How graduates make meaning of their on-campus employment:
A retrospective view

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving husband,

Paul Lewis Empie

Who has quietly performed a multitude of good deeds that have made so much of what I

have done in life possible, including this.

My parents

Bernice (Valley) and Gerhardt Poetschke

Who raised me to work hard, think for myself and start each day with a smile.

With love,

Always,

me

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to *explore and understand how recent college graduates made meaning of their on-campus work experience.* The author interviewed graduates from a private liberal arts institution regarding how their on-campus employment impacted their academic success, overall student experience, and beginning careers.

The participants believed that supervisors arranging their work schedules for them when they began working, and the time management skills they developed because they worked, positively contributed to their academic success. They said they would not have studied more even if they had had more time. Solid work ethics got the participants to work, but, the relationships they developed kept them working. Through their on-campus employment the participants developed the transferrable skills of how to received feedback and how to deal with difficult situations. They also built self-confidence, developed patience, and enhanced their ability to be precise. The participants believed that those skills had helped them in their careers.

Recommendations for practice include: encouraging students to start working as soon as they start college, arranging work schedules for them to decrease stress, working 8-19 hours per week, ensuring that students are not working alone all of the time, finding ways to increase job responsibility, ensuring that pay is comparable to that of off-campus employment and training supervisors of students in the importance of their role, how to supervise and how to mentor. Recommended policy changes include: changing financial aid

policy so it does not discourage students from working, creating student jobs whenever

possible, creating institutional internships, and incorporating the priority of on-campus

student employment into institutional goals and decision making.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter lays the groundwork for a qualitative study which will explore and understand how recent college graduates from a private liberal arts institution make meaning of their on-campus work experiences. On-campus student employment positions which focus on leadership activities, such as resident assistants, have been the focus of significant study; however work which primarily exists to provide campus services has typically been included within studies combining on and off campus work. Most of these studies focused on the effect of work on factors such as persistence and grades. Research is just beginning to separate on-campus and off-campus employment, and it is important to study the effect of on-campus service positions on student development (Perna, 2010). A literature review showed that on-campus employment is a vast and largely untapped resource which can positively affect persistence, academics, career placement and career success. Understanding the effect of on-campus employment on graduates' perceptions of their educational experience and the institution, will further the body of knowledge, and could stimulate the intentional design of employment experiences to enhance student and graduate success.

Statement of the Problem

Since the 1980's, financial aid availability has not kept up with the cost of education. Furthermore, as required by federal policy, student aid gets decreased if students make too much money (Baum, 2010). Financial aid issues end up affecting decisions

students make about work; with the cost of education rising, working to offset expenses is an increasingly important part of student life.

The work aspect of student life was implied to be part of the student experience by Astin (1984) in his Theory of Involvement, which stated that student learning and development was directly affected by the degree and amount of involvement students engaged in on campus. As the role of employee became a more prominent aspect of students' lives, researchers began to study the effect it had on students. Although students worked both on and off campus, on-campus jobs provided increased opportunity for student engagement (Kuh, 2003; Troppe, 2000), development of social relationships (Ely, 1993; Putnam, 2000) and helped students persist (Beeson & Wessel, 2002; Wilkie & Jones, 1995). Additionally, Barden (2004) theorized that on-campus employment taught students transferrable work skills.

While there are theoretical implications and research which support the positive impact of on-campus student employment on student engagement, persistence, academic success and career entry, knowledge about how on-campus employment affects students from their own perspective is lacking. This research is about on-campus work designed for the purpose of providing services to the campus community. There are many more service jobs on campuses than student leadership positions, and they are more inclusive and available to all students, therefore, the potential for affecting larger numbers of students is greater.

There is little qualitative research about this kind of on-campus employment; the kind of on-campus employment where students may have leadership or supervisory roles, but the ultimate purpose of the work is to provide service to the campus. It would be helpful to

understand how the on-campus employment experience is viewed from the persons who lived it in order to understand how individuals construct meaning "even in relation to the same phenomenon" (Crotty, 1998, p.9). This is supported by Laura Perna (2010), editor of *Understanding the Working College Student,* who concluded that "Future research should use the insights generated from qualitative research to identify additional measures of work in survey research…Future research should also consider changes in the continuity and nature of work over the period of a student's enrollment" (p.304). This research will do that.

Purpose of the Study

Exploring on-campus employment from the student worker perspective will fill a void in the body of knowledge regarding how work affects students. Understanding how graduates retrospectively view their experiences could inform intentional development of work experiences. This understanding could impact recruiting and hiring practices, training and mentoring programs for supervisors of students, and future financial support to the institution.

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to *explore and understand how recent college graduates from a private liberal arts institution make meaning of their on-campus work experience.*

Research Questions

The following research questions are designed to ascertain how graduates make meaning of their on-campus employment:

a. How do recent graduates from a liberal arts college describe the influence of on-campus employment on their <u>academic success</u>?

b. How do recent graduates from a liberal arts college describe the influence of on-campus employment on their <u>overall student experience</u>?

c. How do recent graduates from a liberal arts college describe the influence of on-campus employment on their <u>career-entry after graduation</u>?

Theoretical Framework

Two theories served as the foundation for developing this research. Astin's Theory of Involvement (1984) is the basis for assessing graduate perspectives of how time spent working on campus impacted their learning and development, and Sensemaking Theory (Weick, 1995) was used as the foundational logic for assessing how graduates retrospectively view the effect of their employment on their lives.

Theory of Involvement

Astin (1984) proposed through his Theory of Involvement that the quantity and quality of time students spent involved in the environment directly affected student learning and development. Theory of Involvement emphasizes what students do, not necessarily their feelings about it; and the more students are involved in all aspects of their education, the more they get out of it. If everyone involved in the institution focused on this, there would be more opportunity for students to be better learners (p. 307). Students who work on-campus versus off-campus, have opportunity for additional engagement, and the experience can enhance their learning and development. This qualitative research explores how graduates perceive their work experience as they look back on it. The degree to which they believe it affected their learning and development is related to Theory of Involvement.

Sensemaking Theory

Work can have an effect on student engagement because relationships developed in the work environment impact the student experience. Sensemaking Theory, as applied to organizations by Weick (1995), involves viewing how people interpret their workplace experiences and how they view themselves in the context of their environment. How people act and feel depends on how they interpreted their relationships with multiple others. Therefore, it is not necessarily possible to find a cause and effect relationship to only one aspect of one personal relationship experience. Sensemaking Theory states that people retrospectively continue to evaluate and reframe their experiences and thus, their view of reality changes. The ongoing nature of sensemaking makes it applicable in retrospective exploration of the total impact of on-campus student employment on individual lives. Sensemaking Theory favors plausibility over accuracy. Critical Sensemaking (Mills, Thurlow, & Mills, 2010) addressed issues of power and took agency into account in more personal situations and was not a study of how organizations function. Sensemaking for this study favored a more personal sensemaking approach. This research studies how former on-campus student employees remembered the personal experience, not necessarily what actually happened in the experience - perception is reality.

Applying Student Involvement Theory (Astin, 1984) and Sensemaking Theory (Weick, 1995) generated a retrospective view of how graduates believed that working on campus affected their student experience and their lives, which could impact future co-curricular applications of Involvement Theory (Astin, 1984) as well as use of other theories in applications related to on-campus student employment.

Methodology

"How we know what we know" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8) is a constructionist

epistemology. With constructionism, the truth is not existing and waiting to be found, but is

based on individual experiences with things which occur and that individual's perceptions

about them. Crotty (1998) stated, "In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that

different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same

phenomenon" (p. 9). This constructionist research explores individual interpretations of

similar experiences.

The theoretical perspective utilized in this research was interpretivism through a

symbolic interactionist lens. Interpretivism refers to learning to understand a phenomenon

instead of finding a causal relationship to explain it (Crotty, 1998).

Prasad (2005) discussed the importance of the interviewer who utilized symbolic

interactionism as entering the "everyday lifeworld of the people being studied in order to

comprehend their own processes of sense-making" (p. 25). According to Prasad (2005),

interviewers "ask fewer questions about 'what' is or was taking place and more questions

about 'how' interviewees make sense of specific situations" (p. 25). Also, according to

Prasad (1993), multiple realities and meanings held by different individuals are a

distinguishing feature of symbolic interactionsim, and diverse interpretations (not merely

shared ones) are imperative. A symbolic interactionist lens was selected for that very reason

– to study how individuals make meaning of their personal experiences, because although the

goal of higher education is to impact society, it is individuals who experience their

environment, one person at a time.

The methodology was phenomenological. Crotty (1998) shared a clear description of how to utilize phenomenology: "Phenomenology requires us to place our usual understandings in abeyance and have a fresh look at things" (p. 80). This research sought the "*essence of the phenomenon*" (Merriam, 2002, p. 93) of the on-campus employment experience. According to Moustakas (1994), "The aim is to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experiences and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it" (p. 13).   The goal was to investigate how individuals make meaning of their personal on-campus employment experience in order to understand the overall and long term effect of on-campus employment on students.

Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews. According to Esterberg (2002), semi-structured interviews are customized to the participant, allow the interviewer to follow the lead of the participant, and "… the goal is to explore a topic more openly and to allow interviewees to express their opinions in their own words" (p. 87). An interview guide was designed to allow the participants to respond based on what was important to them, and the questions were open-ended in order to allow participants to determine how much they wanted to divulge based on what was important to them.

Nine participants were selected by purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves participants being selected for their particular experiences and perspectives (Esterberg, 2002). Participants were alumni of Valley College who had held student manager positions in dining services and who graduated between 2006 and 2010 (one to five years ago). The reason for selecting participants who had been out of school awhile was to be sure they had sufficient other employment in order to assess the impact their on-campus employment had

on them, rather than assessing what they thought it would do for them in the future. It was important that they graduated within a few years of each other and were from the same school, in order to have a fairly similar experience from the standpoint of the basic work environment.

Student managers in dining services trained, directed and evaluated up to twenty other student employees at a time, and the job required a fairly high level of commitment. Students applied and interviewed for this position, but there was no minimum grade-point or academic standing requirement. Most students were selected because they had been good workers and had good attitudes; they were mostly trained on the job. A first-hand knowledge about this specific work environment assisted in the interpretation of the findings, and helped to avoid misinterpretation. Interviews were approximately one to one and a half hour long. Interviews were transcribed, and data analyzed from the transcription. Best practices for quality qualitative research, validity and reliability recommended by Merriam (2002, pp. 23 and 31) were employed.

Significance of Research

This research will contribute to the field of knowledge regarding the impact of on-campus employment on students. This research could (1) start a movement to bring the academy closer to being intentional in providing valuable on-campus employment for students and (2) initiate change in policy and practice to support that cause. It could eventually affect alumni donations to the institution.

Definition of Terms

Academic success - Academic success in higher education generally refers to grades; the higher, the more successful. However, as discovered by Yazedjian, Toews, Sevin, and Purswell (2008), students consider themselves to be academically successful if their grades met their own expectations, more so than if their grades were good in terms of grade point. Yazedjian et al. (2008) discovered that while students knew what strategies to employ to be successful, they did not always engage in them.

Agency - Refers to the ability of individuals to understand their situation and do something about it. The level of agency is like a continuum between human action and external forces. Some theories put agency at the core of action such as symbolic interactionism (Schwandt, 2007, location 285). Critical theories address issues of structure versus agency.

On-campus employment - Paid student jobs available at the institution in which the student is enrolled. These can be work study or regular payroll positions, but must be paid in some form. This refers to part-time work available to students while they attend school and does not encompass full time work.

Off-campus employment - Any work students get paid for which is not paid by the institution. This includes part-time work through full-time work. On-campus contractors such as bookstores who are paying students from their company instead of the institution, should be considered off-campus employers even though the work is technically being done on campus, because the funds are not coming through the institution and because the employer is not likely to have the same developmental interest in the student as institutional departments.

Persistence - Continuation of attendance at the institution. There is concern that if a student leaves one institution and attends another, they are considered as not persisting at the first institution (McClenny, 2004; Tinto, 1998) when in fact they have persisted, just in a different place. Current research is reassessing how persistence is to be determined. The term persistence is also used in reference to a person developing the ability to be persistent in a situation.

Student engagement - Student engagement and student involvement both refer to the degree to which students are connected to the institution through both curricular and co-curricular activities (Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2003).

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Summary

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With so much work to be done on campuses across the country, and institutions of higher education needing to handle all the functions of a large business as well as a community, there should be numerous on-campus employment opportunities for students. On-campus student employment is a huge untapped resource which can positively affect student engagement, persistence, academics, career placement, career success, and it could advance the mission and financial stability of institutions. This research will contribute towards determining how that can be done intentionally.

This dissertation is organized in five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the research study and provided an overview of the theoretical framework, methodology and significance of the research. Chapter 2 focuses on a review of the literature. There has been significant quantitative research on working students. There has been qualitative research on students with leadership positions and off-campus internship experiences, but very little research on

the specific topic of on-campus student employment in support services areas. Because there is a lack of directly related research, the literature review centers on related topics and generates an overview leading to the need for this research and its potential impact. Chapter 3 describes how research was to be conducted using an interpretive theoretical framework viewed through a symbolic interactionist lens. Phenomenological methodology was utilized to gain insight as to how graduates retrospectively make meaning of their on-campus employment experience. Chapter 4 includes descriptions of the work environment and participants. The data analysis is categorized into themes that describe my understanding of how the participant's on-campus work experiences affected their academic success, their overall student experience and their early career. Chapter 5 relates the findings back to the literature in the context of the three research questions and discusses implications of the findings. Specific overall recommendations are made for practice, and implications for policy will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter 1 laid the groundwork for a qualitative study that would explore and understand how recent college graduates from a private liberal arts institution made meaning of their on-campus work experience; to explore and understand how on-campus employment affects students, from their own perspective. This study explored how graduates described the influence their on-campus employment had on their academic success, their overall student experience and their early career.

The purpose of this review of the literature was to determine what is known about how on-campus employment affects or can affect students. The results of the literature review helped inform the research questions and determine the need for additional research as indicated by the literature map (see Appendix A). This issue is important to schools who want to improve their persistence rates, for faculty and staff who want to help students engage, and to students who enter college because they want a degree and to improve their lives. Therefore, in order to explore factors surrounding on-campus employment and career success that could inform future research, the research questions were:

- What are the characteristics of on-campus employment that affect the success of students in college?

- What are the characteristics of on-campus employment that affect career entry upon graduation?

- What are the characteristics of on-campus employment that affect short and long term career success?

These questions follow students from the start of college through graduation and into their careers. This literature review is organized thematically and chronologically. Both four-year and community colleges were included because there are differences between them; and because many students who intend to graduate from four-year institutions go to community colleges first (and sometimes vice versa). Additionally, with the changing face of demographics in institutions of higher education, under-resourced students are also addressed. In order to understand the topic well, and to make the most of the interviews, longer term career success was also included. At the end of the literature review is a summary of answers to the three literature review questions with the intent that my interviews will help generate new knowledge that fits between implications and practice.

Persistence

In the 2003 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA] Bridges to Success Report, McClenney said, "Pay attention to the front door of the college…there are very powerful improvements we can attain in our results if we focus our attention and resources on what happens to students during the first fifteen credit hours" (p.8). For over thirty years, it has been known that the more students are engaged on campus both academically and socially, the more they are likely to persist (Astin, 1984, 1993; Ely, 1997). Tinto (1993) found that only 15-25% of students left school because their grades were poor. The rest left for other reasons, such as feeling like they did not fit in.

In addition to feeling like they have failed, students who do not persist are faced with a second challenge. They leave college with debt they are not equipped to pay back, because they did not complete their education and have not increased their earning potential

(Ehrenberg & Sherman, 1987). Students who do not persist could, therefore, be worse off than when they started.

Community colleges suffer from even lower retention rates than four-year institutions. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2009), 23% of community college students left in the first year of college and had not returned within three years. While 79% of community college students have the goal of obtaining a degree, fewer than half do (Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2009). Nationally, community colleges lose about half of the first year students before their second year of college. The Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE, 2009) reported that 46% of first year students (representing 50,327 surveys at 120 community colleges) were non-white.

In a study at Allegany Community College, Price (1993) found that a large number of students dropped out within the first three weeks. The students in this study were mostly traditional-aged students who did not need developmental courses. If efforts to engage the students had taken place immediately, they might have been retained. Among programmatic recommendations to make greater effort to retain students, Price suggested that on-campus employment would have engaged them and that it may have helped them avoid the feelings of isolation that contributed to these students not persisting.

Low retention rates are challenging for the institutions themselves, as well as the students. Replacing students without having them graduate is costly, similar to the way employee turnover is costly. It costs money to recruit, admit and initiate students into programs. When students graduate, they become potential donors, positive role models for

present and future students, and likely supporters of the institution. When students leave

without graduating, in addition to the institution failing in the core mission of education,

those students are not likely to become potential donors. There is even a risk that those

students will spread a negative view of the institution because of their experiences.

The issue is slightly different, but possibly even more challenging for community

colleges. There is generally less alumni loyalty toward community colleges than four-year

schools; if a student transfers to and graduates from another institution, the student is likely

to be more loyal to that institution than to the community college. With decreased public

funding, the efforts required of community college foundations will become more important

(National Association of Student Personnel Administrator [NASPA], 2003). It is a better

utilization of resources to keep students in all higher educational institutions through

graduation than it is to replace them.

Swirling. **"**Swirling" refers to students leaving school to attend another institution

and sometimes changing schools more than once. At the school they are leaving, it looks like

the student did not persist, but at the new school, the student is a transfer student. Students

are also increasingly doing what has been coined a "reverse transfer": going from a four-year

institution to a community college. With swirling becoming more common, more students

are having the challenges that transfer students have traditionally experienced. One of these

issues regards credit transfer. When credits do not transfer, students need to repeat classes,

internships and work experiences, and this requires additional time and affects their overall

finances. It might be time for institutions of higher education to collaborate with each other

and accept experience gained through internships or possibly even work, for credit

(American Council on Education [ACE], 2009). Several methods of determining value of other programs and work experiences exist, but are not heavily utilized by four-year institutions.

ACE evaluates the quality of internship programs and offers credit recommendations for programs it deems to be worthy (ACE, 2009; Hand & Winningham, 2008) through its CREDIT program. This credit review process implements universal standards and allows institutions to be comfortable accepting transfer credits. This helps transfer students stay on track for graduation, especially if an internship is a graduation requirement, as well as providing recognition for the overall value of internships. With the increase in swirling, credit for internship transfer may become as important as having credit for coursework transfer. Universal analysis and approval of an internship program lends credibility to the program and could enhance the number of applicants to participating institutions. It helps establish good internship criteria, which helps to insure positive experiences for students.

Some students transfer as part of an initial plan to get a two year degree and then transfer to a four year institution to complete their BA. The level of engagement these students experience needs tending, too. In a qualitative study of the experiences of transfer students, Townsend and Wilson (2006) discovered that transfer students had difficulty engaging on campus. These students were challenged by coming onto campus and fitting in when most of the students their age had already developed their social groups; the new institution assumed they did not want to take part in student activities, yet the students were unfamiliar with the culture of the new institution. These transfer students fell victim to some of the same challenges as under-resourced students.

The Specific Case of Under-Resourced Students and Persistence

Because the changing demographics of higher education are resulting in increased diversity (Gray, 2009; Longworth, 2008; Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2008), institutions of higher education need to adopt programs and policies which will help these students function best (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998).

According to Becker, Krodel, and Tucker (2009), under-resourced students are defined as those who do not have "financial, personal, and support system resources necessary to well-being" (p. 1). These students often come from generational poverty and have remediation need because their previous educational experiences did not prepare them sufficiently for college coursework. They are more likely to be first-generation college students or to have ethnic or racial minority status. Under-resourced students are at greater risk than others for not completing their degrees. The recommendations of Becker et al. (2009) were consistent with the theoretical considerations of Rendón, Jalomo, and Nora (2000), which stated that it is more important to focus on programs which remove systematic barriers and actively reach out to students, than to focus on programs which require students to take the first step to become involved. The emphasis should be on the institution doing the reaching out instead of the student. According to Rendón et al. (2000), programs which were typically based on Tinto's Departure Theory Model (Tinto, 1987) helped students get involved, but required students to take the initiative. Departure Theory was developed from research using students who were mostly white and middle to high socioeconomic class. Becker et al. (2009) noted that under-resourced students have four additional significant challenges which are different from students who have sufficient resources: lack of transfer

knowledge, lack of understanding of the hidden rules, lack of development of future stories, and lack of social capital or bridging relationships.

Transfer knowledge. Transfer knowledge is information that family and friends share with a student about the experience of going to college. Family and friends generally serve as a resource to college students and offer advice on how to get things done, how to handle classes, work with professors, and other similar kinds of information. When a student has a challenge, family and friends come to the rescue. Under-resourced students often lack relationships with people who can provide transfer knowledge, because they do not have relationships with people who have had the experiences. Students might even experience being told to "just come home" when they bring up problems, because although their family wants to help, they do not know how else to be supportive. The student then has to deal with the additional pressure of being told they should give up and come home, still not knowing what to do (Becker et al., 2009).

Hidden rules. Hidden rules are the things people are just assumed to know. Often, hidden rules are the kinds of things a person does not think to ask about, because he or she does not have the frame of reference to know to ask. An example of a hidden rule in college is that it is acceptable to drop a class. Often, under-resourced students will not know it is acceptable to drop a class and will miss the deadlines. There are hidden rules for institutions, as well as for departments within institutions. The biology department might have hidden rules about how to use the laboratory after hours, while the music department might have hidden rules about using practice rooms to give private lessons. Knowing hidden rules is

important because they are the path to getting things accomplished, as well as feeling like one belongs to the group (Putnam, 2000).

Future stories. According to Becker et al. (2009), "future stories" is the idea that something can be different than it is today. It is the vision that if something is done differently now, there will be a different outcome later. Having a future story about oneself allows goals to be accomplished because of the belief that something will be different in the future, because of action taken now. Future stories are established in children by experiences being mediated. An example of a future story is emphasizing reading as a source of joy and learning, versus telling a child that he or she should be outside playing and not spending all that time on books (p.41). Someone who has never seen or experienced reading just for fun will have great difficulty doing it. Being able to envision the future is what motivates a person to have perseverance, through patience and willingness to delay gratification, which are essential to success (Goleman, 1995).

Social capital. Having social capital is important because the people one knows who are not family and close friends (such as acquaintances) are often the people to help one get ahead (Putnam, 2008). Having people to help with these challenges is critical to success. These are the people who give references, initiate internship contacts, and help in other similar situations where "who you know" is important. Knouse, Tanner, and Harris (1999) noted that African American students had fewer internships than other students. It was not possible to determine if this was because they did not apply, or because they were not selected. At the university where the study took place, the student had to assume most of the responsibility for pursuing the internship, and few companies advertised internships. It is

possible that not having an internship was really a result of lack of social capital for the African American students.

Working students do not have as much time to contribute to dealing with significant challenges. Those who work off campus have less opportunity, because they are gone from campus more. Students who work and live off campus do not know as many people on campus and have not had as much opportunity to build social capital.

Students worked for many reasons including financing their education, gaining relevant work experience, and for personal development (Robotham, 2009; Winkler, 2009). Under-resourced students were more likely to be working to help support their families (Becker et al., 2009; Rendón, 2002). They therefore had different challenges from typically traditional students, because they had more non-college related responsibilities. They needed money more so they needed to work more hours and tried to get jobs that paid more. Needing higher paying jobs that pay more can be a barrier to under-resourced students' ability to afford working on campus, if on-campus jobs pay less than off-campus jobs, and if available work hours are limited, which they often are because of financial aid requirements and institutional policy.

Although under-resourced students are at greater risk for leaving school, concerns relating to students engagement on campus apply to all students. Social networking, smaller families and not living as close to extended families are other factors which contribute to a lack of practice in personal social skills and increase the need to be sure each student is engaged.

Students Who Work Full Time

Community college students who worked full time had a 52% attrition rate. Of the students that went to two-year schools, 25% considered themselves to be employees who went to school instead of students who worked (McClenny, 2004). The attitude about who the students considered themselves to be first affected decisions they made about their priorities. The persistence rate of under-resourced students was low in general, and the persistence rate in community colleges was lower than four-year institutions because of open enrollment. Additionally, there were more under-resourced students in community colleges. These situations made it difficult for students to develop relationships that helped them feel like they fit in. In *Community Colleges as Cultural Texts*, McGrath and Buskirk (1999) discussed the relationship between social capital and the development of emotional capital. The authors discussed emotional capital as a complement to social capital, saying emotional capital is "the capacity of an organization to evoke and hold in place over time, through its practices, symbols, and culture, positive appraisals of well-being in its membership" (p. 17). The feelings students had about their environment and how they fit into it directly affected their persistence.

Community colleges enroll more non-traditional students and more students who work full-time than four-year institutions. Furthermore, non-traditional students tend to work more hours per week, and are more likely to go to school part time, and work full time. This also affects their ability to spend time on campus, which affects persistence. While the situation for community colleges is different than four-year institutions, because of the demographic difference in students, the issues are the same in that students who are off

campus are not engaged in the campus community, and this, regardless of the reason they are

not on campus (family, work, other commitments), means lower rates of persistence.

Persistence and On-Campus Employment

Tinto (1998) noted that most of the programs implemented to affect persistence were

created and implemented by student life and non-academic staff (such as first-year seminar

and orientation programs) and called for institutions to do more to facilitate collaboration of

all areas. While Tinto's focus was primarily on the development of learning communities

and an emphasis on academics, collaboration with on-campus employers could also be used

to increase persistence. Chrissman-Ishler and Upcraft (2005), in summarizing research of

first-year student programs, concluded that such programs appear to have a mixed impact on

persistence. Given that, in comparison, on-campus employment has thus far been shown to

have a definite positive impact compared to developmental first-year programs, it seems

prudent for institutions to take advantage of this collaborative opportunity.

Characteristics of Work

Off-campus versus On-campus Employment

Work experiences on or off campus can be "just a job" or intentionally career related.

In both situations, students learn real- life work skills and have opportunity to build social

capital and bridging relationships. However, when students are working off-campus, they

are not engaging in the campus community. Walpole found that more than 50 % of low-

income students and 37 % of higher-income students worked more than sixteen hours per

week (as cited in Gupton, Costello-Rodriguez, Martinez, & Quintanar, 2009). Students who

worked off campus had a difficult time with the balance between a life away from campus

and being engaged on campus (Gupton, et al., 2009). They spent more time traveling to and from work and were more likely to have given up other activities in order to meet off-campus work commitments.

One of the challenges for students who prefer to work on campus, is that off-campus jobs sometimes pay more. Students with serious financial need might find that they have to take off-campus work because of the pay (Gupton et al., 2009). This might be slightly different in each community, because of the economics of the region, but it is critical that the dynamics of on-campus versus off-campus work is understood by the institution, and that the pay-rate decision is made strategically. Gupton, Costello-Rodriguez, Martinez, and Quintanar (2009) recommended that institutions carefully design on-campus work programs and offer training for students on how to balance work and school. Additionally, the way financial aid has been required to be administered means that students who receive work-study funding for on-campus work end up having their other aid decreased (Perna, 2010). This has forced students to take jobs off campus. Then, because of how aid need is calculated, students who make more money end up in following years being eligible for less aid. Therefore, students who worked more (theoretically because they were less well off) find themselves at a disadvantage (Baum, 2010). It is easy to see how this could cause additional problems for under-resourced students.

In a national longitudinal study of the males in the class of 1972, off-campus work negatively affected grades, and on-campus work positively affected grades (Ehrenberg & Sherman, 1987). This study is over thirty years old and did not have a diverse sample; however, it was the first to explore this topic. Studies that followed, while having varied

results, continued to show that on-campus work affected grades in a more positive manner than off-campus work (Furr & Elling, 2000; Lundberg, 2004; Wilkie & Jones, 1994).

Stern and Nakata (1991) found that students who worked did not get lower grades than students who did not work. They also found that students who worked were more likely to leave college. However, they did not evaluate on and off-campus employment separately, and considering the research of others (Furr & Elling, 2000; Lundberg, 2004; Wilkie & Jones, 1994), that might have yielded a different result. Stern and Nakata's research showed that if work was related to studies, there was a slightly positive effect in persistence. Students can become more a part of the institutional culture if their work is on-campus, because relationships with on-campus supervisors and other student workers increase their engagement.

Furr and Elling (2000) discovered that as the number of work hours increased for students working off campus, the students became less connected to the institution. These same students reported that their employment interfered with their engagement on campus. This concurred with Astin's (1993) Involvement Theory that off-campus work takes students away from their academic focus. According to Furr and Elling (2000), students also reported that off-campus experiences increase, the longer the student attended the institution. This may be because students working on campus averaged 9.6 hours per week, while those working off campus worked an average of 24.4 hours, which may have affected their ability to engage on campus. This supports the case that students need to be engaged on campus early in their academic careers, and that during those early years, it would be wise to make an

effort to educate students and their parents about best practice methods of building the skill set needed for future success.

How Much is Too Much Work?

In 2009, 32% of first-year community college students worked more than 20 hours per week (CCCSE, 2009). In 2004, undergraduates averaged 24-34.5 hours per week, (Perna, Cooper, & Li, 2007), and 46.5% of full-time traditional undergraduates worked (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Students in the United States have long worked while going to school. This is not true internationally. For example, Greece, the United Kingdom and Australia are just starting to see a trend of students working part-time while going to school (Robotham, 2009). In an online study conducted in the United Kingdom (Robotham, 2009), 68% of the students had part time jobs. Forty-seven percent of the students worked more than 10 hours per week, 35% of the students worked 11-15 hours per week, and 12% of the students worked over 20 hours per week. Six percent of the students believed that their jobs were related to their coursework or their future careers. Robotham (2009) pointed out that this was important, because it conflicted with the reports of others, which suggested that working enhanced future careers (Watts & Pickering, 2000; Winn & Stevenson, 1993). The most significant results of this study found that as students worked more, they had increasing tendencies to do less of the reading (67%), were more tired (53%), and had to decrease their leisure activities (67%). In specific response to stress, 43% thought that working while going to school increased their stress, 39% said it caused them to be less able to cope with stress, and 33%

said it increased their ability to cope with stress. Students clearly had different reactions to the need to work.

Students were more likely to leave campus because they felt like they did not fit in, rather than because of grades (Tinto, 1993), yet encouraging students to obtain good grades is the main reason counselors and parents discourage students from working their first year.

Students who worked on campus less than twenty hours per week did not have worse grades than students who were not employed (Lundberg, 2004; Wilkie & Jones, 1994), and students who worked up to eight hours per week had grades better than those who did not work (Wilkie & Jones, 1995). A study which compared students that did not work, students who worked off campus, and students who worked on campus, found no difference in grades between the three groups, until the students worked more than twenty hours per week (Augsburger, 1971).

The high end of how many hours per week to work has also been studied. Twenty hours per week seemed to be the line above which students could not go to before work affected students' grades (Cheng & Alcántara, 2004; Furr & Elling, 2000).

On-campus employment helped students persist (Berger & Milem, 1999; Crissman-Ishler & Upcraft, 2005). Wilkie and Jones (1994) applied Astin's Involvement Theory (Astin, 1984), which implied that on-campus work facilitated persistence, to over 1,000 freshmen in a developmental studies program. The program was highly structured and the students were told the purpose of the program. The students were assigned an average of eight hours of work per week. The supervisors of the students provided additional mentoring as part of the program. It was discovered that students who worked up to eight hours per

week had better grades and persistence rates. Seventy-five percent of the students reported that they learned skills that would help them in their careers.   This is a much different result than Robotham (2009) had, as described above, where students were not provided intentional additional mentoring and the focus was not on campus.

 Ehrenberg and Sherman (1987) found that grade point and persistence were not affected for students who worked less than 25 hours per week. They also found that the more hours per week the students worked off campus, the greater the chance that the students would not persist as they progressed through each of the four years of college, and it affected their ability to graduate within four years. This is consistent with Astin's (1984) Involvement Theory that students who were involved on campus had a greater chance of persisting. This study was of all males, who in 1987, would have been mostly white, so this may not necessarily be representative of what would happen to racial and ethnic minorities or women.

Based on the more recent work of others (Cheng & Alcántara, 2004; Furr & Elling, 2000), twenty-five work hours per week is a very high number to use as a break point in evaluating hours worked. Students who worked had higher grade points (albeit slightly) than students who did not work (Kulm & Cramer, 2006). Furr and Elling (2000) found that students who worked 11-20 hours per week had better grades and were the most satisfied with them.

Robotham (2009) found inconsistent reports as he reviewed many studies from different countries, including the United States, regarding the effects of working part-time while a student. He noted that many studies were single-institution surveys, and few were

large scale across many institutions. Robotham (2009) suggested that the cumulative research done in this area implies that the benefits of working might outweigh the drawbacks, however, urged caution regarding raising the cost of education further, to avoid forcing students to work even more hours.

A study conducted in the United States, mentioned by Winkler (2009), showed that there was no relationship between hours per week spent working and academic success (Nonis & Hudson, 2006).

Internships

Although most internships are not on campus, they are a critical aspect of student work that is intended to have a positive career outcome. Internships have been shown to improve college performance (Knouse, Tanner, & Harris, 1999). Among 1,117 College of Business graduates at a large southern university in the United States, those who held internships had a significantly higher grade point average at graduation than those who did not. There was no difference in overall ACT scores, which are an admissions requirement and are used as a general indicator of academic potential. It is possible that students with internships had higher GPAs before they did their internship, since internships are generally held in junior and senior years. Knouse et al. (1999) pointed this out, but also pointed out that it is likely that the students with internships developed skills during the internship experience that translated into better academic skills, as well as time management skills and better self-discipline.

What Makes On-Campus Work Better Than Off-Campus Work?

Work does not have to be career related to impact persistence. On-campus jobs provide opportunities for students to engage themselves on campus while developing relationships with people who can help them persist. At the same time, these are opportunities for students to build social capital (Rendón, 1994). Cheng and Alcántara (2004) found that students were interested in the meaning of their work. Students enjoyed the process of searching and obtaining a position, they enjoyed applying the things they learned in their jobs to their careers, and work helped them create a structure for their daily routine. This information could be used to design on-campus jobs that appeal to students.

For on-campus employment to work as a key to increasing persistence, it was important for under-resourced students to work starting their first semester (Berger & Milem, 1999). Beeson and Wessel (2003) discovered that when first-year students started working right away, persistence was higher.

Rendón's (1994) Validation Theory posited that low-income and first generation students were different from traditional students. While traditional students were comfortable asserting themselves in a culture where it is the norm for students to take initiative to join groups, low-income and first generation students were not. This was applied specifically to racial and ethnic minority students by Rendón et al. (2000) and was supported by Becker et al. (2009). Low-income and first generation students needed campus faculty and staff to initiate involvement because they considered involvement something which someone else initiates.

Hidden curriculum contributes to this phenomenon by the nature of how it is implemented in the educational system, beginning with elementary school. Hidden curriculum involves the messages sent to an individual through daily encounters (Ottewill, McKenzie, & Leah, 2005). Hidden curriculum is different from hidden rules, in that hidden rules are the *things* one does not know, and hidden curriculum has to do with *how things are learned*. Anyon (1980) found that students from different social classes were taught differently, even when using the same textbooks and core materials. Students from lower and middle class backgrounds were taught the tasks and methods of solving problems, while students in higher socioeconomic backgrounds were taught why problems were solved and how to think through the problem from their own perspectives. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were not given the connecting explanation of why, and they were taught in a rote method, as receivers of information, while those with higher socioeconomic backgrounds were taught through involvement.

Colleges and universities were started by those with higher socioeconomic backgrounds, and students have historically been taught by being actively involved in the learning. Therefore, it has become a hidden rule of higher education that students need to take the initiative to ask questions, join programs, and initiate their own involvement. Under-resourced students, because they frequently come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, know only what they have learned in the past, and they have learned by being told what they should do (Anyon, 1980). This is consistent with the findings and recommendations of others (Rendón, 1993, Rendón et al., 2000). On-campus employment can offer students the advantage of a job, staff to help them learn the hidden rules, and

interaction with others, who will help them negotiate the environment and assist with dismantling any hidden curriculum. Additionally, on-campus student employees can practice work skills in a semi-protected real-world environment.

The traditional educational system has focused on learning outcomes, and not as much emphasis has been placed on the learning process (Rendón, 1994). The system was not designed for low-income students, first generation students, or students from diverse populations. Rendón (2002) studied a highly structured community college program aimed at encouraging Latino students to complete their community college programs and transfer to four year institutions. She found that the program was highly successful because faculty and staff did not wait for students to come to them, but initiated the relationships with the students.

On-campus mentors (faculty and staff) can help students understand how to negotiate the campus environment. They can provide transfer knowledge, explain the hidden rules, and help students build self confidence, which helps them develop their future stories. On-campus employers also, by nature of being entrenched in the institution, value education and are more likely to be interested in helping students make academics a priority. On-campus employers can make it easier for students to schedule work around classes and other activities and are more likely to be willing to accommodate time off to work on projects and study for exams. Other student employees are likely to be more willing to assist in substituting for their colleagues as needed, because they too need the same consideration from time to time.

Upon advent of the policy that all students have notebook computers in 1997, Clayton College and State University (CCSU) needed to increase their information technology department quickly. CCSU developed a training program with a curriculum that included transferrable skills and work ethics and treated student employees like other employees. This program taught transferrable skills and gave students a chance to practice them (Barden, 2004).

Working with other students, on campus, provided important relationships that were different from those made in class or residence halls (Berger & Milem, 1999), and because they worked with their peers, students who worked on campus used work as a vehicle for socialization. This was verified in an online survey of 500 undergraduate students, which found a positive correlation between the number of hours employed on campus and opportunities for social interaction. It found that the more hours students worked, the less they enjoyed socializing outside of work, and the less they did of it. This is an important note because drinking and other partying has become an area of increasing concern on college campuses (Seaman, 2005). In this same study, persistence increased with increasing hours of employment, even though length of time until graduation also increased.

Umbach, Padgett, and Pascarella (2010) researched the effect work had on faculty interactions with students. They found that "students who work more than ten hours per week off campus participated less frequently in cooperative learning and are less challenged academically and put forth less effort" (p. 250), and the work negatively affected cognitive development. This study separated on-campus and off-campus work, and studied averages of work hours under twenty hours, which had not frequently been done. The implication of

this research was that on-campus employment at least did not detract from cognitive development and learning.

Effects of On-Campus Employment and Internships on Career Placement Skill Development

Robotham (2009) found that the most positive aspects of working while in school were the improved ability to deal with other people (60%), improved communication skills (60%), increased self-confidence (53%), and improved understanding of business (51%). Students who worked on campus also learned valuable transferrable skills and developed positive work ethics (Barden, 2004; Roark, 1983). According to a study of the Federal Work-Study Program, 80% of the students gained skills that could be used in another job (Troppe, 2000).

Lewis (2010) evaluated the relationship between student employee experiences at Northwestern's student union (Lewis, 2010) and learning domains. Students and staff who supervised students participated in the mostly quantitative study. The students had a broad range of jobs from service worker to student leader to career related position. The workplace experiences studied were: formal training, informal training, observation, collaboration, feedback from peers, feedback from supervisor, informal interaction with supervisor, task repetition, problem solving, idea experimentation, reflection, intuition and congruence. The learning domains were: learning, career development, civic and community engagement, leadership, ethics and values, and responsible independence. In Lewis' study, "Neither students nor staff reported high instances of formal training…and formal training was the only one all 13 measured experiences that did not produce a significant positive correlations

with any of the five learning domains" (p. 160). All the rest of the workplace experiences produced significant positive correlations with the learning domains.

There are few studies which evaluate how students felt about their part-time work while they were students, yet how people feel about their work can greatly affect what they put into it, as well as what they get out of it. A study conducted in Germany (Winkler, 2009) evaluated the factors that influenced students' assessment of their jobs. Winkler found that if the primary reason for working was to make money, students were less engaged in the job than if they were doing it for specific work experience. Furthermore, if the social aspects of work were positive, and the students believed that they were treated as well as other staff, the students were more positive about their experience. Winkler concluded that universities should work on creating positive work experiences and help students evaluate their work experiences so they could be better professionals in the future. Students need to be made aware of the skills they have developed so they know how to articulate it to future employers and can utilize the skills in future jobs.

Bridging Social Capital.

Part-time work and internships offer the opportunity to develop bridging social capital (versus bonding social capital, which is close relationships with family and friends and is closely linked to the need to belong). Bridging social capital exists in relationships with more distant acquaintances and tends to involve relationships that help a person connect to society as a whole; for example by giving someone leads to new jobs (Becker et al., 2009; Putnam, 2000). Students who have work experiences and internships while in school have opportunity to build bridging social capital, which implies that the lack of that experience

could have a big impact on the success of diverse populations in their careers (Knouse et al., 1999). This is especially important since under-resourced students who are frequently of diverse populations, tend not to have bridging social capital, and on-campus employment can give them that opportunity.

Internship Benefits

For the most part, graduates who had internships found jobs immediately upon graduation, while graduates without internships did not find jobs right away (Knouse et al, 1999). However, within six months after graduation, that was no longer true. It appeared that internships only offered an advantage immediately upon graduation. Knouse et al. (1999) advised that colleges should put greater effort towards helping students, especially minorities, find internships, so they can use the internships to help them obtain their first positions after graduation. Knouse et al.(1999) also suggested that more corporations and industry groups become involved in the development and use of internship programs. It is interesting to note, that internships and other career related work experiences seemed to matter most to those with specialized education and mattered less for those with a general liberal arts education (Sagen, Dallam, & Laverty, 2000).

There is growing concern regarding the decreased engagement of sophomores, which in one study was caused by issues relating to the need to select a major and lack of faculty interaction (Graunke & Woosley, 2005). Sophomores spent more time socializing and less time on academics than other students, which pulled them away from being engaged. Engagement in activities was not as important to sophomores. The sophomore year might be a good time for academic departments to engage students in the first stages of work

experiences or the beginnings of long-term internships. This could help them with commitment to a major and give them relevant work experiences.

Some institutions have recognized that the gap in diversity regarding who is doing internships (Lipka, 2008) may be caused by the fact that internships are frequently unpaid. Additionally, many companies require that unpaid internships are for academic credit, to protect themselves from violating labor laws. Therefore, students who want academic credit have to pay for it, potentially causing additional expense to the student. In effect, students pay two times: first, the opportunity cost in lost wages for not obtaining a paid position, and the second, paying for the academic credit. Internships are often employee pipelines, and if they are not paid, students who cannot afford to work for free or pay for the course credit are left out of the experience. Some institutions offer grants to subsidize internships in an effort to make opportunities available regardless of the student's financial situation. This leads to concern that it enables employers to continue not paying interns, however, it is a way to bridge the gap. Sweet Briar College tapped into its "old girl" network of donors to provide stipends up to $3,000, based on the expected quality of the internship experience, and in exchange, the students provided a reflective paper when the internship was completed (Kuh et al., 2005). Students at Sweet Briar College had to take the initiative to locate their own internship and apply for the stipend. This might still be an issue for students of diverse populations if they do not have enough bridging capital to locate internships that are not advertised. University of the South (Sewanee) had a similar program, started under the Lilly Grant, to allow up to 10% of Sewanee students to have funded summer internships. That program progressed to being supported by an endowment.

Field experiences are a similar way of accomplishing this, and they are part of the program at many institutions including the University of Kansas and Evergreen (Kuh et al., 2005). Policies that Kuh et al. (2005) suggested worth considering include requiring students to participate in experiential programs such as internships, practicums, field experiences and other similar real-world experiences that allow them to apply what they are learning to real life (pp. 236-240). While this is but one part of student success in college, and it is not known if it will help them beyond six months after graduation, it is critical to helping students get jobs right after graduation (Knouse & Fontenot, 2008).

Knouse and Fontenot (2008) cited research indicating that, even if students were not hired right away, those who had internships were kept in the potential employee candidate pool longer. Research has not been done past the six month point, but staying in the candidate pool longer seems critical. Interns with more autonomy had better job offers (Taylor, 1988), and internships and projects make students more marketable because they develop important skills such as critical thinking and communication (Molseed, Alsup, & Voyles, 2003).

In Greece, the concept of part-time work and internships is fairly new. Internship research at the University of Macedonia in Greece found that internships helped students link theory to practice, and helped them get jobs when they graduated (Mihail, 2008).

Employers demonstrate how highly they value work experiences and internship programs by their hiring practices--by hiring either their own interns or students who have had other, similar experiences. In 2008, 69.6% of interns obtained full-time positions as a

result of their internship experiences, as compared to 56.9% in 2001 (National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE] Experiential Education Survey, 2008).

Students who engage in part-time work or internships are demonstrating to employers that they are willing to learn. Students take advantage of these experiences to learn transferrable skills that can otherwise take years to learn, and it should help them get ahead faster once they are on the job. A well-known and practical approach to this is utilized at Disney. Through their internship programs, Disney created an environment for learning transferrable skills by expecting interns to complete tasks on the job, get practice at quick decision making, and learn to deal with customers (Hand & Winningham, 2009). Disney's goal was to help interns learn time management, problem solving and interpersonal skills in a business environment. This helped interns learn to work with different kinds of people and personalities, and deal with workplace politics. Additionally, students learned what types of work they enjoyed and more clearly understood how their skills impacted their daily lives. Disney conducted a study of 200 students which showed that the internship experience helped students become more accepting of different points of view and more aware of which situations might become problematic. This research coincides with what was discovered in the U.S. Department of Labor, The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills [SCANS] (1991) report, which evaluated decision-making and problem-solving skills, and in the research done by Robotham (2009).

Taylor (1988) conducted some of the first empirical research on the benefits of internships and found that internships helped students develop a greater understanding of vocational self-concept and personal work values, and the students had better post-graduation

employment opportunities, as well as less reality shock in their first post-graduation position. Reality shock is the same as the "humbling effect" described by Evers, Rush, and Berdrow (1998), which is the realization that new graduates, having graduated and thinking they had learned all they needed to know, were surprised (and therefore, humbled) by how much they needed to learn in order to do their jobs (p. 9).

Understanding of vocational self-concept occurs when, in internships, students perform job tasks that are related to their fields of study. According to Taylor (1988), students who had field-of-study related experiences, were more likely to stay in their first positions and persevere through difficulties. Internships also increased self-efficacy (Friesenborg, 2002). Students who experienced internships were also more likely to have more job opportunities, because they had access to more informal job leads. Additionally, internship experiences got them higher ratings as potential employees, thus, a greater chance of getting hired and higher starting salaries. The internship experiences helped the graduates experience less reality shock or humbling effect experience, because they worked in their fields and were not as surprised at what they found in terms of the difference between what they learned in class and what really happened in the work environment. They had less anxiety about their work, as well as higher performance quality and, therefore, were more satisfied with their positions and tended to stay with their first positions longer.

Capstone courses are commonly used to help summarize education and experience into an applicable culmination experience just prior to graduation. At the University of New Hampshire, students in the psychology program had a capstone course called "Internship" (Goldstein & Fernold, 2009). As part of this course, students did their supervised practicum

as an internship and participated in a weekly three hour seminar that helped them pull all the experiences together, to insure they had opportunity for a humanistic perspective of the experiences. The class shared their experiences and feelings from the internship experience, and the hope was that, through the students' individual growth, they were better prepared for their first jobs, and might be better able to handle the "humbling effect" (Evers et al., 1998) of the first job. Students at the University of New Hampshire used the internship capstone course on their resume as a selling point to help them get into graduate school and to get jobs.

With the advent of an ever-increasing importance of sustainability on campus, there is opportunity for institutions to use students in internship positions to help student development and help programs progress. In a program at Australian National University (ANU), curriculum, research, and campus operation programs partnered to create what was coined a "whole-of-university" approach to sustainability. Many sustainability programs are discipline-based and narrowly focused, offering a good opportunity for internship experiences on campus (McMillin & Dyball, 2009). Linking the three areas of curriculum, research and campus operations seems especially beneficial because the students can do work that impacts their daily life and work on campus, and the campus can potentially benefit in the future from hiring "one of their own." The benefit of this practice promotes interdisciplinary knowledge, encourages systems thinking and improves the students, faculty and staff ability to put knowledge into action.   Several studies have shown that student commitment to sustainability is enhanced (DeLind & Link, 2004; Rowe, 2002) when this is

done, and it would be interesting to discover if this same principle might apply to students working in other areas.

Characteristics of On-Campus Employment that Impact Career Success

Personality Traits

According to Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, and Barrik (1999), the Big Five (Big 5) personality traits seem to hold true in all careers studied and stay about the same over time. These traits are used as a way to study career and life success in order to share common vocabulary when discussing personalities. The Big 5 factors are neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness (Goldberg, 1990). They have been studied extensively and from many angles. Daniel Goleman (1995) also explored aspects of the Big 5 through his work on emotional intelligence.

Judge, Boudreau, Cable, and Bretz (1994) discovered in a longitudinal study that high conscientiousness was strong in those who experienced high intrinsic career success, and those with high levels of extrinsic success displayed low neuroticism, low agreeableness, high extraversion, high consciousness and high cognitive ability. Furthermore, knowing about one's personality and cognitive ability at a young age seemed to affect later success in a positive way. This is important to educators because, even if the Big 5 are something to which individuals are predisposed, knowing how to work with one's own personality appears to be a critical factor.

It is important to note that, in a later meta-analysis, Ng and Feldman (2010) confirmed the effect of cognitive ability and conscientiousness on career success by showing that cognitive ability and conscientiousness positively affected human capital, which, in turn,

positively affected long term career success. Therefore, as employees have more tenure, human capital, including cognitive ability and conscientiousness, will play a bigger role in their success at one organization. Human capital is defined as what one knows in terms of basic knowledge and technical skills which improve productivity and success in the work-world (Ng & Feldman, 2010).

If, as found by Rode et al. (2008), extroversion and agreeableness are the most important factors early in the career, and if agreeableness tends to be a negative factor later, it is essential that graduates understand how to negotiate this adjustment. Knowing HOW to disagree and propose a viable alternative could be an essential skill.

Early Career Success

In a study by Gault, Redinton, and Schlater (2000), internships provided a way for students to begin to adapt their academic understandings to the reality of the career world, and well designed on-campus employment and on-campus internships could do the same thing. Employers are increasingly giving credit for work experience while in college, and this is more frequently becoming visible on job advertisements. Offering more on-campus experiences and teaching students how to articulate them is a way to help graduates obtain more pay and more work-experience credit as they start their careers.

Early career success has been shown to be determined by different factors than later success (Rode, Arthaud-Day, Mooney, Near, & Baldwin, 2008). For the first two years after graduation, salary was impacted most by gender, extroversion and agreeableness. Furthermore, "personality has a stronger effect than ability on success during the first two years on the job" (Rode et al., 2008, p. 297).   Predicted perceived job success (not actual)

was determined by proactive personality and emotional stability, and it was related to extroversion. The implication was that those with desirable personalities were promoted regardless of real ability, which poses a potential challenge for individuals as well as organizations. However, educators can assist by helping students develop the transferrable skills which utilize and enhance the desired personality traits.

For 3.5-4.5 years after graduation, conscientiousness and general mental ability predicted promotions and salary (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1994). Baccalaureate graduates who were out of school for approximately five years were found to have a proactive personality and openness to experience as the traits that helped them advance (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003). Measurements for this study were drawn from the Big 5 (Goldberg, 1990). Only for MBA students did something related to ability to do the work actually relate to promotions. That may be due to the difference in terms of what would be immediately expected from them upon graduation, since an MBA is an advanced degree, and expected to bring with it high level mental skills.

Ability to be Engaged

"Engaged employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organization forward" (Fox, 2010, para. 3). Fox (2010) reported that according to the August 2006 Gallup Employee Engagement Index, 49% of employees were not engaged, and just putting in time; and 18% were disengaged and acting out their unhappiness. Only 33 % of employees were actively engaged in their work. According to Fox, Management tends to think that recognition for good work causes engagement, but the top employee engager is actually progress. Even small progress matters.

People are engaged when they believe they are helping make progress. This means that they

need to see how they fit into the organization and how what they do matters to the business.

And, if they are to do good work that matters, they need to be contributing their best work.

Employees need to know what they are best at in order to locate work where they can be

engaged. Institutions can help students learn what they are good at and practice it though

their education and their co-curricular activities, including on-campus employment.

> According to Astin (1993):
>
> Why should part-time employment on campus have such a different pattern of effects from the same kind of employment off campus? …Students who are employed on campus are almost by definition, in more frequent contact with other students and possibly with faculty…Apparently a greater degree of immersion in the collegiate environment and culture more than compensates…for the time that students must devote to a part-time job on campus. Similar trade-offs are simply not available…off campus. (p. 388-389)

Mentoring

Students who completed field experiences indicated the importance of their

relationships with their supervisors. They turned to their supervisors for guidance, support,

and solutions to problems. The students rated this relationship as more important to them

than coursework, school personnel, or program seminars or discussion groups (Williams,

1990). These same students were found to have developed more realistic expectations of

what the real work world, compared to impressions probably created by popular media such

as television shows and movies.

To properly mentor students, managers and leaders needed to have specific skills.

According to Fowlie and Wood (2009), Goleman (2005) furthered research by others and

outlined the four main Emotional Intelligence (EI) constructs of self awareness, self-

management, social awareness and relationship management. Fowlie and Wood took the

constructs of EI and its related competencies and studied the effects of these on MBA

students. Although good leaders tended to have good self-management skills, just because

someone had good self-management skills did not mean he or she was good leader. Face-to-

face communication showed up as very relevant to leadership ability, as assessed by students

in internship programs (Fowlie &Wood, 2009). When the MBA students discussed their

experiences, Fowlie and Wood (2009) noticed a visible change from negative to positive,

when going from discussion of the worst leaders to discussion of the best leaders. According

to the students, the best leaders were motivated and energized; they wanted to do more than

expected; they were inspired, stable and loyal; they were someone to look up to; they were

love, appreciated, optimistic, confident and creative. The students believed strongly that it

mattered whether the leaders used genuine or fabricated emotions, and this affected their

opinion of the leader.

Networking Abilities

Networking is considered an essential skill for productivity; however, sometimes this

skill is not developed within the world of social networking which college students seem to

prefer. In an article reviewing this topic, Baber and Waymon (2010) cited MIT professor

Pentland, who discussed a study showing that, although employees with the most digital

communication available were seven percent more productive, employees with well-

functioning in-person networks were thirty percent more productive. Good networking skills

enhanced the company bottom line, helped those employees who found it difficult to fit in,

(including employees from diverse backgrounds and more introverted or shy employees), and

leveled the playing field for all employees (Baber & Waymon, 2010). On-campus employment can help students develop networking skills, especially in this digital networking world where people are fast becoming less skilled at face to face communication.

Transferrable Skills

A study was done to evaluate the impact of social skills (sometimes also called business etiquette) training on the performance appraisals of 117 interns. Bartkus (2001) discovered, that the training impacted performance evaluation ratings in the areas covered by the training. The implication was that more of this training is needed, either through programs provided by career services, or mentors. If, in fact, early career success is built on factors other than technical skill, these transferrable skills are essential for students to obtain before they graduate.

General Career Success

As careers progress, ability to do the work tends to become more important and personality characteristics, such as the Big 5, begin to show up as less important. A two year longitudinal study showed that, regardless of personality characteristics, employees having proactive behaviors, such as offering innovative solutions when challenging the status quo and managing one's own career path, are important for both intrinsic career satisfaction and extrinsic career progression (Siebert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). These are skills that, theoretically, could be intentionally taught by mentors.

Summary and Implications

What are the characteristics of on-campus employment that affect the success of students in college?

The overall implication is that on-campus employment can be intentionally designed to effectively engage students and positively impact persistence. In order to feel engaged on campus, it was important for students to start working on campus within the first three weeks of arriving at the institution (Beeson & Wessel, 2003), and it did not matter whether the work was career related or not. Students who worked up to eight hours per week showed improved grades, and up to twenty hours per week of work did not negatively affect grades (Wilkie & Jones, 1995). Based on Astin's Involvement Theory (1984), eight to nineteen hours likely helped students feel engaged, which may have improved the persistence rates. At twenty hours per week, grades (Wilkie & Jones, 1995) and engagement were affected (Lundberg 2004) but persistence and learning was maintained.

With the cost of education rising and availability of financial aid decreasing, students from all backgrounds need to work more hours than they did in the past. When students worked off campus, they were away from the campus community, and they were less engaged (Gupton et al., 2009). Being away from campus so much of the time affected the ability for students to develop relationships and to feel like they fit in. In addition to developing peer relationships and providing additional mentors, on-campus work provided opportunity for students to be engaged, develop social relationships with each other (Berger & Milem,1999), and build social capital.

What are the factors of on-campus employment that can affect career placement?

Employers are now giving credit for work experience in college, so it is advantageous to have relevant work experience. Salary up to two years after graduation was shown to be impacted most by gender, extroversion and agreeableness, and personality had the strongest effect on salary during those first two years (Rode et al., 2008, p. 297). Because it appeared that those with desirable personalities were hired and promoted regardless of ability, helping students develop the transferrable skills that will help them those first two years is something on-campus which on-campus employers can focus.

Good networking skills enhanced the company bottom line and helped those employees who found it difficult to fit in, including employees from diverse backgrounds and more introverted or shy employees (Baber & Waymon, 2010). On-campus employment can help students develop networking skills. Similar to networking skills are social skills (business etiquette), which were proven by Bartkus (2001) to impact performance appraisals of interns.

What are the factors of on-campus employment that can affect career success?

Between 3.5-4.5 years after graduation, conscientiousness and general mental ability affected promotions and salary the most (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1994). Those out of school for five years advanced most when they had a proactive personality and were open to experiences (Eby et al., 2003).

The Big Five personality traits of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness (Goldberg, 1990) have been studied extensively and have been found to be credible across all fields of study (Judge et al.,1999). Although the

Big 5 have been shown to be somewhat genetically predetermined, being aware of one's personality and learning how to work with it could enhance career success. Rode et al. (2008) found that extroversion and agreeableness were the most important factors early in careers. Since agreeableness tends to be a negative factor later, it is essential that graduates understand how to negotiate this adjustment. Knowing HOW to disagree and propose a viable alternative could be an essential skill that higher education and on-campus employment could help students develop. Teaching faculty and staff how to mentor students as they develop these skills could be life-changing for students.

As careers progress, ability to do the work tends to become more important, and personality characteristics, such as the Big 5, begin to show up as less important. A two year longitudinal study showed that, regardless of personality characteristics, employees having proactive behaviors, such as offering innovative solutions when challenging the status quo and managing one's own career path, are important for both intrinsic career satisfaction and extrinsic career progression (Siebert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). These skills could be intentionally taught by mentors.

Conclusion

The results of this literature review showed that, while there are implications for what can be done to utilize on-campus employment as a way to positively affect the student experience, as well as ensuing careers, there is a lack of knowledge as to the influence on-campus employment has really had on students. Studying the influence of on-campus employment from the retrospective view of those who experienced it will add a perspective that was missing from the literature; sometimes people are not aware of how something has

influenced them until later. This might be particularly true of a work experience, because

work experiences build upon one another in much the way as one academic course serves as

a prerequisite for another, and builds toward general topic knowledge and general learning

ability.

Chapter 3 describes how further research was be conducted using an interpretive

theoretical framework viewed through a symbolic interactionist lens. Phenomenological

methodology was proposed to gain insight as to how graduates retrospectively make meaning

of their on-campus employment experience. The results of this research should help fill in

the gap of knowledge.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Chapter 2 focused on a literature review which indicated there was significant quantitative research on working students, especially students who worked full time, and related to work and grades specifically. There was also qualitative research on students with on-campus leadership positions such as resident assistants, and off-campus internship experiences, but nothing could be found regarding the specific topic of on-campus student employment in campus support services, and how on-campus employment affected students from their own perspective. Campus support services such as custodial services, bookstores, copy centers, mail rooms, offices and dining services offer numerous positions for students, meaning work can affect large numbers of students. Understanding how student employees make meaning of those experiences could contribute to the knowledge base regarding the impact of work experiences on students.

Importance of Qualitative Research for this Topic

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore and understand how recent college graduates from a private liberal arts institution make meaning of their on-campus work experiences. Exploring and understanding how individuals make meaning of their on-campus employment experience over time was of special interest because as the literature review showed, working while in school affected academic success, the overall student experience and careers. Understanding how graduates describe the impact of on-campus employment after they have had time to process the experience and consider its

influence in the context of their lives, could help institutions create intentional experiences which affect the long term success of students, and it could help students learn to articulate how their experiences are part of their co-curricular education. To understand this well, it was important for me to research several experiences in depth.   According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is appropriate when research questions require one to "learn about the views of individuals; assess a process over time; and obtain detailed information about a few people or research sites (p. 64). This need for new knowledge fits those criteria.

Theoretical Framework

Two theories, discussed in Chapter 1, influenced my research design: Astin's Theory of Involvement (Astin, 1984) and Weick's Sensemaking Theory (Weick, 1995). As data were analyzed, the possibility of additional theories of socialization or professionalization seemed to surface as possibly relevant, such as Bourdieu's Praxeology, which focused on the link between conditions of society and how individuals interpreted those conditions related to power structures (Prasad, 2005). These theories could be areas that future research on this topic could focus upon.

This qualitative research explored how graduates make meaning of their work experience as they reflected back on it. How it affected their learning and development relates to Theory of Involvement (Astin, 1984). According to Astin, if students are involved in any capacity on campus, and that can include working, it affects their feeling of engagement on campus and thus, their ability to persist. People need to feel they belong. Additionally, a survey conducted of graduating Valley College Seniors who worked on campus in May 2011 (Empie, 2011), informed this research by assessing how graduating

seniors believed work had affected them at the point of graduation, specifically as it related to their transferrable skill development; and this helped direct what to search for in the initial literature review and informed the wording of the interview guide.

Sensemaking Theory (Weick, 1995) maintained that people retrospectively continue to evaluate and reframe their experiences, and how people remember the experience is more important than what actually happened, because that is their reality. The ongoing nature of sensemaking makes it applicable to this study. Graduates described how they viewed their past on-campus work experience as they looked back on it and the impact they believed it had on them. How they remembered it was their reality. Weick's Sensemaking Theory (Weick, 1995) focused on how organizations function. Critical sensemaking (Mills, Thurlow & Mills, 2010) addressed issues of power and took agency into account in more personal situations and did not study of how organizations function. Although the Sensemaking for this study did not model critical sensemaking in the sense that it evaluated issues of power and agency, it did favor the more personal aspect of sensemaking in the way that critical sensemaking does. This study was not about organizational functionality, although there were situations brought up in some interviews that could be used to inform research about that in the future, as well. This study was about how individuals made meaning of their work experiences as they moved on with their lives.

Research Design

Epistemology

"How we know what we know" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8) is a constructionist epistemology. With constructionism, the truth is not existing and waiting to be found, but is based on

individual experiences with things that occur and the individual's perceptions about the experiences. Crotty (1998) stated, "In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon" (p. 9). This constructionist research explored retrospective individual interpretations of similar experiences.

Theoretical Perspective

Interpretivism. The theoretical perspective utilized in this research was interpretivism through a symbolic interactionist lens. Interpretivism refers to learning to understand a phenomenon instead of finding a causal relationship to explain it (Crotty, 1998). As recommended by Crotty, this research focused on understanding the individual's experience rather than explaining or justifying it. According to Prasad (2005), interpretation is the way each person develops their reality. This goes back to Kant, Husseral and Weber, who each theorized that reality is individual and is only socially constructed as it is experienced and interpreted (Crotty, 1998; Prasad, 2005). This also complements the Theory of Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969).

Symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism is the lens by which data was interpreted. In the Theory of Symbolic Interactionism, initially formulated by Blumer (1969), people react toward others and their environment based on the meaning they attribute to objects that occur in everyday social interactions. An object can be a physical object (such as a work space), a social object (such as a student employee or a graduate), or an abstract object (such as the principle of work ethic, or an idea such as the skill of time management). According to Blumer (1969), an object in symbolic interactionism is "anything that can be

indicated or referred to" (p. 11) and is something with which individuals socially interact. "…Social interaction is a process that *forms* human conduct instead of being merely a means or a setting for the expression or release of human conduct" (p. 8). The idea that individuals interpret and engage with the objects in their environment instead of simply responding to them is the key concept of symbolic interactionism.

Blumer (1969) placed emphasis on self as a process; a process of engaging with society and being able to see oneself more or less from the outside looking in, and viewing how one fits into that society. Engaging and interpreting continue throughout the fitting in process. Individuals form and reform themselves according to how they view themselves within the context of society. Blumer devoted a chapter of his book on symbolic interactionsim to the sociological implication of George Herbert Mead's philosophy, upon which Blumer founded symbolic interactionism. At the time Blumer wrote his book, viewing individuals engaging with their environment was a new concept, and in direct contrast to the positivistic idea that the individual is merely an actor who responds to his environment. The difference of looking at the experience as being part of the environment versus reacting to the environment is the lens by which on-campus employment was viewed in this study. It seems a slight difference but is an important twist of the viewing lens. Prasad (2005) summarized symbolic interactionism in a concise manner. According to Prasad (2005):

> First, human beings act toward objects on the basis of the meaning that these objects hold for them. Second, the meaning of such objects arises out of the social interactions one has with the larger society. And third, these meanings are not completely predetermined but are constantly being modified through a series of individual interpretations. (p. 21)

Prasad (2005) warned that use of symbolic interactionism in the Blumerian way risked

misinterpreting situations where power dynamics were at play by over emphasizing that

individuals have the ability to choose their reaction. This can be understood by carefully

thinking about the second line in the above quote: "Second, the meaning of such objects

arises out of the social interactions one has with the larger society." If the larger society has

effect on the meaning, it might not be only the way the individual reacts that needs to be

considered because societal issues can affect that view. In 1969 when Blumer's book was

written, power dynamics such as those discussed in critical research were simply not yet

being addressed, and language use was not emphasized as much as it is today.

"More recently, researchers working in the symbolic interactionist tradition, have

renewed the idea that language and interpretation are intimately related, and that self-

identities are produced in and through language" (Prasad, 2005, p. 27). The present study

intentionally focused on personal interviews and paid close attention to use of language, as

Prasad did (Prasad & Prasad, 2000), keeping in mind the intent of Blumer (1969), but

emphasizing what was said (and sometimes what was not said) in interviews, in order to

avoid misreading data.

Prasad (2005) described the importance of the interviewer utilizing symbolic

interactionism as entering the "everyday lifeworld of the people being studied in order to

comprehend their own processes of sense-making" (p. 25). According to Prasad (2005),

interviewers "ask fewer questions about 'what' is or was taking place and more questions

about 'how' interviewees make sense of specific situations" (p. 25). Also according to

Prasad (1993), multiple realities and meanings held by different individuals were a distinguishing feature of symbolic interactionism, and diverse interpretations (not merely shared ones) are imperative. A symbolic interactionist lens was selected for that very reason; to study how individuals make meaning of their personal experiences because, although the goal of higher education is to impact society, it is individuals that experience their environment, one person at a time.

As the data were coded and memos were written, the memos were related back to the symbolic objects of symbolic interactionism: physical objects, social objects and abstract objects (Blumer, 1969). That task helped me find commonalities and differences, and helped me think through what the participants meant. That in turn affected how responses were evaluated and how the responses showed up in themes. Symbolic interactionism was, therefore, a lens through which the results were viewed, but did not need to be referenced in the results.

Methodology

The methodology for this study was phenomenological. Phenomenology is based on individual interpretation of the world (Prasad, 2005, p. 13). Phenomenological research is based not on empirical evidence presented by quantitative research such as surveys, but by studying the subjective interpretation of individual experiences based on the view of those individuals (Schwandt, 2007). Crotty (1998) shared a clear description of how to utilize phenomenology: "Phenomenology requires us to place our usual understandings in abeyance and have a fresh look at things" (p. 80). This study was seeking the "*essence of the phenomenon*" (Merriam, 2002, p. 93) of the on-campus employment experience. According

to Moustakas (1994), "The aim is to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experiences and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it" (p. 13).

Methods

The method of gathering data was semi-structured interviews. According to Esterberg (2002), semi-structured interviews are customized to the participant, to allow the interviewer to follow the lead of the participant, and "… to explore a topic more openly and to allow interviewees to express their opinions in their own words" (p. 87). An interview guide was designed to allow the participants to respond at various levels of depth based on what is important to them, and the questions were open-ended in order to encourage this. Each interview, therefore, was customized to the participant during the interview process, and this allowed me to understand their experience from their perspective.

<div align="center">

Research Site and Participants

</div>

Research Site

All participants were alumni of Valley College in Midwest, United States. Valley College is a selective four-year private liberal arts college that offers over fifty majors, pre-professional and certificate programs. The mission statement -"Valley College is dedicated to challenging and nurturing students for lives of leadership and service as a spirited expression of their faith and learning (Valley, 2011)" - drives focus and decisions on a daily basis at the college. As a college of a Christian organization, Valley College is proud of its inclusive culture.

The liberal arts emphasis of education at Valley College included following a detailed Plan of Essential Education initiated in 1999, that was designed to complement study in one's major in order to develop students into liberally educated, ethically minded citizens (Valley, 2011). Valley College developed specific learning outcomes that addressed the broad learning process that takes place in higher education. Approximately 450 students made up each freshman class, and approximately 400 students graduated each year. The emphasis of a program that can be completed in four years, while allowing time for service trips and work abroad, was a well marketed aspect of a liberal education at Valley College.

Valley College is a primarily residential campus, with emphasis on living and learning in community. Part of living and learning in community included eating on campus. A board plan was a required aspect of residential life. The result of that requirement is that Dining Services was a busy department, and offered approximately one third of the student employment positions on campus. Valley College Dining Services was a self-operated auxiliary service which made the student employees on-campus student employees by definition. In 2011, Dining Services had 33 full time employees including six salaried and two clerical employees. There were approximately 250 part-time student employees who worked in all areas of operations, of which 30 student managers who supervised other student employees.

I understood this particular research site because I was the department head and all of the participants worked there during my tenure. Selecting participants from one department who had a shared general environment helped me understand the similarities and differences between the individual experiences. A thorough understanding of the environment as

department head made it less likely that the data would be misunderstood. The participants knew me and encountered me at work and on campus, but I was not their immediate supervisor. Because of this, my positionality became more important and it was essential that I put my own opinions aside in order to interpret those of the participants.

Participants

Participants were alumni of Valley College who were in the student manager position in Valley Dining Services and graduated between 2006 and 2010. The reason for selecting participants who had been out of school awhile was to be sure they had sufficient time to have other employment and experiences. According to Sensemaking Theory (Weick, 1995), people continue to evaluate and reframe their experiences over time. Perceptions are reality and the goal was to understand the participants' current reality. It was important that they had graduated within a few years of each other in order to have a reasonably similar experience from the standpoint of training and work environment. Those with student manager positions were selected to help ensure basic commonality of their experience. Additionally, a quantitative study of Valley College Graduates (Empie, 2011) which evaluated opinions about transferrable skill development from students who worked in departments across campus had been conducted; and the results of that research called for in-depth qualitative research to further explore the topic. This research was part of my dream to inspire a movement and initiate a change in policy and practice, to bring the academy closer to being intentional in providing the most valuable on-campus employment possible for all students.

Student managers in dining services trained, directed and evaluated up to twenty other student employees at a time, and the job required a fairly high level of commitment. Students applied and interviewed for this position; there was no minimum grade-point or academic standing requirement. Most students were selected to be student managers because they were good workers and had good attitudes. Student managers came to campus before school started in the fall, to provide service to other students who returned early and to participate in training sessions themselves.

Participants were selected by purposive sampling, a technique of selecting participants for their particular experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2012; Esterberg, 2002). The management team suggested thirty-five participants with diverse backgrounds and varied levels of work quality. Ten participants were interviewed and nine interviews were used for data analysis. One person had not graduated, having left school because of finances, near the end of her four years, so although she provided a great interview, her data were excluded.

Data Collection

The method of gathering data utilized semi-structured interviews. According to Esterberg (2002), "In semi-structured interviews, the goal is to explore a topic more openly and to allow interviewees to express their opinions in their own words" (p. 87). The interviews were conducted in person, when possible, and conducted some by telephone, due to distance and participant preference. I transcribed the interviews myself, and utilized the transcription to analyze data. Audio recordings of each interview were played twice, and voice tone and inflection were used to guide interpretation. Some participants were asked

clarifying questions. Additional interviews took place via phone, email and in person to ask clarifying questions.

The interview guide was designed with open-ended questions to allow the participants to respond based on what was important to them, and select the depth with which they were comfortable. The research questions that served as the foundation to development of the interview guide were:

a. How do recent graduates from a liberal arts college describe the influence of on-campus employment on their academic success?

b. How do recent graduates from a liberal arts college describe the influence of on-campus employment on their overall student experience?

c. How do recent graduates from a liberal arts college describe the influence of on-campus employment on their career-entry after graduation?

Data Analysis

Data analysis techniques were drawn from Esterberg (2002), Merriam (2002), and Charmaz (2006). Esterberg (2002) and Merriam (2002) offered solid basic qualitative research practice summaries, collected from numerous sources. Charmaz (2006), although focused on grounded theory, gave superb examples of what codes and memos might look like. Charmaz (2006) suggested that her methods could be used with methodology other than grounded theory, and her methods were referenced in several non-grounded theory articles. An analysis table was utilized, to aid in understanding the results, as recommended by both Charmaz (2006) and Creswell (2012). As part of the initial planning, a sample analysis table was developed (See Table 1).

Using a table helped me watch for what was not said in addition to what was said, because empty areas are more noticeable. Text box inserts were used instead of a comparison column because the table was so large, in order to make it more readable. Esterberg (2002, p. 178), discussed how evaluating negative cases and null hypothesis may lead to viewing a situation differently, and this would be easier to do with an analysis table.

Table 1.

Sample Analysis Table

Themes	Karen	Jonnie	Comparison
Feelings about **Job Status**	"even if it's food " "aren't going to do this for a living" Deflected authority "We can only do so much"	"tasks they give are not too difficult" "how important do you feel scrubbing a tub of potatoes is" "not like my opinion about how to put a recipe together is über important " "I wouldn't say I want to work in a kitchen my whole life"	Happened into work. Did not express liking kitchen work. Similar feelings of low job status. Neither expressed commitment to cooking.
Relationship Experiences: Work	Preconceived notions about spoiled college students. "they're just looking for a free ride" "maybe a mentor"	Learning time management, communication skills and giving direction to peers. "if they are in a bad mood, it's kind of like a buzz kill" "Karen treats me with respect"	Both think transferrable skills are learned. Both have negative notions about the "other" as a group. Both have positive feelings about the "other" as individuals
Relationship Experiences: Personal	"we include them; they are family; we see them a couple times a week" "they come to you when they have a problem, and that feels good"	"I'm not just going to work with people; and I'm going to work with my friends" Facebook friends, very casual and not friends outside of work. Hot chocolate social event	Both positive personal relationships. Karen expressed deeper friend relationships than Jonnie.
Future Stories	Wants to have students visit and maintain relationships.	Never talked about maintaining the relationship.	Karen has future contact expectations. Jonnie did not express any.

Memoing. Memos were written right after each interview and again after coding each interview. Throughout the data analysis, these memos were expanded, and after rereading my coding and jotting down categorical ideas. According to Esterberg (2002),

analytic memos "contain your hunches and ideas and best guesses about what you should be thinking about" (p. 165). Charmaz (2006) gave examples of how analytic memos evolve into final text. As the memos were written, common themes began to appear and they matured throughout the data analysis process.

Coding. The interviews were transcribed immediately to provide an early opportunity to begin thinking through the content. The transcripts and memos were open coded using the comment feature of Microsoft Word, and each transcript was reviewed several times. Open coding refers to going through the data without any preconceived notion of what themes or categories are present and noting them, even if they do not directly relate to the research question (Esterberg, 2002).

Focused coding was used to isolate and flush out specific themes (Esterberg, 2002). This was done in the transcribed interview among the codes, using capital letters within comments to isolate the focused codes from the open codes. Moustakas (1994) gave examples of how to code text using technology, and although neither NVIVO or similar technology were used in this study, the coding process was informed by and in-class demonstration of NVIVO and previous practice using this method of coding. This method of coding was used in two qualitative coursework projects involving four participants and five different interviews (one interview was used for two different studies).

Within the coding, the concepts of Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969) were used to understand the ways the participants related to their environment by identifying their experiences as relating to physical object, social object and abstract object, and what those objects were, such as a small physical kitchen space (physical), friend (social), or time

management skill (abstract). This was initially organized on a separate memo, which helped to sort the codes into themes. After lengthy analysis, eventually, no new themes emerged. The symbolic interactionist lens helped me view the data from a different angle and organize my thoughts. The realization that a future study might focus on power issues relating to critical theory to study in the future also resulted from utilizing a symbolic interactionist lens.

Throughout the analysis, special attention was paid to what was not said as a way to assess data (Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2002). Esterberg (2002) described the practice of looking for "negative cases" (p. 174), cases that disprove the interpretation. Esterberg (2002) recommended doing this after the initial analysis. Both Esterberg (2002) and Merriam (2002) recommend initially assuming there is no pattern in the data much the way that quantitative researchers try to prove the null hypothesis. This idea originated from Howard Becker's book *Tricks of the Trade* (Becker as cited in Esterberg, 2002). The holes in the data analysis table helped identify things that seemed like they could be themes, but lacked data to support them. How on-campus work helped students determine kinds of work they prefer, and how work affected participation in co-curricular activities, are samples of how that helped in my research.

Ensuring Goodness and Trustworthiness

Goodness and trustworthiness was important in order to ensure a quality qualitative study. Suggestions from both Merriam (2002) and Esterberg (2002) helped toward this end. Memos were written immediately following each interview articulating initial impressions, including things that cannot be seen in transcription such as mannerisms, voice tone and

body language. Transcribing the interviews myself helped me interpret intent in their voices. Later, as the interviews were re-read, the participants could be "heard" speaking.

Being the director of the department might be viewed as causing bias. However, having previous opportunity to see participants at work made it less likely participants would tell me things that were intentionally inconsistent with their pre-study behavior. According to Esterberg (2002), "interviews can provide insight into people's thoughts and feelings, but people's behaviors don't always match their words" (p. 36). Additionally, Sensemaking Theory (Weick, 1995) favors plausibility over accuracy; the goal of these interviews was to determine how the participants made meaning of their past experience today and not what actually historically happened. Being from the area they worked in made it easier to understand their responses to questions, and they could talk about their feelings about their experiences without being asked to backtrack to explain things related to the general work environment. This helped the interviews to exhibit depth.

Maximum Variation

Maximum variation is the intentional diversity of a sampling in order to make it possible for the application of the findings to be greater (Merriam, 2002). Utilizing the management team to help select participants and discussing with them the goal of having diverse participants helped obtain variation from within the population, keeping in mind gender, ethnicity and area of student responsibility. Selecting participants through recommendation of others makes the findings more credible, especially since the research was done in the researcher's place of employment. Initially, obtaining ethnic diversity was expected to be difficult, but in the end, both a male and a female of color agreed to

participate in the study. Each participant was employed in a different kind of work, which provides support for the results in terms of how on-campus employment affects careers in general.

Member Checks

Member checks were used to ensure validity. According to Merriam (2002), "you take your tentative findings back to some of the participants…and ask if your interpretation "rings true" (p.26). Participants were asked to participate in a member check by reading what had been written about them. This was arranged with them at the end of the interview and sent it to them electronically. During two small qualitative studies to prepare and practice for this research, the participants did not want to read what had been said, but some were willing to discuss it and have verbal dialog. This was attempted in the cases where the participants did not respond. In the end, only one participant did not provide a member check.

Audit Trail

According to Merriam (2002), an audit trail is "a detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the study" (p. 31). A detailed audit trail was kept that included a record of the order work in which the work was done, the timeline and the procedures used for each step. All of the collected data was retained. Participant identities were kept confidential by using pseudonyms.

Peer Review and Debreifing

Peer review is a technique to establish credibility and is a form of investigator triangulation (Denzin, as cited in Janesick, 1998). Peer review is supported by Merriam

(2002), who stated "…a thorough peer examination would involve asking a colleague to scan some of the raw data and assess whether the findings are plausible based on the data" (p. 26). Two peer reviews were conducted. One peer reviewer was a graduate of the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at Iowa State University, who wrote a qualitative research dissertation, and the other was a cohort member who was familiar with the topic. The peer reviewers' questions and comments verified that my interpretations were valid.

Researcher Positionality

Because the research was conducted in the department in which I was the director, it was especially important to bracket and consider my positionality at the onset of the research. Merriam (2002) indicated that this is important so the researcher explores and understands the experiences the participants actually had and to avoid a researcher's lens bias (my words):

> Prior to interviewing others, phenomenological researchers usually explore their own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of their own prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions. These prejudices and assumptions are then bracketed, or set aside, so as not to influence the process. (p.94)

I am a white, middle aged female with two B.S. degrees and an MBA, who was a first generation college student. With siblings nine and ten years older than me, I was raised more like an only child, especially after my siblings left home. I grew up in a small house in a new neighborhood of young families, on the edge of a large Midwest city.

I was bused to the inner city for high school at the start of desegregation. Our arrival on the first day of high school was met with anti-desegregation picketers. The three years of high school provided a front row seat to many societal and racial issues; many of the

experiences were stressful and unexpected, and I felt unsafe in school. I begged my parents to let me go to a private school but they were unsympathetic. Yet, when two of the three high schools in our city closed because of violence among the students, ours did not. High school was a significant emotional experience.

After high school, my personal and work experiences continued to include dealing with issues of various kinds of discrimination, individuals' sense of fairness and unfairness, and other challenging situations. For example, after graduating from college, within a few weeks of starting my first professional job at a state university, I found myself addressing the issue of a white student refusing to serve food to African American students.

In that same first job out of college, I was hired as part of an initial effort to hire managers with college degrees as operation managers. The hourly staff had just ratified their first AFSCME agreement as I started my job. My mother had been a union member and had gone on strike in the past. My father was a mail carrier and had retired when President Regan said he was going to fire all the postal workers if they went on strike, and he feared they would, so he retired to avoid forfeiting his pension. Until that time, I had only seen the labor issue from the view of the workers. Since then, through my career in management I became familiar with rules, how to follow them properly and how to articulate them to others. I never liked conflict, but I learned to handle it.

My personal and work experiences continued to include dealing with issues of various kinds of discrimination, individual people's sense of fairness and unfairness, and other challenging situations. These experiences, plus significant other management experience made me sensitive to issues that were not always discussed openly, helped me to

be aware that there were things people might not be telling me in addition to what they do tell me. I learned many lessons the hard way. I am not an intuitive über-manager of any sort; I simply worked hard, pragmatically and consistently. I tried to plan for the "what ifs" of life, and because I rather like change, and I was always working through others to do it, careful planning was the only way to be successful.

I have been passionate about the importance of work in the life of students my whole career. I feel that regardless of how students come to us and under what situation they leave (graduation, leaving school, employment terminated), it is our responsibility that, somehow, they leave better equipped than when they arrive in regards to their knowledge of how to work, their understanding of people, and their general approach to the world. Dining Services has the opportunity to reach large numbers of students as employees and provides a place that is different from the classroom or the residence hall, a place where students can go to get away from other pressures and "just work" (as I call it). The dining service work environment offers students an opportunity to practice real-life transferrable work skills in a semi-protected environment so they can learn and grow from the experience. I have taken this seriously and worked very hard with my staffs over the years to make sure this is our goal, using the mission of dining itself as the framework to make it happen.

The ability to impact students is the reason I have stayed in this field. There is a stigma about food service work, and I am sensitive to that. I feel that others in higher education do not understand the complexity of this work. In addition to providing revenue critical to the institution, the inventory is perishable, and employee turnover is extremely high by design (they graduate).

As the director of the department in which the participants had worked, it was important to present myself neither as an official representative of the organization or nor as too distant from it. I did not want to have so much rapport that the participants would assume I just knew what they meant; and I did not want to be too distant in overcompensation, because then they would be less likely to share. My strong opinion about the impact of student employment on student lives had potential to cause bias as I interviewed, so I was be careful to avoid leading questions, correcting participant viewpoints or justifying why things were the way they were.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations of this research were the selection of former student managers from only Valley College Dining and within the past one to five years. These delimitations were important so that I as the researcher could understand the context in which the participants were making meaning of their experiences, in order to decrease the chance of misinterpretation. Delimiting the research allowed me to see how similar experiences were retrospectively viewed differently.

The delimitations that allowed me to focus intently were also limitations of the research. The specific focus of participant employment location made it difficult to generalize the details of this research to other non-similar sites, although in a general sense it can be useful to all educational institutions. Additionally, because this research narrowed the retrospective view to one to five years, it precluded knowing what on-campus employment means to those who have been in their careers longer. This narrowed the study; however, it is possible to duplicate this research elsewhere.

Significance of Research

This is ground-breaking research, which should contribute to the field of knowledge regarding the impact of on-campus employment on students. This knowledge could change how institutions view on-campus student employment in terms of co-curricular impact. It also could affect student employment policy in terms of helping institutions set priorities about use of on-campus employment to enhance student involvement. Most importantly (and what would be most exciting), this research could start a movement to bring the academy closer to being intentional in providing the most valuable on-campus employment possible for all students and initiate change in policy and practice to support that cause. It could even eventually affect financial aid award and policy, as well as alumni donations to the institution.

What is learned with this research could impact developing on-campus employment programs designed to improve the persistence and career success of students. An on-campus employment program could include mentor training for staff and development of long-term on-campus internships that collaborate with academics (and even if they do not).

Summary

This chapter reviewed how the research was conducted using an interpretive theoretical framework viewed through a symbolic interactionist lens. Using phenomenological methodology to gain insight as to how graduates make meaning of their on-campus employment experience, I collected data from nine interviews and did so in a way to enhance goodness and trustworthiness.

On-campus student employment is a huge untapped resource that can positively affect student engagement, persistence, academics, career placement and career success, and could advance the mission and financial stability of institutions. By focusing specifically on the graduates' retrospective view of their experiences, Chapter 4 demonstrates my understanding of those experiences as told by the graduates and contributes to the field of knowledge that may help determine how that can be done intentionally.

CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Chapter 3 discussed how data were collected from nine participants, using phenomenological methodology to gain insight as to how graduates make meaning of their on-campus employment experience. The research was conducted utilizing a theoretical framework of interpretivism viewed through a symbolic interactionist lens.

The process of analysis required careful evaluation of participant word choice in order to categorize it into one of the three forms of symbolic interactionist objects (physical, social, abstract). This was done prior to the determination of themes. This process helped provide an understanding of how social interaction played a role in the participant's retrospective views of their experiences, and how social interaction "… *forms* human conduct instead of being merely a means or a setting for the expression or release of human conduct" (Blumer, 1969, p. 8). This layer of analysis helped provide an understanding of how the participants formed meaning out of their experiences.

An example of this process is the categorization of Heidi's experiences leading to development of self-confidence as a social objects before self-confidence was a theme. Then, it became evident that her self-confidence was developed over the course of her employment though her social interactions with supervisors and other students. After the participants' comments were categorized into symbolic interactionist objects, themes were identified. The common themes then stood out boldly. Self-confidence was displayed differently by each participant although each identified it using the term "self-confidence": Heidi became less shy and obtained a position where she spoke in front of people daily; Jonathan started liking

his work and realized he could do it; Janet was encouraged because her ability to give direction was noticed at Valley College and she knew she could be successful again in another place. Viewing the data first through a symbolic interactionist lens, provided an understanding of the path by which the participants' experiences formed their future behavior.

The analysis table was developed to summarize the data and to help evaluate common themes. The data analysis table revealed that, in some places, themes did not exist where they were initially expected, because the table was not complete for all participants. Grades, diversity and co-curricular activities were three items that which were removed as themes. Grades became an aspect of the time-management theme. The data analysis led to continued editing of the table. This chapter is organized to respond to how graduates made meaning of their on-campus employment in the context of the three main research question areas: academic success, overall student experience, and career entry. The work environment and individual participants are described and then the themes are discussed.

<div align="center">**Work Environment and Participant Descriptions**</div>

Work Environment

All participants were alumni who graduated from Valley College between 2005 and 2010 and had had at least one post-graduation position they considered part of their career progress. They had been general student employees and were promoted to student managers. They worked in two different locations on campus: the Hideaway, a short order retail restaurant on the lower level of the student center, and Melange, the student board plan all-

you-care-to-eat dining service on the upper level of the student center. Full-time staff

worked alongside the students and supervised them.

The Hideaway served students as well as faculty, staff, and visitors; and was the only

student center public dining area. Two full-time staff supervised students during the day, and

one worked at night. There were six student managers and thirty other students employed in

the Hideaway, rotating to cover all the shifts, with five to seven students working at a time.

Melange served approximately 1,400 board-plan students three meals a day (two on

Sunday) and was the only all-you-care-to-eat facility on campus. Both students and visitors

ate in Melange. Faculty and staff ate there too, but less frequently than in the Hideaway.

Melange had two full-time management staff focused on student employment and front of

the house activities. They and nine student managers dedicated to front of house service,

oriented, trained and supervised 150 student staff.

Student employees were selected from lists of students who wanted to work that were

assembled each summer. Dining Services also actively recruited during first year summer

orientation by talking with incoming students about work and following up with them before

selecting and scheduling them. Most dining service student employees started work the first

day of classes. Employment was not limited to freshmen. Students can apply and get a job

in dining services at any time while they are enrolled.

Student managers, who supervised other student employees were selected through a

traditional application process; they applied, were interviewed and selected, and expected to

make a commitment to coming back to school early for training. Not everyone who applied

was promoted to the student manager position. Students who had worked at least one

semester in dining were the typical applicant pool, but most of the time they had worked several semesters. There were 40 student manager positions, and during the time the participants worked there, the program was decreased to 30, so more emphasis could be placed on individual student manager development. All of the participants were student managers.

Individual Participant Descriptions

     Cary. Cary was a first generation student whose previous work experience was working in a diesel mechanic shop, owned by his dad and uncle, and helping on his grandparents' farm. He had worked for family, and only family, since middle school. His mom worked as a woodworker in a motor coach factory and loved her work. All his relations lived in proximity to the same small town.

     Cary initially chose to work on campus because the scheduling was easy. He said:

> Dining services already worked with your schedule…versus if I go and work for someone-another employer off campus-then I have to worry about trying to set up a schedule with them. And then, of course, there's the travel…It made it so much easier trying to stay on campus.

He described his uncertainty when a student manager started him in his first assignment on his first day of work, the first day of classes, his freshman year:

> So, basically, I was thrown on the dish room. He said "this is what you do, start pulling dishes, then, I'll let you know when it's time to go to class." It was kind of one of them, "oh boy, I don't know if this is what I want to do," especially the first day.

Cary initially mistrusted his supervisor. He was used to working on his own or with a few others that he knew, but not in big teams. He was promoted to a student manager position by the second semester of his freshman year. Cary said "I believe I stepped into the student

manager role just because of, I guess, attention to detail and able to recognize things and kind

of foresee issues happening or being self managed." In addition to his student manager

work, Cary participated in a multi-year business management internship program with dining

services, where new experiences were carefully planned each semester based on his current

interests. He did this during his sophomore, junior and senior years. Cary said he liked his

job because:

> It changed regularly. No one day was the same as the next day. So there's no routine
> to get set into; and it kept you on your toes, being able to think on your feet and be
> constantly moving around. It wasn't a position where you got bored with it.

Cary described the things he did not like about his student manager job as:

> Just the little things such as this person's not getting along with this
> person…[employees saying] "I've done this before. I've been in the dish room three
> days straight now and want to do something else." It's just the little things you don't
> think of that "Hey, this is a part of managing. I don't want to deal with this. I just
> want to tell people what to do to keep things flowing."

Cary did not like dealing with issues between staff or people complaining about their work,

and he occasionally found it awkward to handle correcting the behaviors of students he knew

well. He said "Your expression has to be firm and not let them know it's uncomfortable for

you because then they are going to be uncomfortable and it's just a waste of both parties

time." He did not enjoy personnel types of issues, preferred to focus on task accomplishment

as a student and that preference continued in his career, as evidenced by his discussion about

handling those situations in his present job. Cary said:

> My big issue I have right now. It was kind of the same scenario. I call it the HR
> issues. (Speaking in the voice of an employee.) "Well my time card didn't get filled
> out right, my paychecks off." And I have to go back into the system and fill out an
> off-pay form for them. I was involved a little bit with it here at the college, but when
> somebody comes up to me, now I know why no one wants to do it. (Again speaking

in the voice of an employee.) "I've been with the company for three years and I still don't have access to the garage." OK, I'll work on that. You know what to prioritize. That same person came up to me every day asking about his access to the parking ramp. (Speaking as himself talking to that person.) "I'll get to it. You realize that we just brought in 300 new employees and your parking in the ramp is not top priority right now." So being able to decipher what to do now, what to do later, and he was finally appreciative when today was his first day to park in the ramp. He's one from Virginia, and he's like "I just want to make sure it happens before that wintertime came." That's a couple months away. I had time, really.

Cary put work tasks above individual needs as a student employee and in his career.

Cary said that if he had not worked as much he would have had time to study more, but doubted that he really would have studied. He gave up social time with friends but did not mind, because it was his job. He said that he had some nights and most weekends off, and that was time to socialize or study more. "I didn't feel like I was overwhelmed", said Cary. Cary said that if he had not worked on campus, "I think I would have just had a different job where I worked more."

Cary believed it was his responsibility to figure out how to get his schoolwork done while working. He said:

And it was just my responsibility to fit time in there, the study, do the homework. If I had an hour break before class…or break between class and work, I knew that was time I could maybe squeeze in maybe an accounting project for accounting class. Usually, I planned on having all my work done the day before rather than trying to scramble, which didn't always work out, trying not to scramble and squeeze it in. Not like some students, propping books up on the dish line. If you're studying at that point, you might as well give up. It's too late.

Cary said that the freedom with the internship aspect of his work helped him organize his days. He said, "I thought that the work experience and lower grades would be better than grades alone." When asked if he that worked out for him, he said with a smile, "I have not

been in the same position for over a year, and my resume [has] only been submitted once to the company".

Cary graduated with a degree in business administration, a minor in accounting, and concentrations in both finance and management. He accepted a job with a large financial firm upon graduation and had been promoted three times. The most recent promotion, which was to begin soon, was for eighteen months, to handle a specific project. He had changed departments and was to have eighteen team members in the near future. It was his responsibility to take this staff to open a new office. The additional responsibilities and location change came with a salary increase and higher pay grade. Cary was to give performance appraisals for the fourteen people he presently supervised, and recommend their pay increase before he moved to the new location. He believed the experience of conducting performance appraisals while in his on-campus position would come in handy.

The day he was interviewed, Cary had come to campus for one night of Homecoming to meet friends, but was headed back to work early the next morning. His team was working overtime, and he wanted to show support for them; he did not get overtime pay. About a recent experience helping his employer interview for open positions, Cary said, "It's all about the piece of paper. I want [to see] the customer service skill. I'm helping hire people and am NOT looking at their grades."

A few months after the interview Cary called on a Saturday afternoon as he was finishing work for the day, to respond to follow-up questions. He reported that he had cancelled his scheduled vacation because work was so busy.

Mari. Mari came from a small town less than two hours from Valley College. Her mother had two associate degrees, and her dad had started but not completed college. Mari wanted to work while in college, but had intended to avoid food service work, because she had worked at McDonalds as a shift supervisor while in high school, and she had found it stressful.

Mari started work the first day of her freshman year in college. Regarding her first experience working on campus, Mari said, "I started in Melange and I was the outside runner, and the first day I hated it and I wanted to quit. And then, like three days later, I made friends and started to like it." Once she started to get to know other students, the work became fun.

Mari became a student manager at the beginning of her sophomore year. The students she worked with became her friends; they supported each other in their work, as well as spent time together outside of work. An example of how she had stayed connected to those friends was that the night before the interview, she had stayed with friends she had made in her on-campus job. She said that she and her friends frequently assisted each other at work. Regarding how they organized their work schedules, Mari said:

> It was kind of nice, because the student managers…sometimes you're gonna have a lot more homework than other times. We generally worked together pretty well. We figured it out. If I needed a day off, I knew I could find somebody; like test times when finals came around. You knew you could find someone to work for you, because you were going to work for them. It was pretty easy, and if you really couldn't figure something out, usually Judy and Tony [the full-time managers] would do something for us.

Mari transferred in AP classes to Valley College and said she found college academically easy. She found balancing work and school to be easy. Mari said:

I went to class and I realized what I had for homework. I always managed to get it done early. It was social time I had to give up on. With work set, it didn't affect a lot I don't think…It was pretty balanced.

Even though she said she gave up social time, Mari also said, "We still went out a LOT (her emphasis)." She was active in several major-related organizations and had leadership roles, although she could not exactly remember the name of the organization or the positions she had held.

Mari graduated from Valley College with excellent grades, in 3 ½ years, with a degree in business administration, an international business concentration and a Spanish minor. She chose to graduate early because she decided the additional expense was unnecessary. She had taken out student loans and did not want to add to them.

Mari said that the student manager responsibilities helped her learn to balance the roles of boss and friend. She said, "You always had to find the balance between being a friend outside of work, but 'I still have to be your boss at work.'" Although she said that working built her confidence in her abilities, Mari learned that she still did not like dealing with challenging customer service situations. She intentionally avoided those after graduation by taking a position as a production and sanitation supervisor at a large food processing company. The hiring process was competitive, and took several months.

Mari worked third shift in her post-graduation position. She supervised seven full-time staff, was responsible for their performance appraisals, and had recently helped her supervisor interview job candidates for an opening on Mari's crew. She attributed low turnover on her crew to her ability to supervise and have friendly relationships in a fun

environment; and ability she developed working on campus. Before she worked there, the

turnover had been significantly higher. Mari described why the turnover decreased:

> We have a really high turnover rate on third shift and so when I first started, we had a lot of in and out…and now it's kind of settled…Most of the time now, it's career moves. Before, it was they just didn't really like their jobs. I think also, the thing that helps is that I'm not a really strict boss, and am okay with having fun as long as they are not doing things that affect the product, so they have a really good bond. They're all really tight. They hang out together outside of work…We all understand each other.

Mari said she practiced some of the harder parts of supervision as part of her student

manager position. She described how she had learned to deal with difficult situations as a

student employee and how that applied to her current work:

> I've had some hard conversations with people here (on campus) where I had to say, "You know you're not doing your job right; this is how it's supposed to be done; you haven't done this yet." And so, I've had to do that in my job now. Just knowing how to go about that helps a lot. I don't think I'd be as comfortable with it if I hadn't had that experience.

A particular point of pride for Mari was that she had never called in sick to any job

she had ever had, a trait she attributed to her parents. Mari lived with her parents for the first

year after graduation in order to save money and start paying back her student loans. She

was preparing to move into her own apartment at the time of the interview.

Mari saw a promotional path in her career, and intended to stay with her present

employer. She envisioned herself in the international business area of the company in some

form and the fact that the company provided training for existing employees gave her hope.

She gave several examples of other young people in her organization that had remained with

the company and had moved up the organizational ladder. "They always do updates when

people get promotions and stuff, and tell you when they started and where they worked, and it gives you lots of hope for the future", said Mari.

Jay. Jay's mother had an associate's degree, and his father went to college but did not graduate. The summer prior to his freshman year, at the age of 17, Jay arrived from out of state to start taking classes, and started working on campus at that time. His father had brought him to the dining center to help him find a job. Jay was a Regent Scholar and took out student loans to pay the difference. He initially intended to become a pastor and later changed his major to philosophy.

Jay's first on-campus work experience was as a caterer in the special events area, and he did not like it at all. "The only thing I didn't like about work was special events, which is why I got transferred," said Jay. In most of his previous work he had usually worked alone: as a trap keeper for a conservation club, a gas leak surveyor for the gas company, and his own small lawn care business. Once he moved out of the special event area to Melange, he found that he liked his work. He especially liked that his supervisor demonstrated trust in him by giving him special tasks from time to time. Jay said that working was a nice contrast to class work, and it helped him focus. He observed that students who were hard workers, worked hard in classes to, and perhaps the contrast also helped them:

> I've found the students who actually want to work, and they realize their job is a good thing, are also the ones that work really hard in their classes… Maybe it's just… just because the people who work hard at work are just hard workers in general, and therefore they also work harder in their classes; or it's just the fact that because they have that variety, they are more refreshed when they go back to their homework.

Jay was a serious student and a serious employee who in retrospect thought that he might have worked harder in classes than he needed to. He had more work relationships than

friend relationships with other student employees. He built a close bond with Tony (a full-time manager), who mentored him along the way about life in general. About that relationship, Jay said, "We had established a rapport between the two of us. I felt like he could always count on me to do my job and to do it well, and I felt like he trusted me…" Jay said that his other supervisor helped him learn to deal with coworkers:

> Judy really nourished me as far as my relationships with coworkers. You know, what to do; what not to do; how much to interact with them; how not to interact with them. And, I could always go to Judy and ask her questions, and I could say, "Hey, I said such and such to so and so, do you think that was right or should have said something differently?" And she was able to provide good advice, and something that I could always learn from. And so I think Judy helped me a lot with my um, professionalism in dealing with coworkers.

Upon graduation with a degree in philosophy, Jay went to graduate school in his home state and was teaching ethics classes as a graduate assistant. He said that his student manager position prepared him to deal with students. Jay said, "It gave me confidence walking into my job." He believed that his credibility with students was affected by how he dealt with them from the beginning, and since he had not received any training in how to do that as a graduate assistant, his student manager experience was the foundation for how he handled himself as an instructor.

Jay had been soul searching regarding what to do with the rest of his life. Although he was on a professorial path, he was not certain if he wanted to be a faculty member. He wanted a job where he would be active and work at solving real problems. At the time of the interview, he was at the juncture of deciding if he wanted to begin a different career or stay on the academic track and pursue his doctorate. Jay said:

I've been looking at a lot of job postings and the ones that have caught my eye …usually have something to do with being the safety supervisor in one way shape or form, or have to do with being someone who analyzes the quality of a product for a service being provided, um, or to make sure that sanitation is kept up and things like that.

Jay said that he had liked his on-campus work and liked the experience of making progress and being busy, and had been contemplating how to duplicate that in his future career.

Jackson. Jackson, a first generation college student, came to Valley College and received support from his parents in the form of using their certificates of deposit as collateral for his loans. This allowed him to obtain loans at a significantly lower interest rate than normal.

Prior to college, Jackson's work experience was limited to helping on the family farm and doing odd jobs for neighbors. He did not go looking for the work; they asked him. He got paid whatever the neighbors decided the work was worth, and he thought that had been a good arrangement. He said, "I always kind of worked as needed…You do it and…people usually compensate pretty well for your time. People usually appreciate help." He was heavily engaged with sports in high school and did not have much free time.

Jackson was the defensive end of the Valley College winning football team and graduated cum laude with a degree in physical education and a health education endorsement. His other activities on campus were the Valley Association for Student Educators and the local Special Olympics. Jackson helped with the community Special Olympics all four years and chaired the event for the last two. He also served as a student ambassador during the summer he was on campus, helping to recruit other student athletes.

Jackson's first job on campus was custodial work, which he disliked because it was lonesome. A friend recommended he work in dining because of the flexible hours, since he had to have significant amounts of time free for football, and he wanted to be with people. He appreciated that his supervisors would adjust his work schedule to accommodate football; even during the off-season, the team worked out five days a week.

Jackson became interested in the student manager position after his supervisors recommended it to him. He started as a student manager his junior year. He said, "I took a lot of interest once I thought I had the skills to fill the position and do a good job." Jackson missed a large part of the student manager training prior to the start of the school year because of football, but did not feel he was at a disadvantage because of it. His supervisors helped him keep up and filled him in on what he missed. He thought that most of the work was logical and not very difficult. Jackson had to stay focused in order to manage his time and he believed working helped him do that. He said:

> What I was able to do with my work and stuff, it really helped me become fundamental in my time management strategies, and being able to look at a time for the next day and say I have a half hour here, and a half hour here, and I need to get something done. I can't come back and flip on the television, and get on the internet and check out what people are doing on Facebook. I need to be able to focus and keep the wheels going on this so it [working] really helped me in that regard.

Jackson liked being part of making sure things ran smoothly. He really enjoyed working the summer in dining services. There were significantly fewer customers in the summer, but there was also a smaller staff, and each person had a broader scope to their work.

When things were really busy or not going well, the pressure to do quality work was

challenging. Jackson said:

> When you are supposed to have eighteen people on a shift and twelve come in, then it
> would be frustrating to try to cover everything and that part would get frustrating but
> overall, um, it really worked out pretty well.

Jackson liked knowing what was going on and he liked being part of the solution and

contributing to the organization. He said,

> I hope I brought a positive person to work every day, and that I was able to affect our
> ability to get the work done that was needing to be done, in a timely manner also, and
> making it a good experience for other people. I felt I was part of what our goals were
> and what our mission was as to the goals of our department. I think I had a positive
> influence overall.

Jackson related the customer service skills he learned working, to dealing with parents as a
teacher:

> It's always hard. It's a situation you don't want to be in, but you learn how to be able
> to read the person and understand they are upset; and you know when people are
> upset they're gonna say whatever. And keeping it impersonal and it's a lot of times
> how YOU (his emphasis) react in the situation. Let someone else make a jerk out of
> himself but make sure YOU'RE (his emphasis) always able to leave the situation not
> regretting anything you said and thinking "I shouldn't have let emotions take over
> and have that same attitude." It's hard to keep emotions out of it but that's just the
> way it goes. It's hard to just deflect stuff when people are attacking you and you just
> want to fire back and let them have it.

> Jackson graduated with a degree in physical education and a health endorsement.

Jackson and his spouse lived in small town near Valley College. They had agreed to move to

follow the person who got the first full-time teaching position. His spouse was selected for a

full-time teaching job and he was a substitute teacher, coach and bus driver, working as many

hours as he could. He was considering whether he should go on to graduate school before he

gets a full-time job and they have children.

      Heidi. Heidi was a first-generation college student who came to Valley College from

a nearby mid-sized town.   Her goal when she came to Valley College was to get a degree in

social work and "get out of town." She wanted to live anywhere but where she came from.

Heidi said "I was a spoiled child and had not worked anywhere, ever." She said she was very

shy when she came to Valley College.

      Heidi's mom suggested she work in dining. She was initially assigned to the catering

area but did not like being where people would see her. Heidi said, "Having to serve people,

knowing which way to take up dishes, and wearing your proper attire…that just took a lot of

toll on me." Therefore, she requested a change, was reassigned to The Hideaway, and

worked mostly in the kitchen until she was promoted. She said:

> I found I really liked working in the kitchen in The Hideaway, and I found I started
> making some friends, and those friends are still with me today. The Hideaway kind
> of helped me to get out of my shell and to work my way up to the front eventually
> [laughing].

Heidi did not apply for the student manager position the first year it was recommended to

her, because she was unsure of herself. She preferred to stay in the kitchen and not talk to

customers. She also was not sure she would be a good person to delegate because she tended

to think, "If you want it done right, do it yourself." She considered that her supervisors

might have seen something in her and applied for the position when it was suggested to her

again the following year. Heidi became a student manager at the end of her sophomore year.

Heidi was involved the social work club and Black Student Union. She was disciplined about not allowing herself to have fun until her homework was done. Heidi said:

> I'm not gonna come to school just to mess up, because there was a lot of people ahead of me that had did that. As for me, I'm one of those people that takes on everything, so I literally had it scheduled. Like, "you can't go out until you get this homework done. You get the A, and also well, you need money to go out and do things, so you better go to work"…just setting a good example, I mean. There was some workers that would go out and come to work hung over…I didn't want that to be a representation of myself so I made sure that I just had to do what I need to do both in school and work. I didn't want to have any skeletons in my closet for me.

Heidi did not think she would have studied more if she had not worked. She said she "just would have found other things to do."

Heidi said, "I got to know a lot more students than I otherwise would if I didn't work at all…I became more talkative, more friendly." Working on-campus made her feel safe and she was exposed to more people. She learned how to supervise and to delegate. Heidi said:

> There's a difference between being somebody's friend and somebody's actual supervisor. You can be on their level but you can't get to the point where you're friends and you're letting them get away with murder, and getting away with everything. There still has to be that boundary there. You have to be able to say "go take this out" or "you're coming in hung-over, that's not what needs to be done-I need you to go home now."

Heidi liked the people she worked with but did not like dealing with disrespectful customers. She learned to cope with difficult situations as a student employee, and said that prepared her for her present career. Heidi said:

> I would only say the thing I didn't like was when we had disrespectful students. Students that liked to make a mess-that sort of thing…Because you can't say anything. You can't be rude to them.

Heidi was proud of earning the Duncan Walker Award for the African American student graduating with the highest grade point at Valley College, and began her social work position immediately upon graduation. Heidi did not leave town like she thought she would. When she came to her interview, she was on her way to speak to a Valley College social work class about her career.

Heidi was a youth-of-color coordinator in a program that had a goal of bringing about awareness regarding sexual health issues and disparities in the county. Part of her job was to provide individual health and pregnancy prevention counseling. Heidi had been promoted once since she started her social work position. No longer shy, she believed that she had grown into her position. She held support group sessions, provided mentoring, and spoke to large groups of people as part of her outreach to the community. She frequently used her personal connections to get in to churches to discuss sexual health issues and disparities, with the goal of garnering financial support for the program. Heidi supervised two others, one of whom was a very challenging person for her. During her interview, she discussed that personnel issue at length and how the things she learned in her on-campus job helped her deal with it. Heidi intended to stay in the area because she saw purpose in her work. She said:

> I've become very, very spiritual. I was spiritual before, but I just feel like God just wants me to stay in the area right now, especially with our high STI rates- This County #1-we're even higher than the national average. So, I think I need to stay around awhile.

Janet. Janet had worked since she was fourteen. She was a first generation college student whose father farmed and mother worked as an accountant at a grocery store. Her

mom got Janet's first job for her by filling out an application at the grocery store where she worked. Janet worked there as a cashier through college, in addition to helping in the kitchen at a small camp. She did not like the work but did it anyhow, because it was her job, and she had worked ever since. When she came to Valley College, Janet did not want to work in Melange, saying, "I was glad I didn't get put in the cafeteria…I was excited about The Hideaway." Janet was a self-proclaimed introvert who believed her work experience provided sufficient socialization. She said:

> When I'm out in public I seem like an extrovert, but, I'm actually introverted… I appreciate my alone time and my quiet time, and so I think I got enough socialization at The Hideaway, and when I did have some free time a lot of time, I didn't go out and party because I didn't want to be around people (laughs). You know I just kind of wanted to be in my room, read a book or watch TV or go to a coffee shop or something like that.

Janet was proud when she was "discovered," during her first semester of college, to have ability to organize and direct people. Janet claimed that being a first-born child caused her to be naturally "bossy." She was a student manager before the end of her freshman year. She said she learned how to balance work and school even though it was difficult:

> And, so you just kind of have to learn how to prioritize…time management sort of thing; and I did my homework when other people were off doing their own thing. And you know, I grabbed dinner by myself and took it back and ate it while I did my homework and that kind of stuff. It made it hard sometimes for group projects, um, I think that was one of the biggest battles. Communications majors have lots of group projects and so it was kind of hard because they all wanted to meet in the evenings… [when] I was working. That kind of made it a little bit of a struggle, I think. Other than that, there weren't a lot of changes. That's all I knew though, so I don't necessarily think I realized like, if I would have done it another way. I don't think I realized that because I worked from day one, when I got on campus.

Janet considered the full-time staff in The Hideaway her family away from home and leaned on them for counsel. She said, "I get homesick sometimes. I missed my parents. I

missed that adult influence on my life and I think they kind of made up for it." Janet also

said:

> And I was the oldest, even out of the grandkids, and it was just me and the grownups. So, I think I got along better, not that I didn't get along with my own coworkers, but I related more to the full time employees than I did to a lot of my you know fellow coworkers, simply because, I don't mean this to sound, like arrogant or anything, but I have always been a little bit more mature than people my age and so it was easier for me to talk with them, and it was easier to discuss things with them. And, I wanted, like, real sound advice on issues and I didn't want the, you know, immature, catty, advice that came from some of my coworkers. So they were sort of my sounding board for a lot of things.

Janet was disappointed when college was harder than high school and she decided to

be satisfied with lower grades. About her logic surrounding grades, Janet said:

> My grades as a freshman weren't awesome, and I was used to not have to look at grades, and I think it was to the point where I didn't care enough to put in the effort to try. I mean they weren't terrible. I still had a 3.0 or above, but I was used to a 4.0… And, I got to the point where I didn't really care about that… as long as I kept up and as long as I was learning what I thought I needed to know. I mean my science classes and stuff; I realized I felt like, as long as I passed this class, and I give it my best effort, I'm not gonna exert the extra effort in order to get an A in that class, because when I graduate, I'm not going to need that stuff. You know, I could care less.

Basically, she decided to stop worrying about grades as long as they were adequate. Janet

said she would not have studied more if she had had more time.

Janet was in choir her freshman year, and was not involved in activities on campus

other than work the other years. She joined a Christian youth group at a nearby state

university and spent most of her free time with them. She said:

> I was always down in Claire City, hanging out with those people…I had a group of friends from Valley College that went with me, so it was sort of where we went and hung out; and it was a nice way to get off campus and hang out with different people.

When she graduated with a degree in communications and electronic media and did

not have a job, Janet was scared. She did not want to move back home. She moved to a

large city within an hour of her parents, talked friends into renting with her, and looked for a

job. She worked at a restaurant to make ends meet. She kept in touch with her former

employer where she had done two summer internships. It took about a year, but eventually, a

job opened up in that organization and she got it. Janet had been promoted once since she

had been there, and at the time of the interview was preparing to start her new position.

Janet frequently came across Valley College Alumni as a natural course of her days,

living in a large city. She spoke about how she liked it that, even though they did not know

her name, she was still recognized as someone who had worked in The Hideaway.

Jonathan. Jonathan was a "student of color" (his term) from a large metropolitan

community out of state. While in high school, he worked in a day care and a church youth

program. Jonathan began his on-campus employment, at the start of his freshman year, in

Melange. He was responsible for paying for school himself and had over $30,000 of student

loans to pay back. Referring to working in Melange, Jonathan said:

> A lot of time the student managers…made them do like, the crummy jobs more…the
> grunt work, and sometimes it seemed the students didn't like it. Some students would
> find other work within the college because of the treatment. The student managers
> seemed to feel superior, which they were, but…it seemed a lot times they would
> rotate you, and they would rotate everyone, and then it would happen again…you
> know, sometimes you were told you were in a certain place, and you were maybe put
> there to do better there. I know for a fact that some of the managers didn't like the
> freshmen, and they picked on them that way.

Jonathan said that the student managers harassed the new students by making their work

difficult. Although he did not like the work in Melange, Jonathan said he learned about why

it was important to be precise with sanitation. Jonathan almost quit his job because no one

listened to his concerns about the work. He said:

> I'm not trying to bash anything, but you know before I did The Hideaway, I was almost going to leave Melange, because, for awhile I was just kinda…getting sick of working the same things. I tried to explain my reasoning, but I felt no one listened to my reasons in response.

He requested a move to the Hideaway his second semester and at first found it to be complicated and difficult. He was concerned that he could not learn the work. However, after awhile, he started to enjoy his work and the people with whom he worked. He said "They treated you well and just."

One of Jonathan's supervisors recommended that he apply to be a student manager. He started working as a student manager in The Hideaway his sophomore year. Jonathan liked the responsibility of making sure things ran smoothly, and he liked being connected to both the other student employees and the full time staff. Jonathan remembered the names of the other student managers and full time staff with whom he worked, and spoke about how much fun they all had working together and keeping the Hideaway running at night. He appreciated the fact that one of the supervisors would hold bon-fires at her house for the students and that the students were treated with respect. Jonathan maintained friendships with some of the other student employees and continued to visit his former supervisors when he came to campus.

Jonathan was initially involved in the social work club and was a tutor, but as he progressed through college, he stopped his activities and worked more, because he needed the money. Jonathan said:

> I just got busy with all the classes and I started picking up hours in The Hideaway, because school was expensive and I was trying to pay for it; still paying it off now, but a little bit helps all the time. So for me--that's just the way I am--my job is more important than being involved in all those things.

During his junior year, Jonathan thought his grades were suffering, so he requested to cut back on work hours. He appreciated that, although he had cut back on hours, he was allowed to come in when he could at other times and do tasks such as cutting vegetables, to earn more money.

Jonathan believed that working did not harm his grades. He saw work as a way to release the stress of class work. Jonathan said, "I would look forward to going to work because it was a stress reliever and a chance to get your mind off things, and kind of do your things and enjoy something."

Upon graduation with a degree in social work, Jonathan returned to the large city he was from and obtained a social work position. He had worked as an aide for students with autism for four years. Jonathan said that learning to deal with difficult people while a student employee helped him now with students and their parents, and that the job taught him to be patient, precise, and to deal with people better. He said, "Sometimes you would say things; you weren't trying to be disrespectful but you would use a word that wasn't good. I learned how to reword things better."

Robert. Robert worked with his dad on a construction crew for six summers, and missing work was not an option in his mind, because even though they did not work on the same crew, he knew his dad would not allow him to miss work. He attributed his good work ethic to his daily trips of riding to work with his dad. Robert said, "I always felt like if I was assigned to work it was my responsibility to work. I would rather plan something else around work than plan work around something else. "

Robert's parents helped him pay for school, and he took out student loans. Robert

used some of his work income each month to pay his parents back. He said, "The money

would come in, and I would put it in my account, but I would give my parents checks every

month to offset their costs."

Robert came to Valley College to play football and decided after the first year that it

was not for him. He started working on-campus his freshman year, stocking groceries for the

coffee shop in the library. Once his schedule opened up because he decided not to play

football anymore, he started working in The Hideaway. He was a resident assistant during

his junior and senior years. Robert's other activities at Valley College were singing in the

choir and volunteering in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program. One of his supervisor's

granddaughters was his and his girlfriend's "little sister."

Robert believed his promotion to the student manager position was a reward for doing

a good job. He liked helping his supervisors by making sure things ran smoothly and tried to

come to work whenever they called, because he knew they needed him. "I felt like I was

trying to do a really good job to help them," Robert said.

Robert graduated with a biology degree and an emphasis in education. He talked

about how comfortable he was interviewing for his present teaching job, and although he

could not remember the details of the interview, he was sure he had brought up his

responsibilities as a student manager.

He said that he learned the importance of explaining why things were done a certain

way, in his job in The Hideaway. Robert said, "Procedures are put in place for a reason, and

you follow them and there's probably a good reason for it. And, if you don't think there's a

good reason for it you gotta find out." He also learned about delegation and the importance of balancing teams, which is knowledge he said he applied to his present job too. Robert said:

> But you know, trying to get the strengths out of each person. That was kind of a goal that you worked for as a manager; you always wanted to get the best person in the best spot to be the most efficient to get things out on time and so….Trying to find the strengths of the students. I guess I still try to do that every day. I'm trying to find that outgoing person that maybe doesn't understand everything but likes to talk a lot, working with that person who picks up on things really fast but doesn't like to talk a lot; trying to get the best groups that way. So, trying to get the best shift going possible [in the Hideaway] definitely relates.

Robert taught science, was the co-assistant director of the annual musical, and helped coach football in a small town high school. He was a volunteer coach just because he liked it. We conducted the interview in his biology classroom. The very large laboratory was neat and orderly, and he was obviously proud of it. He was in his fourth year in his job and had no intention of leaving.

Bryan. Bryan was a first-generation college student. His mom worked two jobs, and his dad worked every day, including weekends, as owner and operator of a silo building business. Bryan had a close relationship with his parents, especially his mom. He had bought his mom a cell phone when he got his first one in high school, put it on his plan and paid the bill for it. He and his mom spoke daily when he was in college and still talked frequently. At the time of the interview, Bryan was planning on upgrading his mom's phone for her for Christmas. He still had her cell phone on his plan and was paying for it. When he talked about doing that for her, it sounded like he was doing it as a way of being nice to her.

Bryan suffered brain damage from a head injury sustained in a car accident while in high school. He wanted to go to college to prove he could do it. Even though Bryan said he liked talking to people and believed he was extroverted, he had mostly stayed to himself until his junior year. His roommate was a student manager and recommended to Bryan that he get a job in dining services. Bryan thought he would make better use of his time if he had more to do.

Bryan started working his junior year. He became a student manager the following year, and was a student manager for two full years. Bryan mostly handled dish room supervising and after hours' clean-up. Working on campus helped him to get to know more people and taught him people skills. Bryan said that working with international students helped him understand people from different cultures better and that helped him in his current position.

Bryan worked frequently with high school students and he, like all the participants who had worked in Melange (the only location that high school students worked), thought the high school students were difficult to manage. He handled them by being careful who he assigned them to work with and giving them multiple tasks. Bryan said that the high school students, sometimes, were easier to manage than college students. He said:

> If you figured out with the high school students, who you could put with who, they were a lot easier to manage than the college students. The college students weren't as likely to do what you wanted them to do…they thought they should do what THEY (his emphasis) wanted.

Bryan valued the relationships with his supervisors and still called Judy, his former supervisor, to check in from time to time. He was still very close friends with several

students with whom he had worked. Bryan graduated with a double major in biochemistry and chemistry after five years at Valley College.

Bryan lived with his parents upon graduation, and continued to work for his dad in the silo building business. Bryan started looking for work immediately after graduation, but the economy was poor, and people were not hiring. It took him a year and a half to find a career-related job. Bryan has worked in the chemistry testing lab for a national corporation, several hours away from his parents, for over three years. He does not see himself wanting to get promoted in his current company because "They just seem to care about revenue." If he is going to supervise, he wants to do it by working with his staff, like he did in Melange.

Bryan was starting to build a life for himself in his community. He made friends by stopping in at a popular bar. He did that because otherwise, he might spend most of his time alone. He did not want a repeat of his early college experience. Bryan was generous with his time, helping friends with home-owner projects when he was not working. Bryan worked over 60 hours per week. In fact, he missed the first interview time because he was working late and happily rescheduled for 7:00 am the following Saturday morning. Bryan said he was a morning person, and even in college, got up at 5:30 am to do his homework.

Bryan was renting a house where he kept the heat as cold as he could tolerate in order to save money; most of his paycheck went towards his $22,000 in student loans. His parents helped him with school, but he paid for the last year completely by himself; that was his choice. Bryan wanted to eventually become a pharmaceutical salesperson, which was something he was interested in when he was in college too, because as he put it, "I like

talking to people." A criteria for Bryan as he worked towards his future goals was that he did not want to live in too large of a city and did not want to move too far from his family.

Themes and Analysis

Multiple themes emerged from this research. They are organized in the context of the main topics of the research questions: academic success, overall student experience and early career.

The first section—*On Campus Work and Academic Success*—explores the experience the participants had with work which they believed had impacted their academics. The themes within this section are employer support and time management. The participants believed that the employer support for their academic program was an important feature of their on-campus employment. They also believed that working and going to school, positively contributed to development of their time management skill.

The second section—*On Campus Work and the Overall Student Experience*— explores the participant views of how working impacted their non-academic experiences while in college. The themes that emerged in this area were debt expectation, the importance of relationship development and work ethic.

The third and final section—*Early Career*—explores what the participants specifically took from their on-campus employment experience and applied to their careers. The themes that emerged in this area were how to receive feedback, dealing with difficult situations, building confidence, developing patience, and learning to be precise.

On-Campus Work and Academic Success

Two themes emerged regarding the experiences the participants had with their on-campus work and academic success: employer support and good time management skills. A sub-theme of time management was that all participants said that they would not have studied more even if they had had more time. They had enough time to do the things they wanted to do.

Employer support. All but one participant (Bryan) started working the first day of class, of their freshman year. According to Cary, it was stressful to start school and work the same day. He spoke about his uncertainty with starting work on the first day of classes. Cary said, "I don't know if this is what I want to do; especially the first day. Classes started the first day." However, having work scheduled in conjunction with their class schedule at the start of their freshman year, with no effort on their part, was a huge bonus to working on campus. They were pleased that they had said they wanted to work on campus and someone just took care of it for them. According to Jay:

> All I had to do was register for my classes…my supervisor got the classes I registered for and I didn't even have to take it to her myself; and then she just arranged my work schedule around my course schedule which was incredibly convenient and so I didn't really have to do anything at all.

Jackson began his on-campus employment doing custodial work and requested to change to dining, because he disliked working all alone, and knew that dining services would get scheduled for him around his football schedule; he learned that from a friend who worked with dining. Robert easily received more work hours once his schedule opened up because he quit football, and that was helpful to him because he needed the money. Jonathan

requested to reduce work hours at a point where his grades were being compromised and his

schedule was reorganized for him, to accommodate that. Jonathan said, "At one point, my

junior year, I was working too much, and I asked to have like two days a week, maybe

three…The staff worked with you well and fair, and so they were very respectful of that."

The participants realized that if they worked off campus, they would have to negotiate

schedule changes and time off for meetings and other activities, without support from their

supervisors and other students, and it would be much more difficult and time consuming.

According to Cary:

> Dining services already worked with your schedule; pull your class schedule and do
> your work schedule for you versus, where if I go and work for someone--another
> employer off campus--then I have to worry about trying to set up a schedule with
> them. And then of course there's the travel, going there and trying to get back to
> classes on time. It made it so much easier to try to stay on campus.

Cary was initially considering working off campus his senior year and getting an internship

at a bank, but decided that his on-campus employment would accomplish the same thing and

be easier to organize.

Time management. As they reflected on the effect working had upon their grades,

the participants expressed the view that working helped them focus on coursework by

requiring them to organize their time. Their strategies to handling class and working

included utilizing even small blocks of time. Robert characterized making the most of all

pieces of time available in order to stay on top of academics as "thinking busy." Robert also

said, "I never really noticed the hours having to work….just planned around it. When I was

free I was working on class work and when I wasn't free I was working on other things."

Cary and Bryan studied in the early morning, as did Mari. Mari learned over time that if she worked in the early mornings, she could have her evenings free for schoolwork and group project work. Mari said that, in regards to what she would have done if she had not worked, "I actually would have gotten less accomplished." All participants believed that time management was the key to balancing work and academics.

Several participants discussed creating personal deadlines that were earlier than the actual deadlines, in order to avoid completing homework on the day it was due. Cary said, "I planned on having all my work done the day before rather than trying to scramble." Heidi said, "Instead of procrastinating, I had to get my stuff done earlier. You start a week ahead instead of doing it the night before; so, I think it truly helped me, extremely, a lot."

Janet never asked for time off to do school work; it was simply, in a matter-of-fact way, her responsibility to utilize her time well. Janet said, "And so, you just kind of have to learn how to prioritize, and you know, time management sort of things, and I did my homework when other people were off doing their own thing."

They liked the variety in switching from school to work and believed that the change of pace made it easier to focus on class work when it was time. Jay said:

> The contrast between going to classes and going to work, having that variety can be very refreshing itself. It can get you moving and once you get up and moving it gives you some energy and then you can think better.

Those who worked later at night said that it was challenging to find time to meet with class project groups.

> One of the things I struggled with my senior year was a lot of the class work was group projects, so trying to work with three or four people in the group. Trying to find a time we could all meet together. My work shift may be the evening meal, and those

who had internships during the day, so my day was wiped, their day was wiped so we were meeting at ten or eleven at night in the library, just on projects. Sometimes that becomes overwhelming at the end of the day…So it was just a real challenge to fit the perfect time that worked for everybody.

They traded shifts, asked for time off, or missed part of the group time. The participants were quick to point out that working on campus (instead of off campus) was a benefit in that regard, because their supervisors and co-workers understood the problem and accommodated varying schedule needs. Mari said "You knew you could find someone to work for you, because you were going to work for them. It was pretty easy." In general, they supported one another through the challenging parts of school. Jay, who studied with a passion, had lots of empathy for students who were having challenges with class. He said that having the authority to help his employees with class issues and conflicts was a favorite part of his job and that he would talk to them if they were upset and cover for them himself if they needed to leave. Jay said, "It was really fulfilling to provide some support for those students."

Grades. The participants indicated they would not have spent more time studying even if they had had more time. They said that if they had not worked, they would have spent time on other things instead of school work. Since this was retrospective, and they never would have been called upon to really do it, they could have easily said they would have studied more if they did not work. They did not need more time; their time management skills allowed them to have the time they needed to get things done.

Janet found high school easy and was surprised by the difficulty of college courses in comparison to high school. Once she realized that college was more difficult, she decided

not to focus too much on it, do what she had to do and be content with a lower grade point.

Janet said:

> And I got to the point where I didn't really care about that… As long as I kept up and as long as I was learning what I thought I needed to know. I mean my science classes and stuff; I realized I felt like, as long as I passed this class, and I give it my best effort, I'm not gonna exert the extra effort in order to get an A in that class, because when I graduate, I'm not going to need that stuff. You know, I could care less.

> Cary consciously traded time spent to get better grades for the work experience of

managing others because he believed the experience would build his resume better.

Regarding that decision, Cary said:

> At some times, I thought I could have done better on a project, or done better on an exam had I prepared better; had more time. But then again you don't know. Would I have used that time to an advantage, or would I have watched TV? It's one of those things where you're uncertain. Take your gains with your losses. I just thought that the work experience and lower grades would be better than grades alone.

Jonathan, who chose to cut back on work hours because his grades were dropping, said he

did not think he would have spent additional free time on studies if he had not worked.

Jonathan said when talking about his grades, "I would never blame that (referring to lower

grades) on dining service because that's just time management. That's what you learn in

college."

Mari had not studied in high school and found college to be academically easy. She

said, "I really wasn't one to ever study." Heidi was proud that she had earned the award for

the highest grade point among graduating African-American students at Valley College. Jay,

who mostly studied and worked, thought he had studied harder than necessary. He said, "I

probably put more into my classes than I otherwise would have had to." The participants

assumed personal responsibility for their grades, as well as how they utilized their time.

On-Campus Work and the Overall Student Experience

As the participants reflected upon the overall effect that work had on their student experiences, three themes emerged: relationship experiences, a strong work ethic, and debt expectation.

Relationship experiences: esprit de corps. The relationships experienced by the participants are best described as esprit de corps: the overall positive feeling from being together. The participants were aware of challenges in supervising their friends. They talked about it when they talked about working and supervising others, yet those lines blurred when they talked about the feelings of teamwork and friendship. They liked their work because they were working with friends, or people they genuinely liked and respected: supervisors, other student managers, and employees. When Jonathan described his impressions of the people he worked with, he said, "You felt they really cared about you. We had a lot of fun and I felt like a lot of people wanted to come there and it was family."

Their descriptions of the relationships and their verbal enthusiasm as they talked about their coworkers reflected a strong sense of esprit de corps. Mari enthusiastically tried to describe the relationships she had built at work:

> Just starting from my freshman year, I met Anita and Dan, and Wanda, and all those people I met my freshman year right out of the gate. I worked with them every day and we ate supper together, and you just build on those relationships. From working together, we had a lot of classes together and we helped each other study and stuff. And you build relationships with people who you know you are going to help out, and are going to help you out. So, a lot of--even, the younger kids--when they would come in as freshmen and sophomores but I knew they were a Spanish minor or Spanish major, so I would help them with it. So you build on the relationships that

you make…You're gonna be friends with them outside of work, and then just the others you just start hanging out with them, and so I can't explain it.

The relationship experience theme was multi-faceted and broke down into sub-themes: work relationship experiences and personal relationship experiences.

Work relationship experiences. Work relationship experiences were those that resulted from task oriented encounters with supervisors, other student managers and employees. Because someone noticed them and suggested the student manager position to them, they believed they were "picked" by their supervisors to be student managers. Janet recalled the day she was discovered as a potential student manager when she was a freshman and new employee:

> And I'm a first born child and so I'm bossy, and I was kind of bossing her [another student] around and telling her what to do, and showing her what to do, and everything. And after that, that's when he [her supervisor] came up to me and asked me if I wanted to be a manager, and so…. I was excited about it. I was just a checker [referring to her previous grocery store job], and a new student and it was kind of an opportunity for me to do something, so.

The participants liked that it was THEIR job to make sure the work got done. They liked being in charge. "I liked the ability to kind of oversee the different areas and make sure things were running smoothly and also to just have that extra knowledge about things," said Jackson. Both Jackson and Mari talked about how they liked working in Melange during the summer, when there were few student employees and they each had a broad scope of responsibility.

The participants were proud of their work, and it affected their sense of responsibility and how they dealt with others. Jonathan believed the work he did affected how he was

viewed by others. He explained that by saying, "You're in charge of how it's going to run, and every night it's a reflection on you."

Heidi had a transformational experience. She said she was very conscious of the image she presented at work, and called herself, "a very shy, nervous person." She talked about how she became more confident as she worked: "The Hideaway kind of helped me to get out of my shell and to work my way up to the front eventually. Intimidating, that's the word." Heidi talked about being recommended for a promotion:

> There was a couple people that suggested it cause the first year they suggested it I didn't want to accept it, because I'm not one of those people that likes to delegate out, I always think if you want it done right, you better do it yourself kind of thing, so I didn't do it the first time around, but the second time around I finally just said whatever and yeah I applied for it and got it.

Work relationships with supervisors. The participants worked hard to make sure people thought well of them and tried hard to please their supervisors, as well as demonstrated to others that they were doing a good job. They developed respect, loyalty, and friendship toward their supervisors. Robert described how the relationship with his supervisors made him want to be responsible:

> I really enjoyed working with the adult managers there. I developed some good relationships…I felt like I was trying to do a really good job to help them…I felt like that relationship I developed with the full time staff was one of the reasons I felt responsibility toward the job.

The supervisors worked with them individually, and sometimes in small groups to help them deal with a variety of situations. Much of that support related to developing skills needed to help them to be successful in their careers after Valley College. Cary talked about his supervisors in Melange giving counsel about what to do:

> Judy, Tony, even Jack [professional management staff] at times would give advice on how to handle particular situations or maybe step in and do it as a group of two managers, so, yeah if there's ever a question of how to handle a situation, the, your management team [referring to the director's direct reports] would step in and give great advice.

Jay thought that Judy and Tony were supportive to all the student employees. He said, "I also found that… Judy and Tony… did really well, really well with the students, um, not just [with] the managers, but the students in general as far as being a support system."

Participant loyalty to their supervisors was apparent. Jay described his loyalty to his supervisor, Tony:

> The staff member that had the biggest impact on me would be Tony. I worked with Tony quite a bit, and I think over the four years I was there we had established a rapport between the two of us. I felt like he could always count on me to do my job and to do it well, and I felt like he trusted me, which was…which was a big deal for me because Tony has a hard time allowing people to be trusted. I mean, that's probably a bad way of saying it. Tony is very cautious. If you can put him at ease by doing a really good job, you know you are doing something right. I would always laugh, because I knew that every time there was a special thing going on in Melange, I would always see an email from Tony… I always felt quite pleased that Tony asked me and it was kind of a special, special task. It was always something out of the ordinary, made it a little exciting. And, um, I was always willing to listen to what Tony said and listen to his experience. Obviously, he has been at Melange a very long time and is very experienced and, um, so I learned a lot from him in that way.

In regards to trying to find substitutes when needing time off, Mari said "If you really couldn't figure something out, usually Judy and Tony would do something for us." That level of support bred loyalty and respect in return. The participants looked to their supervisors as mentors and role models. Jay said that Judy taught him ways to say things more effectively to students he supervised. He expressed how Judy helped him learn to be professional in his work:

Judy really nourished me as far as my relationships with coworkers. You know, what to do; what not to do; how much to interact with them; how not to interact with them…and she was able to provide good advice, and something that I could always learn from. And so I think Judy helped me a lot with my um, professionalism in dealing with coworkers.

Work relationships with employee-peers. The participants enjoyed their work

friendships but were keenly of how awkward it could be to be the boss in one place and a

peer in another. They were sensitive to the potential for difficulty in supervising other

students. Sometimes actual difficulties occurred and they had the opportunity to practice

dealing with them. "I think working here helped me to figure out the boundary between

friend and boss, so I can convey that at my job now," said Mari. That kind of relationship is

different for students than full-time staff because full-time staff can have relationships

outside of work, with different people, but students are with their employees in class,

residence halls and other activities. This awareness and practice was helpful as they entered

their careers, because early in their careers, they were still young and needed to work with

people of all ages.

In order to handle peer supervision, the participants tried to separate the role of friend

and supervisor. Heidi learned to keep work at work and be professional. She said she

learned what to do by "seeing the other student managers and how people would react if they

were letting things slide or calling people out on their responsibilities." Heidi also said:

> There's a difference between being somebody's friend and somebody's actual supervisor. You can be on their level but you can't get to the point where you're friends, and you're letting them get away with murder, and getting away with everything; there still has to be that boundary there. You have to be able to say "go take this out" or "you're coming in hung-over, that's not what needs to be done-I need you to go home now"…I definitely learned that there's a difference between being friendly and you know, down to earth with somebody and supervising.

Sometimes, significant negative experiences occurred that affected how they handled similar situations in the future. Janet addressed an employee's negative attitude when she administered a performance appraisal. It did not go well, the student employee became very angry (eventually quitting), and it troubled Janet because the woman never spoke to her again. Out of that experience, she learned that she had to be careful how she addressed situations, but she also learned not to be afraid to do it, and that she needed to do her best and then let it go. Janet said of the experience:

> There's a difference between being somebody's friend and somebody's actual supervisor. You can be on their level but you can't get to the point where you're friends, and you're letting them get away with murder, and getting away with everything; there still has to be that boundary there.

Even though it had happened several years ago, when she talked about it, it was obvious that this experience still bothered Janet, and she referred to it several times during the interview.

The participants were sensitive and thoughtful about things that had happened as they dealt with people and situations. Jonathan's experience was that the student managers who supervised him when he first started working, exerted their power and were not kind to freshmen; giving the freshmen all the "bad jobs." It was such a negative experience for him that he discussed it with a professor, and the professor suggested he request a change of location. Reflecting upon that experience, Jonathan said, "Some that negative stuff that happened was good because I learned what not to do and I learned how to treat people." Jay also referred to student managers who were not respectful to their employees:

> One of my biggest complaints about the student managers…was how we deal with our student workers. And, one of the pet peeves of mine, um, working in that job, was this (sigh) undue sense of authority that the student managers can have at times

and the student workers take great offense at that. It's matter of having the right tone and dealing with the student workers with the right tone.

The participants were keen observers. They saw what happened around them, and even if it was not a positive experience, they learned lessons from what they saw and behaved differently themselves.

Jonathan believed his positive attitude set a mood for the team, and Robert would always go in at the last minute, because he knew they needed his help. Jackson thought his contribution was to the team effort: "Let's work because it's beneficial to work. You do it for more than a paycheck." They liked being in charge, and they felt responsible for making sure the tasks were done, as well as maintaining a positive work environment.

Work relationships with each other. They tried to respect each other's decisions and not change the way the other student managers did things, even if they thought it should be different. Cary said:

> There's only a couple of us on a shift at a time and we never questioned each other's decision or…the way they decided to do something…For example say Jeff wanted to do something his way. I may have thought of it being better a different way, but I wouldn't go behind his back and change it to the way I thought it was better. There was mutual respect.

Robert said, "I felt like, especially the student manager group, they were kind of a close knit group. Not necessarily always socially, but when we were working together, we were sticking together." Jonathan said that he and the other student managers worked well together to organize their shifts. Janet and Jay enjoyed being with the other student managers as a change of pace from schoolwork. When they talked about working with supervisors,

each other or their employees, the participants quickly moved into talking about how they made friends at work.

Personal relationship experiences. The professional and personal relationships tended to blur as the participants described esprit de corps. They had fun when they were working as a team and they talked about feeling like family. Janet said, "I loved the supervisors in the Hideaway. They were you know, kind of like our moms away from home sort of thing. So, I really enjoyed going to work. It wasn't like my high school job, where I didn't like it." Heidi, in describing her relationship with the full-time staff, said, "They kind of gave you that Mama feel, like if you were far away from your mom, they were your moms, you know."

They became animated and smiled as they spoke of friendships they had developed and, in many cases, still maintained. Those who tended to have fewer close work friends, such as Janet, also used the friend term for those with whom they worked. As they began to get to know people at work, the participants intentionally used work as a way to socialize, and their co-workers became their friends. Heidi made the majority of her friends through work. She said:

> I think I got to know a lot more students than I otherwise would if I didn't work at all; because I wanted to stay to myself because I was nervous and I think it also just brought out my personality more... I just truly overall, enjoyed my experience, and the people I met, obviously are my best friends to this day… I met my friends THROUGH The Hideaway.

Both Heidi and Jonathan talked about how they became good friends with each other because of work--and were still great friends.

Describing himself as a "closet dweller" before he started working, Bryan began working because he spent too much time in his room and wanted to meet more people. His roommate was a student manager and suggested he work in dining services. Jackson had a similar experience, leaving custodial work because he did not like working alone. Jonathan said, "We had a lot of fun, and I felt like a lot of people wanted to come there, and it was family." Mari was vehement that she initially "hated" the job when she was a freshman and wanted to quit until she started making friends. She said, "I'd say about half of my really good friends, like people I looked forward to coming back for homecoming, were people I worked with in Melange." Robert fell in love with another student manager and they got married. Some participants ended up rooming with co-workers. Jonathan said, "When I went back this time, I wasn't going to see my professors; I was going to see … my friends and people I worked with."

In addition to developing peer friendships, they developed personal relationships with the full time staff and maintained contact after graduation. Cary discussed how he and another student manager called the head cook "Grandma" and their immediate supervisor, Judy, "Mom." He also learned things from "Mom," but the affection regarding the personal nature of the relationship was very apparent. Bryan joked in a friendly way about not wanting to make Judy mad -- the way one would tease a friend. Jackson developed very close friendships with some of the full-time staff, saying, "We became like a close knit family." He also said:

> I got one that I been there for supper before and things like that. We are really close
> in that regard. I know right now that if I really needed something, I could still

ask…and they would go out of their way to do anything they could for me, which is really nice.

Social networking was consistently mentioned as a way the participants kept in touch with former coworkers. Knowing what was going on in people's lives made them feel close, even if they did not talk frequently. Janet said:

> Facebook makes it a whole different ball game. Because, you know I consider them my friends and I feel like I have relationships with them, but because of Facebook it's effortless. I mean, even with the supervisors like Linda [a full-time supervisor in The Hideaway], she and I will still occasionally send an email to each other and keep in touch. And yeah, I consider them a big part of my Valley College experience--the people that I worked with--and I can find out about you and your life in my own quiet private time. Like, I don't need to be on my best game and sitting here talking face to face with you. I can be in my pajamas on my couch at midnight in my apartment, and still figure out what's going on with your life. It's beautiful for introverts.

Cary also noticed that social networking helped him stay in touch. He said, "In these days it's easier to stay connected because of social networking. Even June [former head cook he called 'Grandma'] who is no longer with Valley due to retirement; we still talk every now and then."

Work ethic. The participants had strong work ethics. They did not always like their work, but they persevered and kept going to work, because they were responsible and knew they were needed. Their loyalty to their supervisors and each other kept them behaving responsibly.

Most participants said they learned their work ethic from their parents. Robert worked with his dad, on a construction crew, for six summers. Staying home for the day was not an option, because his dad would not let him. "I always felt like, if I was assigned to

work, it was my responsibility to work. I would rather plan something else around work than

work around something else," said Robert.

Janet's parents expected her to work and she worked since she was sixteen. She

worked as a grocery store cashier year-round, and as a church camp kitchen helper during the

summer. She said:

> My parents have always been, I mean, "you work." When I was 16, my mom filled
> out my application for HyVee [grocery store] and submitted it for me,…and on my
> [college] breaks I didn't have a choice. I was working when I came home from
> breaks. And, if I ever complained about work. "Well, welcome to the real world."
> You know, that's always the comment I got from them. "As long as you are keeping
> up with your school work we expect you to work." Yeah, I think, you know, it gives
> me a sense of a work ethic… You had to give them [HyVee] two weeks notice if you
> needed time off. If you couldn't find someone to work for you and you were already
> on the schedule, "Sorry, it's your shift." And so when I went to college, I just never
> lost that mind set, that it was never an option to me. It was work and I've got to be
> there.

Janet did not like that job, but she stuck with it because it was an expectation. Mari was

proud of never having missed a day of work in her life, saying "Working **--** it's an obligation.

People do depend on you." Bryan also, had never missed a day of work. He said, "I got my

work ethic from my dad. Ever since I can remember, my dad worked every day…I feel like

we had a responsibility to the student body." The participants attributed their work ethic and

their sense of responsibility, to the example set by their parents. Their work ethics kept them

coming to work even when they did not like it.

Debt expectation. All the participants took out student loans. They expected to have

student loan debt upon graduation and were extremely matter-of-fact about it. None of them

had credit card debt. Jonathan said that it would have been possible to not work by taking

out more student loans, but since he was paying for school himself, every little bit helped.

Most participants had some assistance from their parents. Robert gave his parents a small amount of money out of every paycheck to help pay them back. He used the rest for his own expenses.

The participants consciously separated school expenses (cost of tuition, room, board and books), from other living expenses (car expenses, gas, and "going out") as they discussed finances. Janet, whose parents expected her to work, described how she thought about the kinds of expenses differently:

> I took out a lot of loans, but the money that I made here was more just stuff like car money and fun money and stuff like that. But, it also helped me pay whatever tuition money I had left.

Bryan did not work until his junior year and said he started working because he thought he needed to get out of his room and be with people. During the first four years of school, even with his parent's help, Bryan accumulated student loan debt of $22,000. Even though they were willing to help him during his fifth year, Bryan thought his parents had done enough. The traditional time it took a student to graduate from Valley College was four years. Therefore, Bryan insisted that he pay for the fifth year by himself. All participants were making payments on their loans. Bryan was trying to be frugal in order to meet his debt obligation. He was renting an old drafty house and keeping the heat as low as he could stand it in the winter (below 60 degrees) to save money. He had no credit card debt saying, "If I can't pay for it with cash, I don't buy it." Janet's fiancé had graduated without debt but had sacrificed mightily while he was in college. He was surprised by her level of debt, but she said that it was normal and that was just the way it was. As she discussed her debt, Janet displayed a matter-of-factness that was common among the participants:

I've got ten years left on my loans; and I graduated in 2008. My fiancé walked out of college with no student loans. He was very, very poor in college. When he sees my loans he's like "are you kidding me?" It's not like it's credit card debt, it's just student loans.

On-Campus Work and Early Career Experience

The participants were not intentionally thinking about their on-campus job as important to their future work when they took the job, but they realized it was a resume builder and a skill building opportunity by the time they graduated. They initially received their work schedules and accepted the job because their supervisors arranged their work schedules for them and it was easy.

Cari and Mari knew they were developing specific business management skills. Cary decided to continue working on campus instead of implementing his initial plan of going to work in a bank. He said, "With the management program, it gave the opportunity to be a resume builder as well, and show you were a manager of people."

The participants learned how to receive feedback and deal with difficult situations. They also built confidence, developed patience, and learned the importance of being precise.

How to receive feedback. The participants spoke about how they received constructive feedback from their supervisors as they worked. When their supervisors observed them do something that could have been handled better, they discussed it with the participants. This happened in many different types of situations, such as dealing with difficult people, how to improve their communication, and how to conduct themselves in general. They experienced being mentored. Jonathan said he "felt that they really cared about you," referring to his supervisors. Practicing how to react when they were given

feedback or constructive criticism helped the participants learn not to appear defensive or say

the wrong thing in response to being corrected. It helped them feel comfortable with

feedback as they started their careers, and by receiving feedback themselves, they learned

how to provide it for others.

Mari initially had a tendency to get defensive when her supervisors provided

feedback. She described how that feedback impacted her:

> They were able to give me really good feedback on how I was performing as a manager…even if it wasn't review time, but if one of them noticed something [that I said or did] that really bothered another student, they would come up and tell me about it… I may not have realized I hurt this person's feelings, so I was able to think about that and change how I approached the situation the next time…it helped me feel comfortable with receiving feedback. It took me awhile, but the experiences with them, hearing what they had to say, trying to think about it before I became defensive about it…I'm glad it happened to me while I was still a student in an environment where I'm not going to get fired, you know.

Cary received repeat feedback from his supervisors about not taking on too many

tasks personally. He talked about the day he had taken a garbage disposal apart to release a

jammed fork, not realizing that he might not be able to put it back together because of all the

seals and bearings involved. Cary said:

> I learned that dining services was not like back home where if I had an idea where I thought I could fix it myself, I could. I learned not to the take the dish machine or the garbage disposal apart (nervous laugh). Because you don't necessarily know everything about the bits and pieces of the operations, where I thought tearing it apart would be able to get the jammed silverware out, but I didn't know it would also cost in the long run, with parts and pieces to get it all back together.   I learned NOT (his emphasis) to be so much hands on in that nature, or think I could do it all myself. And that I've seen on a lot of, ah, semester reviews—was learn to delegate more.
>
> Every now and then, I get in the mode or in the mood where I just want to get it done quicker, rather than have the new hire--having to re-explain to them; the new project they've not done before. I'll just do it, and we'll get out of there quicker.

Through his on-campus work, Cary became aware of his tendency to take care things himself rather than work through others. Much like Mari, he had practice receiving feedback about his performance, prior to starting his career.

Jackson was aware that his supervisors had intentionally allowed him to handle difficult situations and used those experiences to give him feedback. He said:

> There were several situations where instead of them (his supervisors) just stepping in to take care of the situation, they let you have the reigns, and let you develop those skills, and um, take it as a personal challenge of sorts. "We're gonna let you control the situation and we'll see how you do." And they they'd be able to offer advice on how maybe next time to maybe try this perspective on it and then. They'd always come back with that reinforcement. Tell me, a.) "Great job," or "maybe next time try to look at it THIS (his emphasis) way."…Sometimes you don't want to hear that you're not doing things the right way, but you're going to hear that wherever you are.

Jackson summarized how he had learned to view receiving feedback as both an athlete and an employee by saying, "You learn how to handle it and understand it's not an attack on your person, it's more just something to help you become better and you gotta take it that way and use it that way."

Dealing with difficult situations. The participants developed and honed their interpersonal skill of dealing with difficult situations, whether it be dealing with customers, co-workers or employees. They received direction from their supervisors, which helped them learn how to talk to people as they did their work. The participants also had to deal with difficult situations that were not their personal issues, such those between other students and customer service situations.

Heidi was promoted once since she started her social work career, and supervised two people. She learned to deal with difficult situations in her on-campus job. Heidi said, "You

put your big smile on, even though deep down you are ready to wring somebody's neck…I

had to learn there's professional you and your own you. Professional you is the one that gets

the spotlight." Robert said you learn "to put yourself in other people's shoes" when you

learn to deal with difficult people.

Janet's experience with the unhappy employee who did not like her performance

appraisal helped her to become less sensitive and less timid in dealing with difficult people.

Janet said, "She was nasty. That was freshman year and by senior year, she still wouldn't

talk to me. And, that's fine. I didn't lose sleep over it after awhile." As she talked about

dealing with conflict in the future and how it would be different, Janet reflected back on that

experience and said:

> It bothered me when she was mad at me. I think it's different again now, because…I
> oversee this program that has ten people work for them during the [State] Fair, and so
> that will be me, and, with interns, and I'll oversee these couple of interns. And, I
> think it will be a little bit easier than it was at Valley College, because, I think I'm
> removed enough from college where I've been in this job a few years now. I do
> believe I know what I'm talking about.

Cary, who had difficulty tolerating employees who complained, still did not like

"whiny people," but he knew how to deal with them better. Jay explained how the students

he supervised as a student manager were not always respectful and how having practice at

dealing with that prepared him for his graduate assistantship. He said:

> Being a manager at the Melange provides you with plenty of opportunities for
> conflict… For example, people are working harder than they have to and are angry
> about it. So when you tell that student "hey, you are not doing your job" or "you
> know, you are being disrespectful to the rest if the students workers"…When you are
> giving evaluations of those student workers, um, they take great offense to that and
> right away, they want to start an argument, and so [to] maintain that professionalism
> in the midst of having another person yell at you, um, can be very difficult; and you

know, I've had several experiences with that. I've had student workers at Valley College…get right up in my face at times and tell me what they think.

And so, having an experience like that, I thought, was really valuable because, because here at West University, you come across students who do not, um, think that you are qualified for this job you are in. You have to convince them you are qualified. And, you come across students who are plagiarizing or texting during class and to deal those situations in calm, professional way is a great asset in the job that I have now.

Jackson had dealt with challenging parents as both a substitute teacher and as a coach. He found that keeping it impersonal and remembering that a large part of the other person's reaction was dependent upon how he reacted to them was an effective practice that he learned as a student manager. His description was to "look at the situation first, instead of assuming the person is just not being responsible; kind of assess it, and then go in and work, and see how you can improve the situation."

The participants learned that the way they delegated work assignments between both the high school and college students they supervised, and who they placed employees together with on the job, affected the degree of cooperation they received and the overall quality of work produced. Therefore, how employees were assigned to tasks in their daily work, affected how many difficult situations the participants had to face. Some participants said that high school students were harder to supervise, because they were generally more immature. Mari said she learned that the trick to supervising high school students was to pay more attention to them and give them time to cool off when they were upset. Mari supervised young people in her career position, and continued to use that technique.

I think your most difficult people to deal with a lot are the high-schoolers. And I work with people that are just out of high school now--a couple of them at a time--but

just knowing how to; I know their mind set and so I know kind of how to reach out to them. I tend to not just slam them down and say "no that's not how it's going to be." I tend to try to work with them quite a bit…and their attitudes. If they get into a bad attitude, and just knowing to let them cool down first, and then, going and talking to them. I think that's helped a lot. I've had to do that a few times here [at Valley College]. And now I've done that a few times on my [present] job. If I know that somebody is really hot and…they're really excitable, I know I'm not going to be able to go and talk some sense into them right now. I'll let them cool down a little bit.

Bryan also said the high school students were a challenge to deal with but expressed a tolerant attitude about that challenge. He said, "The biggest challenge was sometimes getting the high-schoolers not to be goofing off, but that just comes with their age." However, Bryan found college students to be more difficult than high school employees because they did not take direction as well. Bryan described that experience:

Actually, actually, if you figured out with the high school students, who you could put with who, they were a lot easier to manage than the college students. The college students weren't as likely to do what you wanted them to do. They were more--they thought they should do what THEY (his emphasis) wanted.

The participants had many different kinds of situations from which they extracted opinions of how they should deal with difficult situations. They observed, practiced, learned what did and did not work for them. They had opportunity to try different ways of phrasing things in their difficult conversations, and took those experiences forward into their careers.

Building confidence. Each participant was noticed by someone as having potential and was told they should apply to the student manager program. That encouragement contributed to building their confidence. As the participants worked with their supervisors, they were given responsibility and redirected as needed. Their confidence grew as they were

mentored and their work skills strengthened. That built their confidence in their ability to do

it again in their chosen career. Janet said of being noticed and promoted as a freshman:

> I think that gave me a little bit of confidence to know that whatever path I want to go
> down -- I had no idea where I was going to be at-- as long as I made sure that I
> learned the job and I worked hard, and always did my best, that, hopefully, people
> would recognize that, and I would be promoted.

Not having a job when she graduated scared Janet, but her confidence was boosted by her

experience of being successful in the past.

Heidi was asked to apply for a student manager position twice. This showed her that

she had an ability which was not being utilized. This built her confidence in her abilities.

Heidi described her performance as a social worker: "I'm not being arrogant, but I know the

things and nobody can't discredit me because I know what I'm doing." Jonathan developed

self-confidence working in The Hideaway. He said, "When I first started there I thought I

can't do this job, this is too much, but then I realized I can." Mari said:

> Having to supervise people and having to make plans and stuff, um, at work affected
> how I was able to do that [in my job now]. I was able to understand what needs to get
> done, how it needs to get done and I think it helped just my confidence level doing
> that stuff.

All participants used their student manager positions as resume builders. Jonathan

believed that his on-campus work demonstrated that he had the confidence to take charge and

get things. He said:

> I don't remember that it came up in my interview, but I think it really helped;
> especially the student manager part. Those are strong words. I forgot what I put on
> it, but I know I worded it really well; like [the words] responsibilities and duties. And
> so, I think, it really helped because it showed I was really responsible and you can
> handle being in charge…I feel that was really one highlight. I was in social work
> club and that was really cool, but I think it helped hands-on as a manager, and you are

really doing the skills. It's not like a major, like education, "Oh you're in education club," or "You're in band." That's cool really, but it's not really giving skills.

Jonathan was confident that he could handle situations that came along in his career position, most of which were unplanned; the students he worked with were autistic and unpredictable, and their parents were protective.

Jay did not receive any training on how to deal with difficult situations that might arise as a graduate assistant, and the confidence he gained from his student manager position helped him as an instructor. He said:

> Having the [student] manager experience prepared me for this [teaching] job; really gave me a leg up. It gave me the training I did not have walking into this job…It gave me confidence walking into my job. When you have to speak--when I was a TA (teacher's assistant) for professional ethics, I had to get up in front of, oh, upwards around 100 or so students. You need a certain level of self-confidence to do it professionally, not so your voice shakes. If your voice shakes, if you're nervous, the students know it, and once the students know it, you start to lose your credibility. If the students see you are nervous, they start to doubt if you are right for that job. Dealing with the student workers at Valley College really helped me with that, and helped me try to give off the level of confidence that says "Hey I know what I'm doing. I'm qualified and I know what I'm doing," without being arrogant about it, which the students end up liking, because they want to feel as though their money is well spent.

Robert expressed how even if his on-campus student manager position did not impress his employer, it helped him feel confident as he looked for a job. He said:

> Being in a leadership position and being able to put that on a resume--and then in turn, getting the recommendations from the supervisors you had built the relationships with--I felt like if it didn't have an effect on an employer looking at it, it at least gave me the confidence that I had something like that on my resume.

Developing patience. The participants learned patience with other people as they trained and delegated. They also learned patience working with multiple supervisors, who

sometimes contradicted each other in their own direction giving. They realized, after they graduated, that multiple directions from persons in authority were not uncommon. The participants worked through difficult work-shifts by focusing on the tasks at hand while remembering that everyone did not have the same skills or abilities. They learned what it was like to have their patience run out. Jonathan said that the patience he learned in his on-campus job gave him the ability to handle the challenges of his social work position working with autistic children. He described what it was like working with the autistic children:

> With autism, little things can trigger something so I make sure they are ok. With autism there are a lot of social issues, so I deal with their social behaviors, actually, more social behaviors and less academic stuff… It's a pretty big job and I'm pretty tired by the end of the day. It's like there is no break.

Then, Jonathan discussed what he learned in his on-campus position that helped him handle it:

> I learned a lot of patience. Working in The Hideaway, you had to work with a lot of people. Those skills help me be more positive working with other people…It helped me see that you have to be patient with everyone and take that into consideration. I felt like I wasn't that patient of a person before [I worked in The Hideaway].

Robert compared the patience he needed to train new workers in The Hideaway, to teaching new students in his biology laboratory. He stated, "My students are like the new trainees coming in. I have to explain things, and be patient, because they're not gonna understand or always get it right away, but they're trying."

Several participants (Cary and the garbage disposal incident, for example) talked about how they learned not to do everything themselves in order to get things done, but to be patient and delegate to others. They learned to be patient in the face of frustration and

deadlines. Janet explained how she learned to stay calm in her daily work, and it transferred

to her present ability to be calm:

> And it's even something as silly as when those lunch and dinner shifts got crazy.
> They got crazy, and I think that even the skills that I learned, I rarely ever get panicky
> about being in a time crunch or something. I very much, like, don't panic about the
> situation.

Learning to be precise. The participants talked about how, although they were not

working in food service now, they had become very aware of how attention to detail was

essential. An awareness of the importance of attention to detail was related by each

participant, back to their work in dining, where they learned how the small steps of what they

did was important.

Robert had saved food that had been prepared incorrectly, instead of throwing it away

as he had been instructed. He was taking it home, because he disagreed with the policy,

thinking "why not?" Eating food that had been mishandled could cause illness. Food cost

was also controlled by not allowing food to be taken out by the staff; if staff were allowed to

take food out, they would be encouraged to over-produce. Removal of food that was not paid

for was considered theft. Robert was embarrassed when he was confronted about it. He said

he learned from this experience how important it was to explain rules to people, so they

understood the reasons for things. Robert said that experience caused him to implement the

practice of explaining "why" in his science classroom, in order to make sure his students did

what he wanted them to do.

Jay learned to be very clear and specific about giving directions in order to avoid difficult situations. He said:

> If you leave any gaps whatsoever in your description, they (employees in Melange) will take advantage of those gaps in order to do less work. And, the students in the classroom are no different. If you leave any grey areas at all, they will take advantage of it and do less work than they have to.

As a graduate assistant, he focused on being specific regarding what he expected from the students, because it helped students follow directions better. For Jay, one of the most difficult situations was dealing with students who had plagiarized, so explaining clearly ahead of time helped ward that off. Jay said, "By and large, the bulk of the students who plagiarize don't intend to do it."

Janet indicated that although she was not a list person, she used lists to provide instructions for her staff and to keep track of what she had delegated. Janet said:

> I would make a list for other people, to assign the students. Kind of as a visual reminder that this is what needs to be done; this is the time frame that it needs to be done. I need you to initial when it is done.

Janet intended to use this technique when she became responsible for teams of people during the State Fair as part of her recent promotion.

Some participants remembered specific sanitation or cooking skills they had learned in their on-campus work, and talked about how they noticed and practiced those things now. When asked if he applied any specific sanitation or task skills to his present work, Jay said:

> You come across a lot of facilities, whether they be restaurants, or the buildings in which I work, um, where maybe the staff there who are cleaning and taking care of the place don't do it in the correct manner, and it's probably bad. But, I can't help thinking to myself as I see people doing their jobs, "Oh gol, there are so many violations within a two minute period!" Some things that we were absolutely prohibited from doing in Melange, I see people doing all the time; I mean something

so simple as putting the cleaning cart right next to a drinking fountain. I imagine that if we had drinking fountains in Melange, we wouldn't be allowed to put cleaning supplies and trash receptacle right next to the drinking fountain, just little things like that. So, not things like my job, but life in general. When you are searching for apartments, you can pick up on things right away; apartments that are good and apartments that are bad, based on how they clean their facility. You learn to pick up on smaller things quicker.

Summary

The first section—*On Campus Work and Academic Success*—explored the experience the participants had with work affecting their academics. Two themes emerged about the effect work had on academic success: (1) students had their work schedules arranged around classes for them and (2) working while going to school helped them develop good time management skills. Having work scheduled around their class schedule, with no effort on their part, was a huge bonus to working on campus. The participants expressed the view that working helped them focus on coursework by requiring them from the beginning to organize their time. They learned to be efficient and to utilize time between work and classes during the day to study. They said that if they had not worked, they would have spent time on other things instead of school work, and they would not have studied more.

The second section—*On Campus Work and the Overall Student Experience*—explored the participants' views of how working affected their non-academic experiences while in college. The three themes that emerged in this area were the importance of relationship development, work ethics and debt expectation. The relationships experienced by the participants are best described as esprit de corps: the overall positive experience from being together. The relationship experience theme was multi-faceted and broke down into several sub-themes: work relationships with their supervisors, other student managers, and

employees, and personal relationships. They valued the relationships they developed at work, and subsequently developed personal relationships and lasting friendships. They became fond of their supervisors, and in addition to having fun at work and counting their supervisors as friends, they believed they had been mentored in skills that affected their on-campus work and their careers. They liked being in charge and making sure things got done, and while all experiences were not positive, they recognized that they had learned from them. Their strong work ethics got them to work; personal relationships kept them coming back. Most of the participants had some financial support from their parents. They expected to have student loan debt upon graduation and were extremely matter-of-fact about it. They assumed loans in order to pay for their tuition and room and board, and they worked to pay for their other expenses.

The third and final section—*On Campus Work and Early Career Experience*—explored what the participants said they specifically took from their on-campus employment experience and applied to their careers. The themes that emerged in this area were how to receive feedback, dealing with difficult situations, building confidence, developing patience, and learning to be precise.

As they were trained and mentored by their supervisors, the participants learned how to receive feedback and to not get defensive or upset by being told what to do. They dealt with difficult situations with customers and other employees in the daily course of their student manager responsibilities. Supervising people their own age posed a challenge due to lack of respect and lack of maturity. They learned that who they assigned employees to work with whom greatly affected the degree of cooperation they received and the overall quality of

work. They also learned what worked and what did not work by observing their supervisors

and each other. Practice in dealing with situations at work built their overall confidence in

their abilities. By working their way through the things that happened at work, the

participants developed patience with other people and challenging situations. They also

learned that attention to detail made a difference in the quality of work.

Chapter 5 will relate the findings back to the literature in the context of the three

research questions (academic success, overall student experience and careers), and discuss

implications of the findings. Specific overall recommendations will be made for practice and

for policy.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARIES, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter summarizes the findings of how graduates made meaning of their on-campus employment experiences, and relates those findings back to the literature in the context of how on-campus employment can be intentionally utilized to affect the success of students. Implications are categorized by the focus areas of the three research questions: academic success, the overall student experience and careers. Within this discussion, implications are reviewed. Recommendations are made for practice, and recommendations for policy are also discussed.

Research Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and understand how recent college graduates from a private liberal arts institution made meaning of their on-campus work experiences. The theoretical framework was Involvement Theory (Astin, 1984) and Sensemaking Theory (Weick, 1995). The theoretical perspective utilized in this research was interpretivism through a symbolic interactionist lens.

According to Astin (1984), student learning and development was directly affected by the degree and amount of involvement students engaged in on campus, and engagement affected persistence. People need to feel they belong. The basic tenet is that the more students are involved on campus, the more they will get out of their experience. Students who work on campus instead of off campus therefore, have additional opportunity to enhance their learning and development. Theory of Involvement (Astin, 1984) was the foundation upon which I built my study and it impacted the research questions and interview guide.

The findings in this study support Astin's Involvement Theory. On-campus employment engaged students while not detracting from academic success. The study was delimited to participants who persisted. None of the participants reached points where they wanted to leave college, even though several had challenging experiences with grades as well as not liking their work experience, but since they were being depended upon, they persisted. They overcame their challenges, built meaningful relationships with students and staff, and learned and practiced skills that impacted their careers.

Sensemaking Theory (Weick, 1995) stated that as people retrospectively continue to evaluate and reframe their experiences, their reality changes. Sensemaking Theory (Weick, 1995) favors plausibility over accuracy. How people act and feel depends on how they interpret their relationships with others. My research studied the participants' beliefs about how work affected their academic success, overall student experience and careers as they looked back on the experience. Utilizing Sensemaking Theory with the view that perception is reality made it possible to explore the longer term impact that on-campus employment had on students.

Symbolic interactionism provided a method to organize how the individual participants made meaning of their experiences before the data was categorized into themes. This was particularly important because of my positionality as the director of the department in which the participants had worked. It added a layer into the data analysis that helped me to avoid bias.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine Valley College alumni that had held student manager positions in dining services and had graduated between 2006 and 2010.

Delimiting the participants to those who had been out of school and working ensured that they had had sufficient time to have other employment and experiences in order to study their current reality: their current view of how their on-campus employment had affected them.

Data analysis techniques were drawn from Esterberg (2002), Merriam (2002), and Charmaz (2006). Esterberg (2002) and Merriam (2002) offered solid basic qualitative research practice summaries, collected from numerous sources. Interviews were transcribed and data were analyzed from the transcriptions. Additionally, audio recordings allowed voice tone and inflection to help guide the interpretation. As the data were analyzed into themes, the findings were categorized according to the three original research questions:

a. How do recent graduates from a liberal arts college describe the influence of on-campus employment on their academic success?

b. How do recent graduates from a liberal arts college describe the influence of on-campus employment on their overall student experience?

c. How do recent graduates from a liberal arts college describe the influence of on-campus employment on their career-entry after graduation?

Organizing the data into the three question categories of academic success, overall student experience and career entry helped to maintain a focus on the purpose of the study.

A previous mixed methods survey of all graduating seniors who worked on campus at Valley College (Empie, 2011) researched whether students believed they had learned and practiced transferrable work skills, evaluated their overall opinions about their job experiences and compared the hours worked in up to three different jobs simultaneously held

on campus. This study informed development of the interview guide and is referenced in the implications.

Results Summary and Implications

The figure below provides an overview of the themes described in Chapter 4. Each box represents the participants at a specific stage of their academic timeline and three of them relate to a specific research question.

Figure 1.

How Graduates Describe the Influence of On-Campus Employment
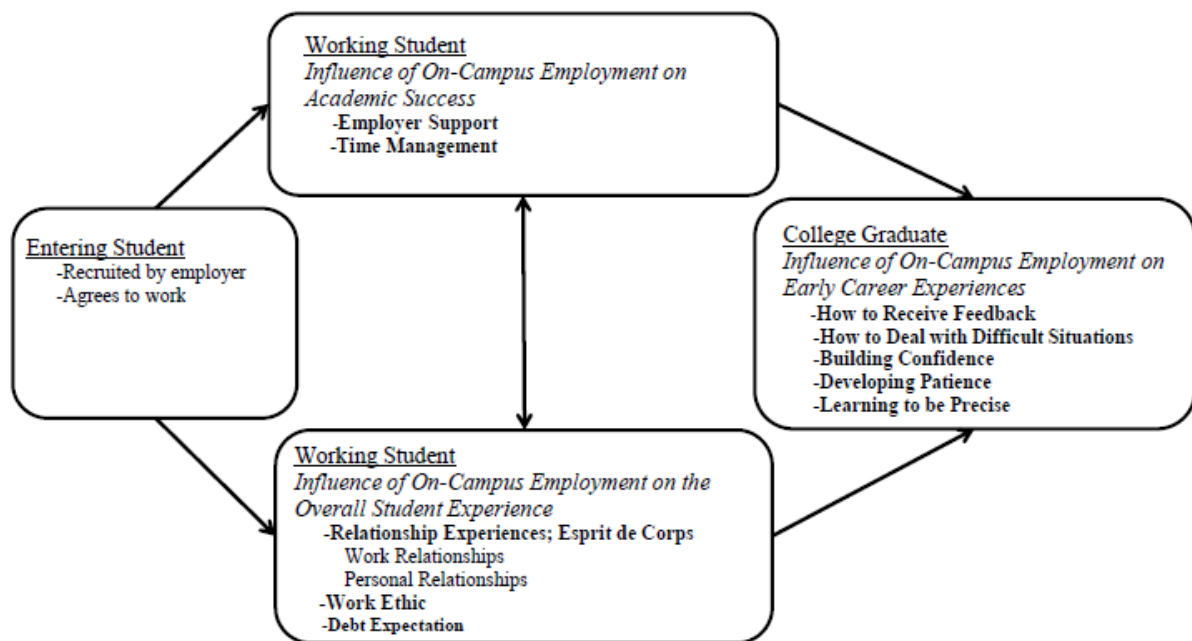
The participants were recruited to be dining service employees as entering students, and agreed to work prior to starting college. There were two research questions which focused

on working students: influence of on-campus employment on academic success and influence of on-campus employment on the overall student experience. One research question focused on the college graduate: influence of on-campus employment on early career experiences. The bold items in each box represent the common themes found through data analysis which relate to each specific research question.

Work and Academic Success

Employer support. Eight of the nine participants were recruited for their dining service job the summer prior to their freshman year. The job was easy to accept, because work had been scheduled around classes and activities before they ever came to campus. Having their supervisor arrange their work schedules for them was a great benefit in the eyes of all the participants. It decreased stress. This scheduling support began their work relationships with their supervisors on a positive note. The participants saw their supervisors as helping them succeed academically because the supervisors continued to help when they temporarily needed time off, or needed to change their schedules.

Five of the nine participants were first-generation college students, considered to be under-resourced students according to Becker et al. (2009). Berger and Milem (1999) found that, when at-risk students started working immediately, persistence was higher. Recruiting students by inviting them to work and not waiting for them to apply for jobs, is supported by the work of Rendón (2002) and Rendón et al. (2000), which found that when staff went to students instead of waiting for students to come to them, the students were more likely to persist. All the participants believed this was a good practice, not only the under-resourced students.

Time management. The participants believed that working contributed to their academic success by forcing them to manage their time well. They were involved in co-curricular activities to varying degrees, but all of them had time for the things they wanted and needed to do. The participants carried these time management skills with them into their careers. Time management skill development as a by-product of working on-campus was also supported by a quantitative survey at Valley College, where 90.89% of graduating seniors surveyed, believed that they had learned time management in their on-campus job (Empie, 2011, p. 10).

The overall implication is that on-campus employment can be intentionally designed to effectively engage students from their first semester and help them develop time management skills that are important to academic success, the overall student experience and early career success. This is consistent with research of Beeson and Wessel (2003), who demonstrated that, in order to feel engaged on campus, it was important for students to start working on campus within the first three weeks of arriving at the institution. It did not matter if the work was career-related or not. The participant who did not start working until his junior year (Bryan) indicated that he started working because he needed to reach and engage with others, which is also consistent with Beeson and Wessels' (2003) research, which found that work can be a vehicle for engagement.

Grades. The participants earned a range of grade points. They strongly believed that working did not affect their grades; and insisted that they would not have studied more even if the time had been available. The participants' belief that their work did not interfere with their academic experience is consistent with the findings of Nonis and Hudson (2006) and

Umbach et al. (2010). In a study discussed by Winkler (2009), there was no relationship

between hours per week spent working and academic success (Nonis & Hudson, 2006).

Umbach et al. (2010) found that on-campus employment at least does not detract from

cognitive development and learning. The participants studied a variety of majors—biology,

biochemistry, business, philosophy, social work, education—which leads to the suggestion

that the participants' view that working did not affect their grades is not related to academic

program content.

   Hours of work. None of the participants worked more than 20 hours per week. This

study did not evaluate hours worked per week. However, when discussing working students,

recommendations need to include how many hours to work. According to Baum (2010),

"Number of hours per week worked may actually be more relevant than the basic information

about whether or not a student works in terms of the impact on the student experience" (p. 6).

   The review of literature regarding hours worked, showed varied results. Students

who worked up to eight hours per week showed improved grades, and when students worked

up to twenty hours per week, it did not negatively affect grades (Wilkie & Jones, 1994).

Nineteen hours per week was the maximum before there were negative effects. Even at

twenty hours per week, persistence was maintained, although grades were affected

(Lundberg, 2004; Wilkie & Jones, 1994). Hours students work is also intricately connected

to financial aid award (Baum, 2010; Gupton et al., 2009; Perna, 2010) and that also needs to

be taken into consideration.

   Students should work enough hours per week to be engaged in the work

environment, with the understanding that up to eight hours per week will help their grades,

and they should not work more than nineteen hours per week if they want avoid repercussions from simply not having enough time to study. The actual number of hours needs to be determined by individual situation.

Work and the Overall Student Experience

      Relationships. The participants particularly enjoyed talking about the relationships they developed at work. This was apparent by their smiles, the enthusiasm in their voices and the length at which they talked about it. They believed they were asked to apply to be student managers because they had been good workers. They liked being responsible, depended upon, and being the ones who got things done. The participants learned from both positive and negative experiences.

      Through on-campus work, meaningful relationships developed. The participants talked about family-like relationships with both the full-time staff and other students. Even though they were keenly aware of the challenges of supervising students who were their peers outside of work, the participants readily blurred the lines separating the different levels of authority as they talked about the experience. The best description to summarize their description of work relationships is esprit de corps. This is consistent with the research of Berger and Milem (1999), who found that working on campus provided important relationships that were different from those made in class or residence halls and that work was an important form of socialization. Williams (1990) found that students rated relationships with their supervisors as more important than class groups or other personnel, and that through work students developed a more realistic picture of the real world of work.

Work ethic. The participants entered college with strong work ethics. They said they had learned their work ethics from their parents and they practiced it in their jobs. They demonstrated positive work ethics by not missing work. They went to work even when they had class pressures. Some participants initially disliked their jobs, and they went to work then as well. They believed that their work ethic and being generally good workers caused them become noticed as potential student managers. The participants enjoyed being in charge and believed they contributed to a positive work environment. The esprit de corps experienced by the participants, encouraged their sense of responsibility and their continued work ethic because they believed they were making a difference.

The experience of the participants is supported by Fox (2010) and Cheng and Alcántara (2004). According to Fox (2010), engagement at work is a national issue, and people were more engaged at work if they knew they were helping to make progress, even small progress. It is important for employees to be doing real work that matters, and it is important to understand how their work matters, in order to want to be engaged (Fox, 2010). Cheng and Alcántara (2004) found that students were interested in the meaning of their work. They enjoyed the process of searching and obtaining a position, they enjoyed applying the things they learned, and work helped them develop a structure for their daily routine.

Debt Expectation. The participants' attitudes toward student loans was casual and accepting, especially in comparison to the more alarmist attention given to it in the literature (Baum, 2010; Gupton et al., 2009; Perna, 2010). It is not known if the participants took that stance upon entering college, or adjusted to the concept of loans and loan policy, and merely became accepting by the time they graduated.

The participants categorized their expenses into two parts: school expense (tuition, room, board) and personal expense. They took out loans for their school expense, and therefore, the money they earned went towards their personal expense. They used their work income for things such as clothes, gas, and fun activities. The participants initially spoke as though work income was extra money, yet, as they spoke longer, they talked about it being essential. None of the participants tried to lower the loans they took out with their employment income and none of them had more than one job except Robert who was also a resident assistant, for which he received free housing.

The need to accept debt as a normal consequence of degree attainment is encouraged by Federal Work Study (FWS) allocation policies because the policies are inflexible and unavoidable to the students that need financial aid. FWS policies ultimately require a decrease in financial aid equal to the amount of income a student has earned, as well as regulatory limits on the amount of money a student can earn when receiving FWS funds (Baum, 2010; Perna, 2010).

> [F]or every dollar of work-study earnings a student is allowed, his eligibility for other forms of need-based aid is diminished by a dollar…FWS earnings diminish eligibility for institutional and other nonfederal grant aid and for federal subsidized loans even more than other [off campus employment] earnings diminish that eligibility. (Baum, 2010, p.17)

In financial aid calculation formulas, previous fiscal year income decreases the award by $.50 or less per dollar earned, but future earnings (FWS awards) decrease the award by the amount equal to the award. FWS policies encourage students to work less during the current year to avoid a financial aid award decrease the following year. It also discourages on-campus employment because of the dollar for dollar financial aid decrease.

Work and Early Career Experiences

How to receive feedback. The participants learned how to receive feedback without becoming defensive as they got used to being corrected by their supervisors. This happened in daily mentoring and performance appraisals. The participants believed that this helped them feel comfortable with receiving feedback as they started their careers. They also believed that by receiving frequent feedback, they improved their own ability to provide feedback for others. This was consistent with a survey done at Valley College, where 87.86% of the graduating seniors believed they learned how to receive feedback (Empie, 2011, p. 10) in a variety of on-campus positions. Lewis (2010) found that feedback was a "catalyst for growth" (p. 163). Dorsey (2011) emphasized that frequent and immediate feedback is critical and essential for the current generation to engage in the workplace, and periodic formal performance appraisals were not sufficient. The participants became comfortable with both daily casual and periodic formal feedback and it helped them both receive feedback and in some cases, provide feedback for others.

Dealing with difficult situations. The participants believed that their work experiences significantly helped them develop and hone their interpersonal skill of dealing with difficult situations. They received direction from their supervisors, which in turn, helped them learn how to talk to people as they worked. They also dealt with difficult situations such as those between student employees, and customer service situations. Their supervisors advised them on what to say and let them practice, while providing feedback along the way. The participants also learned by watching each other work, and deciding that what they saw was effective or ineffective. They modeled each other in addition to their

supervisors. The participants had many different kinds of difficult situations from which

they extracted opinions of what should be done, and they tried to adjust their behaviors

accordingly. They all indicated that the skill of dealing with difficult situations had helped

them in their careers.

These findings are consistent with those of Robotham (2009), who found that 60% of

the students who worked while in school believed they improved their ability to deal with

other people even though only 6% believed at the time of the survey, that their work

experience would help them in their coursework or careers. Lewis (2010) found that:

> "In an employment setting, students have the opportunity to observe their more
> experienced (and often older) peers and they carry out job tasks, noting qualities such
> as the relative pace and attitude with which a task is approached, the interaction style
> used when conversing…and the ratio of time spent on work tasks as compared with
> schoolwork or personal tasks…[This] can contribute to that student's management
> competencies…[and] positively correlated with the leadership learning domain. (p.
> 162)

This is also consistent with an online survey of graduating seniors at Valley College in which

92.83% believed they learned to deal with difficult situations in their on-campus position

(Empie, 2011, p. 10).

Building confidence. As the participants worked, they were given responsibilities

and redirected as needed. These informal interactions strengthened their work skill. As their

work skill strengthened, their confidence grew. The participants attributed their confidence

to engaging with their supervisors, and being able to being responsible for real results. They

had learned one job with a lot of responsibility, and that built their confidence in their ability

to do it again. This was consistent with the research of Robotham (2009), which found that

53% of students surveyed believed their work responsibilities increased their self-confidence.

Lewis (2010) discussed how becoming adaptive learners at work helped students believe they could solve problems.

Developing patience. The participants learned to be patient as they taught new employees how to do their work. They focused on tasks at hand when work was busy, and learned that everyone does not have the same abilities. The participants said that their supervisors sometimes gave conflicting directions and that this also, developed their patience. They realized after they started their careers, that conflicting directions were not uncommon, and they were able to handle it. They practiced dealing with frustration, as they learned how it felt when their patience was running out and how to cope with it. Lewis (2010) quoted a student in his study who said "I have learned how to think on my feet and how to be patient" (p. 165), emphasizing how that patience helped students develop problem solving abilities. The participants needed patience for their careers and learned it on campus.

Learning to be precise. Accuracy is an important skill in most jobs, and especially when working with food, where sanitation and cost controls are dependent upon individuals following explicit direction. The participants spoke about how, although they were not necessarily dealing with food related tasks in their daily career work, they had become aware of the importance of precision. Additionally, as part of their student manager work, they needed to pay attention to the accuracy of their employee's work, and that further honed their skill. Lewis (2010) related task repetition to attention to detail and the ability to handle human resource types of activities required in careers, such as completing reports.

Other Comments Regarding the Relationship of Results to Review of the Literature

The review of literature revealed very little research supporting the specific findings of this study regarding how the participants believed their on-campus employment had impacted their academics, overall student experience or careers. Parts of some studies were extracted to support this research. The research conducted by Robotham (2009) which supports several themes related to academics and the overall student experience, was conducted utilizing students (versus graduates) and was not delimited to on-campus student employees. Lewis' (2010) research was delimited to on-campus student employees. A significant difference between Lewis' (2010) research and this study is that his research consisted of students (versus graduates) in high level leadership development and career related positions as well as service positions, and included feedback from supervisors. Lewis found a positive correlation between workplace experiences and learning domains that would impact careers. The positive correlations of feedback, training, observation, supervisor interaction, task repetition and problem solving to the learning domains in Lewis' research are consistent with the findings of this study.

A broad range of skills are needed as graduates enter and then progress through their careers. According to Baber and Waymon (2010), good networking skills enhanced the company bottom line and helped those employees who found it difficult to fit in, including employees from diverse backgrounds and more introverted or shy employees. The participants practiced good networking skills as evidenced by their development of relationships, learning to receive feedback and learning to deal with difficult situations.

Salary up to two years after graduation was shown to be impacted most by gender, extroversion and agreeableness, and personality had the strongest effect on salary during those first two years (Rode et al., 2008, p. 297). This study found that on-campus employment helped the participants develop the transferrable skills and display traits that will help them those first two years.

O'Reilly & Chatman (1994) found that between 3.5-4.5 years after graduation, conscientiousness and general mental ability affect promotions and salary the most. Having experienced positive results from good work ethics and developing skills such as dealing with difficult situations should encourage the participants to continue those practices.

Being open to experiences and having a proactive personality was most beneficial to those out of school five years (Eby et al., 2003). These participants had to be open to experiences in order to be successful in their work, by the sheer nature of the work which required them to handle unexpected situations while working through and with other people. As careers progress, ability to do the actual work becomes more important, and personality characteristics become less important, however, proactive behaviors such as offering innovative solutions when challenging the status quo and managing one's own career path are important (Siebert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). The potential exists for these skills to be intentionally taught in on-campus work, as a co-curricular supplement to academic career knowledge, and to allow students to experience and practice talent alignment (Gubman, 1998) which will help them in their careers.

This research clearly offers new knowledge about how service oriented on-campus employment experiences impacted students and their ensuing careers, and is a springboard for further research.

Implications

The implications of this research are significant. This study's findings have implications for those advising students, for departments who hire students and for institutions wishing to better engage students on campus, as well students themselves.

Advisors, parents, and students can use this study as a resource for making decisions about working while going to school. The data revealed that by starting work as they started college, these participants learned time management skills that helped them maintain their grades, and they did not study less or miss out on co-curricular activities they were interested in. Students could intentionally seek on-campus positions that would offer them opportunities to develop relationships as well as gain transferrable skills.

This study can be a resource for departments and supervisors who wish enhance the on-campus student employment experience. The participants found it helpful and supportive for their supervisors to take the initiative to design work schedules around their classes for them. This made it less stressful for the students as they started college, and they appreciated the supervisors' efforts. This began a trusting relationship with the supervisors that the students valued, and created loyalty on the part of the student. Given that the relationships developed at work were important to the students, it would be wise to be sure those opportunities exist for relationship building. Students should be working with other people (not alone) and have opportunity to get to know them. Supervisors could mentor students

and help them develop transferrable skills as well as help the students understand the skills they are learning, so they can articulate their skills to future employers.

Institutions can utilize this study to inform decisions regarding on-campus employment. Chrissman-Ishler and Upcraft (2005), in summarizing research of first-year student programs (such as first-year and orientation), concluded that such programs appear to have a mixed impact on persistence. In contrast to that, on-campus employment has been proven to encourage persistence (Ehrenberg & Sherman, 1987; Furr & Elling, 2000; Gupton et al., 2009; Lundberg, 2004; Wilkie & Jones, 1994). This study indicated that on-campus employment offers benefits to students that positively contribute to their academic experience and overall student experience. The participants also developed skills and attributes in their on-campus positions that positively contributed to their careers and offered opportunity to participate in talent alignment (Gubman, 1998). Therefore, it seems prudent for institutions to take advantage of that knowledge, and find ways to encourage students to work on campus.

Recommendations for Practice

While this research is not transferrable to all students on campuses everywhere--all students will not have the exact same experience--how the participants in this study made meaning of their on-campus employment experience contributes to the knowledge of how on-campus employment could support academic success, the overall student experience and careers, and what institutions could do if they want to utilize that resource intentionally. The recommendations below grew out of the results and implications of this study evaluated in

light of what was already known about on-campus employment and working students in general, as described in the review of literature.

Students Should Start Working Right Away

Students should be encouraged to start on-campus employment at the same time they start college. According to Wilkie and Jones (1994), high school counselors frequently told students not to work their first year. Employer support in arranging work schedules around academics was important to the participants, made working while going to school less stressful, and it helped them to begin building important relationships. Learning to work and go to school at the same time forced the participants to develop good time management skills. Developing time management skills as they started college built a pattern of self-discipline and helped the participants to obtain grades they were satisfied with.

High school counselors and parents of incoming students should be informed that on-campus employment positively supports academics and affects persistence (Ehrenberg & Sherman, 1987; Furr & Elling, 2000; Gupton et al., 2009; King & Lindsay, 2004, Lundberg, 2004; Wilkie & Jones, 1994), helps student develop important relationships (Williams, 1990), and assists students with socialization (Berger & Milem, 1999). Higher education faculty, staff and peer advisors should also be educated regarding the impact working can have on students. This knowledge could help with collaboration on campus and provide consistent and accurate messages to students and their families.

Arrange Student's Schedules for Them

Entering students are unsure about what they need and what they should do. Having their supervisors arrange their work schedules provided assurance and support to the

participants. Some participants thought they did not want to work in food service, but it was so easy that they just did it. Afterwards, they realized they liked it and it would work out well. On-campus employers should work to provide the extra support to entering students so they experience additional support. A caution, though, is that students must not feel forced as that that could cause a negative experience; they need to be invited (Rendón, 2000). This practice will especially help under-resourced students (Becker et al., 2009; Rendón, 2000).

Most Students Should Work 8-19 Hours per Week

There were conflicting studies regarding how work affected students (Cheng & Alcántara, 2004; Furr & Elling, 2000; Lundberg, 2004; Wilkie & Jones, 1994). When students worked up to eight hours work per week, grades improved, and at twenty hours per week, even though persistence was maintained, grades declined. Based on the results of numerous studies, 8-19 hours per week appears to be the best recommendation at this point in time. If a student is going to engage in the workplace, the student needs to be there enough to learn the work, get to know the other workers and feel like a member of the group. Individual schedules need to be custom designed to the student need.

Students Should be Working with other People

The personal relationships (esprit de corps) that existed for the participants were very powerful. If student engagement is to take place at work, students need to spend time with their supervisors and other students. Students should not be working alone all of the time if the goal is to make on-campus work an engaging experience. Students of this generation need to understand that their work matters and how it matters, and they need frequent and

immediate feedback (Dorsey, 2011). Therefore, it is important that the supervisors of students spend time with them and make sure they are communicating effectively with them.

Ensuring that all student workers have relationship experiences might be challenging for some departments. For example, students who do custodial work often work alone. Making sure student employees are working with others may require strategic scheduling of job tasks or work schedules. For example, students doing custodial work may need to be scheduled at the same time their supervisor works, or with other students.

Increase Responsibility

There are leadership positions on campuses that require high levels of responsibility (tutors, resident assistants), but the number of those available is small compared to the number of total potential jobs available on campuses. If students are to work the whole time they are in college, they need to have opportunity for growth in the job, in order to stay interested and continue their personal growth. Increased responsibility does not necessarily have to be a higher level position, but it needs to be real responsibility, perhaps responsibility that grows with tenure. Using students as supervisors of other students is one way to increase responsibility. The participants liked being depended upon, and it caused them to behave responsibly. Being responsible made them want to work.

On-Campus Pay Needs to be Comparable to Off-Campus Pay

Students can often make more money off campus—frequently in jobs that involve tips, such as waiting tables and bartending—and students who have serious financial concerns must consider that. The participants in this study were paid more than minimum wage as student managers, and none of them had additional off-campus jobs. However, in a

recent survey of Valley College graduating seniors who worked on campus, 33.6% also had an off-campus job, working an additional 9-12 hours per week off campus (Empie, 2011, pp. 11, 32). If institutions want to make on-campus jobs desirable, pay rates need to be comparable or better than the surrounding community, and institutions need to find ways to make sure students are not penalized in their financial aid awards because they work on campus (Perna, 2010).

Supervisors and Managers Should to be Trained

Staff who work with and supervise students should understand the critical role they play in the student on-campus employment experience and they should receive supervisory skills and mentoring training. Institutions could develop their own programs, adapt programs from other institutions or departments, or could use purchased training programs.

Since mentoring must be sincere to be effective (Fowlie & Wood, 2009), and relationships with their supervisors are important to students (Williams, 1990), it is important to maintain the personal touch, while intentionally mentoring student employees in their on-campus positions. In this study, relationships with their supervisors were a critical part of the participants' on-campus employment experience. Every interaction does not have to be perfect or necessarily positive. The participants did not have only positive experiences. It was the long-term aspect of the relationship and the lessons learned from the supervisor that gave the relationship life and made it memorable.

Recommendations for Policy

Create Student Jobs Whenever Possible

Full-time and part-time staff provide consistency over time as compared to student

employees, who bring with them planned attrition due to graduation. Retraining can be

costly and frustrating. Often, it is at the start of a semester or a school year, when work is the

most challenging, that new students start their work. To garner support for hiring students

instead of non-students, faculty and staff need to be educated and committed to the value of

using student employees, and institutional policies need to support it. For example, if empty

salary lines are required to be forfeited at the end of a fiscal year, those who might be willing

to experiment with employing students would be less likely to try it.

Another method of impacting the availability of on-campus jobs for students is to

consider the impact an outsourcing decision would have on student employment

opportunities. An additional factor evaluating outsourcing proposals could be contractors'

commitment to student employment, jobs and pay that would be provided, as well as job

enhancement opportunities that would be available. Student job availability could be

addressed in the request for proposal process in order to ensure quantity of jobs and the

quality of the experience.

Incorporate On-Campus Employment into Institutional Goals and Decision Making

Institutions should support on-campus employment in creation of institutional goals

and decision making practices. This will give status to and generate support for students

working on campus, both figuratively and financially. One example of how to do this is to

include an on-campus employer representative on committees that take action directly

affecting student ability to work, such as the committee that determines the daily class schedules. This would add a broad view to the overall analysis of student's lives. Another example of how to do this is to designate scholarships specifically for on-campus student employees. These could be funded by sole-source suppliers such as beverage and outsourcing contractors, the institution itself, former student employees of the departments who hire student employees, or employees of the departments that hire students. Scholarships could be specific to the department in which students work depending on how they are funded. This also offers the possibility of new sources of scholarship funding (former student employees or present faculty and staff).

Create Institutional Internships

Institutions should take advantage of all resources they have and develop on-campus internships and work experiences that collaborate with academics and give real-world experience (Blummer, Martin & Kenton, 2009; King & Lindsay, 2004; NASPA, 2003). Internships are frequently provided by off-campus employers. However, institutions of higher education offer many of the same services and hire trained and educated professionals, just as off campus employers do. There is a shortage of paid internships, which makes participating in internships a financial challenge for under-resourced students (Lipka, 2008), and under-resourced students often lack the social capital to locate such opportunities (Kuh et al., 2005). Furthermore, increasing concern about sophomore engagement (Graunke & Woosley, 2005) could be addressed through such on-campus internships, while keeping students involved on campus, which is the basic tenet of Involvement Theory (Astin, 1984).

Although Knouse and Fontenot (2008) stated that it is not known if internship experiences benefited graduates after the six-month point following graduation, the participants said that they learned things in their on-campus positions that helped them in their careers, and they were well past the six-month point. The student manager positions were not internships, but they were similar in that the participants received training and mentoring, and then were allowed to practice their skills on their own.

Sagen, Dallam, and Laverty (2000) found that internships and career-related work experiences mattered less for graduates of liberal arts programs. Liberal arts institutions could focus on general internships to especially assist liberal arts students and create an edge in the job market for their graduates. The participants in this study graduated from a liberal arts institution and they believed that their on-campus employment had a positive impact on their careers.

Change Financial Aid Policies

Financial aid policies need to change in order to discontinue punishing students for working on campus. The manner in which financial aid has been required to be administered means that students who receive work-study funding for on-campus work end up having their other aid decreased (Baum, 2010; Perna, 2010). This encourages students to take jobs off campus. Then, because of how aid need is calculated, students who make more money end up in following years, being eligible for less aid. Therefore, students who worked more find themselves at a disadvantage (Baum, 2010).

Until financial aid policies change, students who need money the most will be more likely to go off campus for their work. Furthermore, these are likely to be under-resourced

students who would benefit most from the likelihood of increased persistence (Ehrenberg & Sherman, 1987; Furr & Elling, 2000; Gupton et al., 2009; Lundberg, 2004; Wilkie & Jones, 1994) and the additional support that is gained through on-campus employment (Berger & Milem,1999; Williams, 1990).

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

A delimitation of this research was the selection of former student employees only from Valley College, and from within the past one to five years. An additional delimitation was the selection of individuals who held a specific position upon graduation: that of student manager.

I was the department head of the department in which the participants had worked. This was helpful for understanding the context in which the participants made meaning of their experience and it decreased the chance of misinterpretation. It also allowed the interview to be focused on asking questions concerning their meaning-making instead of trying to understand the environment the participants were talking about. It was important to not have so much rapport that the participants would assume that they were understood; and it was equally important not to be too distant in overcompensation, because then the participants would be less inclined to share. My opinion about the impact of student employment on student lives had potential to cause bias in the interpretation of the data, so in addition to being careful to avoid leading questions, correcting participant viewpoints or justifying why things were the way they were, and being very methodical in data analysis, the peer review process was utilized to help me put my bias aside.

Limitations

The delimitations that allowed me to focus intently also became a limitation of the research. The specific focus of the participant employment location made it difficult to generalize this research to other non-similar sites. Additionally, this research narrowed the retrospective view to one to five years, and precluded learning what on-campus employment meant to those who were in their careers longer. This narrowed the study; however, it would be possible to duplicate this research for different kinds of participants.

<div align="center">

Recommendations for Future Research

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The interviews for this research provided data regarding diversity, but it was not sufficient to consider diversity a theme, since all participants did not talk about it. The three participants that discussed diversity said that working on campus increased their understanding of people who were different from them, but the rest of the participants did not mention it at all. The effect that working on campus has on diversity awareness merits further research.

The participants had varied levels of co-curricular activities, and they believed they had made time to do the things they wanted to do. Many of the participants had difficulty recalling the specifics of their co-curricular activities which leads to wondering if it had significant impact on them. It is not known if work replaced the value of other activities in the form of the socialization and relationship development it provided, nor why some participants decided not to engage in many co-curricular activities outside of work. The participants believed that they had managed their time well, that they had participated in the co-curricular activities they wanted to, and work had not affected their grades. Further

research regarding the differences between how and if on-campus employment impacts participation in other co-curricular activities and how that affects the student experience as a whole, is warranted.

This research focused on dining service student employees who became student managers. Many of the themes could be applicable to all student employees, however, the belief that they were chosen for their positions may have had significant effect on how the participants viewed their experience. Further research is needed regarding those students in service positions who do not become managers of others.

Perna (2010) stated that additional measures were needed to quantify data regarding how on-campus employment affects students. Some of those measures have now been found. The themes that were revealed in this research (arrangement of work schedules, time management, debt expectation, relationship experiences, work ethic, learning to deal with difficult situations, learning to receive feedback, building confidence, developing patience and learning to be precise) could be used as measures to develop quantitative research that would broaden the scope of the results over a larger population.

Summary

This research contributes to the field of knowledge regarding the impact of on-campus employment on students and provides impetus to (1) bring the academy closer to being intentional in providing the most valuable on-campus employment possible for all students and (2) initiate change in policy and practice to support that cause.

The results of this study showed that the participants believed that they entered college with less stress because their supervisors provided extra support by organizing their

work schedules for them. They developed time management skills which helped them maintain their grades and have time for other activities. All participants said they would not have studied more even if they had had time.

The participants' work ethics got them to work and the relationships they developed kept them engaged in their work. Seeing through the participants eyes how important the relationships they developed were to them, should help those who work with students realize that, even on what many call "bad" days, students are watching and learning. It is encouraging that all does not have to be perfect; the participants benefited from a realistic world. However, it is very important to be aware that even the smallest experience can be remembered. Furthermore, this can affect how graduate feels about the institution.

The participants learned how to receive feedback and how to deal with difficult situations. They built confidence, developed patience and learned the importance of accuracy in their work. The participants believed that those traits and skills had helped them in their early-careers.

Institutions do not have to design massive, new, or expensive programs. Change could be incremental. The work environment does not need to be over-manipulated. Recommendations for practice include: encouraging students to start working as soon as they start college, arranging work schedules for entering students in order to decrease stress, scheduling students to work 8-19 hours per week, ensuring that students are working with others, offering progressively increasing job responsibility, ensuring that pay is comparable to that of off-campus employment, and training supervisors of students in the importance of their role and how to supervise and mentor. Recommended policy changes include: changing

financial aid policy so it does not discourage students from working, creating student jobs whenever possible, creating institutional internships, and incorporating the priority of on-campus student employment into institutional goals and decision making.

What was learned with this research could assist in the continuous improvement of on-campus employment programs. Education for faculty and staff, and supervisory skills training for those who directly supervise students could be the beginning and then changes in practice and policy would follow. Further research should continue.

In addition to enhancing the influence of on-campus employment on academic success, the overall student experience and early-career experiences, it is possible that positive on-campus employment experiences could impact alumni donations to the institution. Alumni who had a positive experience while on campus, and feel close to the campus community because they were an integrated part of it, will be more likely to donate back in order to provide positive experiences for others.

Retrospective Reflections

Early in my career, I worked directly with students, but as I obtained more responsibilities and new positions, my work became less tactical and more strategic. I knew contact with students mattered because former students made efforts to stay in touch, but I did not know exactly what had happened to them at work that had made the difference. My interest in this topic was spurred from my personal experience, and I never tired of the topic during the entire research process.

In preparation for this research, two qualitative research projects were designed and conducted involving three supervisors and one student employee. The first study was about

how full-time staff experienced their relationships with student employees. The second study

researched the student perspective regarding working with full time staff. As those

interviews were transcribed, I listened to how I conducted the interviews, and it became clear

that more pauses were necessary to allow the participants to expand their thoughts. Those

interviews, in addition to informing this study, provided excellent interviewing and data

analysis practice.

My capstone project, titled "Graduating students' perceptions of work skill

development and employment experiences" (Empie, 2011), conducted at Valley College,

also informed this dissertation. Going through the process of obtaining IRB approval for the

capstone project prior to the dissertation IRB was also helpful. Through these preliminary

projects, it became possible to refine the purpose and research questions for this study.

One of the interviews conducted as part of this research was with Amy.

Unfortunately, while we were doing the interview, it became clear that the interview could

not be used because Amy had never graduated.   Amy had worked on campus for three years.

Her interview would have added interesting quotes to the dissertation, but no new data.

Amy's interview suggests that the impact of on-campus employment on students, may be the

same whether the student graduates or not, as long as the experience is for a long enough

period of time. It would be interesting, when studying students who did not persist, to

determine whether they worked on campus, and how that affected their experience. In

Amy's case, it kept her in school a little longer, and because she was so close to her degree

when she left, she intended to pursue completion. When considering whether the data was

saturated or whether it was necessary to obtain more interviews, the interview with Amy convinced me that the data was saturated.

Thanks are due to the staff at Valley College, who dug into their records to find the participants they thought would meet the criteria. One person took the initiative to locate potential participants by contacting those whom she thought had been friends with potential participants, in order to obtain phone numbers. The participants deserve thanks for their time and their honesty. They told me about certain things which had happened at work, about which they were embarrassed, and that the department as a whole had handled poorly. Some shared things which they did not want known at their places of employment. Their trust is greatly appreciated.

As this research progressed, it inspired me to want to create a movement and initiate a change in policy and practice, to bring the academy closer to being intentional in providing the most valuable on-campus employment possible for all students. As this research comes to a close, it is evident that more work is still needed in order for that to happen, but perhaps, because this now exists, it might stimulate others to answer that call.

APPENDIX A
LITERATURE MAP

On-Campus Student Employment

Career

Career Related Skills
- Barden, R. (2004)
- Berger, J. & Milem, J. (1999)
- Evers, F., Rush, J., & Berdrow, I. (1998)
- Fowlie, J. & Wood, M. (2009)
- Knouse, S. & Fontenot, G. (2008)
- Goldstein, G. & Femold, P. (2009)
- Knouse, S., Tanner, J. & Harris, E. (2009)
- NACE (2008)
- Taylor, M.S. (1988)
- Robotham, D. (2009)
- Rowe, D. (2002)
- Williams, R. (1990)

Early Career Success & Transferrable Skills
- Eby, L., Butts, M. & Lockwood, A. (2003)
- Fox, A. (2010)
- Gault, J., Redinton, J. and Schlater, T. (2000)
- Rode, J., Arthaud-Day, M., Mooney, C., Near, J. and Baldwin, T. (2008)

Networking
- Baber, A. & Waymon, L. (2010)
- Bartkus, K. (2001)

Social Capital
- Cheng, D. & Alcántara, L. (May, 2004)
- Knouse, S. & Fontenot, G. (2008)
- Putnam, R. (2009)

Co-curricular/Overall Student Experience

On-Campus vs Off Campus
- Baum, S. (2010)
- Gupton, J., Castelo-Rodrigues, C., Martinez, D., and Quintanar, J. (2009,
- Crissman-Ishler, J. L., & Upcraft, M. L. (2005)
- Stern, D. & Nakata, Y. (1991)
- Roark, M. (1983)
- Tinto, V. (1998)
- Troppe, P. (2000)
- Umbach, P., Padgett, R. & Pascarella, E. (2010)

Mentoring
- Fowlie, J. & Wood, M. (2009)
- Goleman, D. (1998)
- Williams, R. (1990)

Under-resourced Students & Future Stories
- Becker, K., Krodel, K. & Tucker, B. (2009)
- Berger, J. & Milem, J. (1999)
- Rendón, L., Jalomo, R., & Nora, A. (2000)

Hidden Curriculum
- Putnam, R. (2009)
- Anyon, J. (1980)
- Ottewill, R., McKenzie, G. and Leah, J. (2005)
- Rendón, L. (1994)

Benefits to Students and the College
- Roark, (1983)

Academic Success

Persistence
- Astin, A. (1984)
- CCESE (2009)
- Ely, E. (1997)
- Tinto, V. (1993)
- Ehrenberg, R. & Sherman, D. (1987)
- McClenney, K. (2004)
- NASPA (2003)
- Price, L. (1993)
- U.S. Department of Education. (2008)
- Wilkie, C. & Jones, M. (1995)

Grades
- Nonis & Hudson (2006)
- Beeson, M & Wessel, R. (2002)
- Winkler, I. (2008)
- Yazedjian, et. al. (2008)

Swirling
- ACE, (2009)
- Hand, A. & Winningham, K. (2009)
- Townsend, B. & Wilson, K. (2006)

Need to know how graduates view the effect of on-campus employment on their lives in the context of their work experience.

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: How Graduates Make Meaning of their On-Campus Employment: A
                          Retrospective View

Investigator: Margaret Empie

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate.
Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to learn about how alumni who worked as student managers in
dining service feel their on-campus employment impacted their early career and life. You
are being invited to participate in this study because you were a student manager at Valley
Dining Services and you were recommended by a member of the management team.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in one, 1 - 1.5 hour personal
interview conducted by Margaret Empie. There may be follow up interviews.

- The interview will be digitally audio recorded
- The results will be used in Margaret Empie's dissertation.
- Everything you say will be kept confidential
- Your participation or declining to participate will not affect any references you may
  request from Valley Dining Services, or your Valley alumni status in any way.

You will be asked questions about how you feel working on campus impacted your academic
success, student experience, career- entry and career to date. You can decline to answer any
question or stop your participation at any time. There are no right or wrong answers to these
questions and you do not need to prepare for the interview.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks at this time from participating in this study. BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study there may be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped
that the information gained from this research will help inform future research topics, and

will help to benefit student employees and supervisors at Valley College or as well as employment programs in higher education.

If you wish to read a copy of the dissertation those results from this interview, it will be made available to you.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will not be additionally compensated for participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken:

- The only person who will have access to the original audio interview is Margaret Empie.
- The tape will be transcribed and coded in such a way that your identity will be kept confidential
- The audio interview will be password protected on the interviewer's personal computer, which no one else has general access to.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

- For further information about the <u>study</u> contact principal investigator Margaret Empie at margaret.empie@valley.edu, 319 290-0039 or faculty advisor and supervising faculty member Dr. Larry Ebbers@iastate.edu, 515 294-8067.

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PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant's Name (printed)

(Participant's Signature)   (Date)

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Question: The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore and understand how recent college graduates from a private liberal arts institution make meaning of their on-campus work experience.

The research questions are designed to facilitate how graduates make meaning of their on-campus employment:
  d. How do recent graduates from a liberal arts college describe the influence of on-campus employment on their <u>academic success</u>?
  e. How do recent graduates from a liberal arts college describe the influence of on-campus employment on their <u>overall student experience</u>?
  f. How do recent graduates from a liberal arts college describe the influence of on-campus employment on their <u>career-entry after graduation</u>?

Gather Participant and Basic Interview Information:

- Review informed consent document. Ask participant to sign informed consent.
- Explain that this is being recorded.
- Place and time of interview (I state for the audio)
- Participant name, graduation year, student manager position location (have them state for the audio).
- Introduce the topic, review what is being studied and discuss how the information will be used.

General information about the participant's experience with on-campus employment.

1. Describe how you began your employment in dining services and what the first exposure to the work was like.

   a. What other jobs did you have before that one?

2. Describe how you came into your student manager position and the work you did.
   a. Why did you want a student manager position?
   b. What did you like, and not like about the work?

Participant's feelings about leaving work and Valley:

1. When you graduated and left Valley how did you feel?
   a. Why?

Information about the effect on-campus employment had on the participant's academic experience:

2. What other activities were you involved in on campus?

3. Tell me a little about how work got organized around your classes and academic interests.
    a. What changes did you have to make in how you applied yourself to your coursework in order to work?
    b. What kinds of challenges did you have to work through if work and study needs conflicted? How did they get resolved?
    c. In what ways were your co-workers and supervisors helpful when class work got challenging?
        i. What kinds of things caused you to be frustrated?

4. In what ways do you feel your grades or academic program might have been different if you did not work?
    a. Did you ever feel like working hurt your grades? In what ways?

    b. Did you ever feel like working hurt your other academic or course experiences? In what ways?

Information about the effect on-campus employment had on the participant's overall student experience:

5. In what ways did working on-campus help or hinder your overall experience on campus?
    a. What student organizations or other activities did you participate in?
        i. How did working affect your activity participation or vice versa?
    b. What other leadership opportunities did you engage in?
        i. How did working affect your leadership activities?
        ii. How did working affect your leadership abilities?
        iii. How do you feel your leadership activities affected your student manager work?

6. What kinds of relationships did you develop with your co-workers?
    a. What effect did work have on your development of a support system? Support by other students? By staff?
    b. Please describe any personal relationships that were initiated at or enhanced because of the job.

7. Describe your relationship with the full time staff and how that affected your experience and what you learned.

a. Can you tell me about an experience with a specific staff member that left an impact on you? (*It can be positive or negative*)
    i. What did you learn from that?

Information about the effect on-campus employment had on the participant's career entry and work experience after graduation:

8. Tell me about your present work.

9. In what ways did your working on-campus affect your ability to get that job? (for example, do you feel it gave you confidence or practice talking to people, that helped you?)
    a. Excel in that job.
    b. Affect how quickly you learned the work.

10. In what ways did your work on campus affect your career so far?
    a. What kinds of transferrable skills (overall time management, time management at work, dealing with people-supervision, general talking to people, customer service) do you think you learned?
        i. How did they affect your career entry or career?
    b. What kinds technical skills did you learn that have had an impact?
    c. What kinds of supervisory or people skills did you learn that have had an impact?

Determine the participant's feelings about leaving and moving on, and closing questions:
You had an enormous amount of responsibility as a student manager, especially when you think about the safety and sanitation, quality; customer service and financial aspects of our operation that you impacted.

11. How do you feel about that role you played in dining?

12. What things could be done to improve the work experience for the next student managers?

13. What things could be done to generally improve the experience?

14. Is there anything else you think I need to know?

Thank you; offer to share report if it is wanted; reminder of confidentiality and more appreciation.

APPENDIX D
AUDIT TRAIL

Summer 2011   BB and CS accepted the request to serve as peer reviewers.

Aug. 13, 2011   KM accepted the request to serve as a peer reviewer.

End of September   Received names from board plan supervisors. They did not have any phone numbers or emails. I asked other students and participants from same years, to get their contact info.

Oct. 6, 2012   Received names and phone numbers of potential participants via email from retail supervisor.

October and November   Set up and conducted interviews. Transcribed as close to interview date as possible. Reread theoretical framework articles and books.

Oct. 10, 2011   Set up interview with Janet.

Oct. 16, 2011   Conducted interview with Mari, in my office.

Oct. 26, 2011   Conducted interview with Jonathan. Phone. His preference.

Oct. 27, 2011   Conducted interview with Robert. In person. Drove to his town.

Dec. 23, 2011   Conducted interview with Bryan. Phone. His preference.

Dec. 2011   Initial coding. Went back and added the forms of social interaction (physical object, social object, abstract object. Put them in categories and created the analysis table. Went back and put each person's info into the table. Started looking for what is missing. Reread the analysis procedures referred to in proposal.

Dec. 18, 2011   Reread Charmaz method. Started writing category/focused code memos. As I looked through interviews, thought I would have added value to results if I had one more. Contacted Bryan, who had a very different personality from the others. I was interested in how his results compared to the others. Set up a phone interview at 7 pm Thursday, Dec. 22. I will call him.

Jan. 5, 2012   In preparing documents for member checks, I took the findings as written for chapter 4 and blacked everything out except what pertained to all, or that specific participant, so I was keeping the other participant's comments and specific notes

confidential. I then saved it as a PDF to send to each participant, so they could read and comment. I also sent them a copy of their transcribed interview at this time.

Sent first member check to Heidi for review. Need to call her next week to set up a time to meet and ask follow up questions. (member check done)
Sent first member check to Jonathan for review.
Sent first member check to Cary for review. (member check done)
Sent first member check to Robert. (member check done)
Sent first member check to Janet. (member check done)
Sent first member check to Mari. (member check done)
Sent first member check to Jay. (member check done)

Jan. 6, 2012
Sent first member check to Jackson. Follow up next week. (done)
Sent first member check to Bryan. Follow up next week. (done)

Jan. 8, 2012   Received member check approval from Jackson, and answers to questions about parent's educational level.
Arranged to meet peer reviewer MK in person on Jan 16, to discuss and provide printed materials.

Jan. 9, 2012   Received member check approval from Jay Thompson.
Sent materials to Peer Reviewer BB. He requested it via email. Sent in 4 emails.

Jan. 10, 2012 Received member check approval from Cary.
Printed materials for Peer Reviewer 2 and organized into book.

Jan. 12, 2012 Received an email from Jay answering some of the following up questions I had asked him about his parent's education.

Jan. 16, 2012 Met with peer reviewer MK. She took materials. We discussed about a week timeline.

Jan. 20, 2012 Mari stopped at Valley College. She said she had read the materials and approved them. Discussed her parents education (mom, 2 community college degrees, dad started college but did not finish). Follow up discussion about findings.

BB, peer reviewer sent me an email with his approval of my findings and said he thought it was very thorough (see email).

Jan. 30, 2012 Met with MK, peer reviewer—received her feedback and made changes accordingly…she questioned some themes as not themes…after review, I agreed with her and they were part of recommendations and further research instead.

Feb. 3, 2012 Sent email follow ups to Janet, Heidi and Bryan for member check.

Feb. 4, 2012 Bryan sent an email saying he had read everything and it was fine.

Feb. 6, 2012 Heidi sent an email saying she approved of the transcripts and analysis.

Feb, 19, 2012   Sent follow up email to Janet and Jonathan requesting member check.

Feb. 20, 2012 Janet emailed and confirmed member check.
March 10, 2012 Emailed Heidi and Janet with follow-up questions.
March 12, 2012 Received responses from both Heidi and Janet

APPENDIX E
IRB APPROVAL

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Date: 9/27/2011

To: Margaret Empie   **CC:** Dr. Larry Ebbers
Wartburg College, Box 100   N256 Lagomarcino Hall
Waverly, IA 50677

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: How Graduates Make Meaning of their On-Campus Employment: A Retrospective View

IRB ID: 11-433

Study Review Date: 9/26/2011

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b).

The determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**

- **You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application.** Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.

  Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

  Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form. A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. **Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption,** even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.

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