where I'm in all these male-dominated environments that typically usually aren't in student affairs but are in my arena for some reason. So yeah, it's just this gut feeling about it.

Vertical text on the right side of the page, possibly bleed-through or a separate column of text.

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024

025 Jodi: I'm curious as to what it is about your department, do you have any sense as to why yours is so different, whether in terms of gender balance or the male privilege. Is there something in your environment that kind of promotes that?

026

027 Charlotte: The director of my department is very male-preferenced, very traditional hierarchical leadership. He's not a typical— he doesn't have a student affairs degree. He's not your typical student affairs person at all. And I think that people who are successful— I mean, we attract a very diverse set of candidates for gender, race, region, 'cause we're [city] and people think that's exciting. But in terms of people who stay longer than two years and are successful, it's typically men.

File Log/Present-
Student Affairs - People -
Work with female

028

029 Jodi: Interesting. Is the director a conservative?

File Ideology of leaders

030

031 Charlotte: No, he's very liberal. He's conservative, well, he's got some old school, which tends to be associated with conservative philosophies on things, but my presumption is he's incredibly liberal. I've never had a direct conversation with him, but...

032

033 Jodi: OK. So how do you think the male privilege— I'm just sort of thinking out loud here. The male privilege and the political privilege kind of intersect. Because I know you said, most of the conservatives that you know are male and if conservatives are sort of not in a place of power or privilege within your department, I'm just kind of curious as to the intersection of those. You may not be able to answer that. I don't know.

034

035 Charlotte: [Sigh; long pause] I'm trying to think for a second. I guess the men that I know are conservative in my department, which there are a couple of, are definitely in, I think— my perception is a greater position of power and that their actions, they don't think about or worry about the things that I do when it comes to sharing political views or speaking out or even just like negotiating the day-to-day politics of our department, in terms of just getting stuff done. Then that can be a leadership style. It also could be a privilege standpoint of "[name]'s not going to say no to me," kind of thing.

File Comparisons to colleagues -
Discourse - Other -
Leadership styles -
File Log/Present -

036

037 Jodi: How vocal are those men, the men who are conservative?

File Comparisons to colleagues -
Discourse - Other -

038

039 Charlotte: One is incredibly vocal. The other is vocal about things within the department, but not as much politically.

040

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P83: Charlotte 11-08-09 transcript.rtf

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right now we have an RA on our staff who's older, so he's like a 29 year old undergraduate RA. He's incredibly mature and confident and almost seeks out confrontations. He definitely doesn't avoid it at all. And he's had several students complain, saying they feel unsafe around him. But when you look into the situation there's really nothing he's done wrong, other than be very active in student government and speaking up for himself. And he could probably be a little less aggressive. But in general he's really not done anything wrong and I'm consistently, I'm definitely in the minority saying he's not doing anything wrong. There's no job action here. And I've had no problem saying that to our associate director, to the dean of students to the assistant dean of students on numerous occasions. And so in that situation, I have no problem being the minority opinion, and being-- 'cause that's what I believe in. I mean, if I have to have a conversation with him or something, I'll do it, 'cause that's my job. But I-- as long as it's not unethical or illegal. But I've had no problem saying I don't think there is anything he's done wrong.

052

053 Jodi: It sounds like a lot of the times when things become an issue or the things that you're afraid to talk about, that they tend to focus on diversity issues. Is that correct?

☞ Diversity -
☞ Faculty/Student
☞ Diversity

054

055 Charlotte: That's correct. That's usually where I tend to quiet up.

056

057 Jodi: And you said that you avoid getting involved in planning multicultural events now because it gets complicated. Is that the same kind of issue that you were just talking about?

☞ Campus Activities/Events
☞ Diversity - Faculty/Student

058

059 Charlotte: [Pause.] I'd say in general. Yeah.

060

061 Jodi: Are there other aspects to that, that you want to elaborate on?

062

063 Charlotte: [Pause] I'm having a hard time finding the words for that one. So maybe come back to it.

064

065 Jodi: OK

066

067 Charlotte: If it comes back in our conversation.

068

069 Jodi: OK, sure. Let's see. You mentioned last time, about a lot of people who go into student affairs being driven by activism, a desire to be sort of activist and to use their professional roles as a catalyst. And I know you don't approach your work that way, but how do you feel about other people using their professional roles

as a catalyst for anything? Not necessarily one particular thing. But how do you feel generally about people using their roles that way?

Activist

070

071 Charlotte: I think in general, it's a gray area. Like it certainly, probably, unless the institution has some sort of policy, it's probably not anything against it. And people do have certain passions or things that really excite them. Or things they get interested in. I wouldn't want to stifle that. I mean, part of being in, working in student affairs and higher ed is that creativity, that freedom to approach things differently and not having to follow an exact formula, that you get sometimes. So I wouldn't want to stifle it, but at the same time where I'm hesitant on it is I've seen people get so focused on those passions or that activism that they're only focusing on that student group. I'm sure some of my perspective on this is because I've worked in housing and we're supposed to be generalists. And I have a hard time when the resident directors or area coordinators are so focused only on one certain type of student that I wonder if they're really serving their entire building. And I think that even reflects back to— I know one of the times we talked about my RHA and the diversity seats they wanted to add. And how I felt like it was double representing and that the hall representative really should have been able to represent everyone. And if they weren't it was a training issue, or an election issue and we needed to address that, and it's almost a parallel; just in a different setting. And I'm sure some people do it really well. And I just don't know that it always happens and that's where, I guess I don't know that it always has a—, depending on your role. I mean if you're working in an office where you're completely designed to be a student advocate office for a specific issue, whether it's sexual orientation or domestic violence or if it is a veterans office or even a diversity office, then that's that office's purpose. I think I get concerned like when student activities people or orientation or housing folks, who are supposed to serve all students, take that activist approach.

Activist
Student Activities
Student Affairs / Faculty Affairs

Activist
Student and community
Student Affairs / Faculty Affairs

Activist
Student Affairs

Activist

072

073 Jodi: So it's very much about the functional role that people have, in terms of where it is appropriate to live that out.

Activist

074

075 Charlotte: Yeah, I think so. I think that's the first time I've articulated it that way as I've just talked out loud. But I think that is what it really comes down to. I work with judicial as well, but I've always been in housing and that's where I get concerned, is when I see my housing colleagues, in my opinion, losing sight by becoming focused on things they're passionate about. And I don't think that they shouldn't be passionate. But it just has to have a

are completely opposite of where I'm at so, I think some of that's it too. I think there is also on some subconscious level, that because I do see stigma in my family and my work that if I'm not officially registered, that I can claim Independent when the situation warrants it. But I think it's more that— what I talked about before, about the independence than the other things.

☞ Political participation
☞ Political participation
☞ Political participation

096

097 Jodi: OK. You said that not registering is sort of a way of maybe mitigating the stigma that you experience with your family and other people.

098

099 Charlotte: Yeah. I've most certainly considered in the last year or so, registering. Like I signed up for, like in the [city] area, there is the Young Republicans group. And I signed up for their listserv and their emails about their events and stuff. But I never went. I never officially registered Republican Party. It's most certainly something I wouldn't be surprised if I did do in the future, but I'm also not surprised I haven't either. Just I think kind of that exploring too.

☞ Political participation
☞ Political participation

100

101 Jodi: Is it something that you feel you— that you want to do eventually? How do you feel about being officially unaffiliated?

☞ Political participation
☞ Political participation
☞ Political participation

102

103 Charlotte: I'm indifferent to it.

104

105 Jodi: OK.

106

107 Charlotte: I guess I don't feel like I need to be associated one way or the other officially. And I kind of like the freedom of not having officially tied to anything, not that I couldn't change my opinion anyways, but...

108

109 Jodi: In looking over what we were talking about last time, I gather that you would appreciate having a better balance of perspectives in your work environment, but not necessarily ideological neutrality in the sense that everyone should always do their best to be absolutely neutral at all times. Is that accurate?

☞ Ideological balance

110

111 Charlotte: Yes. I feel that's accurate. Neutral at all times is boring.

112

113 Jodi: OK. (Chuckling on both sides.) Is there anything else you'd like to say on that?

114

115 Charlotte: I mean in general, I say "being neutral is boring" jokingly. But I also— I'm not the type of person who doesn't have

☞ Ideology
☞ Ideological balance

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the media and that perception of, you know, the White House attacking Fox News and saying they are not a news organization and then be, this is a source of information and that's something I kind of aspire to do more of.

124

125 Jodi: So do you sort of see yourself as kind of being the Fox News of your environment? Is that, did I hear that correctly?

126

127 Charlotte: Yeah, I mean not the overt stuff, but the covert, subliminal – not subliminal, but like side conversations – I just definitely feel, not completely under attack, but I feel like my views would be under attack if I shared a lot of them, so I just kind of keep quiet. I think some of it also is like – although they are extreme – I applaud the newscasters, and that's what their job is, but they just say what they think and I would like to be able to do more of that in that political arena.

卷卷卷

128

129 Jodi: So you'd like to be able to be as vocal as the Fox commentators are in their environment.

130

131 Charlotte: Yeah, maybe not as extreme in the views, but as vocal they are. [laughing]

132

133 Jodi: Expressing with confidence.

134

135 Charlotte: Yes. Yes. 'Cause sometimes they just make me laugh.

136

137 Jodi: So having more information from some news source, whether it's Fox or any other, you said would help you to feel like you could have a more balanced conversation with other people because you'd be coming from a place of better knowledge. Is that right?

138

139 Charlotte: Yeah. Yup.

140

141 Jodi: How do you think your experiences as a conservative in student affairs have changed you, if at all?

142

143 Charlotte: [Pause] Hm, that's a really good question. I mean I think it's really forced me to know who I am and what I believe more. Because I think, when you don't believe what the majority believes, you – well, for me, – I feel like I need to know why I believe that. I expect to be questioned and I expect to be challenged, so I try to prepare myself for that. But sometimes, it's made me a little bitter, 'cause it's frustrating sometimes, but I don't think overarchingly it's made me a bitter person by any

卷卷卷

卷卷

means.

144

145 Jodi: Can we go back to the question about your avoidance of multicultural event planning?

146

147 Charlotte: Can you ask me that again, though?

148

149 Jodi: I was going to ask if you could explain a little bit more, sort of the reasons why you feel like you need to avoid those, because you said it gets complicated, just what that means.

150

151 Charlotte: Yeah, I think, [pause] trying to get the words together 'cause I know where I'm going now. I guess what I mean by complicated is many times people are incredibly passionate and often times in those rooms it becomes less about the event and political ideologies come out and I know I'm gonna feel uncomfortable because I'm probably not going to agree. And again, I could be wrong, and I haven't done this per se, but my perception is that if I voiced a dissenting opinion, I would be outcast of the group and probably wouldn't be invited back next time there is an event anyway, so I just shy away from it. I think some of the other reason I stay away from it is, I definitely -- at my current institution and when I was at [previous institution] -- felt like, as a white woman, that wasn't my place. Like, the planning of those events, the multicultural events, was for people who identified as multicultural in some way. And that, in those two arenas, means a person of color. I know that multiculturalism has a much broader definition but at [current institution] and [previous institution], it was black and white. It was about race. And it really was mostly black and white and maybe Latino. Again, not that I'm necessarily unwelcomed, but I definitely had that perception, like, they're not gonna pick me anyway when there's all these people who quote-unquote "have more to add" or who are more passionate about this. You know, those kinds of thoughts.

152


153 Jodi: So part of it is feeling like they, other people wouldn't accept you being part of that.

154

155 Charlotte: They wouldn't accept me or if they did, it would still be like, "Why is she doing that? Oh, that sweet nice little white girl is trying to help the people of color again. She's not one of us but she's trying to be nice and helpful." It's not been directed at me, but I've heard people of color make those comments about white colleagues who are always volunteering for those things.

156


 Diversity - Equity - Inclusion -
 Research Institute


 Diversity - Equity - Inclusion -
 Research Institute

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157 Jodi: So they interpret it as kind of being a paternalistic approach.

158

159 Charlotte: Yes.

160

161 Jodi: And then the other part of it was that you said it becomes very personal for people and it's bigger than just planning an event but it becomes sort of a commentary on your views on bigger issues that can affect people very deeply emotionally. Is that...?

162


163 Charlotte: Yes.

164

165 Jodi: OK. As you think back to when we first started this interview process a couple of months ago, were there things that you were sort of expecting, or questions or topics that you expected me to explore with you, that we haven't talked about?

166

167 Charlotte: No. I had no idea what to expect because I was so thrown off that someone was researching it that I was like "Oh my God, I want to do this." I had no idea what it would be about. But I thought, "Well that sounds like fun."

 Returned to participant

168

169 Jodi: Is there anything that you hoped I would ask you about that I've missed?

170



171 Charlotte: No.

172

173 Jodi: I think that pretty much wraps up all of my questions, so unless there are any final comments or things like that you'd like to make...

174

175 Charlotte: Just that, I'm sure that-- I mean, I know you're doing this research and what not, but I actually think I've learned a lot myself going through the process. Being much more reflective and intentional. It's been kind of a cool experience to go through.

 Original author(s) -
 Returned to participant

176

177 Jodi: Good, I'm glad to hear that. That's awesome.

178

II. Codes and descriptions

Activism: Describes the degree to which someone takes an active role in promoting particular values or opinions. May also refer to activism generally, such as whether or not it is appropriate to be an activist in given situations.

Artifact: References to the artifact aspect of the study

Challenge – Benefits of: References to or examples of how challenging and/or being challenged can lead to a better system, process, or outcome

Comparisons to colleagues: References to how participants see themselves in relation to their colleagues, either at one particular institution or more generally. The comparison may be at any level (e.g., behavior, philosophy, treatment, etc).

Conflict – Engagement in: References to or examples of a participant's or other person's willingness to engaging in conflict. May also refer to the manner in which the person engages in conflict.

Conservative vs. Republican: References to the ways in which being conservative does or does not align with being Republican

Coping strategies – Avoidance: The extent to which participants manage their circumstances by avoiding potentially hazardous people or topics

Coping strategies – Covering: Examples of muting conservative ideology in order to avoid negative consequences or attain positive outcomes

Dialogue: References to or examples of having/wanting to have productive dialogues as a means of improving one's own or others' awareness and understanding

Differences – Invalid: Describes the way in which participants (or others) deal with differences. Differences are seen as invalid or evidence of one person being right and other being wrong.

Disagreement – Manner: References to or examples of how a person handles disagreement, their personal manner in disagreeing with others (as opposed to the content of the issue)

Disclosure – Others: References to when/how other people disclose their ideological views

Diversity: References to or examples of diversity as an issue in and of itself. This may refer to efforts to manage diversity, measures that are implemented in the workplace, general reflections on the value placed on diversity by student affairs/higher ed colleagues, etc.

Diversity – Gender: References to diversity-related issues where gender is the salient feature

Diversity – Programming/Education: References to programs and/or classes intended to address diversity issues. May be evaluative or descriptive.

Diversity – Race/Ethnicity: References to diversity-related issues where race/ethnicity is the salient feature

Emotions – Frustration: Expressions of frustration

Fit: References to fit or the extent to which a person feels “at home” in the given environment.

Freedom – Personal: References to or expressions of a sense of freedom to be authentic or to make choices

Freedom – Professional: References to a sense of autonomy or freedom in doing one’s job, or the lack thereof

Hegemonic tools – Campus activities: References to or examples of how campus programs and activities convey and reinforce messages about dominance and acceptable ways of thinking

Hegemonic tools – Marginalization: References to or examples of dominance being reinforced by isolating or marginalizing a deviant person (intentionally or unintentionally). May also refer to a perceived threat of marginalization.

Hegemonic tools – Priorities: How institutional or professional priorities reinforce messages about what is acceptable

Hegemonic tools – Subtleties: Refers to the subtle ways that hegemony is perpetuated or communicated (e.g., the things people can’t quite put their finger on)

Hegemony – Effects: References to or examples of the way hegemony affects a person’s life, attitudes, relationships, or environment.

Hegemony – Nature of: References to statements that describe or explain the nature of the hegemony/hegemonies a person lives under.

Hegemony – Nested: Implicit or explicit references to possible hegemonies within hegemonies (e.g., departments within institutions, departments or institutions within the profession, institutions within a state, etc)

Hegemony manifested – Need to educate: References to or examples of how the participant (or others in non-dominant positions) feels called upon or are expected to educate themselves to a greater extent in order to respond to the challenges of others. Also refers to the need or expectation to educate people around them, especially colleagues and other non-students. This is generally a more burdensome responsibility, as opposed to “teachable moments” which are more positive and also more reasonably part of one’s job with students. The need to educate others points to ways in which the hegemony makes certain points of view common knowledge and others foreign.

Hegemony manifested – Non-response: How hegemony can be evident through policies/actions that institutions or individuals choose not to enforce or choose not to respond to

Hot buttons: References to or examples of words, symbols and/or actions that strike a sensitive nerve

Ideological balance: References to the existence (or not) of, need for, or desirability of ideological balance—making room for “both sides”—in professional or educational settings

Ideology - Social issues: References to or examples of opinions on social issues like abortion, guns, gay marriage, affirmative action

Ideology of institution: References to the perceived ideological orientation of a specific institution

Ideology of leaders: References to the political/social views of institutional or professional leaders

Ideology of student affairs: References to the perceived ideological orientation of student affairs

Institutional features – Diversity: References to the degree and/or type of diversity at a particular institution

Institutional features – Public vs. private: Differences in institutional policies or in participants’ experiences based on public or private status

Institutional features – Setting: Rural or urban, physical landscape, etc.

Knowledge is power: References to or examples of knowledge giving a person a sense of confidence or empowerment. Knowledge can be self-knowledge or knowledge of a particular topic.

Leadership style/skills: References to effective and ineffective styles and practices of leadership. This is not about developing leadership skills in students, but rather about a participant's observations about qualities of leadership.

Media: References to national or local media

Ontological authenticity: Evidence of a participant thinking more about their views or coming to understand their own views better as a result of being part of the study

Personal growth/development: References to or examples of personal growth & development, efforts toward personal growth, or a desire for personal growth

Personal image: References to or examples of a participant's perception of or concern for how others see him/her

Place in the organization: References to how one's experience or perspective is affected by where one falls in the organizational structure

Political correctness: Examples of or references to political correctness

Political identification: References to the participant or others identifying (or trying to identify) themselves or others in political terms. For the individual, this could be about seeking or the process of coming to identify oneself politically. In the case of "others," it may refer to an effort to peg people according to their political views.

Political participation: References to or examples of participation in the political process through voting, educating oneself in anticipation of voting, running for office, campaigning, etc.

Privilege/Power: References to or examples of the degree to which a participant enjoys or perceives privilege or power in some capacity (racial, socioeconomic, etc), or perceives privilege or power (or lack of it) in others' lives

Professional competence: References to or examples of people being good at what they do, or the need for people to strive for professional competence/excellence. In the inverse, this code may also apply to examples of professional incompetence.

Professional organizations: References to professional organizations in higher ed & student affairs

Relationships – Other conservatives: References to relationships (including casual interactions and/or the absence of relationships) with other conservatives

Response to participation: Reactions related to the participant's involvement in the study

Role models: References to or examples of conservative role models, the importance of having role models, and/or the absence of role models. This is intended to describe conservative role models in particular.

Silencing: Feeling unable to voice one's opinions. May refer to being actively silenced by others or silencing oneself.

Stigma: References to the sense that being conservative carries a stigma

Student affairs – Feelings about: References to how the participant feels about student affairs

Student affairs – People: References to the kinds of people one encounters in student affairs

Student affairs – Role/Purpose: References to the actual and/or ideal purpose of student affairs. What is this profession here for, or what do people think it's here for? May also refer to comments about a person's awareness of student affairs and its role/function in an institution.

Value – Independence: References to the importance of being independent or of seeing people as independent

Work environment: Describes the participant's work environment and/or preferences related to work environment (e.g., institution size or type, relationships with colleagues, etc)

III. Memos

Memo title: Mitigating factors

I think this will have to be either a theme or at least a significant point of discussion in the results/discussion section. Allison has not been affected by the hegemony as much because the culture of the region and institutions where she has worked have either been more supportive of conservative views or have made political affiliation less relevant. Charlotte also acknowledges the possible impact of the institution. I would also add that Allison's personality is a huge mitigating factor for her. Few others are as confident in themselves and their views as Allison is. Jim, perhaps.

Memo title: Interactions of privilege

I think this is an interesting observation. No one else has talked about the difference between being male and conservative vs. female and conservative. Perhaps the benefit of being male in Charlotte's department counterbalances any disadvantage that come from

being conservative. Or perhaps it's just relative. (Male conservative may be worse off than male liberal, but in a better place than female conservative.)

Memo title: Framing an issue

In this case, the liberal nature of the problem comes through in how the issue is framed. When a problem deals with racial representation, I suspect liberals are more likely to frame it in terms of identity politics. Or rather, the people who frame it in terms of identity politics are likely to be liberal. (There are probably plenty of politically liberal people who also would see it as a training issue, as Charlotte does.)

Memo title: Diversity as a privileged category

Charlotte expresses—and I think there is evidence that others experience this too—that diversity is a special category where the hegemonic expectations are particularly strong.

Memo title: Whiteness & conservatism

I think there is an important point here that I can't quite articulate yet. I think Charlotte's example here of feeling uncomfortable planning diversity events because she's white and wouldn't be accepted is a phenomenon that transcends political views. So I wonder how much she conflates them in her own mind? Does she feel like there's a connection there between assumptions about white people and assumptions about conservatives? Or is it just kind of a coincidence that both white people and conservatives might be seen as having questionable motives?

Appendix F

Sample Journal Entries

February 22, 2009

I finished the transcription of interview #1 yesterday. I still can't stand the way I sound on the recording, and how choppy and unnatural my follow-up questions seem. I am going to do the summary today and start coding. I'm afraid I may not have asked very good follow-up questions. I'm not sure how you ever can follow up on everything when each answer contains so much that is worth pursuing. I know that's what the subsequent interviews are for, so perhaps I just need to be patient. It just seems like I could fill a whole second interview with follow-up questions from the first interview, without ever going on to the new questions I didn't have time for from the interview guide.

One of the things that Chelsea talked about was her willingness to talk with people about her political opinions if they wanted to have an actual discussion, rather than try to convince her that her opinions are wrong. I can understand that, having avoided conversations with [an acquaintance] for that very reason. I just don't know how often I'm guilty of it myself. Probably a lot more than I'd like to think. I'm not sure how to be simply curious and detached from issues like gay rights or reproductive choice. I don't really want to agree to disagree; I do want to find points of agreement and build on those. Perhaps I am somewhat naive in thinking that there is a lot more room for agreement if we could only get past rhetoric. Today I'm thinking that there are, in fact, areas where people genuinely cannot find common ground on key issues. What then? How can I be loving and accepting of those people while still fighting against their views? Could I still have good friendships with those people? Depending on the area of disagreement, maybe not. But then isn't that sad, and doesn't it perpetuate this whole cycle of polarization? [Worship service] this morning was all about inclusivity with regard to LGBTIQ people, about the world having been created with vast diversity, and that we have to learn to live together, building community with diversity. I'm all for that. But then, as my dissertation asks, what are the limits of what we can accept? [The minister] has preached about anger, righteous anger, as being a good thing. So the question is how to be loving and accepting and righteously angry at the same time. I realize that I'm getting into "love the sinner, hate the sin" territory, and I've often thought that was a really tough thing to pull off. Maybe it's a question of how much the "sin" is part of who the "sinner" understands him- or herself to be.

I wonder if I can ever widen my circle of love enough to have a dear friend who believes things that I find horribly narrow-minded or unjust, and not have that matter to our friendship. We could go to an abortion demonstration together, take our places on opposite sides of the protest lines, and get together for coffee afterwards to share our feelings about the day. What would that be like? At this point in my life and my spiritual development, I feel like that would be insincere or inauthentic. But then, what is authenticity? It's a question of which values I hold most highly. If my friendship is more important than my position on abortion rights, then I should be able to have a relationship like that. The question would be which course of action most authentically expresses who I am. And, boy, isn't that a tough one! That's a big part of what we've been talking about in [a spiritual

discussion group] lately. Maybe the reason this dissertation topic chose me is because this is what I need right now to grow as a person. Maybe by working through some of these issues in the context of my study, I will find answers to some of these questions about who I am and what I truly value. Wow, I wonder if I'm ready for this.

March 12, 2009

I've just been looking through Chelsea's first interview and also looking ahead to Sean's tonight. He sent me an article about Obama's shift in policy on stem cell research, which was sent to him by his supervisor and which he said was a good example of the "conflict faced on campus." That wasn't what I was expecting as a material culture sample, but if it yields good data, I'm sure it will be fine. In both Chelsea's case and in the case of Sean's artifact, I find myself wondering if I'm really getting at the subtleties of the issue here. Unfortunately, so far I haven't been able to come up with questions that I think can capture what I'm sensing. I can't even articulate what I'm sensing. Even when I can, I'm not sure how to phrase my questions in ways that are open-ended and not leading. I want to challenge folks, but I'm not sure how to do that in an appropriate way.

For example, I want to ask about the issue of political expression that I wrote about last time. When do folks think it is appropriate to express an opinion with a student, or to express an opinion that might be picked up on by chance or circumstance (such as being seen volunteering for a certain organization or being overheard in a conversation with a friend)? To what lengths do people go to mask their opinions, and how difficult is it for them to maintain that level of vigilance? Would they feel as wary of expressing an opinion if they didn't feel that doing so would mark them in a potentially dangerous or disadvantageous way? To what extent is it about letting students figure things out for themselves as opposed to not saying something that might get around to the wrong set of ears?

I suspect there are probably many liberals who also would not think it a good idea to try to sway students one way or another, but who also might feel much freer about incorporating their political values into their work. Why is that? Would those people feel as free to do that in an environment where they expected those values to be challenged or opposed? Or are those people the activist types who have found student affairs to be a supportive outlet for their activism? What about wholeness, living an integrated life, etc?

When I imagine asking some of these questions, I start to get excited in a way that might not be good in my role as a researcher. I see myself going off in a Socratic manner, trying to get people to recognize or acknowledge the implications behind what they are saying, and to admit that there is something else going on other than just keeping the best interests of the students at heart. It comes across as intellectual bullying in my own mind, and if it comes over that way in my own head I can only imagine how much worse it would sound coming out of my mouth!

November 6, 2009

I had my final interview with Charlotte today. I thought it went okay in the doing, but thinking back on it later, I'm afraid I let some major questions go unasked. Specifically, I never asked her about student development theory. Some people have raised that issue, but not everyone. I don't know if I am expected to ask everyone about the same things. I have brought up topics with some people that were raised by others, but I guess I haven't heard anyone talk about student development theory in a while, so it didn't occur to me to ask. I didn't ask Casey either, and I did my last interview with her this week as well. I still have Allison (although from what she has told me already, I doubt that will be a big thing for her), and Austen. Austen has touched on theory a bit, but I'm not sure how to probe it further without leading. Maybe if I ask her if the messages she got in grad school about liberal=good, conservative=bad were communicated in ways other than her run-ins with lesbian classmates and colleagues (i.e., through actual course content)?

I finally had my last interview with Michelle last week, and I was concerned because she raised the topic of religion and how important Christianity was in her life. I was surprised because she hadn't raised that before. It made me wonder what else could be sitting below the surface just waiting for another opportunity to come out. I asked her why it had taken so long to bring that up and she said that I was peeling back the layers and that she felt comfortable enough to raise it. That's great, and I'm glad she felt comfortable, but again, what else might I be missing? I contacted Judi to ask about data saturation, given that this was something big that didn't come up before now. She suggested that I do a "live" member check on that interview with Michelle, rather than just a summary, and see if anything else comes up from that. If not, then I can be satisfied that I've got as much as she wants to share at this point. I wasn't thrilled to hear that response because, frankly, I'm ready to be done with interviews and I've already talked to Michelle five times. (I like talking to her, but I'm not sure how member checking "in person" will be different from the checking I did during the interview itself. I don't want to waste her time, or mine for that matter.) Judi's comment made me wonder if I've been making proper use of my summaries as member check documents. I've had very few corrections/modifications to the summaries. I guess I should be happy about that, rather than concerned. Leave it to me to assume that not having corrections means I did something wrong!

I finally called Austen yesterday and managed to schedule our last interview. I was getting really concerned about her because she hadn't responded to several e-mails asking for a new interview date. I was afraid that she might be considering dropping out of the study. Each time we've talked, she seems to have made some kind of realization that has affected her deeply. It's great for the ontological and educative authenticity of the study, but I also care about her and don't want to think that I'm creating stress for her.

Austen is an interesting person. She seems highly reflective, as I think I've said before. She had clearly taken notes during the group interview (or else she has a fantastic memory for names!), because she was able to talk about specific points made by specific people and how they affected her. She has studied student development theory and has turned the magnifying glass on herself often enough in grad school, yet she said she was taken by surprise with my question of how and why she identified as conservative. That in and of itself wasn't surprising -- political ideology isn't a dimension of identity most grad schools talk about. But I guess I was surprised that, upon reflection, she came to the conclusion that conservative

was what she is, particularly with regard to faith, morals, and values. She agrees that her version of conservative doesn't exactly align with the current conservative political agenda. She sees being conservative as the core of who she is, and so whatever faith, morals, and values she espouses are conservative because she's conservative and she espouses them. It's a tautological argument and it suggests that anything could be conservative. As long as it fits her worldview, she considers it conservative because that's how she defines herself.

And I think that's the crux of it. Conservative is how she defines herself. This gets back to the whole notion of tribalism. I identify with a label, and then that label means whatever I am. What makes us identify with the labels in the first place, as opposed to figuring out what we believe and then describing that with whatever language most closely matches? Charlotte started out thinking she was a liberal Democrat until she started becoming more aware of politics. When she realized that, she changed her label. Allison is an interesting person too, because she is proud of the fact that she believes what she believes because she's researched it and it's not because of where she grew up or what her family believes, or what the Republican Party says, etc. At the same time, she said that she's always embraced certain socially liberal views and her whole family does too. So how independent is her identification really? It sounds like she hasn't fallen far from the family tree. And what made her embrace the conservative label when so many of her views are, in her own words, socially liberal? I know she sees those views as being universal rather than liberal, and she thinks they are more in line with true conservatism. Could this be another example though of someone saying "I'm conservative, so therefore what I believe must be conservative too"? Allison doesn't seem to struggle with this though the way Austen does. She is extremely strong in her identification as a conservative (although she agreed that being conservative is more about what she thinks than who she is), and she seems completely unbothered by any apparent incongruity. In a way, that fits with her assertion that she doesn't hold to a party line, but it's interesting that she does hold firm to an ideological label, if not a party label. In both Austen's and Allison's cases, I'm left to wonder what the term conservative "actually" signifies and who gets to determine that. (What does any word really mean? Oh, Derrida!)

Doing this study has had a real impact on me. I can only hope it's for the positive, but I fear that it may make me very unpopular too. I attended [a presentation on diversity] yesterday. I couldn't help but listen to the presentation through the lens of my study. I was inwardly pleased when [the presenter] spoke about "comprehensive inclusivity" and the need to reach out to **everybody** in the cause of diversity. But then when he talked about engaging students in critical conversations around religion, he used the examples of people who don't believe in homosexuality or evolution as people who would not believe as they do if they only had enough knowledge and awareness to see how their religion does not have to be interpreted in such narrow ways. (I'm oversimplifying what he said to some extent.) He also referred to this week's vote on same-sex marriage in Maine that left a lot of GLB people feeling hated by their fellow countrymen. That really got to me. I don't doubt that they feel hated as a result of the vote, but that doesn't mean that they are. I kept thinking of Casey and her frustration over the marriage vote in her state and the slogan "A Fair [State] Votes No." She didn't like to be seen as unfair just because she holds a traditional view of marriage. It's hard for me, because I also felt deeply saddened by the vote in Maine, and I also would love to see marriage rights extended to same-sex couples throughout the country, and I think it's unfair that we have this unequal system, but I don't think Casey hates gay people. Yes, she

disapproves. But I don't think she's a bad person for that. As BJ said yesterday when we talked about this, the vote in Maine may not say that gay people are hated, but it does say that they are not loved (in the sense of approved of) by a lot of people. And where does it say that everyone has to love us? In this case, unfortunately, the extension of rights is contingent on the acceptance other people feel for gay people, and the majority of people just aren't there yet.

The point of all of that was just that I left the presentation with a sense of despair. I just don't see how we can possibly achieve inclusive environments if supporting gay students (for example) means vilifying people who aren't ready to accept them. Like Austen says, how can we give students (or other people, for that matter) the room to question and maybe change their views if we strike them down as haters for expressing what they really think? And if even the people who advocate "comprehensive inclusivity" can't accept some conservatives where they are, what hope is there for the rest of the population? And what does it say about my own tolerance? Where would I be prepared to draw the line and say "yes, that belief or that action does demonstrate hatred for someone else and that's just wrong"? Should we never say that about anyone? Maybe it's the whole issue of person vs. belief/action, à la "love the sinner, hate the sin." Maybe I can disagree and even hold no respect for a view that you hold, but that won't change my regard for you as a person and I can like you for the other things about you that are more in line with what I value. Ooh, that would be hard! It seems inauthentic in a way, and also cowardly, as if it implies condoning someone's behavior or beliefs. Then again, who am I to judge? Then again, if some people didn't judge and take strong stands, what would ever change? Then again, maybe the important thing is taking the stand against the belief and not equating the belief with the person.

Yowza. This whole thing gives me a headache. It also makes me realize how hard life could be if I managed to put this kind of thinking into practice. But then again, who said life was meant to be easy?

November 7, 2009

One question that I have not dealt with enough given the nature and direction of my research is why I identify myself as a liberal. The questions I pondered in my last post about Austen and Allison apply just as much to my own political identification. I covered this to some extent in my Researcher as Instrument statement, but I don't think I explored it at a deep enough level.

I was primed early to think of myself as a liberal because my parents were. I don't remember my mother being as vocal about politics when I was a child as she is now, but that may just be flawed memory on my part. [Specific statements about my mother's political views deleted here.]

BJ and I have been working our way through the entire M*A*S*H series on DVD (we're now mid-way through season five), and I realize now how much that show reinforces the messages I got from my family about who the good guys and the bad guys are. I'm sure I was never conscious of that growing up. There is very little overt politics in M*A*S*H --

Frank Burns makes one comment about being a Republican -- but it is clear that Burns is racist, xenophobic, an "America -- love it or leave it" kind of patriot, status-seeking, money-hungry, pro-military -- all attributes that are stereotypically attributed to conservatives (or at least certain strains of conservatives). Hawkeye and the other characters that you're supposed to like, on the other hand, are anti-military, see the war only as senseless brutality without any justification or hope of redemption, they fight against prejudice and homophobia while they stick it to the bombastic and the powerful. There isn't a single sympathetic character in the show -- even Col. Potter, a career Army man -- who sees the war as a necessary evil. At least, that position is never articulated by any character, even when given the opportunity (as in the episode where the characters are all being interviewed by a journalist).

Essentially, the good guys are liberal in the ways that seem to really matter. I don't know how any of them feel about tax policies, small government versus big government, affirmative action, etc., but on the issues that Allison calls universal (but agrees are generally associated with liberals), they stand on the side of open-mindedness, tolerance, peace, and compassion. Why should those be liberal values? In that sense I agree with Allison that they seem more universal. Perhaps the difference is in the extent to which those values take priority over others in guiding people's behavior and attitudes.

As I've gotten older, I can see the difficulty in some positions that are deemed liberal. I don't think that affirmative action is helpful if it means hiring patently unqualified people. I don't think sexual permissiveness is a good idea, although I won't say it's morally wrong. I don't think that speech should be restricted through law or policy because of the offense it might cause. I don't abhor the military. I understand concerns about welfare and giving people hand-outs or privileges that they haven't had to earn. Perhaps what makes me liberal is that I am just as opposed to those privileges when they are given to upper-middle class suburbanites through invisible means. I wouldn't want to live under a truly socialist government. Then again, I don't personally know any self-identified liberal who does.

I think I am a liberal in many legitimate ways, but what it comes down to more is an image that I have. [A friend] has said that conservatives concern themselves with the winners and liberals concern themselves with the losers. I can relate to that. I don't think that's true for some of my study participants, particularly Austen, but it does match my own reflexive sense of what conservative and liberals are about. The degrees of conservativeness or liberalness are determined by how big the gap is between how people feel about the winners and the losers. I think it's great when people succeed, and I think people should have a right to use whatever advantages they've accrued, but I also think that much can be expected from those to whom much has been given. I don't have a problem with graduated taxes, or with taxpayer-funded programs that offer the highest benefit to those who pay the least.

Where did those ideas come from? How did I develop my sense of priorities? I think part of it was from the kind of Christianity I was raised with. I don't know why I say that exactly, but when I think about my justification for some of my beliefs, I often find myself quoting (or vaguely remembering) Jesus or other parts of the Bible. That's especially funny given that I don't actually *know* a lot of the Bible. So how else? Even if I attribute it to the pop culture that I was exposed to, aren't there people who watched M*A*S*H and Sesame Street

who turned out to be conservative? What else were they exposed to that gave them the sense that conservatives were the good guys?

Obviously, I haven't come to any firm conclusions about this. I just wanted to document what's been on my mind and how I've been thinking about it.

August 24, 2010

In writing up Casey's profile, I started thinking about why her liberal colleagues would not see political banter as potentially alienating to some students, or at least not alienating enough to keep the behavior in check. This led to the question of whether "conservative" is/can/should be considered a group identity in the same way race or sexual orientation might be. If it isn't seen as an identity, then making a political statement on Facebook might not be seen as the equivalent of making a heterosexist comment. When does expressing an opinion cross the line into bigotry? Someone might feel that a sweeping statement about an ethnic group might be automatically inappropriate. Why is a sweeping statement about a political group any different? Is it because opinions are changeable, and therefore a matter of choice? So perhaps it seems fine to criticize people who hold certain opinions because they could just as easily choose to have different opinions.

Is that true though? Certainly, opinions are changeable. But in a given moment--a snapshot in time--someone either believes something or they don't. Is it fair to attack or make generalizations about the people (rather than the opinions themselves) if those opinions are genuine and, in a sense, can't really be helped in that static moment?

Even the idea of separation could be problematic. If someone tries to criticize homosexuality as a behavior separate from the people who live it, that rings false to gay people because they feel that their gayness is an integral part of who they are, not an article of clothing that they can take off and evaluate with cool objectivity. Saying that homosexuality is wrong is, to them and those who agree with them, an indictment of who they are as people because the behavior is a natural outflow of their naturally-occurring biological impulses. I don't think political attitudes and values are regarded the same way. Should they be? I do believe that attitudes and values are learned. But once they are learned, how easy is it to unlearn them? Even if opinions change, is there some place at the core of a person's self that essentially remains unaltered?

Maybe core values stay the same, but the definitions of those values shift as people experience new things and think about different ideas. Two people can both believe in the inherent dignity of each individual, but they may express that in completely different ways. Dressing a doll in different clothes or putting different kinds of ornaments on a Christmas tree will produce very different effects even though the doll or the tree--the bottom-most layer--is essentially unchanged.

So presumably the people who believe in respecting others and avoid using offensive words for certain groups do not see conservatives (or others with whom they disagree) as defined by the same quality that commands their respect otherwise. My question is why? And is that fair? Is it right? Is it inevitable?

August 30, 2010

Talking with BJ this morning, I was struck by a thought related to how universities incorporate differences in worldview. I've been saying that true inclusivity is impossible and that the best we can do is to reflect on and negotiate where the limits lie and be honest in how we communicate that. I'm sure there are many in higher ed who think they do this already. But I don't think there is consensus on the matter. (And, on another point, how would such a consensus be arrived at or recognized?) Where I do see it happening more readily is on the academic side. American universities are, by and large, based on systems of rational thought. They do not teach or accept as valid divinely inspired ways of knowing, for example. Conservative religious adherents may feel that their worldviews are discriminated against in such a system, and they are right. But I think most academics would be unabashed in saying that rational thought and analysis is what defines education in our current society, and they would not feel inclined to have it any other way.

In student affairs, however, professionals aim to develop the "whole person," which would include their spiritual worldview. It is not something to be set aside, but something to be explored and valued. Religion aside, values clarification is a big part of student development work, and not all students will (or necessarily should) come out with the same values. So some conservatives are asked to check their values at the door in the classroom (if their values are at odds with scientific rationalism) but encouraged to explore those values outside the classroom. What are the implications of that for developing integrity? As I've seen in my study, people who can compartmentalize have an easier time in their work, and that's probably true of most people--regardless of worldview--in life. So then what does integrity mean? That's Chickering's 7th vector, so it's something we're supposed to foster in students. How much integrity do we want to encourage though if it means that a person feels that all aspects of their lives must be in accordance with their religious values, for example?

Appendix G

Researcher as Instrument Statement (Written in the spring of 2007)

[Bracketed ellipses indicate where text has been deleted for the sake of privacy or clarity.]

In the spring of 2006, I presented a program with John Foubert on ideological diversity at the annual convention of ACPA, which is one of the two major professional organizations for student affairs administrators. The presentation was based on an article I had developed to explore the recent movement calling for an Academic Bill of Rights to protect ideological diversity on college campuses. The first half of the program presented data about student political involvement, voting patterns, faculty priorities, and student relationships to authority (based in cognitive development theory). The second half was an open discussion with attendees about the kinds of issues they had seen on their campuses. During the course of the discussion, in reference to ways in which bias can manifest itself, a woman sitting at the front of the room rather quietly disclosed that she was a Republican and that there were things she didn't feel comfortable talking about with her colleagues. Another person announced that in more than ten years of attending ACPA conventions, he had never told anyone that he was an evangelical Christian. Both of these "confessions" received applause from the audience. It reminded me of some of the gay pride rallies in college where students would take the opportunity to come out publicly to the supportive cheers of the crowd.

I first started looking at ideological diversity issues as part of my EPPL 60I (Policy) class. For some reason—I don't recall exactly why now—I chose to do a paper on academic freedom and, specifically, the Academic Bill of Rights. Looking at the arguments and some of the complaints from students who felt their professors or advisers had overstepped the lines of professional conduct, it struck me that some of the issues being raised were very similar to concerns and experiences of other underrepresented student groups. When conservative students tried to compare themselves to students of color in terms of their sense of marginalization, they were often shot down (either directly or collectively) by those who didn't think conservative students—generally assumed to be predominantly White, male, and Christian—could claim any kind of disadvantage, especially at a time in history when the U.S. government was controlled by Republicans. I experienced similar angry reactions when I talked about the issues with fellow graduate students and colleagues at other professional gatherings (with the anger directed at the conservative students and activists, not at me). I wanted to find some kind of common ground between the groups. I consider myself an advocate of multiculturalism, but I thought the denials of conservative students' experiences went too far. As I saw it (and still see it), there *are* ways in which the isolation of being a conservative student or professor mirrors the isolation of students and professors who are members of more traditionally recognized minority groups. I realize that the history and context are very different, and it would be ridiculous to claim that White, straight, male Christians of any political persuasion don't have an easier time in this society *on the whole* than members of other groups. In the narrow domain of higher education, however, I believe that the generally liberal environment can present legitimate challenges to students and professors who are concerned with their personal day-to-day experiences rather than the

entire scope of social history.

Once I started down this path of exploration, I started noticing or remembering other ways in which liberal values had expressed themselves as simply “normal” or ways in which the term *diversity* was applied to certain kinds of diversity but not others. I recalled the Sons of Liberty anti-affirmative-action bake sale and the furor that resulted from their gimmick of charging different prices based on racial/ethnic affiliation. The pricing structure seemed like the biggest cause of offense to many of the people I heard talk about it. I recalled a bake sale when I was in college, in which women were charged 70 cents and men \$1 as a means of bringing awareness to the persistent earnings gap. When I described that bake sale to those who were offended by the Sons of Liberty, the reaction was markedly different. The earnings gap bake sale was clever; the Sons of Liberty’s was hateful. In another example, a devoutly Christian acquaintance described her conflict over the Safe Zone workshop in which she had participated, in which *acceptance* was presented as a relatively low level of support and *nurturance* (encouraging the full expression of someone’s sexual orientation) was considered the highest. She had thought being accepting was the ideal state, and to move up the levels of support to nurturance would mean abandoning the principles of her religion. I wondered how the expectations and goals presented in the workshop made her feel about her role in student affairs. How would she reconcile the ideals of the profession as communicated through the workshop (to fully embrace and celebrate gayness) with religious teachings that present homosexuality as a sin?

I first noticed the liberal orientation of student affairs when I attended my first ACPA convention in 2005. It was a beautiful experience for me to be around so many people who seemed committed to social justice, civic engagement, affirmation of all kinds of identities, etc. Part of it was the excitement of having a shared professional language. People talked about Chickering’s vectors of identity development and didn’t have to stop to explain what that meant. I remember thinking how great it was to be able to start conversations at a different level because you could assume a baseline knowledge and acceptance of certain ideas. People might disagree about the particular means of applying various principles, or they might be ignorant of the issues faced by certain groups, but they were attending these workshops because they knew they were ignorant and they wanted to learn. I didn’t feel like I had to broach gay issues tentatively to feel out people’s level of acceptance; it seemed obvious that you couldn’t be part of this organization without being fairly comfortable with conversations about sexual identity. It was like I had died and gone to social justice heaven.

The following year, I attended the convention again and saw a little bit of the underside of the organizational norms. At the opening ceremony, a group of students (all or mostly White) from a local college presented a half-hour montage of classic Broadway musical numbers. I felt a growing chill in the audience as the program continued, offering up numbers from the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, some of which were probably pretty progressive for their day but seemed rather dated in 2006. The students did a great job and the audience was polite in its applause at the end, but there was a murmur in the crowd that seemed to be asking, “Who thought *that* was a good idea?” In private conversations later, some people voiced their dismay that ACPA would have invited such a display of (hetero)sexism and racism to kick off the convention. I wondered how many people were truly offended by the

show and how many were just extremely uncomfortable watching it with people who they suspected would be offended by it. I know I was uncomfortable, and I like Broadway. I thought it was a real shame because, as student affairs educators, we of all people should have shown enthusiastic appreciation for the students who had worked hard to prepare and deliver the program (some of whom, as someone pointed out, could well have been gay). That, followed by the experience I had with the participants in my own program later in the convention, made me think about the ways in which the values of the profession may be expressed in extreme ways and actually create situations in which we find ourselves supporting some students or groups at the expense of others, perhaps without intending to.

My own political beliefs tend to be on the moderate side of liberal. I have never voted for a Republican for any national or state office, and although I have not always voted for Democrats, my voting pattern has been decidedly liberal. There are some issues on which I might be described best as “far left” and others on which I might be considered somewhat conservative or at least have sympathy for the conservative view. For those issues that I feel intensely passionate about—racial equity, gay rights, religious pluralism, and reproductive freedom, for example—I have a tendency to feel angry toward and uncharitably wary of people who take an opposing stance. In reality, experience has shown me that people with whom I fervently disagree can be perfectly delightful folks, and then I’m left to try to reconcile my affection for them with my incredulity over their “narrow” thinking. I have also encountered situations in which the issues I feel strongly about are in conflict with each other or with other values I also hold dear. In the case of the Sons of Liberty bake sale, for example, I was angered and saddened by the sale and the negative impact it had on African American students, in particular, but I felt that shutting the sale down was a violation of the students’ right to free speech and only gave them a hook for much broader publicity. As a result of encounters like this, I have come face-to-face with the borders of my own thinking on many occasions, to the point where I have sometimes stopped questioning where the borders lie and ask instead how they came to be there and why they lie where they do. Perhaps it is that act of reflection that has led me further toward the center of the political spectrum as I’ve gotten older.

As I mentioned in the previous paragraph, racial equity (and multiculturalism generally) is one of the areas that I feel passionately about. I realize, however, that my version of multiculturalism may be interpreted as more conservative than what is generally reflected in the literature. When I was a senior in college, and for a couple of years afterward, I facilitated training sessions on diversity and prejudice reduction for college and high school student groups. Inevitably, when the discussion turned to students’ cultural backgrounds, at least one White student would say something like, “I have no culture; I’m just White,” or “I’m just me,” or “I’m just an American.” I wanted to convey to them that being themselves was fine, but it didn’t go far enough. What made them who they were? What did it mean to be White or an American? I started to think that one of the reasons diversity initiatives are met with so much hostility from some White people is because it feels like the White participants are there solely to be educated by the rest of the group, rather than being seen as also having something valuable to contribute. Perhaps unwittingly, many diversity programs solidify the division between “us” and “them” rather than inviting White students to become equal participants in the effort. I started thinking about Whiteness, which later led to

reflections on other dominant social groups. As much as I acknowledge the need for members of dominant groups to recognize their privileged status and to listen to and learn from those who do not share that privilege, I have come to believe that it is also important to include members of the dominant groups in positive reflections about their own identity within those groups. I think talking about diversity in terms of *oppression* and *power* may be too much for members of dominant groups who are just starting to think about social status issues and who do not see themselves as bad or even as powerful people. I realize that it may be unpopular among critical multicultural circles to place so much attention on dominant group members, but I think the long-term success and health of the multicultural movement rests on its ability to include (in positive, affirming ways) even those people it sees as having enjoyed unmitigated power and privilege for far too long.

Since conservative politics are often tied to Christianity these days, I think it is appropriate to say a few words about my background in this domain. I have traveled along many paths in developing my spiritual identity. I was baptized Catholic and raised a Methodist, but I declared my agnosticism in my early adolescence. I have always had a sense of the spiritual (at 3 years old, I apparently told my sister that “God is everywhere; he’s in your shoe, he’s in your sock...”), but I was very skeptical of organized religion. Fortunately, my parents were supportive of my spiritual meanderings. I explored various spiritual practices in college and beyond, spent a week in a Buddhist monastery, considered converting to Judaism, and eventually came to join the local Unitarian Universalist fellowship. I used to feel highly antagonistic toward Christianity [...], but I have since made my peace with [it], at least in its more liberal forms. I do not consider myself a Christian, however, and I still feel very apprehensive of people who identify themselves as Christians until I have a better sense of what they mean by the term. In my own practice, I read from a variety of religious and humanist texts, most often the Tao Te Ching and the book of Psalms. I practice yoga and meditation, although not as regularly as I would like. I don’t wear my spirituality on my sleeve and I don’t particularly like talking about it because words are just so inadequate. [...]

I like to think that people have more in common than not, and that many ideological disputes could actually be resolved if all sides would just tone down the rhetoric and look for the areas of agreement. In high school and college, I became interested in eastern philosophies and found that there were many more significant commonalities than differences among the core teachings of the world’s religions. (In fact, it was this realization that helped me to overcome a lot of my hostility toward Christianity.) Similarly, in reading debates over the Academic Bill of Rights, I found myself thinking that the two sides really were not so far apart as their fiery invectives would suggest. I am not so naive as to think that all ideological disagreements boil down to misunderstandings, but I do get tired of people obscuring what really matters by using charged language and hyperbolic misrepresentations to make others look evil or foolish. I think it’s part of this “argument culture” that Deborah Tannen wrote about, where winning, rather than understanding or cooperating, becomes the most important goal. People in higher education might be more amenable to acknowledging the liberal orientation of universities if it didn’t seem like doing so meant they were confessing their guilt in some premeditated ideological crime.

I don’t think the quest for understanding ever profits from the demonization of any

perspective, person, or group. In our society today, I see and read about growing polarization, with liberals and conservatives becoming increasingly entrenched in their own positions and questioning the humanity, patriotism, intellect, etc. of those on the “other” side (as if most of the burning questions of the day could be reduced to only two sides). Unfortunately, in this day and age of technology and “new media” tailored to individual interests, it is very easy to find reinforcement for our existing views and to avoid anything that challenges us to consider alternative perspectives. As difficult as I may find it at times (because of both limited time and a tendency to stay within my comfort zone), I do make an effort to expose myself to credible perspectives that differ from my own. [An acquaintance of mine] is an excellent resource for this, although I sometimes wonder whether the sources of his opinions are what I would consider credible. My interactions with him have prompted a great deal of thought about what constitutes credibility, what constitutes balance, and what I consider to be inflammatory rhetoric. I realize that I hold a double standard in that my own threshold between civil discourse and inflammatory rhetoric is much lower when I don’t share the opinions being expressed. From my reading and my observations of people in general, I think I am in pretty good company in that regard. In the same way that the earnings gap bake sale was clever while the affirmative action protest was hateful, I see that people are much more accepting of language or strategies that push the envelope when those strategies serve a position they support.

Last year, I read some of Cass Sunstein’s work on groupthink and cascades and I can so easily see how this principle might apply to higher education in general and student affairs in particular. As with any discipline or profession, the peer-reviewed research we read provides a direction for future research and helps to establish what is known or considered important in the profession. The vast majority of work I have seen regarding African American racial identification, for example, relies on Cross’s theory of nigrescence. I have some issues with Cross’s theory and I prefer a different racial identity model. Yet when I wrote a paper and wanted to base my arguments on that model, I was told I at least had to summarize Cross because no one would take a work on racial identity seriously if it didn’t mention Cross’s work. Perhaps that’s just the natural evolution of thought in any field, but it did suggest to me how much researchers can be bound and restricted by history and established thinking. It made me realize as well how a profession may self-select its members. In my (admittedly limited) experience, anyone who does not accept the notion of group identity as a legitimate factor in personal development would not last long in a student affairs graduate program. Where I struggle sometimes is in deciding whether I think this is a problem. Much of Sunstein’s work on groupthink deals with how decisions are made. In general, he argues, dissent leads to better decisions because it means more information and more perspectives are brought to bear on the issue. At the same time, Sunstein acknowledges that too much dissent, or a lack of a commonly accepted purpose or set of values, is also detrimental. I haven’t figured out for myself yet whether the liberal orientation I perceive in higher education and, specifically, student affairs is an expression of that essential common purpose or a reflection of groupthink. Although I personally support the liberal leanings of higher ed as an institution, I wrestle with the implications of those leanings when I talk with or read about conservative students who feel that their professors or college policies in general do not encourage them to develop their values and views. I believe that there are some values and attitudes that are just plain dangerous—I would not want to encourage anyone to develop

more fully in their anti-Semitism—but a lot of views that are unpopular among liberals are a far cry from that.

In conducting a study of student affairs professionals who may see themselves as being ideologically at odds with the profession as a whole, I expect to hear at least some concerns and experiences similar to those of other underrepresented groups. In particular, I expect that the day-to-day experiences will most closely resemble those of gay and lesbian administrators because of the less visible nature of that identity. In the same way that some gay and lesbian professionals will hide aspects of their personal lives, or will choose to be “out” only among certain trusted colleagues, I expect to find that some conservative administrators routinely keep their political and/or religious views to themselves except in certain “safe” environments. I would want to be careful not to equate the status of conservatives in academia with that of gay men and lesbians in society in general. Clearly, there is a history of discrimination and violence against gays and lesbians that ideological conservatives do not share. It will be important for me to emphasize that I am interested in the daily navigation of the professional environment, not making any claims as to overall social status.

Overall social status may well have an effect on how conservatives deal with their role in higher education. Family, religious, and social circles may provide affirmation that mitigates the possible sense of marginalization conservatives perceive in their professional networks. Political conservatives in student affairs may be unique in that most underrepresented groups on college campuses are underrepresented outside of academia as well. Depending on the political composition of where they live, conservatives may find themselves in the minority only when they go to work. In that sense, the overall impact of their underrepresentation may be pretty small.

As I think about what I am willing and unwilling to discover in this study, I find myself worrying that I may not have much to discover at all. I would be willing (but also disappointed) to find that there is no real ideological conflict among student affairs professionals. It may be that people who identify strongly as conservative would not enter the student affairs profession in the first place. If I look for participants who see themselves as standing apart from the prevailing ideology of the field, I may find myself talking to a lot of people who think the field isn’t liberal enough in its philosophy and/or its practices. (It might be interesting to include some of those people anyway, since I would expect them to have different experiences from conservatives in terms of how their views are received by others.)

I am willing to find that people who consider themselves conservative in general are actually more liberal on those aspects that most relate to the ideals of student affairs, which would largely eliminate the kind of internal conflict I am interested in. *Liberal and conservative* are part of a complex political landscape, and I do not want to imply that I see clear boundaries separating them into discrete ideological camps. I know some self-identified conservatives who are staunch advocates for gay rights, for example. I would still wonder how readily such folks identify themselves as politically conservative among colleagues, however, given the tendency for people to make assumptions about a person’s values on the basis of

ideological labels.

I would be surprised (and, therefore, perhaps unwilling) to find that even student affairs professionals who do openly identify as conservative experience no discomfort or incongruence with the profession at all. The two comments I received at my ACPA program suggest that there is an issue worth investigating here. I think I am justified in perceiving student affairs as being ideologically liberal, but maybe that has more to do with the kinds of conference programs I have attended. It may be that people who don't place a high priority on social justice simply do not attend the programs offered under the social justice theme at the ACPA convention, or don't attend the convention at all. I still think the organization overall reflects a liberal orientation, but maybe it is easier than I think for ideologically conservative attendees to bracket that and only attend the conferences and programs that suit their own worldview. [...]

I am willing, but also fearful, to discover that I cannot do this study effectively because it is so steeped in a liberal perspective from its very inception. Even though I am looking to capture the experiences of individuals, these individuals are representative of what I see as a possibly marginalized group. Seeing the world in terms of groups and marginalization in and of itself reveals my liberal social justice orientation. How much will that matter when I try to conduct interviews? As much as I would like to keep my own ideology hidden from my participants (at least during the data collection phase), will that be possible? Even common words like *freedom* or *equality* can have different meanings depending on one's worldview. I know that that is always the case, no matter who your participants are, but I am concerned that the kinds of questions I will ask or the clarifications I need will reveal my own orientation in a way that might influence how my participants respond to me.

Ultimately, I see this study as a very small way of understanding the ideological rift I keep reading about in the country as a whole. Conservatives accuse liberals of hypocrisy in their professed concern for tolerance because conservatives don't see liberals as being very tolerant of them. From what I have seen personally, both within student affairs and in society generally, I can see their point. I think it is important for liberals to examine the intentional and unintentional limits of their own tolerance so that they can respond affirmatively, rather than defensively, according to their actual values. I would like this study to begin a dialogue among student affairs professionals about how tolerant the profession really aims to be and what values or perspectives will *not* be tolerated. I think this would have the same value as a Researcher as Instrument statement that asks us to consider what we are not willing to discover. At first, the response may be that there is nothing we would be unwilling to discover, but upon deeper reflection, we find that that's not really the case. Similarly, I suspect that there are values that liberal educators advocate, and those would be pretty easy to identify. Identifying the ones that are merely tolerated and, beyond that, the ones that educators actively want to change is trickier.

I don't mean to suggest that the participants in this study would serve as examples of perspectives the profession should want to exclude; if anything, I hope it will be the opposite. By hearing from people who work in the profession but who do not necessarily agree with the normed expression of its values, I believe this study can help blur the lines that

seem to get drawn between ideological categories and also open the field to different perspectives that might prove valuable in doing the work of student affairs. In the same way that hearing the frustrations of a Jewish colleague can bring people to think more carefully about office holiday celebrations, hearing from conservative colleagues may cause people to reflect on some of the ways that people (students as well as colleagues) can be made to feel welcome or unwelcome on the basis of their ideological beliefs. I am not just trying to add another bullet to the growing list of marginalized groups that require accommodation. It may be that student affairs professionals as a whole are quite content with the state of the profession and, upon reflection, would say there is no call to make any adjustments. I believe self-examination is a worthwhile endeavor, however, and hearing the voices of those who see themselves on the periphery will only serve to make the profession more self-aware and, perhaps, stronger.

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