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Working Beyond 9 to 5: The Impact of a University-wide Alternative Work Arrangements Policy on Student Affairs Employees

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, WORKING BEYOND 9 TO 5: THE IMPACT OF A UNIVERSITY-WIDE ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS POLICY ON STUDENT AFFAIRS EMPLOYEES, by PAMELA DENISE ANTHONY, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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ABSTRACT

WORKING BEYOND 9 TO 5: THE IMPACT OF A UNIVERSITY-WIDE ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS POLICY ON STUDENT AFFAIRS EMPLOYEES

by

Pamela Denise Anthony

Alternative work arrangements (AWA) policies allow employees to select varied work schedules that are both conducive to the organization's goals and to employees' personal needs. Though common in the business sector, such policies are rarely articulated within American colleges and universities. Practitioners within the student affairs profession regularly work beyond the average 40-hour week due to the fundamental nature of their work with students' co-curricular involvement outside of the classroom; as a result, the lack of work-life balance can result in high employee turnover which can be detrimental to an organization. Utilizing grounded theory, a qualitative methodology that allows researchers to espouse new theories to explain phenomena based on data, 14 student affairs practitioners employed at a large research institution in the southeast were interviewed to examine their experiences which emanated from the institution's AWA policy implemented in 2007. The emergent theory collectively affirmed the importance of flexibility as participants indicated that they expected variations in their work hours given the unusual hours that are commonly associated with the student affairs profession. They reported benefits such as better work-life balance, increased productivity, reduced stress, and increased job satisfaction. Conversely, participants expressed concerns that AWAs were not consistency available to all employees and awareness of the policy was limited. They also experienced feelings of guilt and often felt the need to prove that they were working. Finally, participants recommended that AWA policies should be transparent,

regularly assessed, and benchmarked against existing policies at other universities. Results provided evidence of how proven strategies used in corporate human resource models can be applied in a higher education setting, and the findings further suggested that employees and employers could greatly benefit from the establishment of formal policies that allow flexibility in the workplace through the use of AWAs. Implementation of these policies may provide employees with more opportunities for work-life balance, thereby improving job satisfaction and increasing employee retention in the student affairs profession.

WORKING BEYOND 9 TO 5: THE IMPACT OF A UNIVERSITY-WIDE ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS POLICY ON STUDENT AFFAIRS EMPLOYEES

by
Pamela D. Anthony

A Dissertation

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in
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DEDICATION

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"
- Philippians 4:13

To my wonderful parents, Forris and Violet Anthony:
You always told me that I could be anything I wanted to be if I trusted God and "just put my mind to it." I was silly enough to believe you, and now, I am Pamela Denise Anthony, Ph.D.. Thank you for always believing in me.

"The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them."
- George Bernard Shaw

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study, I have defined the following terms in accordance with their general usage in the literature:

1. Alternative Work Arrangement – a variation in an employee's work schedule such that he or she completes work hours outside of an organization's established work hours, usually allowed in order to provide flexibility in the workplace (Dishman & Murphy, 2007; Nollen & Martin, 1978).
2. Compressed work week – A type of alternative work arrangement in which an employee works 40 (or more) hours in fewer than 5 days a week (Nollen & Martin, 1978).
3. Exempt vs. non-exempt employee – An employment classification governed by the Department of Labor. Classification is dependent on how much an employee is paid, how they are paid, and the nature of their type of work. For the purposes of this research study and as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act, non-exempt employees are entitled to overtime pay; exempt employees are not (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009; Dishman & Murphy, 2007).
4. Fair Labor Standards Act – A federal law that governs policies regarding employee compensation, minimum wage, overtime pay, employment records, and child labor (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009).
5. Flex time – A type of alternative work arrangement in which an employee works any set of hours that deviated from traditional 8-5 model (Nollen & Martin, 1978)
6. Flexwork Arrangements Policy – The official name of the alternative work arrangements policy at the research site.

7. Telecommute – A type of alternative work arrangement in which an employee works from an alternate location, usually at their place of residence (Nollen & Martin, 1978).
8. Summer flex/summer hours – A type of alternative work arrangement in which an employee works varied hours based on a university-wide schedule designated for a specific period during the summer months only (Nollen & Martin, 1978).

ABBREVIATIONS

AWA	Alternative Work Arrangements
CSU	Cleveland State University
FLSA	Fair Labor Standards Act
GTM	Grounded Theory Methodology
GMU	George Mason University
IUPUI	Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
UT-Arlington	University of Texas at Arlington

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

It is Thursday evening and you are the advisor to a campus group that is sponsoring a late-night student program. The event begins at 8:00 p.m. and will not conclude until 1:00 a.m., after which you will be required to remain until the venue has been cleared of students and cleaned of any debris associated with the event. Your workday began at 8:30 a.m., so by 2:00 a.m. when you reach your vehicle in the deserted campus parking lot, you are reminded of how in just a few short hours, it will be time for you to report to work on Friday for "regular" business hours. As an exempt employee, you are not entitled to additional compensation and the institution does not offer compensatory time or options for alternative work arrangements. You wonder how long you are able to survive in this environment….

The scenario described above is a perennial reality for many teachers, administrators, and other staff in both secondary and post-secondary education. For student affairs practitioners, those professionals charged with creating co-curricular opportunities for students on college campuses (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), this is a common occurrence that is often accepted as a part of the culture of higher education. The fuel for my interest in studying alternative work arrangements (AWA) for university employees began as I discovered tangible and often negative outcomes for student affairs employees, including me, who as a direct expectation associated with our positions, consistently worked well beyond 40 hours a week without additional or alternative forms of compensation. As a result, employees within my specific division of student affairs

division have left the institution at alarming rates.

Student affairs staff members have not only departed their institutions, but some have left the profession all together as a result of burnout. For example, a former student affairs professional in my division accepted an administrative position in an elementary school because of her desire to get married and start a family. The nature of her responsibilities were such that she was required to be on campus until the conclusion of events sponsored by the multiple student organizations she advised; on a few occasions, she was literally working until 1:00 a.m. Based on the frequency of these occurrences, this individual determined that working long and unusual hours without any additional financial or time compensation was not conducive to her desire for work-life balance. She eventually left the field and is now married with two young children.

This general lack of attention to high turnover rates in student affairs has not gone unnoticed in the literature. The issue of high attrition rates for student affairs professionals (Evans, 1988) is usually attributed to issues such as burn-out (Lorden, 1998; Forney & Wiggers, 1984), and work-life balance is a perennial topic in the field of student affairs (Hancock, 1988). While turnover does have benefits to individuals and organizations (Rosser & Townsend, 2006; Buck & Watson, 2002; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1997; Rosser, 2000; Rosser, 2004), it has also resulted in inefficiency, decreased productivity, and increased financial costs to recruit, hire, and train employees (Buck & Watson, 2002; Rosser & Townsend, 2006; Rickard, 1982). These perpetually negative effects are ultimately detrimental to institutions of higher education. Through the investigation of issues such as job satisfaction, attrition in student affairs, employee retention, and the lack of compensatory time, the primary goal of this study was to

highlight the experiences of student affairs administrators who utilize alternative work arrangements and to recommend effective employment strategies that may be applicable to various higher education settings.

Purpose

The purpose of this inquiry was to study the availability and impact of alternative work arrangements on college and university employees who worked in positions that regularly required direct contact with students beyond the standard 40-hour workweek and/or during nontraditional work hours such as evenings and weekends. The underlying goals were to ascertain student affairs staff expectations regarding flexibility in the workplace, to discuss the process of developing and implementing an alternative work arrangement policy that was utilized by staff who performed student personnel work, and to determine the effectiveness and impact of such a policy within a university setting.

Research Questions

I used the following research questions to guide this inquiry:

1. What expectations regarding flexibility do employees have upon accepting employment at the institution, if any?
2. What types of alternative work schedules do student affairs employees at the research site utilize?
3. What are the benefits to employees who utilize an alternative work schedule, if any?
4. What are the challenges to employees who utilize an alternative work schedule, if any?

5. What recommendations would employees who use alternative work arrangements make to institutions that are seeking to develop such a policy for its employees, if any?

Significance

Work-life balance is a perennial topic in the field of student affairs (Hancock, 1988). The issue of high attrition rates for student affairs professionals (Evans, 1988) has been often attributed to issues such as burn-out (Lorden, 1998; Forney & Wiggers, 1984), low salaries (Evans, 1988; Rosser & Javinar, 2003), supervision and working conditions (Locke, 1983). Studies regarding gender attrition in student affairs consistently reported that women are less satisfied with their careers than men (Burns, 1982; Bender, 1980; Richmond & Sherman, 1991). All of these factors regarding work-life balance suggested that employers may benefit from creating opportunities to improve employee retention in higher education (Lorden, 1998).

The attrition of student affairs professionals has become a topic of concern within the last two decades (Lorden, 1998; Bender, 1980; Burns, 1982; Evans, 1988). The impetus for increased interest in this area has been the growing attrition rates that are "often perceived as harmful to the profession and may even threaten its viability" (Lorden, 1998, p. 207). While various scholars discussed the nature of attrition and employee retention in student affairs, the literature has not provided or substantiated consistent empirical data (Lorden, 1998; Tarver, Canada, & Lim, 1999). This research study is important because it provides potential solutions to detrimental employment issues that have been identified within student affairs. Results of the study will also contribute new and innovative knowledge as it relates to employment paradigms in

higher education and human resources. This leads me to a discussion of the gap in the literature.

While several research studies have been conducted about work-life balance and employee attrition, the gap in the literature resides in the area of its lack of specificity to student affairs. In a profession that encourages programming to meet students' needs (and therefore at times that best fit students' schedules rather than those of professional staff), there is a paucity of literature that directly addresses the experiences and impact of individuals who are employed in positions that regularly require employees to work beyond 40 hours without additional compensation. Further, no studies have been found that offer recommendations or insight for the use of alternative work arrangements in higher education. This is the problem that my research study addressed, and there are several implications of the study for professionals in both student affairs and human resources.

First, the study offers insight into why student affairs professionals have high burnout rates which ultimately affect employee retention. Second, recommendations regarding the development and implementation of formal policies that encourage flexibility may benefit organizations if, as a result, employees' job satisfaction and productivity increase and absenteeism decreases, which the literature about AWA suggests (Nollen & Martin, 1978). Finally, though the research context for this study is a collegiate setting, the findings may also be applicable to a secondary education setting. To provide further context to the proposed study, I next offer an overview of the theoretical framework that guided the project.

Theoretical Framework

My research topic intentionally blended the fields of human resources management (HRM) and student affairs. As colleges and universities are complex organizations (Bess & Dee, 2008; Lee & Bowen, 1971; Sporn, 1996) with a large personnel base (McClellan, Stringer, & Associates, 2009), applying theory related to employee behavior was applicable to such a study. I chose to ground my study through the lens of Herzberg's Two Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1966) which is a conceptual framework that discusses the internal and external factors that impact job satisfaction and thus, employee turnover.

Herzberg's (1966) theory was not initially created in the context of post-secondary education (Rosser & Javinar, 2003); however, it has guided the work documented in various higher education studies (Volkwein & Parmley, 2000; Hagedorn, 1994; Olsen, 1993; Rosser & Townsend, 2006; Austin & Gamson, 1993; Rosser, 2004; Wiggers et al., 1982) and particularly, those involving university and community college employees (Volkwein & Parmley, 2000; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Truell, Price, & Joyner, 1998; Olsen, 1993; Hardy & Lanaan, 2003). The theory espouses two types of factors: intrinsic motivators related to what a person does and external hygienes related to the work environment.

Employees who value the intrinsic place importance on aspects such as "feelings of accomplishment [and] recognition," (Volkwein & Parmley, 2000, p. 97) and "the work itself, such as teaching and research, and recognition of that work through achievement of tenure and promotion" (Rosser & Townsend, 2006, p. 127). Conversely, extrinsically motivated individuals consider "levels of compensation, administrative

support, and working conditions," (Rosser & Townsend, 2006, p. 127) the dimensions of pay and security, and the physical environment (Volkwein & Parmley, 2000). It should be noted that "the presence of motivators lead to job satisfaction but their absence does not lead to job dissatisfaction" (Rosser & Townsend, 2006, p. 127). This is an important distinction when considering why employees leave organizations because of satisfaction and morale issues, particularly given the pervasive nature in student affairs of placing a higher value upon intrinsic versus extrinsic motivators (Davidson, 2009). These motivators directly relate to employees' satisfaction with their jobs.

I selected Herzberg's framework because of the increased needs within student affairs to address high attrition rates (Evans, 1988) and to seek to identify and rectify the sources of employee turnover (Evans, 1988; Rickard, 1982; Johnsrud et al., 2000; Rosser & Townsend, 2006). In a study of midlevel leaders, Johnsrud and Rosser (1997) determined that in comparison to employees in other areas within an institution, student affairs staff left at a higher rate due to their perceptions that the university did little to reward their service beyond what was written in job descriptions. It is clear that employees' intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, as well as their expectations influence impact job satisfaction; as a precursor to turnover, job satisfaction matters. Herzberg's Two Factor Theory offered a relevant and appropriate lens from which to view this study.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided a glimpse of the issue of work-life balance, job satisfaction, attrition, and alternative work arrangements as it relates to student affairs employees. In an effort to address the availability and impact of alternative work

arrangements, I shared the five research questions that guided my inquiry and discussed the overall purposes embedded within the proposed research study. I further asserted the study's significance to the fields of human resources and student affairs. Additionally, I provided a review of the philosophical underpinnings which informed the study from data collection through analysis.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature related to my research topic, identify the literature gap, and provide information about alternative work arrangements and university compensatory time policies. Chapter 3 examines grounded theory, the methodological approach that I utilized in the study. Additionally, I offer information regarding the design of the research study. I present the results of the study in Chapter 4, and finally, in Chapter 5, I offer an analysis of the data and discuss the implications this study has for current and future practice as well as for further research in higher education.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A primary hypothesis of my proposed research study was that compensatory time, in the form of alternative work arrangements, promotes flexibility in the workplace and thereby improves the job satisfaction and subsequently, retention of student affairs employees. In this chapter I present a thorough review of the literature related to student personnel work, attrition, job satisfaction, turnover and intent to leave, compensatory time, and alternative work arrangements.

By discussing these concepts, I provide a comprehensive rationale for the development of alternative work plans in higher education and more specifically, student affairs. Finally, I identify the gap in the literature, highlight two related university policies, and articulate the benefits and challenges of incorporating flexible work schedules into a higher education setting. The context of the proposed study is the university setting; thus, I begin the literature review with a brief foundational understanding of student affairs work.

Student Affairs

The student affairs profession evolved from a philosophical perspective that colleges and universities have an obligation to develop the whole student (Nuss, 2003). As early as the nineteenth century, students began to participate in co-curricular activities such as club membership and campus publications (Geiger, 2000) to balance their academic responsibilities (Nuss, 2003). In educating the student from a comprehensive perspective, student affairs professionals operated under the core principle that while the primary goal of attending college is to obtain an academic degree, it is equally important

that students develop socially, emotionally, and spiritually (Love, 2003). Alexander Astin developed the Theory of Involvement which espoused a foundational premise of the profession – that student learning within the classroom is enhanced by involvement outside of the classroom (Astin, 1984). Boyer (1987) further asserted that college, particularly during the undergraduate years, is a time when students develop character and values that will prepare them for citizenship in a global society. This concept was further supported by Dalton and Henck (2004) who suggested that "the holistic development of intellectual and ethical competencies [is] at the forefront of progressive collegiate education for the twenty-first century" (p. 3). These and other principles guide the daily work of employees who provide student affairs' services to students.

Described as a twentieth-century phenomenon (Nuss, 2003), the student affairs profession gained momentum as colleges and universities began to establish mechanisms to address ancillary components of college life such as student involvement. As a part of its organizational structure, most institutions created a division specifically designated to provide services and programs to complement the academic curriculum. This division is known interchangeably as student affairs, student personnel, student development, or student services (Nuss, 2003).

Historical references to student affairs often cited the Student Personnel Point of View, a statement of foundational values associated with the profession published in 1937 by the American Council of Education (Love, 2003; American College Personnel Association, 2009). This original philosophical statement, along with a revised edition in 1949 (NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 2009), and several other documents that later emerged as attempts to clarify the role of student affairs,

collectively underscored seven fundamental principles that are embedded in student affairs work: 1) student development must be considered from a holistic perspective; 2) learning occurs both in and outside of the classroom; 3) all students have potential and worth; 4) diversity is a strength and the uniqueness of each student should be embraced; 5) students are primarily responsible for their own learning and development; 6) practitioners should develop programs that reflect students' current needs as well as their futuristic needs; and (7) effective involvement opportunities should complement the students' academic goals, personal interests, and professional ambitions (Love, 2003; Young, 2003; Dean, 2006).

Research studies consistently indicated that students who feel connected to an institution have higher retention rates than those who lack this association (Tinto, 1987). By creating involvement opportunities, student affairs personnel develop programs that allow students to form long lasting friendships, and develop leadership, interpersonal, and lifelong skills such as communication and conflict resolution (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Co-curricular activities that may enhance the academic experience and encourage personal development include student governance, fraternity and sorority involvement, athletics, and community service initiatives (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pike & Askew, 1990).

In addition to engaging students through social, educational, and leadership opportunities, student affairs staff provide services to help students succeed in college. This may include academic advising, counseling, career development, and assistance with judicial matters (Nuss, 2003). Depending on institutional type and size, a traditional student affairs division might range from five to fifteen individual departments (Winston

& Creamer, 1997), all of which have similar goals as they develop students outside of the classroom. Subsequently, the nature of student affairs work is most often conducted at times that are most convenient to students, which is after traditional business hours.

From facilitating weekend leadership retreats, to chaperoning a student party, to supervising fraternity and sorority recruitment, and providing duty coverage within a residence hall, it is not uncommon for student affairs professionals to regularly work 50-60 hours a week with no additional compensation. As affirmed by Stamatakos (1978) regarding the nature of student affairs work:

> The working conditions and lifestyles...are unusual if not bizarre by most work standards. Exploited by and conditioned to residence halls and student activities early in their careers, many new professionals tend to perpetuate this 24-hour-a-day life-style throughout their formative years. Eventually, they become habituated to and victimized by long, irregular hours punctuated by unanticipated events that demand, but do not always necessarily warrant, their attention. (p. 329)

This factor underscores the underlying purpose for investigating the development of alternative work plans in a university environment. In order to support the need for such flexibility in the workplace, however, it is important to first provide insight into the issue of attrition in student affairs. Studies over the past three decades confirm the persistence of issues that Stamatakos raised.

Attrition

The attrition of student affairs professionals has become a topic of concern within the last two decades (Lorden, 1998; Bender, 1980; Burns, 1982; Evans, 1988). The

impetus for increased interest in this area was the growing attrition rates that can have a long-term detrimental impact for the student affairs profession (Lorden, 1998). While various researchers have discussed the nature of attrition and employee retention in student affairs, the literature has not provided or substantiated consistent empirical data (Lorden, 1998; Tarver, Canada, & Lim, 1999).

Attrition rates have reportedly ranged as low as 32% and as high as 68% of student affairs practitioners within their first 5 years in the profession. In a study by Holmes, Verrier, & Chisholm (1983), graduates from an eastern university student affairs program were retained at a meager rate of 39%, and the authors suggested that these low rates had significant implications for the field. Likewise, Burns (1982) interviewed masters and doctoral graduates and discovered that 39% left the profession within 5 years after graduating with their degree in student affairs. Finally, Wood, Winston, & Polkosnik (1985) determined that 68% of individuals left within 5 years after degree completion. Evans (1988) suggested that, "given the time, resources, and energy being invested by students, faculty, and student affairs staff in the preparation of new professionals, the revolving door syndrome evident in the profession is a major concern" (p. 19). It seems prudent then that researching the factors leading to attrition would be valuable to the field. In order to effectively study the nature of attrition, it is helpful to understand the purported reasons why student affairs professionals leave the field.

The literature offered various explanations for student affairs employee turnover which can subsequently lead to attrition. These include: 1) the availability of various career options which lead to numerous job shifts (Jones, 1980); 2) dissatisfaction with professional development opportunities (Lorden, 1998; Bender, 1980; Richmond &

Sherman, 1991); 3) low salaries and fringe benefits (Lorden, 1998; Bender, 1980; Jones, 1980; Hermsen & Rosser, 2008; Hancock, 1988); 4) values incongruence, that is, the expectations that new professionals have as they enter the field are based on their values, and the reality of their work experience seems to contradict these original principles (Hancock, 1988; Stamatakos, 1978; Lorden, 1998); and 5) limited advancement opportunities. Of the aforementioned reasons, limited explanation exists about how these factors explicitly impacted attrition. However, several authors agreed that job satisfaction was directly related to attrition in the field (Tarver et al., 1999; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Holmes et al., 1983; Tull, 2006; Daly & Dee, 2006; Rosser & Townsend, 2006; Hermsen & Rosser, 2008; Rosser, 2004; Buck & Watson, 2002).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to the way an individual emotionally responds to a particular job (Gruening, 1979), how employees feel about their job (Johnsrud & Edwards, 2001), and employees' comprehensive attitudes about their job (Benge & Hickey, 1984). Johnsrud and Rosser (2002) further described satisfaction as a psychological variable that can impact turnover, and Buck and Watson (2002) specify that job satisfaction, because it is most often based primarily on the employee's responses to single aspects of a specific role, is an unstable and inconsistent variable.

Despite its inconsistency, job satisfaction directly affected an employee's intent to leave (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999b), and intent to leave was a dominant precursor to actually leaving (Daly & Dee, 2006; Rosin & Korabik, 1995; Johnsrud, Heck, & Rosser, 2000; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Lee & Mowday, 1987; Rosser, 2004). Given the impact of job satisfaction on employee retention, several scholars

underscored the importance of understanding the factors that influenced job satisfaction and subsequently, employee turnover (Rosser & Townsend, 2006; Johnsrud et al., 2000; Johnsrud, 2002). Likewise, Rickard (1982) specifically stated that within a student affairs division, the chief student affairs officer (CSAO) should review turnover rates to identify the reasons employees leave. The implication here is that the CSAO can influence or oversee the implementation of programs and policies that may reduce turnover by improving job satisfaction which requires improving general human resources practices such as job design and compensation. Therefore, it is critical to understand some of the factors that, if improved, can positively affect satisfaction.

The literature identified several primary factors that impact job satisfaction, including: recognition (Hermsen & Rosser, 2008), supervision (Tull, 2006), quality of work life (Rosser & Townsend, 2006), and burnout (Tull, 2006). Additionally, administrative satisfaction, that is, being related to the organizational culture of the institution, influenced employee satisfaction as well (Buck & Watson, 2002; Lee & Mowday, 1987; Gayle, Tewarie, & White, 2003; Johnsrud et al., 2000; Kanter, 1977; Volkwein & Parmley, 2000; Steers & Mowday, 1981). Finally, scholars determined that the job and organization were not solely responsible for satisfaction; personal and situational circumstances such as physical and mental health, age, stress, length of service, and proximity to retirement age were also factors in job satisfaction (Volkwein & Parmley, 2000; Holmes et al., 1983; Wiggers, Forney, & Wallace-Schutzman, 1982; Austin & Gamson, 1993; Evans, 1988; Smith, Anderson, & Lovrich, 1995; Bender, 1980; Spector, 1986; Hagedorn, 1996).

Another major component of job satisfaction was salary (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999a; Hermsen & Rosser, 2008; Rosser & Townsend, 2006). Stamatakos (1978) lamented that many student affairs practitioners "are prone to say, with a certain degree of pride, 'you don't come into this field for money. The satisfactions come from helping young people on their own terms'" (p. 329). While this cliché perpetuates some degree of professional naiveté, it further underscores a commonly accepted notion within the human resources profession that employees are not exclusively motivated by money, rather intrinsic rewards such as feeling valued, autonomy, and quality of life are more valued attributes of a job or organization (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2008; Miles, 1975; Nightingale, 1982; Henderson, 2006), hence providing organizational justification for low salaries. Student affairs professionals have expressed similar values regarding work motivation and a fervent appreciation for intrinsic versus extrinsic rewards (Stamatakos, 1978; Miles, 1975; Nightingale, 1982; Volkwein & Parmley, 2000). I describe two research studies related to job satisfaction and the value for intrinsic benefits below.

Rosser and Javinar (2003) conducted a national study to determine if job satisfaction and morale impact attrition rates in higher education. Defining satisfaction as being related to an individual's perceptions about a specific job or position and morale as representing the collective feelings of a group of employees about an organization (Rosser & Javinar, 2003), the study compared the two variables against an employee's intent to leave the current job, the institution, and/or the entire profession. Results from 1,166 participants indicated that the majority did not feel valued by the institution or the division of student affairs on their campus; thus they had considered leaving their

positions or the institution. Individuals who made higher salaries also reported low morale, which supports the widely held perspective that financial rewards are not the primary motivating factors in job satisfaction (Miles, 1975; Nightingale, 1982).

In another study, Tarver et al. (1999) found that locus of control as determined by the organization had a significant impact on job satisfaction. In this context, newer employees, with 5 or less years of professional experience, desired more control of aspects of their work life. The results from this study suggested that to the degree it is reasonable within institutional constraints, allowing employees the autonomy to determine when their hours are worked may increase their sense of control and thereby increase their overall satisfaction.

Employees' comprehensive sense of satisfaction is based upon what they feel they should receive and what they actually receive (Lawler, 1994). It is evident then, that the dissonance between these two characteristics can lead to dissatisfaction which then greatly influences their desire and propensity to leave the organization. Given these myriad issues, and “since a major portion of a person's time is spent on the job” (Tarver et al., 1999, p. 96), negative perspectives and perceptions or work that lead to employee turnover warrant further investigation.

Employee Turnover and Intent to Leave

While there are positive benefits to turnover (Rosser & Townsend, 2006; Buck & Watson, 2002; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1997; Rosser, 2000; Rosser, 2004), such as the infusion of creativity that new employees may bring (Buck & Watson, 2002), high turnover can be costly to an organization. In addition to the direct costs associated with recruiting and training new personnel, the intangible impact on morale is high as current

employees undoubtedly notice consistent trends in employee departure (Rosser & Townsend, 2006; Rickard, 1982; Holmes et al., 1983; Rosser, 2004). Asserting that "turnover among student affairs professionals continues to be relatively high compared to other units within higher education" (Rosser & Javinar, 2003, p. 825), efficiency, consistency, and productivity within the organization also suffered as a result of high turnover rates (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Holmes et al., 1983).

In a national examination of work life issues among midlevel student affairs employees, many leaders highlighted turnover as a perennial issue within the division (Rosser & Javinar, 2003). Holmes et al. (1983) acknowledged that the time-demanding work of student affairs lent itself to high turnover and that "it may be important to examine the costs of the present attrition rate and to consider whether change is necessary" (p. 442). Given the consistent discussions of turnover as a negative construct, it may be helpful to examine various theoretical approaches that scholars have used to explain turnover behavior.

Consistent within the literature is the belief that intent to leave is the immediate precursor to turnover (Mobley, 1977; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1997; Daly & Dee, 2006; Rosin & Korabik, 1995; Johnsrud et al., 2000; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Lee & Mowday, 1987). Regarding leave intent, Rosser (2004) implemented a national study of 4,000 midlevel administrators. The purpose of the research was to ascertain participants' perception of their quality of work life, job satisfaction, morale, and intent to leave. From approximately 2,000 useable survey responses, results indicated that an employee's intent to leave is immediately predicated upon his or her dissatisfaction with work-life issues.

The aforementioned information provided a robust foundation for understanding turnover behavior. As organizations seek to retain employees, scholarly recommendations regarding the appropriateness of integrating corporate human resource management strategies in university environments are worth consideration (Daly & Dee, 2006; Buck & Watson, 2002; Meabon, Sims, Suddick, & Alley (1978). Lorden (1998) indicated that "innovative strategies for providing rewards should be considered. For example, individuals could be given additional time off when possible...or make it possible to work fewer hours" (p. 212). Johnsrud and Rosser (1999a) determined that employee's sense of "recognition for their competence is one of the most powerful predictors of their morale" and that "recognition can take many forms (p. 136). Based on results from the Tarver et al. (1999) study, allowing employees to control their time through flexible scheduling may increase job satisfaction. Such flexibility can be conceptualized through the lens of compensatory time and alternative work arrangements.

Compensatory Time and Alternative Work Arrangements

Compensatory Time

Offering a form of compensatory time is one way that organizations have informally and formally incorporated flexibility within the workplace. Compensatory time is "time off from work in compensation for irregular or occasional overtime work, substituting for overtime/time and half pay" (Business and Legal Reports, 2007, ¶ 1). It is legally available to employees, both exempt and non-exempt, through a 1985 amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). FLSA requires payment for compensatory time at 1.5 times an employee's regular hourly rate (Dishman & Murphy, 2007).

In most cases, compensatory time policies are generally reserved for non-exempt rather than exempt employees (Dishman & Murphy, 2007). The FLSA does not require employers to offer compensatory time benefits to exempt employees, rather it regulates that non-exempt employees must be paid for all hours worked, either through financial compensation (overtime pay) or time off (Dishman & Murphy, 2007; U.S Department of Labor, 2009). Critics of compensatory time cited the financial implications to employers as employees who accrue such time were more likely to have large amounts of vacation time which the employer must pay upon the employee's termination from the company (Business & Legal Reports, 2007). Other opponents asserted that keeping an accurate account of compensatory time is an unnecessarily labor-intensive task for employers (Miller and Juarez, 1997). A popular way of offering compensatory time is through alternative work arrangements (Dishman & Murphy, 2007).

Alternative Work Arrangements

Alternative work arrangements are designed to satisfy employees' desires for autonomy over their schedules in such a manner that they can select working hours that are not only conducive to the organization's goals, but to their personal needs as well (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2002). These varied work schedules are mechanisms that employers use to provide flexibility in the workplace (Nollen & Martin, 1978), and they are heavily used throughout the public and private sector. In fact, the Department of Labor estimates that as many as 27 million employees work in some form of alternate work schedule (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009).

While employees may enjoy alternative work plans, Nollen and Martin (1978) maintained that there are both advantages and disadvantages and that employers should

develop specific policies about how employees can vary their schedules. Hammer and Barbera (1997) asserted that many employers have not given much consideration in how to structure effective alternative work policies, and managers and employees must participate in training related to alternative work schedules so that they are knowledgeable about the different options available to employees and how the policies will be administered. Additionally, job analyses must be conducted to determine how the organization will be impacted if certain positions have flexible work schedules (Hammer & Barbera, 1997), which is a common alternative work arrangement.

Flexible work schedules encourage some degree of employee work-life balance, a perennial topic in the field of student affairs (Hancock, 1988). The issue of high attrition rates for student affairs professionals (Evans, 1988) has often been attributed to issues such as burn-out (Lorden, 1998; Forney & Wiggers, 1984), low salaries (Evans, 1988; Rosser & Javinar, 2003), and supervision and working conditions (Locke, 1983). Additionally, studies regarding gender difference consistently reported that women were less satisfied with their careers than men (Burns, 1982; Bender, 1980; Richmond & Sherman, 1991). As these factors collectively impact job satisfaction (Davidson, 2009; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Buck & Watson, 2002), employers may benefit from creating opportunities to improve retention in higher education (Davidson, 2009; Lorden, 1998).

There are a variety of alternative work arrangements, including compressed work week, and flextime (Nollen & Martin, 1978). In a compressed work week, an employee maintains a 40-hour per week schedule; however, the hours are worked in a different schedule than the typical 8-hour day for 5 days. The compressed work week model is rarely used in office settings and managers are not typically afforded this alternative work

arrangement (Nollen & Martin, 1978). The most common compressed schedule is a 4-10, in which the employee works ten hours in four days (Nollen & Martin, 1978). A unique aspect of the compressed workweek is that the four days may vary from week to week; in other words, an employee may work Monday through Thursday during one week and Wednesday through Monday during the next. Employers may then rotate the advantage of having either Friday or Monday off among their personnel (Hammer & Barbera, 1997).

Flextime is one of the most popular forms of alternative work schedules (Nollen & Martin, 1978). In flextime systems, employees have the opportunity to create work schedules that best fit their personal needs as long as they work the minimum amount of hours as required by their organization (Ronan, 1981). In other words, an individual with a long commute may benefit from a later (or earlier) start time than the standard 8:00 am start time to avoid traffic. Or, an employee with childcare responsibilities may need to leave work earlier than 5:00 pm. Flexible work arrangements recognize that each employee has different needs that should be considered when designing an effective work schedule (Nollen & Martin, 1978).

In describing the need for flextime from a national perspective, Ronan (1981) acknowledged societal demands for increased service continually require organizations to be more flexible. Flextime systems emerged as many companies began to modify the typical work day to accommodate the trend for immediate and ongoing service (Ronan, 1981). There are various forms of flextime; selected examples include: (a) core time – mandatory amount of hours every employee must work, (b) flexbands – pre-determined periods of time in which employees may choose their hours, (c) variable lunch breaks –

staggered times such that employees rotate lunch so that office coverage is maintained, (d) flexible lunch – employees take lunch between one of two periods, and (e) overtime – employees receive compensation at a rate 1.5 times their regular rate of pay when they are required to work beyond normal start and/or finish times as established by the organization (Ronan, 1981). These and other examples allow companies to select one or multiple options that best fit their employee and organizational needs.

Nollen and Martin (1978) reported that flex time and compressed workweeks offer other benefits such as higher productivity, reduced absenteeism, increased employee morale, ease of commuting, and more satisfied employees. Likewise, they identified negative effects such as decrease in internal communication, given the rarity that all employees will work at the same time, and increased difficulty in managing various employee schedules. Alternative arrangements are typically utilized in corporate environments (Dishman & Murphy, 2007); however, a few higher education organizations discuss compensatory time within their human resources policies.

University Compensatory Time Policies

The impetus for my interest in compensatory time and subsequently, alternative work arrangement policies was born from a growing frustration with high turnover in a department of student affairs at an urban research university in the southeastern region of the United States. Having personally conducted at least ten hiring searches in a matter of 5 years, staff dissatisfaction with various components of the organizational environment became evident. Anecdotal testimonies revealed long hours and lack of flexible scheduling options as two major deterrents to employee retention. While these factors alone may not have dominated employees' decision to leave, they did, by the employees'

own admission, greatly influence their decision to consider alternative employment both outside of the department and the university.

A cursory review of policies at various institutions across the United States revealed four major findings: 1) compensatory time policies rarely exist in the context of student affairs and are almost exclusively discussed under the constraints of the FLSA; 2) most policies explicitly specify that compensatory time is not available to exempt employees; 3) information about alternative work schedules is rarely outlined within written procedures; and 4) institutional polices regarding compensatory time for exempt employees or alternative work arrangements are either non-existent or inconsistent.

Endeavoring to conduct a study about alternative work arrangements in higher education, and more specifically in student affairs, it seemed obvious that I should identify literature that discussed this phenomenon in order to ground my own study. Unfortunately, no such literature existed, and I found myself trying to determine how best to identify schools with relevant policies. As it was not feasible to review policies from all of the institutions of higher education in the United States, I decided to research a subset of Georgia State University's (GSU) peer institutions.

In my selected review, I found 17 universities from GSU's peer institution groups with some type of flexible work schedule policy or some mention of the parameters regarding compensatory time. The institutions were categorized across four groups: Southern University Group, Urban 13, proposed aspirational institutions, and proposed peer institutions as defined by the Office of Institutional Research (Georgia State University, 2009). Some institutions were listed in multiple categories. The name of each

university's policy (or area within a broader policy) and general information about it is provided below:

1. Arizona State University (2010) – Southern University Group and proposed aspirational. *Work Schedules (Alternative Work Arrangements).* The policy indicates that "supervisors may allow flexibility in work arrangements to support an individual employee's desire to maintain a balance between job and family" (p.2). The three types of alternative work arrangements offered include telecommuting, flextime, and job sharing.
2. Cleveland State University (2010) – Urban 13. *Flexible Work Schedules*. The policy is "intended to bolster staff morale and retention while maintaining and enhancing a department's service delivery" (p.1). Employees may utilize flextime and compressed work week plans.
3. Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (2010) – Urban 13. *Flextime*. Employees may vary their hours by arriving early or leaving late; however they are required to be present during the university's core hours of 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
4. George Mason University (2010) – Proposed peer. *Flexible Work Policy*. The policy acknowledges the university's "value of flexible work options to faculty, staff, and the university" and that "flexible work options can also have an important environmental impact reducing traffic congestion and pollution" (p.1). The university offers flextime, job sharing, remote work, summer flex, and telework options.

5. Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (2010) – Urban 13 and proposed peer. *WorkSmart*. It is not considered a policy but rather guidelines that are "designed to address the growing interest in working in more flexible ways, supporting IUPUI sustainability initiatives, enhancing recruitment and retention and helping members of the IUPUI family with more tools to save on gas costs…" (p.1). Five types of alternative work arrangements are offered – telecommuting, job sharing, flextime, compressed work schedule, and part-time employment.
6. Northeastern University (2010) – Proposed aspirational. *Flexible Summer Work Schedule*. Employees may work a four-day work week during four of the weeks of the summer session "with the approval of their managers. Normally the preferred day for flex time will be Friday" (p. 1). On a related note, the university's policy about compensatory time off notes that exempt employees "are expected to perform their duties for such periods as may be required [and] equivalent time off or additional pay will not be granted for any services rendered in excess of the normal work schedule" (Northeastern University, 2010a, p. 1).
7. Old Dominion University (2010) – Proposed peer. *Alternative Work Schedules*. The policy acknowledges that alternative work schedules "help to facilitate employees' commuting time and balance work and personal responsibilities" (p.2). The available options are compressed work-week, flextime, job sharing and the use of nine, ten, and eleven month appointments.
8. Temple University (2010) – Urban 13 and proposed peer. *Flexible Work Schedules*. The policy is very broad and refers to a "range of flexible formats,

including varying start or stop times or varying the number of hours worked in a particular day" (p.1). The policy specifically indicates that employees are not typically authorized to work from home.

9. University of Cincinnati (2010) – Urban 13. *Overtime and Compensatory Pay*. The policy states that exempt employees are not entitled to compensatory time.
10. University of Houston (2010) – Urban 13 and proposed peer. *Flexible Workplace Initiative*. The policy outlines employee and supervisor responsibilities but does not provide specifics regarding the alternatives that are available. Additionally, while the University of Houston System (2010) compensation policy states that only non-exempt employees may receive compensatory time, the University of Houston-Victoria (2009) allows exempt employees to accrue compensatory time in extenuating situations. The policy mentions specific events in which the use of compensatory time might be appropriate, such as student orientation and community events. These programs are similar to activities that might emanate from a department within student affairs.
11. University of Louisville (2010) – Proposed peer. *Flex-Year Positions*. Employees may work in positions that are "established for a period of less than 12 months, or less than full-time" (p.1). The policy statement supports the use of flexible schedules for "greater cost effectiveness and improved morale" (p.1).
12. University of Memphis (2010) – Urban 13. *Non-Standard Work Schedules*. The university allows employees to work alternative schedules through flextime based on departmental needs.

13. University of Oregon (2010) – Proposed aspirational. *Telecommuting*. The university allows employees to work from home and acknowledges that employees "may be able to increase their productivity, reduce their commuting costs, reduce their stress and find a better balance between work and family life" (p.1). Likewise, employers "may benefit…by increased staff productivity and morale, a reduction in absenteeism and lower overhead or space needs" (p.1).
14. University of Texas at Arlington (2010) – Proposed peer. *Flexible Work Arrangements*. The policy declares that "a flexible work arrangement is considered a privilege and not a right" (p. 1). Options available to employees are flextime, compressed workweek, telecommuting, and job sharing.
15. University of Texas at Dallas (2010) – Proposed peer. *Compensatory Time*. Exempt employees do not accrue compensatory time; however, the university does offer a summer flexible work schedule which allows staff to work 80 hours over a period of nine, rather than 10 days every two weeks (University of Texas at Dallas, 2010a). This program is only available for eight weeks during the summer months.
16. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (2010) – Urban 13 and proposed peer. *Alternative Work Patterns Policy*. The policy recognizes the need "to improving present employee morale and productivity, and to more economically and efficiently utilize existing resources" (p.1). Flextime, permanent part-time employment, and job sharing are available. Additionally, in its compensatory time policy, the university allows exempt employees to receive overtime pay "at a rate of up to but not exceeding hour-for-hour (straight time) for hours worked over 40

in a work week…not at the time-and-one-half rate which applies to non-exempt employees" (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2010a, p.1). While I am unsure if this is an anomaly, it is definitely the first I've known of an institution that allows exempt employees to collect compensatory pay for working more than 40 hours a week.

17. Virginia Commonwealth University (2010) – Urban 13. *Working Offsite Policy*. Employees may utilize telecommuting yet the university acknowledges that many jobs "are not appropriate for telecommuting. Faculty and staff often must be available in person to assist students or patients, provide customer service assistance, or conduct classes and research" (p.1). Because of this, flexible work schedules are also available.

In the policies of these 17 institutions, there were similarities in the names of the policies, and flextime was the most popular option available which is consistent with human resource literature. I was encouraged to find written policies about alternative work arrangements; however, no research exists that offers how or if these policies are applied in student affairs. This represents the gap in the literature as it relates to my research study.

The Gap in the Literature

While several research studies have been conducted about work-life balance and employee attrition, a gap exists due to the lack of comprehensive attention to student affairs. In a profession that encourages programming to meet students' needs (and therefore often at times that best fit students' schedules rather than those of professional staff), scholarly literature that speaks directly to the experiences of, and impact on,

individuals who are employed in positions that regularly require them to work beyond 40 hours without additional compensation is noticeably limited. As Davidson (2009) notes,

> Research that explores job satisfaction will aid the student affairs profession by providing insights into the aspects of work that provide greater or lesser satisfaction. This information will enable managers and supervisors to explore adjustments that might improve satisfaction and…thus reduce staff turnover (p. 6).

To date, no studies have been found that offer insight for the use of alternative work arrangements in higher education,

In an effort to diminish attrition rates, several authors' recommendations support the need for this research study as they offered the following suggestions to supervisors, the chief student affairs officer, or other executive leaders who have the ability to shape or influence human resource policies:

1. seek to identify sources of employee turnover (Evans, 1988; Rickard, 1982; Johnsrud et al., 2000; Rosser & Townsend, 2006);
2. offer compensation in the form of free time in lieu of long hours worked (Hancock, 1988; Lorden, 1998);
3. implement an intentional and strategic focus on work-life balance (Lorden, 1998; Hermsen & Rosser, 2008);
4. develop formal policies that allow for flexibility in the workplace (Lorden, 1998; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1997);
5. provide professionals with more autonomy over time worked (Tarver et al., 1999);

6. develop recognition programs and other incentives to balance the intrinsic rewards-only nature of the profession (Volkwein & Parmley, 2000; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999a; Rosser, 2004; Avery, 2001; Davidson, 2009);
7. consider non-financial ways to reward staff members for hard work (Hermsen & Rosser, 2008; Carpenter, Torres, & Winston, 2001; Avery, 2001);
8. create initiatives that recognize importance and support of quality of life issues (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Rosser, 2000; Johnsrud, 2002);
9. implement proven human resource management strategies within a higher education setting (Buck & Watson, 2002; Lorden, 1998);
10. offer employees strategies to avoid burnout (Forney, Wallace-Schutzman, & Wiggers, 1982); and
11. conduct further research regarding work environments in student affairs (Hancock, 1988; Davidson, 2009).

These recommendations solidified the rationale for this research study; understanding work life issues is important (Rosser, 2000). By discussing the constructs embedded within attrition, job satisfaction, turnover and intent to leave, compensatory time, and alternative work arrangements, I seek to offer a broad and contextual understanding of work issues that impact job satisfaction, attrition, and employee turnover in student affairs.

According to Buck & Watson (2002), "human resources management (HRM) strategies have the potential to influence an employee's level of organizational commitment and consequently influence voluntary terminations" (p. 176). Ideally, by developing and implementing alternative work arrangement options, a HRM strategy

commonly used in the corporate sector, higher education institutions will improve job satisfaction and thereby increase employee retention, particularly in a division of the university in which employees regularly work abnormal hours as required to meet the demands of co-curricular student involvement. This study seeks to affirm Herzberg's theory which definitively asserted that employees are more motivated intrinsically than extrinsically (Herzberg, 1966). With this in mind, I argue that employers should institute incentives that encourage retention by rewarding employees with intentional opportunities designed to improve job satisfaction and thus, employee retention.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided context to the research study by reviewing the literature related to the history and demanding work of student affairs, attrition in student affairs, employee turnover, compensatory time, and alternative work arrangements. I offered a rationale for the study by identifying the gap in the literature, and finally, I acknowledged two current university alternative work policies and then reviewed recommendations regarding how student affairs administrators can implement strategies to increase employee retention. In Chapter 3 I discuss the methodology and design of the research study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

As iterated in the two previous chapters, attrition in student affairs continues to be a problem (Lorden, 1998). To address this issue, the proposed research study was designed to explore the experiences of student affairs employees who utilize a university-wide alternative work arrangements policy. The primary goals of the study were to discuss alternative arrangement policies that select universities currently offer, articulate the benefits and challenges of such a policy to practitioners and institutions of higher education, contribute new knowledge to the fields of student affairs and human resources, and provide strategic insight about how to develop and implement this type of policy within a university environment.

The literature presented in Chapter two discussed the nature of student affairs work and described common types of alternative work arrangement structures. A gap in the literature emerged as no studies were found that addressed the use of alternative work arrangements policies in higher education. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the chosen methodology of grounded theory, highlight its use in higher education, and underscore some of the benefits and challenges of grounded theory. The chapter concludes with a discussion of assumptions and finally, I offer an overview of the research design of the proposed inquiry.

Grounded Theory Methodology: An Overview

As a mechanism that allows a researcher to study participants' interactions and engagement within a studied environment (Creswell, 1998), grounded theory is a qualitative methodology by which new theory emerges as a result of data (Glaser &

Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Conrad, 1982; Dey, 1999). Sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss introduced the concept of grounded theory in 1965 during their research about dying in hospitals (Charmaz, 2006). In *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Glaser and Strauss (1967) provided the inaugural framework of grounded theory and its methodological approaches. There have been various iterations and revisions of the theory since its original inception (Conrad, 1982; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998; Glaser, 1978).

Researchers who espouse grounded theory do so because it allows them to construct new ideas about a specific phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Conrad, 1982; Charmaz, 2006). Rather than enter into the research study with a predetermined opinion about what will occur and how it will occur, grounded theorists seek to explore patterns in the research environment that lead to the discovery of a theory that offers an empirical explanation of behavior (Conrad, 1982; Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The methods imbedded within grounded theory "consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). There seems to be a certain measure of freedom associated with an approach that encourages creative and ongoing analysis throughout the research study. This analysis begins with the notion of constant comparison (Conrad, 1982).

Constant Comparative Method

A defining feature of grounded theory is the constant comparative method, an intentional and ongoing process in which the researcher discovers themes as they occur

and adjusts subsequent data collection efforts as necessary (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Conrad, 1982). As Conrad (1982) notes:

> The constant comparative method is a multi-faceted approach to research designed to maximize flexibility and aid the creative generation of theory. The method combines systematic data collection, coding, and analysis with theoretical sampling in order to generate theory that is integrated, close to the data, and expressed in a form clear enough for further testing (p. 240).

Grounded theory is not a one-dimensional process; rather, it is thoughtful, systematic yet flexible, and comprehensive (Conrad, 1982; Charmaz, 2006). The cyclical nature of constant comparison (Conrad, 1982; Glaser, 1978) allowed me to vacillate between the stages of analysis until I was satisfied with my characterization of concepts represented in the data. As data are coded and relationships between them are proposed, considerations of theoretical sampling and saturation are of great importance.

Theoretical Sampling and Saturation

Theoretical sampling allows the researcher to use data collected at the onset of the research project to guide future data collection (Conrad, 1982). The primary goal of this strategy is to extrapolate the categories that comprise the proposed theory (Charmaz, 2006). For example, a researcher who conducts interviews will transcribe and analyze his/her initial interviews prior to conducting subsequent interviews. Based on categories defined within the first set of data, the researcher may modify the questions in an effort to solicit data that will either support or negate these initial concepts. Likewise, prior to interviewing additional participants, the researcher will again code and analyze data to

determine if new categories are necessary and if the previous categories are still warranted.

By the time the researcher concludes the final interviews, he or she may have utilized a totally different set of questions than what was asked in the initial set of interviews. Though tedious, this careful cycle of coding, analyzing, defining and redefining, and modifying the interview protocol based on the data, should yield confidence in the grounded theory that the researcher eventually espouses. In order for this to occur, data saturation must be met.

Saturation happens when the researcher is unable to find additional data to support the categories developed in the emergent theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Conrad, 1982; Dey, 1999). As Brown, Stevens, Troiano, & Schneider (2002) asserted, saturation occurs when "no new data emerges regarding a category, the category is dense enough to cover variations and process, and relationships between categories are delineated satisfactorily" (p. 7). Qualitative researchers do not wait until the study has concluded to code and analyze data as is common among their quantitative counterparts (Merriam, 2009); rather, coding and analysis are conducted throughout the study. This key distinction allows the researcher to ascertain when saturation has been reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In order to navigate effectively toward saturation, a researcher must be proficient in basic aspects of coding data (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory coding requires consistent coding throughout the research project which subsequently guides future data collection. I offer a more detailed discussion of coding in the research design procedures section of this chapter. As the grounded theory emerges, it must be verified consistently

before it is presented as a definitive theoretical paradigm (Glaser & Strauss, 1990; Dey, 1999; Conrad, 1982); therefore, a discussion regarding verification is warranted.

Verification

Dey (1999) posited that it is unrealistic to attempt to prove a theory as true or false. Instead, he argued that a researcher can at best hope to produce strong enough evidence to confirm or reject alternative perspectives. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested that a grounded theory can indeed be verified by further testing, and Conrad (1982) offers a practical approach:

> As the research progresses, some concepts and hypotheses are eliminated because they are refuted or insufficiently supported by the data, while others are supported or modified by the data. As work nears completion, most of the investigator's time is spent searching for additional evidence to support or reject key concepts and theoretical propositions....what remains is a grounded theory based on and validated by empirical evidence (p. 255).

Through careful analysis and rigorous testing, research conclusions should include authentic insights that ensure confidence in what the researcher presents as factual results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

As a means to verify, or evaluate a proposed grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin (1990) offered various criteria to consider, including 1) how and what primary categories emerge from the data; 2) how the theory relates to the literature regarding the phenomena; 3) how data fit into the coding schema; 4) how tightly themes and concepts relate to each other; and perhaps most important, 5) the “closeness of the fit of the theory to the data and phenomenon being studied, and under what conditions the theory holds

true" (p. 253). Incorporating these and other techniques will allow the researcher to justify claims of trustworthiness and credibility of the study.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

As "all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (Merriam, 2009, p. 209), researchers must work diligently to ensure that their results are trustworthy and credible. Among other things, trustworthiness incorporates the soundness of the research, the amount of time spent with the data (such that the results directly reflect the phenomena studied), acknowledgment and control of the researcher's biases, and the theoretical significance of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Merriam, 2002). Embedded within the broad concept of trustworthiness are four critical components of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility occurs with prolonged engagement with participants such that the results definitely reflect what has occurred in the research setting. One way to do this is through member checking whereby the researcher shares preliminary results with all or a select group of individual participants. The participants can confirm, deny, or otherwise offer feedback regarding the researcher's assertions (Merriam, 2002). Transferability refers to whether the findings within the research study are applicable in other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This can be enhanced by incorporating participants' diverse perspectives as well as discretely describing the population such that interested stakeholders can determine the feasibility of replicating the study or applying its findings into their respective environments (Brown et al., 2002).

Confirmability is achieved when another researcher can perform the research study with the same data and reach the same conclusions (Brown et al., 2002). In contrast, dependability ensures that the data adequately represent variation due to changing conditions in the studied environment. One particular strategy to enhance confirmability and dependability of a study is use of an auditor. An auditor is an independent and objective individual (or team) who reviews the researcher's raw data to determine the legitimacy of the findings and in the case of grounded theory, the concrete emergence of a new theory that explains the participants' behavior (Erwin, Meyer, & McClain, 2005; Brown et al., 2002). Detailed information about how I incorporated an auditor into the proposed study is discussed in the procedures section of this chapter.

Benefits and Challenges

Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocated for increased emphasis on generating new theory, and there are considerable merits to conducting research using grounded theory. Its advantages include: 1) its ability to produce new theories to explain behavior (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Conrad; 1982; Charmaz, 2006: Dey, 1999; Strauss & Corbin, 1990); 2) its acceptance to incorporating quantitative approaches within the research design (Conrad, 1982; Dey, 1999); 3) its flexible yet systematic process of discovery (Charmaz, 2006; Conrad, 1982); 4) its use of the constant comparative method which allows for continuous modification during the data collection process (Conrad, 1982); and 5) its exclusive reliance on data to uncover new meaning without a predetermined framework and rather let issues emerge (Dey, 1999; Kezar, 2005).

In contrast, opponents of grounded theory suggested that it rejects objectivity (Conrad, 1982), is not easily quantifiable (Conrad, 1982), and as Sayer (1992) noted, "the

possibilities for accurate and reliable explanatory predictions for open systems are remote" (p. 134). This argument implies that while a new theory may explain the behavior in a particular research context, this theory may not necessarily predict behavior in another environment (Dey, 1999).

Despite its critics, grounded theory has gained significant momentum and a slight redirection since its inception in the late 1960s (Charmaz, 2006). Given its foundational premise that encourages the development and emergence of new theories to explain the behavior in a specific environment, it is an appropriate and effective research methodology for a variety of fields, including higher education (Conrad, 1982).

Grounded Theory in Higher Education

Grounded theory is not new to higher education research. In the mid-1970s, Conrad (1975) proposed a grounded theory regarding how academic change occurs at an institution. Similarly, Newcombe and Conrad (1981) conducted additional research using the constant comparison method of grounded theory to study how academic change is mandated. Another study, presented by Richardson, Martens, Fisk, Okun, and Thomas (1981), utilized grounded techniques to introduce a theory with regard to how community colleges assist in literacy development.

More recent grounded theory studies in higher education have addressed topics such as fund raising in higher education (Lasher & Cook, 1996); organizational behavior and student outcomes (Berger, 2000); feminism (Safarik, 2003); race and cultural identity (Antonio, 2004; Renn, 2000; Sadao, 2003); campus governance (Kezar, 2005); leadership identity development (Komives, Owen, & Longerbeam, 2005) and student cheating (Mayhew, Hubbard, Finelli, Harding, and Carpenter, 2009). Grounded theory is useful in

developing new theories to explain phenomena that has not previously been studied or where there is limited research; as such, it is the selected methodology for a study regarding the impact of alternative work arrangements policies on student affairs staff who use them. The remainder of this chapter offers a description of the research study.

Research Design

While several research studies have been conducted about work-life balance and employee attrition, a gap resides in the lack of attention to student affairs. Scholarly literature that speaks directly to the experiences of individuals who are employed in positions that regularly require them to work beyond 40 hours without additional compensation is noticeably limited. Further, no studies have been found that offer recommendations or insight for the use of alternative work arrangements in higher education. Therefore the use of grounded theory techniques is appropriate when seeking to introduce new knowledge regarding a specific experience (Conrad, 1982).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the availability and impact of alternative work arrangements on college and university employees who worked in positions that regularly required direct contact with students beyond the standard 40-hour workweek and/or during nontraditional work hours such as evenings and weekends. Results from the study may be used to introduce new knowledge to the student affairs profession and encourage divisions of student affairs to lobby for flexibility in the workplace through the development of formal alternative work arrangement policies.

Research Questions

The central focus of the research study was to ascertain if and how student affairs employees are impacted by using an alternative work arrangement. I used the following research questions to guide this inquiry:

1. What expectations regarding flexibility do employees have upon accepting employment at the institution, if any?
2. What types of alternative work schedules do student affairs employees at the research site utilize?
3. What are the benefits to employees who utilize an alternative work schedule, if any?
4. What are the challenges to employees who utilize an alternative work schedule, if any?
5. What recommendations would employees who use alternative work arrangements make to institutions that are seeking to develop such a policy for its employees, if any?

Participants

The participants were selected based on position type and utilization of the alternative work arrangements as employees within the student affairs and auxiliary services divisions (some functional areas that are typically housed within student affairs are incorporated into auxiliary services at the research site). The rationale for selecting individuals based on position type is that certain positions in student affairs have higher levels of direct student contact after hours than others. Individuals in these categories (i.e. program coordinators, advisors, facility managers, and residence hall area coordinators)

are more likely to have evening or late-night requirements inherently incorporated into their positions.

Specifically, employees who worked extended hours (beyond 40 hours a week or after 5:00 p.m.) as a function of their positions at the university were invited to participate in the research project. Eligible participants were employed in a professional role that explicitly required them to remain on-campus, after normal business hours to perform duties such as supervising evening programs, attending organizational meetings of which they are an advisor, and/or to providing on-call or emergency response).

Seventeen individuals participated in the study. Fourteen of these (ten women and four men) were employees who worked an alternative schedule. The primary requirement for the 14 participants was that they were currently using some aspect of the university's alternative work arrangements policy as a result of their employment in a department with student affairs work as its functional context. The 14 participants collectively represented ten areas that provided student affairs services at the research site: Campus Recreation, Career Services, Counseling Center, Greek Affairs, Housing, New Student Orientation, Student Involvement, Student Center, Student Government, and the Women's Resource Center.

Additionally, three individuals who are currently or were involved in the development and implementation of the policy were interviewed for informational purposes only. Throughout the study, these individuals were referred to as subject matter experts (SMEs) because of the former or current human resource responsibilities embedded within their positions. In order to determine the appropriate individuals who were able to inform the study as a SME, I contacted the Department of Human Resources

and conducted an interview with the employee who currently oversees the policy. This individual was very helpful in referring me to the remaining SMEs who participated in the study. As indicated in Figure 2, one individual served a dual role in the study – both as a participant and an SME.

Using pseudonyms, the following two figures provide an overview of the participants' demographics and their specific work schedules. Figure 1 illustrates the participants' position levels, type of alternative arrangements they used, and the reasons they requested to work an alternative schedule. Figure 2 details the participants' work hours by day and offers notes that highlighted individual nuances about the schedules if applicable.

Participant	Position Level	Type of Alternative Plan	Reason for Alternative Schedule
1. Elizabeth	Mid-level Executive	Flex	Childcare
2. Renee	Entry-level	Flex, compressed	Education
3. Jessica	Mid-level Executive	Flex, telecommute	Childcare and education
4. Gina	Entry-level	Flex	Childcare
5. Tammy	Mid-level	Flex	Personal preference
6. Inez	Mid-level Executive	Flex	Childcare
7. Donna	Mid-level Executive	Flex	Education
8. Zachary	Mid-level	Flex, compressed	Education
9. Charles	Entry-level	Flex	Personal preference
10. Bonita	Mid- level Executive	Flex	Personal preference and childcare
11. Ashley	Mid-level Executive	Flex	Personal preference
12. Caitlyn	Mid-level Executive	Flex	Personal preference
13. Peter	Entry-level	Flex	Education
14. Mike	Entry-level	Flex	Personal preference

Figure 1 – Participant Demographics

Note. The definitions that follow are associated with Figure 1. The descriptions are based on common language that is understood in the student affairs profession.

Position level refers to the hierarchal rank of the participant's position.

- Entry level – 5 years or less of professional experience in the field; supervisory responsibilities typically limited to student employees.

- Mid level – 5 to 10 years of professional experience in the field; may have some supervisory responsibilities within their position.
- Mid-level executive– 5 to 10 years or more of professional experience in the field; has leadership, managerial and/or supervisory responsibilities within their position.

Type of alternative plan describes the specific form of alternative plan utilized by the participant.

- Compressed work week – worked 40 (or more) hours in fewer than 5 days a week.
- Flex time – worked any set of hours that deviated from traditional 8-5 model.
- Telecommute – worked from home.

Reason for alternative schedule provides the participant's rationale for requesting an alternative schedule.

- Childcare – transportation to/from school; after school care.
- Education – pursuit of an advanced degree.
- Personal preference – personal reason (preferred working at certain times of day, wanted to avoid traffic, etc.).

Participants in this research study worked a wide variety of schedules as it relates to their specific hours. Figure 2 outlines each participant's specific alternative work schedule.

Participant	Participant's Work Schedule	Notes about Schedule
1. Elizabeth	8:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m. (Monday) 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (Tuesday) 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. (Wednesday) 8:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. (Thursday) 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (Friday)	
2. Renee	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (Monday) 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. (Tuesday) 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (Thursday) 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (Friday)	Wednesday: worked a few hours in the morning (time varies), then commutes to graduate school
3. Jessica	8:15/8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. (Monday –Thursday) Work from home (Friday)	Worked 7:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. prior to having children and pursuing graduate degree
4. Gina*	10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. daily (prior to maternity leave) 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. daily (after maternity leave until end of Fall 2010 semester) 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. (two days a week and 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. three days a week once returns in Spring 2011 semester)	Supervisor allowed her to return slowly to work with an alternative schedule. She will eventually return to 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. at some point.
5. Tammy	7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. daily (summer only) 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. daily	Requested 7:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. but was not approved
6. Inez**	9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. daily (prior to maternity leave) 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. daily (after maternity leave)	Requested permanent reduction in hours from 40 to 30 hours a week after giving birth to child
7. Donna	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. (Monday or Wednesday, depending on class schedule)	Rarely adhered to 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. hours because attended evening meetings every other week
Key: *Participant was employed in a position with pre-established evening hours **Participant was no longer employed at the research site + Participant was also a Subject Matter Expert (SME)		

Figure 2 – Participants' Alternative Work Schedules

Note. These hours were reported by the participants. Upon calculation, the hours do not total 40 hours per week. Neither the participants nor the subject matter experts offered justification for these variances in schedules.

Participant	Participant's Work Schedule	Notes about Schedule
8. Zachary	9:00 a.m. – 6/7:00 p.m. (Monday, Tuesday – Friday) 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. (Wednesday)	Commuted to graduate school so schedule changed depending on class schedule
9. Charles*	10/10:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. (Monday – Thursday) Works 3-4 hours on Friday (exact time varies) Works 4-5 hours on Sunday (exact time varies)	Pre-established hours for position
10. Bonita	7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. daily	Worked several evenings per week
11. Ashley+	7:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. daily 7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. Sunday – Thursday; off Friday (January – March only)	Worked this schedule January – March only due to role with student organization
12. Caitlyn	9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. daily	Worked numerous nights and weekends
13. Peter*	2:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. (Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday) 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (every other Wednesday)	Left early on Wednesday to commute to graduate school
14. Mike	9:00 a.m. – 8:15 p.m. (Monday, Tuesday) 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. (Wednesday – Friday)	

Key:
*Participant was employed in a position with pre-established evening hours
**Participant was no longer employed at the research site
+ Participant was also a Subject Matter Expert (SME)

Figure 2 (continued) – Participants' Alternative Work Schedules

Research Site

The research site is a large public research university in the southeast. With a full-time enrollment of over 20,000 undergraduate and graduate students, the institution's division of student affairs consisted of over 20 departments, including Student Involvement, Greek Affairs, Leadership Education and Development, Career Services, and Campus Recreation. Two departments, the University Center and University Housing, were not housed within the student affairs division; however, as they represented student affairs functions, employees from these departments who used an alternative work schedule were selectively invited to participate in the study.

Procedures

In an effort to familiarize myself with the practical application of grounded theory methods, I conducted two pre-interviews prior to collecting data for the actual research study. I enacted the proposed interview protocol and transcribed and coded the data. As presented in Chapter 4, I then identified themes and reported results of the interviews. This strategy offered me relevant and credible experience as I incorporated grounded theory methodology into my research design which is described later in the chapter.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, I incorporated an auditor into the research study. Auditors offer an objective review of the project with the goal of authenticating the qualitative methods and subsequent findings of the study (Erwin et al., 2005). My audit plan was adapted from Erwin et al. (2005) who used an auditor in their study about violence prevention in urban adolescents. The five phases of my audit model were as follows:

Phase 1: I identified a qualified individual to serve as an auditor. Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggested selecting a person who has experience with qualitative research methods, knowledge of the subject matter, and no vested interest in the study. My auditor holds a Ph.D. in higher education, and he is a senior-level student affairs administrator who is experienced in qualitative methodology.

Phase 2: I introduced the auditor to the study by providing key background information (including the purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, data collection methods, information about the participants and the research site) as well as interview transcripts and preliminary findings. At the recommendation of Erwin et al. (2005), I entered into a contractual agreement with my auditor in which I outlined his role and specific tasks in evaluating the study.

Phase 3: The auditor evaluated the research methods and offered a critique of the study's strengths and limitations. He did not express any concerns about trustworthiness and credibility as discussed earlier in the chapter, and he was complimentary of the purpose and goals of the research topic based on the potential to offer new literature to the field.

Phase 4: The auditor reviewed the interview transcripts and preliminary findings for researcher biases that may have influenced the study. According to Erwin et al. (2005), "an integral part of any audit process is to ask questions that will expose possible sources of bias" (p. 715). I articulated a bias statement that addressed my theoretical perspective and subjectivities regarding the research topic (Appendix A). He then examined the codes and emergent themes through the lens of my biases and subsequently recommended strategies to control for these personal and professional prejudices. His

recommended tactics included allowing participants to talk freely, limiting my interruptions, and being conscious about not guiding the conversation toward my biases.

Phase 5: The auditor provided me with a written summary of his findings which included two primary recommendations. He suggested that I rearrange the themes into categories as they related to my research questions and that I modify the verbiage to better describe a few of the themes. In two cases, he also advised me to delete secondary points that I had previously included with a particular theme and to incorporate these factors within the respective narrative about that theme. Finally, the auditor offered suggestions for articulating my findings into the discussion of implications for the profession. While I had no prior experience with using an auditor for academic purposes, it proved invaluable to have an experienced and external individual who did not share all of my biases to review, critique, and offer strategies for strengthening my research study.

As Brown et al. (2002) noted, an auditor "ensures stakeholders – participants, readers, dissertation committees, and the like – that emerging codes, concepts and theories are dependable" (p. 9). By systematically integrating the five phases as described above, I attempted to ensure the integrity and appropriateness of the data collection methods and analytic procedures used, and the findings purported by my research study.

Data Collection

I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews and a focus group to gather data for the study. Participation required no longer than 180 minutes (one individual 90-minute interview and one 90-minute focus group with all of the participants). I also conducted three follow-up interviews in cases where further questions or clarity was needed based on information provided during the participant's initial individual

interview. These three participants participated in the study for a total of approximately 210 minutes. The individual interviews occurred during the Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 semesters. Once the interviews were transcribed, all participants were given the opportunity to review their transcripts for accuracy prior to being invited to participate in the focus group which occurred in the Spring 2011 semester.

Coding and Data Analysis

Coding.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) asserted that coding and analysis exist as interactive entities rather than actions that occur in isolation. As data are collected, coding is a central component because it occurs throughout the research project rather than a more traditional approach of coding once all the data has been gathered (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Conrad, 1982; Dey, 1999). In coding, researchers attach labels to data in an effort to explain what is occurring in the environment (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Codes are generally short names that succinctly describe individual segments of data (Charmaz, 2006). Open, axial, and selective coding represent three phases of coding utilized in qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Open coding is "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). In my study, I coded the data using this systematic process. I reviewed the transcriptions line by line and identified key words, sentences, phrases, or entire blocks of text that articulated a certain concept. I then assigned a one-word capitalized code that best represented the theme of the datum. This is called a descriptive code (Saldana, 2009). A visual example of this type of coding is below:

> “ [1] I notice that the grand majority of homes have chain link fences in the front of them. There are many dogs (mostly German shepherds) with signs on fences that say ‘Beware of the Dog.’” (Saldana, 2009, p. 4). [1] SECURITY

Additionally, I used In Vivo coding whereby I used participants’ exact words as a code:

> “ [3] I really feel comfortable around him” [3] ‘COMFORTABLE’”

(Saldana, 2009, p. 4). I found this type of coding very helpful in the initial stages of reviewing the transcripts as some of the participants’ direct language represented frequently expressed concepts that eventually became themes.

As the act of coding is cyclical, subsequent and numerous cycles of coding assisted me in capturing salient features within the transcripts that were helpful in “generating categories, themes, and concepts, grasping meaning, and/or building theory” (Saldana, 2009, p. 8). Through a very deliberate process, I developed 134 codes during the first phase of open coding. Once I was confident that I had thoroughly extrapolated the text such that first level coding was complete, I proceeded to the next level of axial coding which is described in the following paragraph.

During axial coding, I looked for similarities and grouped codes together through a color coding system. My goal was to identify broad categories in which I placed various data incidents (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, in a study regarding minorities in special education programs, the category labeled RESOURCES emanated from a combination of the codes of “MATERIALS, COMPUTERS, and TEXTBOOKS” (Saldana, 2009, p. 9). By immersing myself in the data, I subsequently developed relationships between these wide-ranging concepts as I further refined the data in

selective coding. I narrowed the codes in open coding to broad concepts in this second-level coding process and then proceeded to the third level of selective coding.

Selective coding, also called focused coding (Charmaz, 2006), involves "selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). I synthesized the data and eventually determined the 15 themes that best illuminated the phenomenon that my participants experienced (Dey, 1999). I subsequently grouped these themes within five categories that corresponded directly with my research questions as this was a relevant and meaningful way to organize the data. Along with coding, I incorporated memo-writing which is a critical component of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).

Memos are documents that outline the researcher's thoughts about concepts and their relationship to each other. As Charmaz (2006) noted, "memo-writing is the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers...[it] constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts you to analyze your data and codes early in the research process" (p. 71). They offer a fluid canvas for continuous comparisons between data incidents and refinement of the frameworks which ultimately guide the developing theory (Charmaz, 2006).

I initially began writing a memo after each participant's interview as it was helpful to have a written overview prior to transcription. The memo included general notes and significant points about the participant's experience as an employee who worked an alternative work schedule. However, I realized that this was not entirely useful after the fourth interview as I started to see the themes emerge. I subsequently

wrote a memo after every two to three interviews to reflect larger concepts and individual nuances that I thought were important to capture and to be able to refer back to during data analysis. I wrote a total of five memos during data collection.

Through a deliberate process of recoding and recategorizing, I continually reflected on emergent patterns in the data until I was confident in my refinement of the codes, categories, subcategories, and themes. Upon reaching satisfaction with my coding schema, I began the process of data analysis.

Data analysis.

To assist me during analysis, I created a data table (Appendix B) that illustrated the relationships between the research questions and the questions I asked during the interview. This table explicitly indicated how each research question aligned with the interview questions, and it guided my analysis as I formed a comprehensive response to the larger research questions.

A major part of my analysis occurred through constant comparison as described earlier in this chapter. As I coded transcripts after each interview rather than collectively at one time, I revised my initial interview questions based on the responses of previous participants. I then compared the transcripts in a cyclical pattern such that I started to notice the initial themes emerge. As recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I further compared data incidents of subsequent interviews, built relationships between concepts, and integrated categories such that the final 15 themes emerged as the most appropriate indicators to describe the participants' experiences with working an alternative work schedule.

According to Strauss & Corbin (1998), the five analytic goals of grounded theory are to:

1. Build rather than test theory
2. Provide researchers with analytic tools for handling masses of data
3. Help the analysts to consider alternative meanings of phenomena
4. Be systematic and creative simultaneously
5. Identify, develop, and relate the concepts that are the building blocks of theory (p.13).

Through the coding and ongoing data analysis processes as described above, I immersed myself in the data until I was able to articulate reliable allegiances within the data concepts and ultimately draw sound analytic conclusions toward a grounded theory about the impact of using alternative work arrangements in student affairs.

Interview Protocol

In order to provide a comprehensive context about the Alternative Work Arrangement Policy at the research site, I initially conducted informational interviews with human resources personnel and other stakeholders who were instrumental in developing, implementing, managing, and assessing the policy. These individuals are called subject matter experts (SME) throughout this written description of the research project, and one SME also served as a participant. The purpose of gathering this information was to provide a solid foundation for the research study. Informants were asked to discuss the impetus for development of the policy, how the policy was implemented, statistics related to the policy, challenges and benefits of the policy, thoughts about effectiveness of the policy, and recommendations for institutions that desire to develop such a policy for their employees.

Participant interviews were designed to glean insight about the type of alternative work arrangement the employee uses, how the policy was utilized within their department, and their overall thoughts about the effectiveness of the policy. Additionally, participants were asked to discuss the benefits and challenges they have experienced as a result of using the policy. Finally, I asked employees to share their suggestions about how best to implement an alternative work arrangements policy at other campuses. Appendix C represents questions asked during the interviews.

I wrote summary comments at the conclusion of each interview. These comments captured the general substance of the interview, including non-verbal behavior and other nuances (i.e. overall demeanor when discussing the research topic, acknowledgment of mitigating factors that impact them in the work environment) that provided me with relevant insight during subsequent data collection and the data analysis stage. In concert with the memos, these summary comments were invaluable as I began to comprehensively analyze the data.

Confidentiality

I will keep all data records private to the extent allowed by law. Pseudonyms were utilized within the study, and in some cases, departmental names and other potentially identifiable language were omitted. Although names and position titles were collected, only my major advisor and I have access to this information. Participants were not identified personally, and my findings were summarized and reported in group rather than individual form.

Data Security

The interviews were recorded, and the audio files and transcribed data were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. All audio files and data from informed consent forms were coded, and these forms were stored separately from the transcribed data and will be kept indefinitely for educational and research purposes. Electronic data were stored on a password-and firewalled-protected computer in my office.

Risks

There were no abnormal risks inherent with participation in this study. Participants had no more risks than they would have in everyday life. Given institutional specificity, they may have regretted sharing information regarding institutional politics related to the utilization of the policy. Further, they may have regretted sharing personal information. No participants expressed regret or indicated that they had experienced risk as a result of participating in this study. In fact, they spoke candidly and several thanked me for conducting this research as they indicated that they had never before been asked about their experiences with utilizing formal mechanisms that provided flexibility in the workplace.

Assumptions

With 15 years of professional experience in student affairs, I have spent countless hours beyond 40 hours per week coordinating and/or facilitating late night and weekend events for students. Until becoming a supervisor, I assumed I was just fulfilling my job responsibilities and therefore rarely, if ever, requested compensatory time to account for the disproportionate number of hours I worked; over time, I relegated this expectation to an acceptable notion associated with the profession.

Having responsibility for managing employees caused me to pay closer attention to issues of burnout, work-life balance and ultimately, employee retention. At my current place of employment, my employees remained on-campus late at night to fulfill their job requirements, and as I attempted to compensate them for working extended hours and late evenings (as late as 1:00 a.m. during sorority recruitment), upper-level administrators informed me that I was not authorized to offer accommodations such as time off or the ability to arrive to work late on a day following a late night program. Further, my employers' human resource (HR) department did not offer policies to address compensating employees for consistently working irregular hours. A perpetual cycle of turnover has plagued the division of student affairs at my current place of employment over the last 10 years, and while certainly many other factors could influence an employee's decision to leave, job dissatisfaction in one or multiple areas is a direct precursor to turnover (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002).

As noted by Clough and Nutbrown (2007), "all social research sets out with specific purposes from a particular position, and aims to persuade readers of the significance of its claims; these claims are always broadly political" (p. 4). To this end, I readily acknowledge my own bias of believing that the lack of support for flexibility within the workplace has, among other factors, contributed to poor retention for student affairs practitioners. My position is that although the development and maintenance of compensatory time policies can be convoluted and difficult to generalize to one profession, it is prudent that universities consider implementation of policies that encourage work-life balance and retention of employees.

Retention efforts must be unique to individual employee's wants and needs. Jackson, Moneta, and Nelson, 2009 asserted that "a student affairs organization that avoids unnecessary and frequent turnover will be attentive to staff needs in a variety of ways….retention also depends on various personal accommodations, including flextime…" (p. 352). Having been directly impacted by the cyclical effect of frequent turnover, I firmly posit that the human and financial implications that are inherent to the search process necessitate the establishment of both formal policies and informal practices that may curtail the perennial process of hiring and training new personnel.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a summary of grounded theory methodology, its use in higher education research, a detailed description of the research design, and limitations of the study. In the following chapter, I present results of the study. Results from the study offer new knowledge to the field regarding the availability and applicability of human resources management strategies that may be appropriate for use in student affairs.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this research study was to explore the availability and impact of alternative work arrangements on college and university employees who worked in positions that regularly required direct contact with students beyond the standard 40-hour workweek and/or during nontraditional work hours. Participants in this study represented employees who, by the nature of their specific positions, were required to work consistently beyond 40 hours a week including many evening and some weekend responsibilities.

The participants' flexibility occurred through standard formats that have been commonly used in the business sector such as flex-time, compressed work-week, and telecommuting. In flex-time, employees develop their work schedules according to their personal needs within the parameters of a minimum amount of hours worked as required by their employers (Ronan, 1981). A compressed work-week allows employees to work 40 hours in fewer than 5 days a week and finally, telecommuting offers employees the opportunity to work from home or another remote location (Dishman & Murphy, 2007).

In this chapter, I present the results by beginning with a contextual background about the flexible working arrangements policy at the research site. I gathered this information by interviewing four individuals who had historical insight about how the policy was developed; three of these four also had a current role in managing the policy within their departments. Throughout the study I referred to these individuals as subject matter experts (SME) because of their knowledge of and interface with the alternative work arrangements policy at the research site.

In order to distinguish the SMEs' comments from the participants' comments, I have organized the chapter such that the SMEs' perspectives are primarily illustrated within the background and context while the common themes primarily reflect the participants' experiences. SME comments are sparingly included in the common themes as relevant. After summarizing the context, I provide an overview of the common themes that emerged in the data and support them with participants' quotes. In an effort to conceal the participants' identities, pseudonyms were used and the data were stripped of all identifiers.

Flexwork Arrangements Policy: Background and Context

For the purpose of ascertaining information about the history, development, and administration of the Flexwork Arrangements Policy, I interviewed four SMEs: Barry, Stephen, Ashley, and Cassandra. Barry was a senior level administrator in human resources who had direct responsibility for implementing and managing the policy when it was first developed in 2007. He provided information about how and why the policy was developed as well as his opinions about the impact and future direction of the policy. Stephen was the human resource officer who currently oversees the policy at the research site. His perspective was helpful in understanding the campus-wide implementation and existing management of the policy. Ashley's interface with the policy emanated from the human resource functions within her role in the division of student affairs. She collected information from employees who utilized alternative schedules and served as the division's liaison to the human resources department. Finally, Cassandra was a human resource generalist who was hired at the research site a few months before use of the

policy began. She offered insight with respect to flexible schedules specifically at the research site and in the human resource field in general.

With a combined total of 46 years of employment at the institution, the SMEs' collective recollection, reflection, and insight provided a critical foundational lens for understanding the Flexwork Arrangements Policy at the research site as well as the implications for the future use of alternative work arrangements in higher education.

Historical Overview

The current version of the Flexwork Arrangements Policy was established in 2007. According to the policy statement:

> The [university] provides a variety of flexible working arrangements, at the discretion of department, to enable employees to serve customers, meet [university] and departmental goals, and balance personal and professional responsibilities. Participating in a flexible working arrangement is a privilege and not a right (Research Site Human Resources, 2008).

The complete policy statement is included as Appendix D. The impetus for the policy further reflects the institution's efforts to provide a formal mechanism for offering work-life balance to its employees. When asked why the policy was developed, Barry (SME) stated:

> [The policy] is one that's evolved over time, and I think human resources kind of recognized a need, as did some others on campus…to look at ways that we could accommodate people. Especially as times changed, traffic became more of an issue. The cost of travel became more of an issue. [We were] trying to enhance productivity so it kind of evolved based on those needs.

In addition to the above reasons, another subject matter expert offered perspective about the impetus for developing the institution's policy.

According to Cassandra, "the governor had a big push for state agencies about flexible arrangements;" this was another factor in why the institution created the policy. It is interesting to note that while the research site is a member institution within a university system, the policy development committee did not seek the system's approval of the institution's proposed policy; however, they did refer to the system's policy on telecommuting as an initial guide. The university system's policy provided state employees opportunities for flexibility through telecommuting and the use of flextime.

The institution formed an ad-hoc committee of various campus constituents who were charged with establishing a policy that encouraged the use of flexible schedules in the work environment. This group consisted of human resources representatives from each college, division, and major administrative unit. As Barry (SME) indicated, "We usually take a sub-group and I think in this instance that's exactly what we did. We took a sub-group of that larger group and said, let's kind of see how we can start to evolve this." A new unit was established within the department of human resources in 2007, and Cassandra, the SME who directed this unit, assumed responsibility for implementing the policy. Since the framework for the policy had already been established prior to Cassandra's arrival, her role was to finalize administrative details such as the forms, deadlines, and tracking mechanisms.

The SMEs' accounts regarding the development of the policy were helpful as they provided multiple rationales for the university's goals in creating a formal mechanism to

offer flexibility to its employees. They also shared perspectives about various aspects of the organizational culture that became evident once the policy was established.

Organizational Culture

Both the subject matter experts and participants indicated that there was, and in some instances, continues to be management resistance to the policy. When asked to further explain this struggle, Barry (SME) stated:

> As this thing started to evolve, we were still very much kind of a military structured organization…you know, formulaic and pretty much you need to follow the letter of the law. And so there was…a sense of rigidness that, "hey we've done it this way all along." People come in at 8 o'clock in the morning and they go home at 5 o'clock at night and it really works well. You know where everybody is and you don't have to worry about it.

Furthermore, according to Ashley (SME):

> We don't really use that policy much, as much as I think we really could. And so that's where I also become an advocate…I have some directors who are really good and they will try to accommodate the employees. And then I have some of the directors that just won't give. To me, it's like a benefit that is really underutilized, in my opinion.

Both Barry and Ashley admitted that they understood why managers would not want to implement such a policy. Citing issues such as consistency, equity, and record-keeping, they recognized the challenges yet also acknowledged the numerous positive opportunities to employees. Ashley's sentiments captured this best when she noted that

"the benefits far outweigh the challenges for employees and employers as well." These benefits are further explained later in the chapter.

Other organizational culture issues that arose throughout the interviews were awareness and communication. By this I mean how the university and more specifically, the department of human resources informed employees about the new policy once it was finalized in 2007. Barry (SME) led the policy development process and he indicated:

> We did it in a variety of ways and with a variety of different groups. We met with the president's cabinet to talk about how it would work and the advantages and reasons for doing so. I'm sure [there were] probably a couple of lunch and learns for supervisors to say, this is how this will work and this is how you're going to have to manage it, and this is how we can assist you. We [also] probably had an article or two in our internal communication.

Given Barry's use of the word "probably," it is unclear if these strategies actually occurred, and none of the other three SMEs had direct knowledge of how the policy was communicated at the time of its inception. Stephen, the SME who currently managed the policy indicated that the policy is available online, and no particular attention is given to announcing it in comparison to other institutional employment policies.

Additionally, several participants consistently commented about their lack of awareness of the policy prior to requesting an alternative work schedule. They stated that they had no knowledge that the policy existed or that they had learned of it through their supervisor or a colleague. In one case, Zachary, a participant who "accidentally found out about it while looking online for something else," expressed frustration with his

perception that the university did not employ deliberate measures to inform employees of this benefit.

In addition to learning information about how the policy was developed and managed, and the subject matter experts' opinions about the benefits, challenges, and recommendations for the policy, I inquired about the types of alternative work arrangements that were available to employees. The following section describes how employees at the research site incorporated flexibility into their work schedules.

Types of Alternative Arrangements Available at the Research Site

Various types of alternative work arrangements are used in corporate environments. From the popular forms of flex-time and telecommuting (Dishman & Murphy, 2007), organizations have numerous ways in which they offer employees the opportunity to work non-standard hours. Participants in this study utilized three primary types of schedules: flex-time, compressed work-week, and telecommuting. Flex-time allowed employees to work their 40 hours at times that varied from the research site's regular 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. hours. The institution considered any employee who worked outside of these hours to have an alternative work schedule so a vast majority of employees were included in this category. Of the 14 study participants, 11 of them used flex-time as their primary type of alternative work plan. The remaining three incorporated flex-time in conjunction with a compressed work week (two participants) or telecommuting (one participant).

In a compressed work week, participants worked their 40 hours over four days which then allowed them to have one day off a week. The day off was determined in consultation with the employee's supervisor and considered several factors, including

personal preference, departmental needs, and class schedules if the individual was pursuing an advance degree. The two participants who combined flex-time with a compressed work week both worked in the department of housing and both commuted to graduate school. Their schedules included one day off or a significantly reduced schedule on one day per week; the off day rotated per semester depending on their class schedules.

The final type of alternative arrangement allowed at the institution was telecommuting. Although Ashley declared that "telecommuting is not allowed in our [student affairs] division," she noted that other divisions allowed their employees to work from home. Citing the institution as a leader in technology (which would likely be required in a work from home arrangement), Ashley further expressed frustration with the fact that telecommuting is not widely supported at the institution:

> They will, you know, try to let you flex your schedule a little bit for all the student events, but I can say that was only one person who could telecommute in our department and they really didn't want to approve it. And I hear that from other departments, from other divisions as well [although] there are one or two divisions that do allow their employees to telecommute. Employees at Coca Cola get these benefits, employees at GE get these benefits, and all I ever hear is, "well we're really state employees," but if we're really going to be out there leading [other organizations] and we're not allowing our top employees to telecommute, what is that saying?

Student personnel functions at the research site were performed by staff in the division of student affairs and the division of auxiliary services. As such, one participant employed in a department that reports through the division of auxiliary services

implemented a hybrid model by incorporating both flex-time and telecommuting into her schedule. Despite the formal plans that were provided through the Flexible Work Arrangements Policy, it became clear through the interviews that participants utilized both formal and informal alternative work schedules.

Informal versus formal schedules

According to all of the SMEs, employees who desired to work an alternative schedule submitted their initial request to their immediate supervisor. If the immediate supervisor approved the schedule, the employee was required to complete the appropriate HR form and then the director of the employee's department (if different from their immediate supervisor) also approved the proposed schedule. It should be noted that even if the immediate supervisor approved the employee's request, the departmental director could modify or deny the request and there was no recourse for the employee. Alternative work schedules were reviewed annually during the employee's performance appraisal.

While all of the participants in the research study worked some form of alternative schedule, several individuals indicated that their arrangements were made on an informal basis rather than them having followed the official HR policy guidelines. For the purposes of this research study, a formal schedule was defined as one in which the participant completed the HR form that outlined their approved schedule. This form was subsequently approved by the participant's supervisor and the department director (if this was a different person). The form was subsequently maintained in the participant's employment file with the human resources officer of their division.

An informal schedule then, was characterized as one in which the participant made special arrangements with their supervisor, typically through the use of email

correspondence. No HR form was completed and the participant's scheduled was approved through their immediate supervisor only. Ashley, a SME who coordinated human resource functions within the division of student affairs, provided insight about how the alternative work arrangements policy was implemented within her division:

> Now, for some of the other departments, they all do a flex schedule. And it goes from July 1 to June 30. And then throughout the year if something comes up, or a situation comes up where they need to flex a schedule…if it's going to be for a short term of time, and we consider that short term of time three months. As long as we have it in an email request we will accept it. If it's more than three months then we fill out the formal flex schedule policy that [the university] has. That's how we handle it in student affairs.

Many of the participants appreciated the autonomy that each division was given in administering the policy. As Ashley continued:

> [The university] pretty much lets every department or division be somewhat autonomous…I do know that [the university] says that if you flex your schedule, you should have the written form on hand. Because we are student affairs and work so much with students, sometimes we are flexing a schedule just for day, maybe a week, or possibly just for a month. And so, we just kind of figured that was way too much paperwork.

Mike also acknowledged variances in how he as an employee applied the policy:

> I don't know if it's listed as an alternative schedule – I work it out with my supervisor when I come in and when appropriate, determine flexibility. I was here 7:00 a.m. – 1 a.m. during the [fraternity and sorority] recruitment period.

> Afterward we kind of worked out me making up the time….That was just a discussion between us because I don't know if that's official the way [the university] or the state would do it.

The varying alternative arrangements allowed participants, in conjunction with their supervisors, to select the most appropriate schedule based on personal and departmental needs. While they were able to articulate how they benefitted and were challenged by flexibility in the workplace, none of them knew how, or if, the institution assessed the Flexwork Arrangements Policy.

Assessment of the Policy

A major discovery from both the participants and the SME interviews was regarding the university's lack of assessment of the policy. Although Stephen (SME) acknowledged the presence of anecdotal evidence of the positive impact of the policy, he readily admitted, "I don't know if it's been formally studied where we have hard concrete data we can turn to and say, 'here's the evidence that this works.'" Similarly, Ashley (SME) confirmed that there "is no collection of data at a centralized point." She shared that the university employed 6,114 full-time faculty and staff (as of December 2010), and the department of human resources could not provide an accurate account of how many employees worked an alternative schedule due to the absence of internal assessment measures.

Forms for the employees who complete the official policy form were maintained in their employment files by their divisional human resource representative rather than centrally housed with the university's department of human resources. Additionally, the 2007 policy had not been reviewed since its inception. This lack of a systematic

assessment of the policy, how it is used, and if and how employees who utilize the policy are impacted further supported the importance of this research project. In fact, Stephen (SME) requested that I send him a report of my findings at the conclusion of the study.

Doing background research about the institution's Flexwork Arrangements Policy was critical to understanding the results of the research project. I gleaned valuable insight and information from the subject matter experts whose collective perspectives helped to provide context and further clarified the appropriateness of the questions used in the initial interview protocol as well as in follow-up interviews with employees who worked alternative schedules. Utilizing the research questions regarding expectations of flexibility, benefits and challenges to working an alternative work schedule, and recommendations for institutions desiring to establish such a policy, the next section outlines the emergent themes derived from data collected in the study.

Common Themes

The participants in this research study were very candid and forthcoming in discussing their usage of alternative work arrangements in student affairs. They seemed genuinely appreciative that someone took a research interest in their experiences with working an alternative work schedule which they largely deemed as positive. Figure 3 identifies the salient themes that emerged after significant analysis of the data.

Category	Themes
Expectations of Flexibility	1. Flexibility in the Workplace 2. Nature of Student Affairs
Benefits	1. Work-Life Balance - Managing Life - Reduced Stress and Burnout - Parenting - Pursuit of Education 2. Increased Job Satisfaction 3. Increased Productivity 4. Employee Attitudes and Behavior - Conscientiousness - Personal Skill Development 5. Availability and Customer Service 6. Employee Retention - Non-monetary compensation
Challenges	1. Consistency 2. Access to and Awareness of the Policy 3. Guilt and Proof That You Are Working
Recommendations	1. Transparency 2. Assessment 3. Benchmarking
Other Issues	1. Communication - Relationship with Supervisor - Planning - Taboo Topic

Figure 3 – Themes

I determined these themes through the coding process discussed in Chapter 3. The themes correspond with the research questions and are therefore grouped into five main categories:

1. Expectations of flexibility.
2. Benefits.
3. Challenges.
4. Recommendations.
5. Other Issues.

In the sections that follow, I define the themes and support them with participants' quotes that illustrate their significance to the study.

Expectations of Flexibility

This first category related to how the participants expected flexibility prior to accepting their positions. I inquired about this because I wanted to know if preconceived expectations existed, and if so, whether this influenced their experiences and perceptions when they were afforded opportunities to incorporate flexible options into their work schedules. The two emergent themes in this category were 1) flexibility in the workplace and the 2) nature of student affairs.

Flexibility in the Workplace.

In the first theme, all 14 participants expressed definitive opinions about the critical importance and impact of having flexibility that is both informally and formally incorporated into their respective positions. In some cases, participants discussed the fact that they inquired about what flexibility, if any, would be allowed prior to accepting their positions at the research site. Noted Gina:

> I know I looked into it on the HR website. I know the different concessions that they'll make and how they'll work with it, but it was something that I asked about when I was applying as well. We did talk about how it's flexible; sometimes they might need me to stay later for an event and that I can leave early or come in later on another day and my supervisor mentioned that she is flexible too.

While the subject of flexibility may have been discussed prior to employment, none of the participants indicated that their supervisors specifically referenced the university's flexible schedule policy by name. Tammy was the only subject who had previous knowledge of the actual policy, and by her own admission, this was because she researched and became familiar with it on her own initiative because of her desire to work an alternative schedule. The remaining participants did not do this and therefore indicated that they were unaware of the policy prior to needing a flexible schedule.

Three of the study participants worked in corporate environments prior to the institution. Donna stated, "I was hoping that [my schedule] would be more flexible. As long as my work is done and there's some type of supervision, it's definitely a little bit better [than corporate] as far as being able to flex." Similarly as Gina stated:

> I'm used to having flexible hours. I'm not used to working that traditional 9 to 5 job. It's something I enjoy and I was looking for in a job as well, anywhere I was going to work I was going to want the flexible hours.…I'd always had kind of flexible hours and I enjoy my job and enjoy working, but family is also important and so I wanted to make sure that I was going to be somewhere where if I needed to be flexible for any reason that they would be willing to work with me on it.

Yet another participant, Zachary indicated that he expected flexibility and that he discussed it prominently in his hiring interview. His thoughts about flexibility in the workplace stemmed from "having flexibility in previous positions" and his opinion that:

> We don't have enough flexibility in our schedules. I think it should be a staple of American culture and I think it's at a point where there is an unhealthy level in the opposite direction. The demands on our time are far more detrimental than they should be.

As a result of having flexibility in his previous position, Mike asserted,

> Yes, I came here with an expectation that my schedule wouldn't be set in stone and that I wouldn't have to be here right at 8 when the doors open. I didn't expect to show up at 10 or 10:30 but I at least wanted to come in at 8 or 9 especially when we are meeting with councils.

Finally, all of the participants noted the personal impact of having flexibility in their schedules. As Elizabeth expressed, "flexibility is absolutely important, especially in times right now where we're not getting raises. We're making less money every year. For me it's saved me a lot of money in after care costs." Throughout the individual interviews, the participants spoke confidently and passionately about their personal and professional needs and desires for flexibility due to the nature of the student affairs profession.

Nature of Student Affairs.

The expectations and opinions about the desire for flexibility resulted from either the participants' previous work experiences, their opinions that flexibility was necessary given the frequently abnormal work hours associated with student affairs, or both. Nine

participants acknowledged that they were expected to work long hours and evening and/or weekend hours without additional compensation; however, they also expressed concern that consistently working these irregular and often unrealistic hours gravely reduced their quality of life in comparison to individuals in other professions. Renee indicated the following:

> People need a mental, physical, whatever break. As a supervisor of professional staff, I do try to give them some breaks and stuff but it is hard…in grad school, [working long hours] was cute. It seemed to be something our profession valued but what did I have to show for it? My identity is stemming around being a student affairs professional? That's not cool.

As Mike concluded, "flexibility is important because it shows that the institution cares about and understands that different staff members are not working the normal 8-5 hours. It's important for them to see that or make special schedules for those people." Elizabeth lamented about the "incredible amount of hours that staff work, especially those entry-to mid-level employees who are in the trenches." It is from these perspectives that participants eagerly provided insight into the numerous benefits they received as a direct result of incorporating alternative work arrangements into their schedules.

Benefits

The second overarching category provided an understanding of the participants' perceptions of how they had positively benefitted as a direct result of working flexible hours. As it relates to overall benefits, Caitlyn captured the essence of the individual and collective benefits of flexibility within an employee's work schedule:

> I just think that flex time allows you to see your employees as individuals. I mean, what I see as benefits are of it….If you ask another person in my office, they're going to tell you the benefits are that they get to take their kids to school or they commute, and they get to avoid the rush hour traffic. Everybody is going to have benefits that are different. But a flex time policy allows you to meet the needs of your individual employees, so that the time that you have them in your office, they can be their most effective.

This category contained the largest number of themes as participants were verbose in communicating their favorable opinions about the subject matter. Six major themes emerged in the area of benefits: 1) balance; 2) increased job satisfaction; 3) increased productivity 4) employee attitudes and behavior; 5) availability and customer service; and 6) employee retention.

Work-life balance.

While there is no quantitative or universal definition of balance, all 14 participants spoke often about the need for a healthy equilibrium between their professional and personal lives as they defined it for themselves. Inez emphatically stated, “Work-life balance is very important. You can’t keep working at a high level long periods of time.” She also noted that “the ability to offer flexibility helps you recruit and retain talented people who are balanced.” When asked to elaborate further, she provided professional insight about the importance of balance from her background as a licensed psychologist:

> Oh gosh, [balance is] very important. Very important. You think about workplace health. You think about the productivity of your team. People’s ability to

> contribute comes directly out of how well they are, and if they're having problems at home, because they can't manage their home life, it comes directly back into the work environment. I also think when people are not taking good care of their children, or their parents, or their spouses, or whomever, that they don't feel good, and they can't perform well at work. They may be making a lot of calls to children, or spouses, or parents. It's pulling them down at work. I think it's draining the energy out of their workday.

Seven participants also discussed their ability to role model balance as supervisors who worked an alternative work schedule. As Jessica said, “it allows me to role model balance, especially for younger professionals.” She further indicated that it was very important for supervisors to show their employees that it is “okay to work hard but you also need to take care of yourself; what good are you if you’re not around?” Likewise, Elizabeth agreed that role modeling is important as she indicated, “I think part of that is I've role modeled that for them, you know, that it's okay [to leave early].” Additionally, Peter captured the spirit of being able to manage life when he indicated that “the flex schedule allows a little bit of normality in my life.” The vast comments about balance produced four elements within this theme: 1) managing life; 2) reduced stress and burnout; 3) parenting; and 4) pursuit of education.

Managing life.

Barry (SME) acknowledged the personal benefits for employees by indicating, “I think it can help them with managing their personal affairs and their households more effectively…and to more accommodate family child care arrangements. It can make life, work life a lot more tolerable.” Jessica echoed this opinion by stating, “my household's

not a shambles so just by being able to go to work late, which really happens on Fridays or not go at all, I can get laundry done." Similarly, Caitlyn expressed the importance of having time to handle everyday needs:

> It allows me to take care of all of the life necessities that you have to do…. If I don't have time to go to the dry cleaner before they close, then all those little things start to stress. So, for me, the benefits are some stress relief, sense of balance, and to keep myself in check.

The participants equated their ability to better manage their obligations to having reduced stress levels and reduced burnout within their positions.

Reduced stress and burnout.

When discussing stress reduction, all of the participants indicated that having flexibility made them feel better because they were able to take care of personal needs, rest, and work during hours when they were most productive. As Gina stated, "I thoroughly enjoy being in the field with such flexible hours. I think that it causes less stress, less work stress, and I think it helps people to just enjoy their, their work a little bit more." Likewise, Cassandra (SME) agreed that flexibility "helps [employees] reduces stress because they are able to balance work and personal life." Additionally, as Zachary indicated, "I can still get work done when I'm out of the office which can alleviate some of the pressure." The discussions about stress reduction included references to the work environment being healthier and that the mental and emotional benefits they gained as a result of less stress contributed to what Gina ultimately characterized as a "healthier work environment." Inez also reflected that "the intangible benefits make a huge difference in how I feel about working here."

All of the participants discussed how their alternative schedules positive impacted their stress levels. According to Gina:

> For me it feels like a less stressful work environment versus working with a fixed schedule. I know I can deal with a situation at home and not have to be at work right away. I am a little bit less stressed [knowing] that I don't have to take necessarily sick or vacation hours if I have an appointment or if anything comes up I can just look at my hours and stay a bit later.

Furthermore, Christie asserted:

> It's not as stressful as some of the people in my [graduate] program. If I have a project due that I'm just like really strapped for time, I can talk to my supervisor and maybe have to leave a little bit early or take vacation time to leave or to just flex my hours….

An interesting and frequent comment involved the value of having just one additional hour in terms of an employee's arrival time to work. As Caitlyn indicated:

> It's amazing what an hour can for someone's stress. It's just, all different reasons that can add a stress to your employee's life…because that hour, whatever it is that you use it for or how you need to, makes a huge difference.

Similarly, Stephen, the SME who telecommutes once a week, stated that he experienced "some sense of euphoria…[the] extra hour of sleep to me is a great benefit." It was consistently evident that participants benefitted from reduced stress as a result of having flexible schedules. Another benefit occurred for participants who were parents.

Parenting.

Five of the 17 participants were parents, and four of them specifically requested an alternative schedule due to parental obligations. All four of these women had young children in the home, and one individual also had a teenager who requires transportation to school in the mornings. The participants spoke favorably of how their flexibility assisted them in meeting their professional roles while simultaneously fulfilling their roles as parents. They each expressed appreciation for an institution that allowed them as new mother Gina noted, "to balance worklife with childcare" and "make accommodations for childcare issues." Inez said, "I was allowed to be a parent…it was important to me to be a parent and a professional." In other words, the idea of balancing motherhood with a career was very important to Inez and the other mothers. Likewise, Elizabeth stated that "as a working parent it was really important to me, especially in our field. We end up working so many weekends and late nights that it's nice to have some days protected that I know are for my son." Elizabeth flexed her schedule such that she was able to pick up her son every day from daycare and on Wednesdays she left work at 2:00 p.m.

The importance of her role as a mother was further illustrated by Jessica's comments, "I can, you know, write notes to my son's teachers. I can swing by my son's school and check on him and give him a hug and say 'I love you.' I mean, I can be a mom." Having requested a flexible schedule to avoid placing her child in daycare, Inez shared:

> I was able to have really precious time with my child that I'll never get back…from the time she was born to the time she was 5 years old I worked that

> schedule. And those were you know, years that I'll never get back. And so just the time with her knowing that she wasn't in daycare, and that we raised her ourselves, those hours…I gained that benefit.

Jessica shared the perspective of a former colleague who felt that her need for flexibility was not respected because she is unmarried and does have children. According to Jessica, this individual stated:

> If I say that I have to do something as a mother, it works. But that's the only thing. Or my family. But because I'm single and I don't have a husband or kids, there's no value. There's no credibility in it.

Tammy agreed with this sentiment as her request to leave at 4:00 p.m. during the academic year was not approved by her supervisor. Her reaction to this denial was:

> While 30 minutes might not mean much to you, it does to me. And I can't say it's because of childcare, because I don't have any kids, and unfortunately they don't count dogs as kids…that's just how our society is set up. That if you have children, then suddenly you're given a different pass than not having kids.

Elizabeth also agreed, "I'm telling you, having a kid people don't argue with you as much about those things." These comments provided a clear picture of how parents benefitted from incorporating flexibility into their work schedules and the perception that employees who were parents were advantaged in comparison to employees without children. In addition to balancing parental responsibilities, participants discussed their need for flexibility due to enrollment in graduate programs.

Pursuit of education.

Five of the 14 study participants requested alternative schedules in order to pursue graduate degrees. They acknowledged their ability to work and go to school as not only

beneficial to them personally, but professionally as well. Zachary indicated that "people look at me differently…resident directors bring articles once a month for discussion, and I can engage in conversations with them that sharpen my mind for class and for work." In this statement, he expressed how his graduate degree benefitted him both as a student and as a residence life professional. Other participants also discussed their need for flexibility while attending school. As Donna indicated:

> If I have to leave to go to a faculty meeting at school, it might come up last minute that they want to us to come and meet or for a study group or anything like that. I've been able to switch pretty last minute as long as I've let [my supervisor] know and I didn't have anything else going on at that time.

Interestingly, in Donna's case, her graduate program was located at an institution that is within a consortium of schools of which the research site is a member. Within her academic cohort were students from other universities who were not allowed flex-time. Donna noted that "it's actually kind of nice to have flexibility. Some of my classmates can't do flex time. They actually have to take vacation every week." All of the participants who requested alternative scheduled for educational purposes were enrolled in doctoral programs within a 60-mile radius.

Jessica served as a graduate teaching assistant as required by her graduate program at a local university. She found herself in a situation in which a staff retreat conflicted with the class she taught at the university where she was enrolled. She had scheduled the students' final exam for this day, so a last minute schedule change was not ideal. She realized, however, that she "needed to make a judgment call; 'Am I going to leave with my [senior administrator] early? Or am I going to impact my class?'"

Ultimately, Jessica negotiated with her students and they "opted together as a group [such] that I sent them the final from the North Georgia Mountains." Though a definite inconvenience to both Jessica and her students, she felt professionally obligated to attend the retreat rather than administer the final in the classroom as her flexible schedule normally permitted.

Regardless of whether they were pursuing an advanced degree or providing for young children, participants suggested the existence of a direct and positive correlation between flexibility and job satisfaction.

Increased job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction referred to the participant's feelings of happiness with their specific position at the research site. Participants expressed various sentiments that relayed their feelings of increased satisfaction with their specific positions and with the institution. Gina stated, "I appreciate my job more," and according to Inez, "I loved that job. I was really grateful that I could flex and balance my work and my family life." She also mentioned, "those warm and fuzzy feelings you know when you have your supervisor tell you that you can flex your schedule." Participants did not hesitate in discussing how they were more satisfied with their jobs as a result of being able to incorporate flexibility into their schedules.

As Mike stated, "it has helped me to keep my sanity and I enjoy work more." Similarly, Caitlyn stated, "I enjoy work more." Likewise, Donna asserted, "I feel better, happier about my job" and Zachary also acknowledged his "overall better feeling about [the] job because of the flexibility." As Gina also indicated, "it makes me appreciate my job all the more. I really enjoy working here [and] I can't imagine not working at a university because I like the environment and the work flexibility just adds to that."

Additionally, participants mentioned the notion of feeling loyal to their employer as a direct result of their ability to work hours that were conducive to departmental demands while simultaneously meeting their individual personal needs. As Gina proudly announced, "I have a greater sense of loyalty to the institution because I am able to flex my schedule." As participants were more satisfied with their jobs, so did their perceptions that they were more productive employees.

Increased productivity.

The third theme related to benefits was the participants' common opinions that their productivity increased as a result of being able to work when it was most convenient for them. They also expressed a positive impact of having the opportunity to determine their own work schedule. Jessica stated that "it makes me feel that I have control…you're kind of the master of your own destiny in a way. You have the ability to manage your life and still get the work done." Tammy's perspective indicated how flexibility encouraged autonomy by allowing employees to have input into institutional policies:

> Well I like shared governance and to be a participant and also understanding what's best for your work life. You know, when are you at your peak performance? I think that's important. I understand my work habits and I know this is going to work best for me.

This appreciation for autonomy was subsequently linked to employees' perceptions of increased productivity. Inez, a participant who recently left the research site and is now employed at an institution that does not offer flexible scheduling, expressed the following:

> I think I gave them twice as much as they paid me for. I think I did because of the ability to flex my schedule…I gave more than 100% to the university because I

> was so grateful that it enabled me to not stop practicing as a psychologist and still be the kind of mother that I wanted to be.

Another participant, Tammy stated, "in return it's going to mean revenue. Even though we don't really create revenue, at the end of the day you're going to get more. Your human capital is going to be much higher because of the work output." Further, as Gina offered, "I think it helps me to be a better employee and to get things done a little more efficiently." Cassandra (SME and participant) also agreed that "having flexibility increases productivity;" she stated that the alternative work schedule form asks employees how they will measure productivity, so employees and managers work with this goal in mind. Inez further discussed an increased level of productivity when she indicated, "I really felt like they got the best of me; I enjoyed it." Ashley appropriately captured the sentiments connecting increased job satisfaction to productivity when she stated:

> I think if you have happy employees you have productive employees. And when you have unhappy employees I do think productivity goes down…you want employees to really like their jobs [and] you want [them] to be invested 150 percent but you also want people to be engaged.

As the research site is located downtown in a major metropolitan city, the issue of traffic is worth mentioning as it relates to productivity. Stephen, a SME who telecommuted once per week offered this perspective:

> I gotta tell you, from just a mental standpoint, I can support [telecommuting]. There's no question I feel positive about it myself [because] there are times you just have to focus on one thing…times when you're working a [project] and all

> time and energy and effort needs to be focused towards getting that [project] ready. And when you are in an alternate location to do that, it's much easier, more easily done, than when you're in the office.

He continued:

> It also enhances your ability to get right to it. So as an example, like a lot of people, I live at least 40 minutes from [the research site]. So, it's wonderful to get out of bed and go to work without having to commute and spending all that time in traffic so I do believe that it increased [my] productivity simply because I got more time now to focus on getting it done and accomplishing it and less mental strain from having to deal with the traffic; even one day a week makes a dramatic change and how it seems to lift your spirits to know you don't have to make that long trek into work.

Comments about increased productivity surfaced consistently throughout the interviews as well as in the focus group. In return for more productivity, participants indicated constructive changes in their attitudes and behavior in their positions.

Employee attitudes and behavior.

This theme illustrated employees' behavior that was positively impacted by their ability to work an alternative schedule. The two areas within this theme were 1) conscientiousness and 2) personal skill development.

Conscientiousness.

The participants' level of conscientiousness about spending time out of the office heightened as a result of being able to flex. Caitlyn noted, "it has reduced the need for secrecy and sneaking out…I know that I can just tell my supervisor that I am going to work late and it won't be an issue." Renee also said, "I don't feel like I have to lie and I

can be honest about what my needs are." And, as Tammy similarly offered, "I take less vacation and sick days now because I have flexibility for my personal appointments," and likewise as Donna indicated, "I can make appointments during the day and therefore I don't take as many days out of the office." This change in behavior occurred because employees did not want to take advantage of the flexibility that was granted to them. They were deliberate about scheduling personal appointments during their flex time and tended to take less vacation and sick days.

Another behavioral enhancement involved participants' willingness to return to work and also work on their days off. In Jessica's case, she acknowledged, "I teach a class at [another institution]…my class starts at four thirty on Thursdays so I leave [the research site] at four, and I physically come back to work after class." Similarly, yet for different reasons, Inez spoke about her willingness to return to work during peak times:

> During certain times of the year I'd have to give a lot. [I] left at 3:30, went and got my daughter, handed her to her other parent and drove back to the university. [I would] go get her, visit with her for a little while, get supper started and turn around and get back to campus. I did this many a time, and I didn't mind doing it either, in exchange for the flex. People at [the institution] would laugh at me so much; it would be like, "okay, you're coming back for the second shift", and I'd say, "yes. I don't care much, I'll run a daycare"…our daughter was never in daycare. It was like a point of pride for us.

Elizabeth flexed her schedule so that she could pick up her son every day. However, she returned to campus in the evening if necessary:

> [On] Tuesdays I've had to come back for student government meetings because I'm [the Dean's] back-up person if for some reason he can't go to that meeting. And so that was one of the things that we talked about when I did this schedule, was I was still able to be that backup person. I would just have to come back to campus. But I still had to pick up my son.

These examples underscored the sacrifices that employees were willing to make in order to maintain their flexible schedules. These subtle changes in behavior also translated to changes in attitudes towards work.

Participants expressed a greater sense of responsibility to the institution, their supervisors, and their departmental colleagues. The ability to determine her schedule, according to Jessica:

> Holds me responsible and accountable. Like today, I realized that I don't have my charger. So in essence I have to go [to campus] to get it because I can't really work from home without phone calls…I can't be as productive as I need to be and as I'm compensated to be without my computer.

Having flexibility to determine their own schedules also impacted the attitudes of employees who were supervisors. As Renee noted:

> I think it has changed it immensely. I feel like I'm a lot more flexible than I would have been normally. [It]…has made me keenly aware of my staff and their body language, facial expressions, stuff that I probably wouldn't have paid attention to before.

Participants insisted that their behavior and attitudinal changes resulted directly from feeling better about their jobs and their employer. They further indicated that having an

alternative schedule not only benefitted them personally but professionally as well. One of these benefits was the ability to develop new personal skills.

Personal skill development.

Several individuals acknowledged their attainment of professional skills as a result of working an alternative schedule. Inez stated that she "gained the ability to negotiate, increased communication skills, the ability to prioritize and manage my time." When asked to further clarify about learning to negotiate, she said, "professionally it stretched me because I had to learn how to really negotiate, whereas if you're just working the cookie cutter job, you don't have to do that." Donna, a supervisor who was required to attend numerous evening programs, appreciated her professional growth in the area of prioritization. As she noted, "I think one of the, the main benefits too is being able to prioritize what you need to be at as a supervisor. Just to make sure you're there at those important events." Zachary stated that he "learned how to advocate for [him]self." Inez, Donna, and Zachary each indicated that their negotiation, advocacy, and prioritization skills were inherently attained because of their interface with the AWA policy at the research site. They further suggested that while these skills benefitted them at their current workplace, they were useful to them in various other areas in life.

Availability and customer service.

All 14 participants expressed a heightened level of consciousness about still being available to staff or students despite their alternative schedules; this notion of availability led to discussions about how alternative schedules had a positive impact on what they called customer service. Cassandra offered the premise of this concept in her claim that "staggered schedules allow [departments] to provide customer service beyond 8-5."

Elizabeth further provided a tangible example of how her department was able to provide students with extended service hours due to her working an alternative schedule:

> One of the other things it has allowed me to do is, I am the only [staff member] who has late night hours for my general appointments. So it's a great option for students who co-op or are in class all day and need to see someone in the evenings. That's been a benefit and a bonus to this program. We never had that as an option in the past.

Likewise, Gina discussed her need to meet with students outside of her normal work hours:

> We have students that are here either the 5:30 a.m. to 8 a.m. or the 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. shift, and I've had to change my hours and come in earlier, specifically so I can see those students in action and meet with them on their schedule.

In yet another example, Donna offered a perspective about her ability to address quality-control issues in her area:

> If there's an issue, like with a [fitness] class, another [benefit] is being able to do quality control [for] overall programs. We do evaluations on our instructors, so it's going to require a lot of weird hours. I might have to be here till 8 or 9 o'clock at night because I need to stay for the evening class to evaluate it because we can't be here, you know 24-7. If there's an issue with a staff member or with patrons… sometimes that will warrant either the coordinator or myself staying in the evening to check out what's going on.

She also added that “from a customer serve standpoint, you have to be careful with flexing of hours because you can't just assume that you can go into any type of office

[and] know that they're going to be there." Donna greatly valued being able to provide supervisory assistance to student employees and customers with her flexible hours.

From a supervisor's perspective, participants discussed the importance of being available to their staff when they are out of the office. When asked why she often returned to work on Thursday evenings, Jessica stated:

> Because, well, it's not really fair to my team. If they need me to find something, their day doesn't end at 4:00 or 3:30. Right? And so if I want to work from home on Friday I don't want to hold up their progress because they need my signature or my opinion or something like that. They know that if they put something in my box [on Thursday afternoon], 9 times out of 10 I'm going to come back and deal with it.

By being more conscientious, developing new skills, and improving their availability and customer service, participants effectively demonstrated how they changed as a result of having flexibility. Likewise, as their job satisfaction and productivity increased, they were more likely to continue employment at the institution.

Employee retention.

One of the most consistently repeated comments throughout this research project involved the relationship between having flexibility and employee retention. More than half of the participants acknowledged that their ability to determine their work hours based on professional and personal needs contributed to their sense of loyalty and commitment to remaining at the institution.

Cassandra, the SME who served as a human resource officer, noted that "it helps with retention, especially [of] top employees," and Caitlyn offered her thoughts about the value of recognizing the long hours that employees often work:

> To simply say, my goodness, last week was a 90 plus hours week….and when so many folks here work really late at night, I think it's really nice that if occasionally you can say, “hey, why don't we look at not coming in Friday afternoon”.…I think that can go so far in our field for the happiness and retention of our employees.

Similarly, Renee addressed the topic of burnout as she considered it a factor in why employees leave. She stated, “you wonder why you have such a high turnover in the first 5 years? That’s when you start to get the burnout [because] this in some cases can be unrealistic to expect people to be accessible 24 hours [a day].” Barry (SME) also offered that flexibility:

> Has clear advantages for recruitment and retention. I think, I think we are able to retain people during periods of their life when it’s really challenging for them to have to work a rigid schedule, if they can get some flexibility. They really do want to work, and they want to be part of our community. They think they can make a contribution, and they do, but they struggle with how work is constructed.

He continued:

> And so sometimes it's just during those child raising years. And then you see people wanting to come back after they get kind of through that phase of their life. They want to come back and spend more time with colleagues and be more engaged in the kinds of things that happen at work. So I think recruitment and retention are strong advantages [to] the employer.

The participants averaged 5.25 years of employment at the research site. Within the context of retention, they indicated value for their flexible time as a form of non-monetary compensation.

Non-monetary compensation.

Six participants shared that time off and flexibility represented relatively easy ways in which an institution could provide non-monetary compensation to its employees. As they suggested in lieu of giving raises, and with other institutional reductions such as furloughs and budget cuts, it doesn't cost to give time. Elizabeth shared this sentiment by stating, "this is something that doesn't cost any money." Likewise, according to Ashley:

> You know, we're all stressed out we're not getting raises. All of our other benefits keep going up in cost, and you know it's like morale is down and they talk about retaining good employees…[this is] a way they could do that.

As a supervisor, Caitlyn felt a sense of responsibility to encourage balance among her employees. She indicated that "we don't have the freedom to compensate with money and to reward…but there are some things that we could do to help individuals balance better, and I know that's something that as a supervisor, I work really hard to do." Similarly, Cassandra (SME and participant) stated that "we haven't been able to give raises over the past few years; [but we've] been able to provide other incentives such as flexibility." While participants were verbose in articulating the benefits to working an alternative schedule, they also gave insight into the challenges they faced in the work environment.

Challenges

The third category offered insight into participants' personal, professional, and campus political challenges in managing an alternative schedule. The three themes in this

section were 1) consistency; 2) access and awareness of the policy; and 3) guilt and proof that you are working.

Consistency.

The biggest challenge expressed by participants and the subject matter experts was in the area of consistency. While each of the SMEs acknowledged that the policy was not suitable for all positions at the university, they offered no clear outline about what positions were ideal for an alternative arrangement. As Jessica stated, “I think it's important for certain positions. And honestly, in order to offer the optimal customer service that we strive to do, I don't think every position has the option.” When asked to further clarify her opinion about the appropriateness of alternative schedules for various position types, Jessica continued:

> And honestly, I think sometimes it depends on the time of the year as well in our profession. There are just certain times that it just doesn't work…it depends on how the office is managed…I think it should be for as many people as possible. And maybe even for those atypical positions that you wouldn't necessarily think could do it, maybe there's an opportunity, 'cause I think it's pretty empowering.

Barry’s (SME) comment of, “it’s not for every position,” and Cassandra’s sentiment that it’s “based on the position not the person” contributed to this sense of inequity within the division.

As Caitlyn suggested, “when you don't have official policies and it's not consistent, if you happen to get a supervisor who is conscientious of it, and cares, then it happens. But, I can't say that it happens for everybody.” Jessica provided two tangible examples that illustrated how flexibility did not benefit her department:

> We have one human resource person…she does have a flex schedule, and I don't think it works because she works 4 [10-hour days], and it's difficult because that means all HR business is on a hold on Monday, which I think is not a good deal [for the department]. Again, it gets back to customer service. I also don't think it's good for my custodial team because there's nothing that a custodian can do at home.

Likewise, Stephen (SME) acknowledged that "the other equity issue is, some departments have one group doing it, but another group can't." From a supervisor's perspective, Inez offered her perspective about the consistency issue:

> It would have to be something that met the needs of the department. It couldn't just be because the person wanted it. Like I can see it from the person who's doing it, but I can also see it from the university's standpoint, that it has to serve the university as well, meaning it's a two-way street...and in my case, when I was doing it I always made sure that it did. Or I should say my supervisor also too; he was always making sure that he was a good steward of the university too…

Though they were appreciative of the flexible opportunities provided by the policy, participants blamed the university's human resources department for implementing a policy that, by sheer design, was not available to all employees. Additionally, one participant reported a negative experience that she attributed to her colleagues' overall perceptions that the policy was not intended for everyone.

Inez spoke hesitantly but candidly about having difficulty with peers whom she believed were jealous of her ability to negotiate a flexible work schedule. As discussed earlier in the chapter, she considered the ability to advocate for her needs as personally

and professionally beneficial; however, she also reported it as being a significant challenge within her work environment:

> I think there were some people who may have wished that they could have had such a thing, but they didn't negotiate for it, so they were jealous…. [It's] sort of hard to quantify. There was one person that wanted the job I had, and, so they felt I shouldn't have [it] since I needed a flexible schedule. And that was, to me, especially hurtful….it was like bullying.

She continued:

> That was a female. I didn't get that kind of bullying from the males in the office. They were like, "Oh, good for you. You negotiated for that? Hey, good. I hope I can negotiate for something good." But from some of the females there was this social ostracizing of me…like "you're not one of us anymore." Because maybe of the promotion, maybe of the flexible schedule. It was like I got some privileges that they don't have, so they don't like me [anymore].

Inez's unique story highlighted an example of the perceptions of inequity and inconsistency that were acknowledged by all of the participants. Somewhat akin to consistency, participants' also perceived there to be an overall lack of access and awareness of the Flexwork Arrangements Policy.

Access to and awareness of the policy.

Thirteen participants suggested that a major criticism of the policy was that many employees at the research site were unaware of the policy, and all but one of the participants themselves had no prior knowledge of the policy's existence prior to requesting flexibility within their work schedules. Though the policy was published

online among the institution's numerous policies, the participants suggested that the University's efforts to communicate the policy were not effective nor broadly disseminated to employees. Ashley (SME) noted that "it's like we have the policy but no one knows about it, so what good is it?" Likewise, Zachary expressed frustration that his immediate supervisor was not particularly knowledgeable of the university's human resource policies. He stated that "my supervisor doesn't have a great grasp on much. I learned about the policy through a colleague who is also in a doctoral program. My supervisor told me to do what he did." Zachary further clarified that he sought information about the policy from this colleague and that he is "still not clear on all of the ins and outs of the policy." In addition to awareness, participants suggested that hierarchy was a factor in whether an alternative schedule would be approved.

The issue of access also arose as participants mentioned a common thought from employees within the division of student affairs. Ashley (SME) stated:

> People felt like then it's an option just given to faculty or some director. Like, there are some directors who will call up and say, "Well, I'm working from home for today," and nobody calls them on it but if any other employee were to call up and say [the same thing], it wouldn't have the same reaction….and so I think that people think that it's reserved just for a special few.

As an employee in the department that manages the policy, Stephen (SME) readily admitted that the university did not communicate the policy very well. He said, "I don't think we really say much about this…you may stumble on it online, but if your department doesn't mention it, [you're] sort of left to wonder potentially."

Participants lamented about access throughout the research study. They also indicated that they often felt guilty and constantly felt the need to prove they were working.

Guilt and proof that you are working.

Seven participants expressed feelings of guilt when they were not available to staff during standard business hours. These feelings caused them to overcompensate by always making themselves available to students and professional staff through email and telephone correspondence. As Gina stated, “I'm always available by phone and email for them. So if I wasn't specifically here in the building, they could still get in touch with me to communicate anything.” Likewise, Jessica provided a supervisory perspective in working with her employees:

> I have to kind of help them understand that, like, my assistant called and she said, “Sorry to bother you,” and I say, “It’s okay, I’m working from home.” And she's like, “I know but, still.” I'm like, “No, really, I'm here”….we make appointments [to talk when I’m at home].

Elizabeth also shared her experiences with feelings of guilt:

> Yeah, I will say the first year it was really hard to leave when my staff was still working here. You know, that was really hard for me at first. It's just this, you know, this responsibility and you know, guilt or whatever it was. It was a hard thing to get used to.

Another factor that arose from feelings of guilt was the notion of employees’ constant need to prove they were working. As Renee indicated:

> Initially proving that I was still working [was a challenge]. Just because I wasn’t

> there on Wednesday didn't mean that my work wasn't getting done; it didn't mean that I wasn't committed to the job…I have to prove to [my supervisors] that I am doing what I need to do.

Ashley (SME) confirmed the sentiments of some of the managers as the policy was being developed when she stated,

> To be strictly honest, I think some people just think that if they let people work from home, they're not going to work [because] you can't see them [and] you can't talk to them… I think that it's just very old school.

Her flex-time was limited to a three-month period, and she regularly worked on Sunday evenings to accommodate the schedule of the student organization that she advised. As she lamented, "Even sometimes when you're flexing your time, somebody was like, "How do I know you were actually here working on Sunday?" And I was like, "Oh really? Geez…I just sat through 20 budget meetings. Let's not go there." The participants admitted their constant frustration at this component of working an alternative work schedule.

With a robust discussion of the previous three categories related to expectations of flexibility, benefits, and challenges, the study participants were eager to provide feedback about the effectiveness of the Flexwork Arrangements Policy. They also offered recommendations for improvement of the policy and ideas for institutions considering the implementation of an alternative work arrangements policy for its employees.

Recommendations

All of the participants expressed appreciation that their employer offered them flexibility through the establishment of a formal university policy. While their feedback

about the policy was predominately positive, they offered insight that they believed would enhance management of the policy. They also suggested general factors to consider when implementing alternative work arrangements policies in higher education. The three themes that emanated in this category were 1) transparency; 2) assessment; and 3) benchmarking.

Transparency.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, 13 participants lamented that they were unaware of the policy and that the research site was not effective at promoting the policy. This led to perceptions of inequity, and as such, participants suggested that the policy should be detailed and clear about which positions were eligible or most appropriate and which were not. The four SMEs and 11 participants commented that the university's policy seemed ambiguous and difficult to manage.

Charles mentioned, "I think they have a good system in play, but the big thing is to make sure that all policies and procedures are equal and uniform across the board." When asked to clarify how this sense of equality could be achieved, he offered that there should be "clear policies but some gray area to let each person perform their job to the best of their ability. Their hours may look odd but make the connection that they work with students at odd times." Zachary had a similar perspective:

> [The] responsibilities should be clear for the employee and supervisor. HR should create a document that outlines what level of support will be provided by the institution and the employee's responsibilities….the overarching policy is fine, but there should be specifics….the supervisor and employee should have a greater detailed plan.

As participants commented about how the policy was managed, they strongly recommended that the institution collect data about the policy with the purpose of improving the experience for employees.

Assessment.

Included earlier in the chapter as historical context, the subject matter experts indicated that no formal assessment of the policy had been done. As a researcher, I was surprised to learn that the two SMEs who had a role in managing the policy were unaware of which or how many employees were utilizing the policy. Stephen (SME) unashamedly stated this research study would be helpful to him:

> If you can come up with some way of finding out what we're doing, then we can rely on that. That would be great to know. I'd love to know how our employees use this, and what options they're using, and all those things.

He further requested that I share my results at the conclusion of my study.

When asked about when the Flexible Work Arrangements Policy was due to be assessed, Stephen indicated that "it looks like the focus has been on other policies, and so I'm not sure when that one is up for revisiting." Barry had the longest institutional knowledge among all of the SMEs and participants. As the previous administer of the policy, he indicated, "I think that it's probably time for us to review the policy…to sit back and say, 'these were the original objectives; are the objectives the same?' because they change over time as the work force changes." This recommendation regarding the need for institutional assessment of the policy was articulated by the SMEs; the participants had no knowledge of how, or if, the policy was assessed.

Additionally, both participants and SMEs advised interested constituents to benchmark their proposed policy against existing institutional policies.

Benchmarking.

Employees were eager to participate in this study as they indicated that no one had ever inquired about their experiences with working an alternative work schedule. Five participants requested to see the results from the study at its conclusion which was professionally encouraging as they immediately recognized the value of this research and its potential to positively impact the profession. They consistently noted that the benefits far exceeded the challenges of implementing and managing such a policy.

Based on reflections from seven participants and two SMEs, the primary recommendation for institutions interested in developing a flexible work arrangements policy was to conduct research to determine what institutions are doing in this area, and seek to replicate policies that currently serve as best practices. Stephen noted the importance of communicating directly with colleagues about their policies:

> Definitely the sort of thing it sounds like you're doing…but doing that benchmarking and having conversations other than just looking at websites and saying okay before I do anything. It is good to talk to people and get you know what's not on paper type piece of it. And, try to tie in some metrics that demonstrate that this is an effective option that really makes better sense to utilize.

As Ashley (SME) stated, “There’s no need to reinvent the wheel. I’m sure other schools out there are doing this sort of thing.” Elizabeth also suggested that I “research other schools in the [university system],” to see if they have a similar policy. Finally, Zachary

noted that his "previous institution allowed a version of this." The participants' thoughtful recommendations assured me that further research in this area was needed.

In addition to discussing expectations of flexibility, benefits, challenges and recommendations, six participants shared other examples that resonated across the five categories. These individual nuances comprised the final category which is discussed in the section that follows.

Other Issues

This category reflected other issues that interfaced across multiple research questions and arose as important factors related to the participants' experiences with having an alternative work schedule. Additionally, several participants shared unique perspectives representing issues that merited reporting, even though they did not neatly fit into any of the previous thematic categories. The primary theme in this category was communication.

Communication.

The most frequently repeated topic during the entire research study was the importance of communication. Three of the SMEs and twelve participants acknowledged that effective communication with supervisors, peers, and students was critical when employers allowed employees to incorporate flexible schedules into the university environment. Donna proclaimed, "It definitely requires constant communication…it doesn't work otherwise." Likewise, Elizabeth shared that working an alternative schedule requires that she, "communicate, communicate and communicate some more," with supervisors, staff, and students.

They further acknowledged that having flexible options, though indeed an employee perk, was not comprehensively beneficial if employees had no knowledge of the policy's existence. Tammy questioned, "What good is it for us to have this benefit if no one knows about it?" and Jessica acknowledged that her "constant level of communication" helped her be successful at managing an alternative schedule. The three points related to communication addressed participants': 1) relationships with their supervisors; 2) need for effective planning; and 3) opinions that talking about flexibility was a taboo topic.

Relationship with supervisor.

Perhaps the single most important factor that impacted employees' success with working an alternative work schedule was the relationship with their immediate supervisors. The specificity of the immediate supervisor was important because this individual was the person who approved or denied the participant's alternative schedule request. All of the participants acknowledged their dependence on their supervisors to approve their schedule, and as Jessica noted, "I've strengthened my relationship with my supervisor because I have to always keep him in the loop." Donna also said that she "talks to her supervisor all the time." While the director of the department could overrule the immediate supervisor's approval, the participants viewed their immediate supervisor as an advocate to upper management on their behalf.

With one exception, all of the participants acknowledged a positive relationship with their supervisors and that their supervisors were supportive of their flexible schedules. They were comfortable informing their supervisors if they needed additional flexibility and regularly provided detailed information related to their specific needs.

According to Donna, “So as long as it's communicated, he's pretty supportive. As long as we have [our hours] documented…that's typically what we email him to let him know.” Participants regularly commented about their supervisors’ levels of support.

As a new mother, Gina expressed great appreciation for her supervisor. She noted, “I've had huge support from both my immediate supervisor and her supervisor…he is supportive, specifically on family…people leaving soon, leaving early if the child is sick or for daycare or any circumstances like that [is] 100% support[ed].” Finally, as Jessica acknowledged, “My supervisor is very supportive of me and my pursuit of education.” These types of sentiments were repeated numerous times by all of the research study participants as they spoke about communication and their relationships with their supervisors.

In their efforts to be communicative, participants noted their tendency to be overly honest with their supervisors. Elizabeth said, “I tend to tell him everything…sometimes too much because I want him to know that I take my job seriously even though I may work non-traditional hours.” Likewise, Jessica explained how, even on Fridays when she was working from home, she informed her supervisor if she was not going to be available due to personal or household obligations:

> Even when I just work from home on Friday, my boss says I’m too honest. Because one thing I said is that I'm gonna stay honest. And I'm gonna do laundry, and check email…and I'll probably only work six hours. Because the balance of that [is] I'll need to be picking up kids from school or doing grocery shopping or something like that. And I actually want to report that on my form and say that I

> will make up the additional hours on the weekend. And he said that's not necessary.

Both Jessica and Elizabeth supervised employees who worked flexible schedules. They indicated that their need to be honest and sometimes over-communicate with their supervisors was rooted in wanting to ensure that their supervisors trusted that they would be productive and effective employees and supervisors despite their alternative work schedules.

A major component in the supervisor-employee relationship involved trust; that is, the supervisor had confidence that employees would perform their job functions in spite of their irregular work hours. Further, supervisors exhibited faith in an individual's work ethic and integrity such that the employee would not take advantage of the flexibility that had been extended by the supervisor. Eight participants underscored this notion to be critical as they perceived a direct correlation between whether their supervisor trusted them and whether they were allowed to continue working an alternative schedule.

Working alongside her supervisor to determine the most conducive schedule to both her and the department, Gina affirmed that having flexibility in her work environment "helps build trust among employees and supervisors." She explained:

> I trust that if I have any kind of situation where I need to change my hours, they're going to be on board with that. If I need to come into work on a Saturday, or often, a lot of hours I'm here I don't have a supervisor. That builds a lot of trust [because] they're trusting that when you come in on Saturday… you're working and not doing anything else. Or that you're actually going to show up, and you're

> going to be here…[that] builds a lot of trust, and [my supervisor] trusts that I'm going to get my work done no matter what hours I'm here.

Speaking from the perspective of having left the research site and now being employed at an institution that does not offer alternative scheduling, Inez shared:

> But you know on the other side is the director. Like in my own department I don't have the ability [to] do flex time here…it's not something we offer. I don't know whether we would ever and I can see the downfalls. Like if I think about it, it would have to be with someone that I trusted. It would have to be with a good employee.

Another supervisor, Elizabeth, indicated, "I have to trust that things aren't falling apart when I'm leaving and that people aren't taking advantage of that." Donna stated that above everything else, it is important that employees "just communicate...and [be] here when we say we're going to be here." This foundation of trust proved to be critical in helping participants establish trust with their supervisors. Communication and trust were further enhanced by effective planning, which participants indicated was necessary for employees and departments in managing alternative schedules.

Planning.

Another element of communication was planning. In the case of one department from which four participants were employed, the supervisor established an expectation that staff members updated their schedules weekly. Donna noted, "If customers are coming and looking for us or we have specific staff that's looking for us, we have office hours that we post on our door. Those just have to be updated every week." This simple

practice relieved front desk and other staff members from questioning an employee's whereabouts and further ensured that adequate coverage was provided at all times.

All of the participants also spoke of the importance for them to anticipate and plan for individual student and departmental needs. Elizabeth acknowledged that "it definitely takes a lot more scheduling and a lot more calendar planning." Donna also asserted that "it's good to be able to flex hours…but you really have to think about and plan, for not only your schedule being, but the people you're supervising as well." Donna and Gina both indicated that their department's high volume of student employees mandated their focused attention on scheduling to guarantee that the department was appropriately staffed at all times.

To assist with the impact of having employees who work alternative schedules and therefore were not always present during standard business hours, one participant intentionally increased her department's cross-training efforts. This was done to ensure that staff members had multiple areas of expertise so they could meet customer demands in another employee's absence. Jessica explained:

> We've done a kind of documentation of our jobs. From flow charts to how we do what we do to what does it take to make this happen and things like that…I'm trying to get everyone in the habit of every so often we need to go back and update our system.

As to how their department actualized this initiative, Jessica continued:

> We developed this rotation duty schedule so that every other weekend there was somebody else on duty. [There was an] understanding that if you are on duty you have to have a firm knowledge and understanding of what's happening in the

> building, what could happen and how to deal with it. I think just creating that really helped with the crisis management.

This enhanced departmental collaboration and reduced employees' tendencies to operate in silos. In other words, staff members communicated with each other more and as a result, they were more prepared to handle work assignments and departmental responsibilities when their colleagues were out of the office due to varied work schedules.

Taboo topic.

When I presented the emergent themes in the focus group, the participants seemed to take a collective sigh of relief. In fact, as Elizabeth noted, "It is so nice to be able to talk about this openly," a sentiment that also emerged in the individual interviews. As Renee similarly shared, "People don't talk about comp time. It's still kind of taboo-ish even though it's an institutional policy." Similarly, Elizabeth said:

> It's kept kind of more quiet so I don't really know what everybody does for the most part. I mean, I don't go around announcing it everywhere. I think there's still some taboo to it. You know, "am I working as hard as other people or not?"

When asked to clarify why she felt the need to limit discussing her flexible hours, she stated:

> My experience has been in student affairs, that schedules are just something that often cause issues. Admin staff don't understand why we're coming in late. They're all pissy about it, when they don't understand we've been here 'til 10. I just think it's this weird thing, so people don't talk about it a whole lot.

Participants expressed disappointment in their perception of working in an institutional culture that did not publicly acknowledge alternative work schedules. They valued the policy as a benefit but intuitively determined that it was not broadly supported at the research site.

Focus Group Results

In addition to individual interviews, all participants were invited to participate in a focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to allow participants to provide feedback about the raw results of the study. Seven participants attended the focus group, and I shared the initial codes and how I eventually developed these into 15 themes across five categories. I requested their opinions about the themes that I saw as having emerged in the data and inquired as to whether I had adequately captured their experiences. The participants readily affirmed that the themes I extracted best represented their experiences, and they thanked me for studying the phenomenon regarding the use of alternative work arrangements in higher education. No new information emanated from the focus group.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the 15 themes within five categories that emerged as descriptors to captured participants' experiences, both positive and negative, with working alternative schedules in a student affairs environment. Based on the participants' responses, the Flexwork Arrangements Policy appeared to afford them numerous professional and personal benefits. Though there were also challenges, overall, participants strongly favored the policy and believed that it was beneficial both to the institution and its employees.

In a discussion about the need for change, Ashley (SME) declared:

> I think that, you know, the time has come, you know, certainly for my generation. I think we need to move into the 21st century. I think it's just time to walk the walk; we've been talking it for a long time, now we need to walk it.

Ashley's reflection provides a segue to Chapter 5 in which I discuss the results and implications of this study with the purpose of informing the profession and encouraging practitioners to implement an initiative that I believe can, among other things, improve employee morale and reduce attrition in student affairs.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Attrition rates have reportedly ranged as low as 32% and as high as 68% for student affairs practitioners within their first 5 years of professional work experience (Wood et al., 1985; Holmes et al., 1983; Renn & Hodges, 2007). There have been increased concerns about attrition in student affairs (Lorden, 1998; Bender, 1980; Burns, 1982; Evans, 1988), and it is prudent that universities develop strategies to reduce factors that lead to turnover. Goodstein (1994) stated that flexible work options, "may be initiated by organizations as part of an effort to build commitment" (p. 42). Likewise, Grover and Crooker (1995) suggested that offering flexibility to employees promotes organizational attachment, thereby increasing job satisfaction. Based on the results of my study, I concur with Lorden (1998) and Nollen & Martin (1978) that the use of alternative work arrangements may in part be viable options to improve attrition.

The purpose of this research study was to explore the availability and impact of alternative work arrangements on college and university employees who worked in positions that regularly required direct contact with students beyond the standard 40-hour workweek and/or during nontraditional work hours such as evenings and weekends. Fourteen participants represented ten functional areas that provided traditional student affairs services. Additionally, three individuals provided subject-matter expertise (SME) regarding the development and implementation of the institution's alternative work arrangements policy. Of these three, one person served as both a participant and an SME in the study.

Utilizing grounded theory methodology, I examined the following five research questions:

1. What expectations regarding flexibility do employees have upon accepting employment at the institution, if any?
2. What types of alternative work schedules do student affairs employees at the research site utilize?
3. What are the benefits to employees who utilize an alternative work schedule, if any?
4. What are the challenges to employees who utilize an alternative work schedule, if any?
5. What recommendations would employees who use alternative work arrangements make to institutions that are seeking to develop such a policy for its employees, if any?

According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), the goal of qualitative research is to make meaning of participants' personal stories and the ways in which they intersect. In this chapter, I present the grounded theory and discuss my findings through the lens of the cumulative story that emerged in the data. Additionally, I suggest implications for the field, acknowledge limitations of the study, and propose areas of future research about the study of alternative work arrangement policies in higher education.

The Grounded Theory

Grounded theory methodology (GTM) allows researchers to construct new theories to explain phenomena about a specific environment based on data (Creswell, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Haig, 1995). I selected this qualitative approach because

no studies currently exist that explicitly explored the use of alternative work arrangements in higher education and more specifically, in student affairs. Suggested as an endeavor to problem-solving (Haig, 1995), the resulting theory is a story of the participants' experiences that emerged from the themes that were developed from rigorous coding and analysis (Charmaz, 2000). The narrative further represents how participants socially constructed their reality which is defined by a series of interactional experiences rather than a singular occurrence (LaRossa, 2005).

The participants in this research study chronicled their experiences of incorporating flexibility into their schedules by utilizing alternative work arrangements. From flextime, the most frequently used alternative schedule of the participants, to compressed work week, participants overwhelmingly acknowledged that their overall experiences at the institution were more favorable due to their ability to work hours that were conducive to their personal and professional needs. An analysis of the participants' collective responses to the five research questions indicated that employees had specific expectations of flexibility prior to accepting employment, and the overall benefits far superseded the challenges of incorporating alternative arrangements into the work environment. Participants reported that these benefits contributed to an increase in job satisfaction, morale and sense of loyalty to the institution.

As I was generating and refining the grounded theory associated with my research study, I observed two of five foundational principles that LaRossa (2005) identified as critical to the procedures of GTM. First, a defining quality of GTM is that "theories are sets of interrelated propositions, whereas propositions state how variables are related" (p. 838). Furthermore:

> There is value in choosing one variable from among the many variables that a grounded theoretical analysis may generate and making that variable central when engaged in theoretical writing. It will serve as the back-bone of a researcher's "story." This central variable….will be one that developed in the course of the analysis and is well grounded in the textual materials being studied. (p. 838)

This one variable is considered the core variable as it is the one most theoretically saturated and centrally relevant (LaRossa, 2005). Further, as Strauss & Corbin (1998) asserted, this core variable "has analytical power because of its ability to pull the other categories together to form an explanatory whole" (p. 146). While multiple themes emerged in the study, the undergirding variable was flexibility. For the purposes of this study about alternative work arrangements, I defined flexibility as the ability to vary an employee's work schedule such that it is conducive to their personal needs while simultaneously meeting the needs of their respective employer.

Resulting Grounded Theory

The participants' input and stories yielded emergent themes which collectively affirmed the critical need for having flexibility in student affairs given the unusual hours that are commonly associated with the profession and the desire for work-life balance. Given this need, the resulting grounded theory that emanated from my research is that employees who are provided the opportunity for flexibility through the use of alternative work arrangements are more satisfied with their employment experience at the institution which subsequently contributes to less employee turnover.

Based upon the resulting grounded theory, the key concepts that follow are discussed through the core variable of flexibility and organized as follows: 1) employee

expectations; 2) available alternative work arrangements; 3) benefits; 4) challenges; 5) other issues; 6) participants' recommendations; and 6) implications for student affairs.

Employee Expectations

The interviews with participants began by inquiring about their expectations of flexibility. The purpose of this line of questioning was to determine if there were any foundational connections between an employee's expectations and their desire to work an alternative schedule. A majority of the participants expressed that they expected to have some type of flexibility in their schedules. The flexibility they anticipated did not include formal alternative plans such as job-sharing and telecommuting; rather they primarily described flex-time and compressed work week, although they did not use this specific terminology.

Regarding the origins of employees' expectations, Woods (1993) acknowledged:

> Expectations are formed as a result of life experiences…not surprisingly, every employee starts a job with an individual set of expectations. As time passes, the list continually changes and evolves. As changes in personal aspirations, family situation and responsibilities, career progress and health occur, expectations change in priority and relative value. Societal and government trends, as well as the innovative approaches of other companies, have introduced new expectations such as company-supported child care [and] access to physical facilities. (p.15)

Woods (1993) further asserted that the ways in which employees articulate their expectations varies; from inference to direct discussions, "[Expectations] are found in the analysis of grievances and complaints…they show up in suggestion programs, monthly reports, informal meetings…they are insinuated in interviews with potential new

employees and often mentioned by employees leaving a company…" (p. 15). The participants in my study affirmed that their expectations were a result of their employment experiences with previous organizations, both in universities as well as corporate environments. Further, at least three participants recalled having discussed flexibility in their hiring interviews.

Participants indicated that, due to the nature of student affairs work, that is, long and sometimes unusual hours, they assumed that their supervisors would allow them some flexibility such as arriving late to work after working late at an evening student event. They did not anticipate hour-for-hour compensation; that is, if they worked 48 hours facilitating an overnight weekend retreat, they did not expect to receive two days off. They did, however, think they were entitled to some compensatory reward in the form of time off. This was true with the participants regardless of the department in which they worked. One unique perspective was shared by the two participants who worked in the research site's department of housing.

University housing programs require 24-hour operation. Staff members in this department provide programs and services to students all day and night. From planning programs and resolving roommate conflicts to addressing emergency situations, residence life employees are expected to respond to situations as they arise, regardless of the time of day. It is not uncommon then, for staff members to work well through the night dealing with crises in the residence hall. As Renee noted, "Working in Housing, you have to be available 24 hours a day. This gets old after a while." Similarly, Mike acknowledged, "I work a lot of hours because I'm always on duty. I expect to have some flexibility and take special liberties in my schedule so I don't crash and burn." Whether

they lived on or off-campus, both of these participants reported that burnout is the most prevalent result of working in a situation that requires staff to be available 24 hours a day which is a salient feature in housing and residence life departments.

Another idea was reflected by two participants who had previously worked in corporate environments immediately prior to their employment at the research site. These individuals both reported that their prior employers allowed them to work varied hours, and Gina noted that her supervisor expressed more concern about performance and productivity than the specific hours she worked. It is interesting to note that these two participants both worked in the campus recreation center, and they characterized their supervisor as one who was very flexible and who encouraged his employees to strive for work-life balance. They attributed this to their perceptions that flexibility is generally an esteemed value of the recreational functional area within the student affairs profession.

From a corporate perspective, Kotter and Heskett (1992) indicated that companies with higher performance rates value their customers, employees and other stakeholders more than lower-performing organizations. In this vein, Woods (1993) argued that inasmuch as employers work to develop quality relationships with their customers, so should they consider the employee-company rapport. He further suggested that as companies value their employees, they should also seek to understand and more closely meet employees' expectations. In Woods' (1993) paradigm, there are similarities between employees' expectations and those of the company's targeted consumers. Specifically:

- There are usually elements of choice and competition involved on both sides -- companies compete with other companies for the best partner (customer or employee), and customers and employees choose the best partner (company).

- Unless the relationship meets at least some expectations of both partners, it won't last. If it does, it will be a poor one.
- Each partner has a set of capabilities and expectations that vary in importance and need to be understood, articulated, and measured. These capabilities and expectations are also subject to continuous improvement efforts.
- Expectations change as they are influenced by societal trends, competition, or changes within either of the partners. (p.14)

The second principle in Woods' scheme asserted that if an employee's expectations are not met, their employment relationship will be severed or tenuous at best. This phenomenon opposes Herbert Simon's (1947) concept of "satisficing" which suggested that people can survive working in difficult organizations by resolving problems with solutions that are "good enough" rather than optimal. For the context of this dissertation, this means that employees might choose to remain employed despite their dissatisfaction with their employers. Although satisficing represents a reasonable and well-accepted argument, the findings from my research study all aligned with Woods' (1993) principles that explain employee behavior. As student affairs employees were selected and accepted employment at the research site, they came expecting a certain environment of flexibility based both on the nature of the career field and on types of flexible work options that were provided by previous employers.

At the 2011 annual conference of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, I attended a session about work-life balance. In this presentation, Tarkington (2011) noted the vast generational shifts in work values between Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1980) and Generation Y, also

called Millennials (born 1981-1994). While Baby Boomers value communication, personal gratification and achievement, and Generation X members appreciate independence and are concerned with balancing work and family; Generation Y workers are highly educated, confident, spontaneous and motivated by personal space and rewards (Tarkington, 2011).

With their "live for today" mentality, Millennials are now young student affairs professionals, and their remaining generation will be entering the profession within the next 5 to 7 years. As Lorden (1998) indicated, employees are more likely to likely to leave an institution or the profession as a whole if their expectations are consistently unmet by their employers, and the results of my study clearly suggest that employees will continue to enter university environments with increased expectations. I therefore concur with the work of Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (2000) who suggested that employers should aspire to meet their employees' needs by creating nontraditional workplace choices and accommodating flexible schedules based on work/life issues.

Staff Utilization of Available Alternative Work Arrangements

Throughout this dissertation, I have provided definitions of common types of alternative work arrangements that are typically available to employees. The context, however, has included corporate environments because no literature existed regarding if or how, alternative scheduling plans are offered in a university environment. In order to address the second research question, I solicited information from the participants regarding their specific work hours to determine what types of AWAs were utilized at the research site. I discovered that 11 of the 14 participants solely used flex-time, which is the most popular form of flexible work arrangements (Dishman & Murphy, 2007). As

outlined in Figure 2, the remaining three participants incorporated flex-time with two other forms of alternative scheduling: compressed work week and telecommuting.

With flex-time, employees worked 40 hours in five days; however their specific work hours varied from the standard 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule, and the 5 days included weekends for three participants. These individuals reported appreciation for the ability to alter their schedules in a way that met their needs. Those who needed flexibility for childcare were able to arrive late to work or leave early work in order to drop off or pick up their children from school respectively. One participant became emotional during our interview when discussing how much it meant to her that she and her partner did not have to leave their daughter in daycare. As Inez stated, "She was never in daycare. It was like a point of pride for us." Another participant shared that she enjoyed having time to attend her sons' school and meet with their teachers during the day if necessary.

For the three individuals who incorporated flextime with another type of arrangement, two of them also implemented a compressed work week. Both participants commuted to graduate school on Wednesday; as such, they worked the majority of their hours on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. They both noted that their work schedules had the propensity to change based on their class schedule.

Another example of how the research site utilized compressed work week scheduling occurred prior to the development of the Flexwork Arrangements Policy. One participant indicated that employees in student affairs were allowed to work a different schedule during the summer. Elizabeth did not recall the exact schedule but she stated, "It was something like every two weeks you have the tenth day off... [but] that was before our new vice president started." When asked why the vice president discontinued this

practice, she stated that "he's very much a by-the-policy type, a rule follower. Since there wasn't a policy [at the time], he wasn't going to do it, and I remember there was grumbling about it. Morale wasn't as high that summer." It seems reasonable to me that summer hours might be more feasible because there are presumably fewer students (or no students for institutions without summer classes) such that the impact to staff availability would be less disruptive to students and other customers.

Finally, one participant's schedule consisted of flex-time and telecommuting. This individual worked in a functional area that is often situated in a student affairs division; however, it is a part of auxiliary services at the research site. She worked varied hours Monday through Thursday, and worked from home on Friday. In general, staff members in the division of student affairs were not allowed to telecommute, or work from an alternate location. Ashley acknowledged that she was given an exception to telecommute, and although she did not offer an explanation for this exception, she indicated that her supervisor was initially reluctant to approve her request. Ashley was adamant about working from home one day because of her role with a student organization which required her to attend meetings on campus on Sundays.

As a mid-level practitioner, I understand Ashley's supervisor's reluctance to approve staff members to work from home. After all, the foundational goal of the student affairs premise is to provide students with experiences that complement the academic agenda. In order to develop students through leadership activities, advising student organizations, and social and educational programs, staff members must be present and engaged in implementing such opportunities. Other than when completing administrative paperwork, of which there is plenty, it would be difficult to justify how staff members

would be able to adequately perform their duties without being physically present in the environment. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Jessica shared that her human resource coordinator only worked four days a week. This presented challenges for employees within the department because all of the human resources functions were halted when this individual was out of the office on Fridays. Issues related to compensation, payroll, benefits, and hiring are often time-sensitive, and the regular absence of the staff member responsible for these duties can have a significant, and detrimental, impact on a department and its employees.

Several factors may determine whether an alternative schedule is appropriate. For example as Jessica noted, time of year matters. In other words, at the beginning of a new academic year, the volume of activities and needs of students are expectedly high; as such, Jessica's "all hands on deck," philosophy is a common management approach. In my current department, staff members are informed that vacation requests will not be approved within the first two weeks of school. Further, and though it is unstated, employees are often expected to work longer hours to meet numerous demands that are associated with a new semester such as getting students acclimated to the university with a plethora of orientation events, resolving registration holds due to outstanding judicial issues, and facilitating general student inquiries and complaints.

All of the participants in this research study agreed and understood that alternative work arrangements were not appropriate for all positions. Despite this, it was evident that if an alternative scheduled were allowed, flex time provided the most flexibility. Despite their different levels of positions from entry-level to mid-level executives, the functional areas they represented or the type of alternative work arrangement they utilized,

participants indicated that being able to vary their hours throughout the week was the most conducive way to incorporate flexibility into their work schedules.

An initial goal of this research study was to determine if and how employees who utilize alternative work arrangements are impacted, both positively and negatively. The discussions about benefits, challenges, and other issues that arose were very robust as participants candidly shared their successes and frustrations with the research site's Flexwork Arrangements Policy. The following sections provide insight regarding the participants' experiences in these areas.

Benefits

In order to ascertain if and how employees benefitted from using an AWA, participants were asked to describe what they gained as a result of the policy. Nollen and Martin (1978) argued that employers benefit from incorporating flexibility through alternative work arrangements, including improved productivity, increased job satisfaction, and reduced absenteeism. However, Durham, Pierce and Castenada (1997) stated that AWAs do not increase productivity, and Blum, Fields, and Goodman (1994) suggested neither do they reduce work-family conflict. Despite the rhetoric and discrepancy about the benefits of AWAs, participants in this study reported six areas of benefits including increased sense of work-life balance; greater satisfaction with their jobs; increased productivity; changes in their attitudes and behavior; increased availability; customer service; and retention.

The most consistent benefit was that participants were able to find more balance in their lives. Again, given the nature of student affairs work, many practitioners work abnormal and excessive hours performing their duties; thus, their ability to maintain a

healthy work-balance is difficult. The participants reported that because they were able to work flexible hours, they were able to better manage their lives. This occurred as they developed work hours that were most conducive to the reason they requested an alternative schedule. For example, the five individuals who were in graduate school adjusted their hours around their class schedules, and they did not receive any pressure from their supervisors about doing so. Likewise, as children require much flexibility, the parents in the study preferred to have the option to pick up their children from school, to visit their schools if necessary and to care for sick children if the need arose. In the above examples, participants used flex-time, compressed work-week, and telecommuting to accommodate their needs.

The general consensus was that as participants were able to manage their lives, their stress levels were decreased and they experienced less burnout on the job. This led to participants feeling that the work environment was healthier and increased their overall job satisfaction. In a study to ascertain factors that influence satisfaction for student affairs administrators, Anderson, Guido-DiBrito, and Morrell (2000) stated, "Demanding work schedules and work overload may frequently be responsible for interpersonal and time conflicts which can reduce job satisfaction and increase stress" (p. 99). My study participants affirmed this statement and further indicated that their flexible schedules positively impacted satisfaction in their current positions.

Another benefit for employees was increased productivity. While they did not provide specific data to support these assertions, they indicated that they worked more efficiently and were conscious about meeting deadlines, particularly when they knew

they would be out of the office. According to Ashley, there is a direct connection between job satisfaction and productivity:

> I think if you have happy employees you have productive employees. And then I think, you know, when you have unhappy employees I do think productivity goes down. I also think you want employees to really like their jobs [and] you want employees to be invested 150 percent.

Similarly, Inez suggested that she extended more than 100% effort because of her gratefulness to her employer for allowing her to flex her schedule. Robbie also shared that she accomplished more during the day because she was allowed to work hours that were most conducive to her preference for morning hours.

Employees who worked alternative schedules stated that they became more conscientious once they began altering their work hours. They expressed that they were more honest and direct with their supervisors, they reduced the amount of sick days they took off, and they displayed more positive attitudes while at work. These examples mirror what Hammer and Barbera (1997) described as the advantages of AWAs.

As employees' satisfaction increased, so did their morale. Their decisions to remain at the institution were not solely related to having flexible schedules; however, some of them did acknowledge that they would look for this same benefit in future places of employment. Additionally, in times of budget crises, limitations on staff raises and travel restrictions, employee incentives are increasingly becoming more scarce. With an implication of "do more with less," employees are expected to be creative, collaborative, and cost-effective in their programmatic implementation and service delivery. This can often equate to an increased workload, and one way to acknowledge this is to offer

incentives such as alternative work arrangements. Participants were appreciative of this non-monetary form of compensation they received for the numerous hours beyond 40 a week that they often worked.

Two of the participants' reported benefits also benefitted their employer. First, participants indicated being more conscientious in their behavior; more specifically, they admitted to requesting and taking less days off as well as scheduling personal appointments during the times they were already scheduled to be out of the office. They indicated that there was a direct connection between working an alternative schedule and their increased attendance at work. However, Kim and Campagna (1981) asserted that the relationship between flexible scheduling and attendance varied based upon whether an employee's absence was long-term or short-term. Further, in a study to access the impact of flexible scheduling on employee attendance and turnover, Dalton and Mesch (1990) stated that "Much of the literature suggests that the link between flexible scheduling and absenteeism is somewhat more ambiguous" (p. 372). It is clear that the literature does not support as strong a causal relationship between these two variables as my participants suggested.

Another departmental and client benefit occurred as employees were available to provide services to students during non-traditional hours. Given the goal of student affairs to develop students outside of the classroom, staff members commonly accept that sometimes this development will occur beyond the standard work day. In one example, a mid-level participant was able to provide evening services to commuter students. The department never had this opportunity until the staff member changed her work hours and subsequently suggested that she serve in this role once a week. Further, the participants

who worked in the recreation center were able to provide a presence of management in the facility on the weekends. They explained that this increased their response time to incidents and allowed them to evaluate staff performance as necessary.

Challenges

After discussing benefits, I inquired about the challenges participants faced as a result of utilizing the AWA policy. While they shared that the benefits outweighed any difficulties they experienced, they were concerned with issues of consistency, access to and awareness of the policy and feelings of guilt and proof that they were working.

As it related to consistency, participants complained that the policy was not equally applied to all employees within the division. They expressed that some employees were not approved to work alternative schedules, and further that within the division of student affairs, some departments utilized this option while others did not. This sentiment is not surprising, as it is similar to what is currently occurring at my place of employment in which the division of student affairs does not collectively acknowledge the presence of a university policy about flexible scheduling options. This means that supervisors in certain departments allow their employees to adjust their hours while others do not. And, as the participants in this study commented, this phenomenon is not openly discussed though understood among colleagues and further fuels a sense of inequity among employees. As Grandey (2001) suggested, "Work/family policies can be considered fair when the policies are available to everyone" (p. 155). Swanberg, Pitt-Catsouphes, and Drescher-Burke (2005) further suggested that since providing alternative scheduling and other initiatives that encourage work-life are voluntary, "there is significant disparity in the extent to which different groups of employees have access to

specific work-life policies and programs" (p. 866). Within the study as well as with my employer, this sense of unfairness contributed to lower morale within the organization as employees witnessed staff members having an opportunity that everyone was not afforded.

I was surprised at the pervasiveness of the participants' feelings of guilt that they worked an alternative schedule. Additionally, they often felt as if they had to prove that they were working to supervisors, colleagues, and employees. All seven of these individuals were supervisors, so I wondered if this guilt was associated with their desire to meet their subordinates' needs at all times. As a result, many supervisors reported that they extended themselves to staff and students when they were not in the office. Much of this was done through email and telephone calls, and some of the participants expressed comfort in giving students their personal cellular phone numbers so that they were readily available at any time. While commendable, providing students with this type of access could blur the lines between work and non-work activities (Anderson et al., 2000). Further, as one participant noted, burnout and imbalance are inevitable if employees continue to work incessant hours without drawing appropriate boundaries. Collectively, the aforementioned challenges impeded effectiveness of the policy and need to be addressed.

The research site instituted their formal policy about alternative work plans in 2007. The subject matter experts who were instrumental in developing the policy admitted that the university did not employ specific strategies to broadly advertise the policy to employees. It then came as no surprise to me when participants lamented about the fact they had no knowledge about the policy prior to requesting to work alternative

hours. Thirteen of fourteen participants shared this concern which undoubtedly indicated an immediate need for improvement by the human resources department. One participant suggested that his supervisor was also unaware of the policy, so when he initially requested flexibility at the advice of a colleague who worked a flexible schedule, his supervisor was unable to properly advise him about the university's policy.

In Sibson's, The Rewards of Work Study 2006: Improving Employee and Organizational Outcomes, higher education institutions reported a 30 percent satisfaction rate regarding compensation compared to the 70 percent rate reported by corporate respondents (as cited by Jones, 2007). As Jones further notes, "Many organizations are simply missing the mark in actively sharing information about pay structures and incentive systems" (p. 2). During a casual conversation with a division of student affairs colleague last month about my dissertation topic, I learned that my institution recently developed a written alternative work arrangements policy. To say that I was shocked is an understatement, not only because it directly related to my study, but more so because to date, no information has been disseminated to employees. Further, I am aware that the staff governing body had been lobbying for such a policy for years, so I would expect this accomplishment to be shared at various levels within the university. And, while I do think employees should take initiative to stay abreast of university policies, it seems minimal that some announcement to employees about new policies would be communicated, particularly if the policies are intended as a benefit of employment.

Other Issues

In addition to their benefits and challenges, participants provided insight about other issues that transcended all three categories. The overarching opinion was that

communication was a critical component to success when implementing an alternative work arrangement. Participants discussed the importance of their relationship with their supervisors, the need to plan in order to be out of the office, and the feeling that it was taboo to discuss their specific work hours if they were not within the university's standard business hours.

Alternative schedules are popular among employees, yet Powell and Mainiero (1999) affirmed that they "are likely to be ineffective unless they are supported by front-line managers" (p. 41). The participants in my study readily agreed with this concept as they all indicated that their supervisors were supportive of their requests to incorporate flexibility into their schedules. Further, they acknowledged that their relationships with their supervisors improved as they were constantly in communication with each other, particularly if a situation arose and the employee was out of the office due to their varied work hours. While this was reported as a benefit to the participants, it was presumably a benefit to the organization as well.

Three participants mentioned that they were very honest – almost too much so – with their supervisors. One director said that her supervisor had to tell her that she did not have to provide information about her every move when she was working from home because he trusted her to be productive despite working from an alternate location. The participants were all appreciative of their supervisors, and they recognized that their ability to be flexible with their schedules was a benefit afforded to them through the institution but specifically with their supervisors' approval. They did not take this benefit for granted and understood that the privilege could be revoked at their supervisor's discretion.

To ensure that departments were adequately staffed, employees were very conscientious about planning for their schedules. That is, it was important to inform students and staff about their schedules, and one supervisor required staff members to post their hours on their office doors on a weekly basis. Additionally, staff members regularly communicated with each other about unfinished projects or information that may be necessary for students in the employee's absence due to their varied hours. As mentioned in Chapter 4, one participant required her employees to cross train such they knew enough about each others' jobs in order to provide service in a colleague's absence. She indicated that this strategy "helped [her] feel more comfortable about staff being away from the office during regular business hours." As a supervisor with multiple employees working alternative schedules, this management tool contributed to the department's ability to reduce any interruptions in service delivery.

Regarding the final other issue, participants identified flexible scheduling as a taboo topic. They did not feel free to discuss their alternative schedules in the greater university community or in some instances, even with their colleagues. Even though there was an official policy supporting this practice, participants suggested that it was still something that was not broadly accepted in the university's culture. I understand this because although I allowed my employees to vary their hours in certain situations (namely, weekend and evening student events), it was done in strict confidence and with the understanding that they were not to discuss their flexible schedules outside of our immediate department. This attitude persists at my institution today, and I am curious if things will change now that a formal policy has been instituted, although not yet been communicated, let alone implemented in my department. With a clear picture of the

benefits, challenges and other issues that participants experienced, I next focused my attention on their recommendations for improving the Flexwork Arrangements Policy.

Participants' Recommendations

Given that the institution's policy was established just 4 years ago, I thought it would be important to hear participants' perspectives about recommendations for improving the current policy. Additionally, I wanted to know what comments participants would offer to schools that were planning to develop a policy in the near future. Once I learned that the policy had not been accessed and that the human resources department did not track the effectiveness of the policy, it became even more evident that feedback about this type of policy could inform both stakeholders at the research site and the student affairs profession as a whole.

Overall, the participants were satisfied with the policy as they were gained benefits from being able to design their own work hours. Nonetheless, they provided three recommendations about how the policy could be improved for further implementation. The first suggestion was that the institution should strive to make the policy more transparent. That is, specific requirements, procedures, and eligibility should be communicated in a manner such that employees are well informed of both the privileges and expectations related to the policy. The secrecy associated with this topic as discussed previously likely contributed to participants' perceptions of inequity. Further, participants and subject matter experts alike suggested that human resources personnel should enhance their oversight of the policy such that issues of unequal treatment can be addressed.

The second recommendation was that the employees who utilize alternative plans should be assessed to determine if and how the policy is impacting them. When I initially contacted the department of human resources to request a list of employees who worked alternative schedules, I was directed to a student affairs staff member who served as a liaison to human resources. I found it odd that the human resources department did not maintain this information on a university-wide level. Further, an SME blatantly told me that if I "could find out what we [the institution] are doing, that would be great." Though I was astonished at this genuine request, it indicated that some formal mechanism to assess the policy was indeed necessary.

All of the participants seemed surprised when I contacted them to request their participation in this study. They indicated that no one had ever asked them about their application of the Flexwork Arrangements Policy, and some of them assumed that this type of policy was common at institutions of higher education. Consequently, they suggested that institutions use best practices in the field and benchmark themselves against existing policies. They applauded me on my efforts to research their university's policy, and indicated that this was an appropriate first step in learning more about alternative work arrangements policies.

Flexibility: Implications for Student Affairs

This study has multiple implications for higher education and the student affairs profession. As it relates specifically to the purposes and goals of my study, employee motivation, job satisfaction, turnover, work-life balance, and job design are relevant components to consider.

Employee Motivation

The theoretical framework that guided this research project was Herzberg's Two Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1966). The premises embedded within this construct suggest that employees are more motivated by intrinsic rather than extrinsic values. That is, workers value their work, want to contribute positively to the work environment, and they desire to be recognized for their contributions. Conversely, extrinsically motivated employees focus on compensation, working conditions, and security. As their motivators are met, employees are more satisfied. The opposite is true as well; that is, if employees' expectations are not met, they are more likely to be dissatisfied and leave the organization (Lorden, 1998). Participants in this study affirmed that their alternative work arrangement was an intangible benefit that contributed to their satisfaction.

Using a 2006 study, Jones (2007) indicated that employees in higher education institutions reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction with compensation (30%) than those in corporate organizations (70%). This is no surprise considering that most student affairs salaries are not competitive. In order to compensate for this, universities must develop recognition programs and other non-monetary incentives to balance the intrinsic rewards-only nature of the student affairs profession (Volkwein & Parmley, 2000; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999a; Rosser, 2004; Avery, 2001; Davidson, 2009).

Job Satisfaction and Turnover

The literature consistently indicates that a direct relationship exist between job satisfaction and turnover, such that if an employee is less satisfied, he or she is more likely to leave the organization (Johnsrud and Rosser, 2002). As indicated in my study, employees entered the work environment with expectations of flexibility. Given the long

and often unusual hours that are common in the student affairs profession, I believe it is realistic to expect some measure of flexibility in various positions. Of course an institution is not obligated to provide opportunities for flexibility, however, student affairs department and divisions may be constantly impacted by high turnover if employees have no formal opportunities to create balance in their professional lives.

Consistent turnover equates to low morale, reduced productivity and increased personnel costs associated with hiring new employees (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Holmes et al., 1983). According to Jones (2007):

> Before tinkering with or substantively redefining what the institution offers employees, leaders need to take a critical look at the current state of employee satisfaction and engagement. The unique work environment of academic institutions and strong connections that many individuals feel towards their institution and its mission provide rich opportunities to develop a distinctive strategy for attracting, retaining, and engaging faculty and staff. (p. 2)

Colleges and universities should identify the causes of employee turnover (Evans, 1988; Rickard, 1982; Johnsrud et al., 2000; Rosser & Townsend, 2006) and subsequently develop intentional strategies to increase job satisfaction, thus contributing to a reduction in turnover.

Work-Life Balance

Participants in this research study overwhelmingly expressed a desire to achieve better balance between their professional and personal lives. Unfortunately, however, balance has no definitive parameters, and it is therefore a very subjective construct that is difficult to measure or generalize. One participant explained how balance is critical to

workplace health, and several participants expressed a need for more assistance in this area.

The Corporate Executive Board (2009) argued that work-life balance is the second most important factor in employee attraction and commitment. Further, one study indicated that employees who favored their organization's efforts to support work-life balance expressed a lower intent to leave the organization, greater pride in the organization, and a willingness to recommend the company as a place to work to potential employees (Kenexa Research Institute, 2007). As such, employers would benefit from the development and implementation of work-life programs that provide employees with opportunities for flexibility and balance.

Job Design

While employees may request alternative hours, some positions in student affairs may be naturally conducive to pre-established hours outside of the 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. schema. For example, in this study, one participant regularly worked 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and then four to five hours on Sunday. He accepted these hours as a condition of employment, and there was no pressure to request special dispensation to work a different schedule. By considering the needs related to the position, institutions should determine the most feasible hours prior to hiring for the position.

A major implication regarding the above recommendations is that student affairs policymakers would benefit from intentional collaborative partnerships with human resources colleagues to develop effective employment strategies. Instead of operating in a silo where human resources functions are managed internally within the division, student

affairs employees should regularly consult with their colleagues in human resources to provide relevant and effective employment strategies to its employees.

Limitations

As an original research project, this study has several limitations, including:

1. The study includes a small sample from one institution and therefore may not be generalizable to multiple institutional settings. While the participants told a compelling story, their experiences have limited broad applicability.
2. The AWA policy has only been in existence for 4 years at the research site. Therefore, data regarding impact may be limited or unavailable. It was initially difficult for Human Resources personnel to identify employees who used AWAs; this speaks to the subject-matter experts' acknowledgement that data about the utilization and effectiveness of the policy were limited.
3. Numerous other factors may impact job satisfaction, not just the inability to work an alternative schedule. This study did not explore other employment factors that may have impeded an employee's satisfaction, morale, and sense of loyalty to the institution.
4. Claims about how organizations benefit from allowing their employees to use alternative work arrangements are largely anecdotal (Powell & Mainiero, 1999), particularly as it relates to increased productivity as the participants in this study asserted. This study is limited because it did not seek validation from the participants' supervisors or offer any other empirical data to support these claims. It would be interesting to learn whether supervisors' perceptions match those of

their employees regarding how the employer has benefitted from employees having utilized various alternative work arrangements.

Areas of Future Research

Relying on a certain measure of creative yet calculated inference, the emergent grounded theory is intended to explain and predict phenomena (Haig, 1995). It is also important to note, then, that the construction of theory is a dynamic not concrete process in which theory is not a perfect product but an idea that constantly develops (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). While I am confident in my theory's freshman exploration and subsequent explanation of the experiences of student affairs practitioners who use alternative work arrangements, the following suggested inquiries may enhance future research regarding this topic:

1. According to Friedman and Galinsky (1992), work/family programs are primarily designed to address issues with dependent care and therefore targeted toward female employees. My study incorporated both women and men but no specific attention was given to gender differences. A study to compare male and female experiences may assist policymakers in developing initiatives to purposefully cater their policies if necessary.
2. The research site for this study was part of a university system. For schools within a similar structure, it would be helpful to study the availability and impact of alternative work policies across the system. The findings of such a study may yield relevant system-wide recommendations. In the case of large systems, a subset of the system, such as research universities or two-year institutions, could be the focus of the study.

3. Offering alternative work arrangements is an effective organizational strategy to encourage flexibility in the workplace (Powell & Mainiero, 1999). Likewise, there may be other mechanisms that serve to formally or informally infuse flexibility in the culture of an organization. Research to explore these other options could be beneficial to institutions seeking to develop such opportunities for its employees.
4. Job satisfaction, employee morale, and turnover are undoubtedly influenced by many factors, not just how and when an employee fulfills his or her work hours. While this study suggested a positive correlation between alternative work arrangements and satisfaction, morale and turnover, a study to further explore this correlation would be helpful. It would also be useful to develop a study that compares and contrasts the experiences of employees who utilize an alternative work arrangement with those who do not, in order to see if there are any differences reported in the areas of job satisfaction, morale and employee retention.
5. While many institutions do not allow employees to work alternative hours during the fall and spring semesters, they may offer flexibility by establishing summer hours that may include a reduction in hours (i.e., working 30 hours versus 40) or a compressed work week in which employees work Monday through Thursday. A study to investigate this exclusive alternative work arrangement may be useful to employers who want to pilot a modified program prior to implementing a full policy.

Conclusion

Participants in this research study reported increased job satisfaction, reduced stress, increased productivity, and a greater ability to balance their work and professional lives as a result of being able to work an alternative work schedule. From flex-time to compressed workweek, various plans provided them with flexibility which allowed them to be more productive and conscientious employees who developed stronger relationships with their supervisors. Finally, they expressed appreciation for the ability to balance their professional responsibilities with personal obligations.

Based on the above results which were collectively derived from the participants' stories, the resulting grounded theory is that employees who are provided the opportunity for flexibility through the use of alternative work arrangements are more satisfied with their employment experience at the institution which subsequently contributes to less employee turnover.

The findings and various implications to student affairs as discussed in this chapter suggest that employees and employers could greatly benefit from the establishment of formal policies that allow flexibility in the workplace. As provided in the next and final chapter, I offer practical and comprehensive recommendations about how to design an effective alternative work arrangements policy.

CHAPTER 6

DESIGNING AN ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS POLICY

My interest in alternative work arrangements emanated from frustration with the perennial cycle of turnover at my particular institution. As a supervisor, I was directly impacted by this pattern as I was charged with maintaining a high level of service to students despite years of multiple staff vacancies. In an eight-year span, I have personally conducted ten position searches; the recruitment, hiring, training, and evaluating processes alone used considerable human and financial resources, and I determined that it was necessary to research strategies to reduce this phenomenon.

While it is inaccurate to suggest that each employee left the university due to their inability to work an alternative schedule, the overall sentiment from their verbal accounts upon exiting was that they could not continue to work a regularly demanding schedule with rigid hours for an extended period of time. By this I mean, it was difficult for employees to operate at high levels of efficiency and productivity due to the constant hours beyond 40 hours a week in which they worked. At my current place of employment, it is commonly known that alternative schedules were not approved in certain segments of our division. My employees acknowledged my willingness to offer them flexibility on an individual basis, albeit under a cloud of secrecy. Yet they also suggested that the institution did not offer enough incentives for them to remain at the institution, nor were there non-financial mechanisms to compensate them for the unusual work hours that were associated with their positions. This passion fueled my interest in studying the impact of alternative work arrangements policy on student affairs employees.

Based on my participants' stories as well as through personal experience, I emphatically assert that institutions of higher education should establish formal policies regarding alternative work arrangements. The distinction between formal and informal is important for two reasons as explained below.

First, informal opportunities for flexibility are dependent upon supervisors' personal opinions about compensatory time. While a certain level of supervisor discretion may be important and warranted, a formal policy would establish parameters, reduce misunderstandings, and supersede any one person's biases for or against flexible schedules. By utilizing objective language and standards, both supervisors and employees who utilize AWAs will be held accountable to the same stipulations as outlined by the formal policy.

The second reason for recommending a formal policy relates to morale. My participants noted their appreciation for officially being allowed to work an AWA, and one specifically indicated that it made her feel as if the university cared about her as an individual. While this may seem trivial and perhaps even unnecessary, Johnsrud et al. (2000) affirm that morale matters; that is, morale contributes to satisfaction which in turn impacts intent to leave and thus, turnover (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999b). Establishing a formal policy articulates a clear message to employees that flexibility is an important and supported value at the institution. This small yet meaningful gesture may have long-term positive implications for attrition in student affairs.

In tandem with creating scholarly research about the need for flexibility in higher education, the culminating goal of this study was to provide practical recommendations

about how to develop an alternative work arrangements policy in higher education. While this dissertation concerns itself with the specific field of student affairs, my intent in this chapter is to provide insight that can transcend the specific field of student affairs and offer considerations that have broad applicability to serve as the foundation for a campus-wide policy.

The strategies that follow represent a deliberate combination of the research participants' recommendations and best practices that I identified from four institutions based on the review of their flexible arrangements policies as outlined in Chapter 2: Cleveland State University (2010), University of Texas at Arlington (2010), Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (2010), and George Mason University (2010). I selected these specific institutions because they not only included strong policy language, but they offered insight into various important aspects related to the policy such as university and employee benefits to utilizing alternative work arrangements, determining the appropriateness of a particular alternative plan, training for supervisors, supervisor and employee responsibilities, and assessment.

Given myriad suggestions, I have organized the recommendations within four categories: 1) prior to developing the policy; 2) the policy language; 3) implementing the policy; and 4) assessing the policy. This was done because I believe it is insufficient for an institution to simply provide a generic policy statement that tells employees that they may request to work alternate hours. Rather, the proposed guidelines present a comprehensive template for developing an alternative work arrangements policy.

Prior to Developing the Policy

In the planning stages that precede the actual development of the policy, the following considerations are important:

1. *Determine whether this will be an institutional or divisional policy.* While I ultimately recommend the former, the ability to establish it for all employees at the institution may be initially unrealistic. Creating this policy within the division of student affairs allows it to be piloted within a smaller subset of the university and if it is subsequently deemed successful, there may be increased support for broadening it to encompass other areas and eventually, the entire university.
2. *Establish collaborative relationships*. Whether an institutional or divisional policy, consider the immediate and long-term constituents who should be included in the policy development process. Representatives from the university's department of human resources, individuals who perform local human resource functions within their roles in the division, faculty and/or staff governing councils are all important entities to consult. If the policy will pertain to division of student affairs employees only, the senior student affairs officer should serve or have representation on the development committee. Employees who manage staff should be included as well in order to provide a supervisory perspective about how such a policy may impact their departments.
3. *Consider organizational culture*. Organizational culture is a broad framework that encompasses both visible and invisible concepts that explain human behavior in a particular environment (Narayanan & Nath, 1993). According to Narayanan and Nath (1993), "culture….consists of distinctive modal patterns of behavior and the

underlying beliefs, values, norms, and premises. [It] is learned and shared by the members of a society and has a compelling influence on their behaviors" (p. 446). In essence, culture is learned, and individuals with power can influence the culture of their organizations because of their position titles or political ranks within an organization. Employees learn what is acceptable based on what they see and hear during their acculturation to the new setting. They derive meaning from the direct and indirect messages they receive, and their behavior is subsequently influenced as they desire to be accepted (Narayanan & Nath, 1993). As individuals shape an organization, so can culture shape the organization's effectiveness, innovation, and existence (Feldman, 1993).

Narayanan and Nath (1993) also suggested that beliefs, norms, and premises are critical factors in organizational culture. Beliefs are generated from the basic assumptions discussed above whereby an organization communicates its ideas and legends through treatment of its employees and customers. Norms represent the standards of behavior that are deemed acceptable within the organization, and they can lead to recognition for good behavior and performance improvement plans for negative behavior. Last, premises highlight unspoken rules and standards within the organization.

In the case of the research site, the idea of alternative work arrangements was initially met with resistance because the philosophy that permeated the environment was akin to, "we've always worked 8-5," so the opportunity for employees to work alternate hours was not given much attention. Likewise, at my current place of employment, my colleagues told me that certain upper-level

administrators did not support flexible time options; in fact, my direct supervisor told me that I was not authorized to adjust my supervisees' work schedules. This created an environment of secrecy about employees' work hours, particularly if they were not present when needed during the day. Institutional policymakers' opinions about work and time at work will greatly influence if and how an alternative work arrangements policy is implemented.

Another organizational issue includes whether the policy will fit the institutional type. In other words, will an alternative work policy at a two-year technical school work similar to one at a four-year university? Further, demands on staff availability may vary based on what the division offers; if there are no late-night or weekend events and no residence halls, it may be difficult to justify a need to make adjustments in staff members' hours.

4. *Benchmark against other institutions.* The Subject Matter Experts in my study acknowledged that they did not research other universities to see if alternative work arrangements policies existed and if so, how they were structured. They as well as the participants recommended that institutions desiring to implement a policy should do their due-diligence and learn what is locally, regionally or nationally available at other institutions. In the case of university systems, policymakers should contact their system administrative offices to inquire about any system-level policies that may support or impede the establishment of a university-specific policy.

The Policy Language

In addition to the actual policy statement, the following elements should be included in the description of the policy:

1. *Goals*. Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (2010), George Mason University (2010), UT Arlington (2010), and Cleveland State University (2010) all provide clear intentions with regard to what they hope to accomplish by implementing an alternative work policy. Stated aspirations such as employee retention and increased morale offer a sense of deliberate purpose about the policy, and may exhibit some level of care for employees' personal well-being, job satisfaction, and continued employment at the institution. Establishing written goals may also provide a basis for evaluation of the policy.
2. *Benefits and challenges*. The University of Oregon Telecommuting Policy (2010) offers a robust overview of the benefits and challenges to institutions and employees. This is a helpful section to include because it provides a realistic reflection of what employees who request such arrangements may experience, both positively and negatively.
3. *Types of plans offered*. While several alternative work plans exist, only a select few were available to student affairs employees at the research site. As a merely factual element, the policy should indicate which plans are available to employees (i.e. flex-time, compressed work week, telecommuting, summer hours, job sharing). Brief definitions of each type should also be included.
4. *Eligibility.* The most frequent complaint among my participants was the lack of consistency in how the policy was applied and to whom it was made available. A

necessary component of the policy, then, is an explanation of how the university will determine for which positions an alternative work arrangement may be feasible. As both Inez and Barry noted, flexible options are not conducive for all positions. It is important that university policymakers consider whether to adopt such a declarative philosophy and acknowledge this upfront or whether to explore the possibility of offering AWAs to all employees.

Regarding consideration for who is eligible to take advantage of the policy, the institution should consider and clarify eligibility based on the following questions:

- Is the policy available to both non-exempt and exempt employees?
- Are there certain types of positions that are more suitable for an alternative schedule than others? For example, can buildings and grounds staff work from home? Can a payroll coordinator have a compressed work-week in which he or she works Monday-Thursday but paydays typically occur on Friday? Are AWAs other than flex-time, compressed work-week, and telecommuting available to these and other types of employees?
- Are employees who are on disciplinary probation (or some other form of corrective action) eligible to work an alternative schedule?
- Does length of time at the university matter? Similar to standard probationary periods for new employees, it may be appropriate to restrict access to this policy for the first six months to a year of employment at the institution.

5. *Supervisor approval.* Powell and Mainiero (1999) suggested several factors that supervisors should consider when deciding whether to approve or deny employees' requests to work alternative schedules. These include:
    - Type of plan requested and its feasibility based on departmental needs;
    - Nature of the employee's job function, including any special responsibilities performed by the employee that, in their absence would negatively impact departmental effectiveness;
    - Whether the employee is a supervisor, and if so, how many employees he or she supervisors as well as the role of these subordinates; and
    - Reason why the alternative plan was suggested in order to access the short-term and long-term impact to department.

At the research site, the employee's immediate supervisor was required to approve the proposed alternative schedule. This is consistent with the policies of the 17 institutional policies described in Chapter 2. The policy should clearly indicate which individuals have authority to approve or deny an employee's request. Institutions should also state whether immediate supervisors have final approval or whether subsequent levels of consent (such as from a director or the senior-level manager in the division) are required.

6. *Right to appeal*. The policy language should acknowledge if employees have the right to appeal their supervisors' decisions to deny their proposed alternative work arrangement (both in denying them the right to have an alternative schedule and/or denying the specific schedule proposed by the employee). Both the CSU

(2010) and IUPUI (2010) policies specifically state that denial of an alternative schedule is not subject to the universities' grievance procedures.

7. *Expectations*. This section should outline specific responsibilities for both employees utilizing an alternative work arrangement as well as their supervisors. As universities such as GMU (2010), CSU (2010), and IUPUI (2010) have done, this section should provide tangible actions that employees and supervisors should take prior to, during, and after implementing a flexible work schedule. For example, if using an alternative plan such as telecommuting, who will be responsible for financial costs related to office supplies, equipment (including computer hardware and software and internet access), and equipment repair? Related to this, considerations for data security and concerns with technology must be addressed. UT-Arlington (2010) and GMU policies specify that employees who work from home must install virus protection software to ensure that there are no breaches of security into the universities' systems.
8. *Liability*. For incidents that occur at work performed in a location outside of the office (telecommuting), the policy should indemnify the university from negligence for incidents that occur at an alternative site. Specifically, what about other individuals who may be physically in the environment where the employee is working such as children or an aging parent? The policy should indicate that the university will not be liable for situations that happen to others in the alternate location while an employee is working.

9. *Disclaimers*. Either in its introductory or concluding language, the policy should articulate overarching philosophical principles about the opportunity for flexibility through the use of alternative work arrangements. Examples include:
    - It is a privilege not a right. The University of Texas at Arlington (2010) explicitly states this in their Flexible Work Arrangements Policy. Though it may seem obvious and even slightly condescending, this statement provides clear notice to employees that they are not entitled to alternative work schedules, but rather the university offers them as a benefit.
    - The university can rescind this benefit at any time. Inasmuch as an employee may request and be approved to work a varied schedule, the institution should reserve the right to discontinue said schedule with cause as necessary. Provisions regarding notification to the employee if this occurs should be included in the policy. Additionally, the policy should address how employees may terminate their alternative schedule and return to regular hours if desired.
    - Alternative work arrangements are not suitable to all positions. This is somewhat obvious and referenced in the section regarding eligibility; however, the participants in my study complained about a lack of equity in that not all employees were allowed to work alternative schedules. As Cleveland State (2010) noted in its policy, consistency in enforcing the policy "ensures the fair and equitable administration." The reality is, however, some positions may not be appropriate for such flexibility, and a

university should not subject itself to liability just for the sake of being perceived as fair by offering this benefit to all employees.

Implementing the Policy

1. *Impact on other employees*. Supervisors should consider how other employees in the department will be impacted if another employee is not available during standard business hours. For example, will the remaining employees' workload be increased? Will they be expected to respond to student requests about issues that are not typically their responsibility? As one participant stated, "We have some things that are unique to the associate director. When they are out of the office, someone else should be able to assist the client, that customer, that guest, with something." To account for this, the supervisor required her employees to cross-train so that there was always be a staff member present to respond to specific issues.
2. *Approval process*. Institutions should clearly outline the steps that an employee must take in order to gain approval to work an alternative work arrangement. Beyond supervisor approval, this applies to logistical aspects such as the timeline, forms and other administrative aspects of implementing a university policy.
3. *Communication strategies*. Participants in my research study criticized their employer for lack of communication about the alternative work arrangements policy. The SMEs also admitted that the university did not employ any specific strategies to announce the policy, though acknowledging that the policy was available online. Universities should utilize multiple internal mechanisms (i.e.

new employee orientation, employee newsletters, and email blasts) to share information about the policy.

4. *Training for supervisors*. Two SMEs discussed supervisor resistance to having staff work flexible hours. One of these SMEs further suggested that part of the resistance may stem from supervisors' "old school" perceptions about work hours; that is, an 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. model is still applicable in the university setting and employees will take advantage of flexible hours. The SME also indicated that supervisors may need to be coached about how to manage multiple alternative schedules. As such, institutions should provide training for managers which can address these issues. This training does not have to be complex, and it can occur through an online module that supervisors can complete on their own time versus attending an established workshop in a lecture setting.

Assessing the Policy

1. *Policy review*. Both the participants and SMEs acknowledged that the policy at the research site had not been assessed. Participants indicated that they have never been asked for feedback about the administration or usefulness of the policy. To that end, universities should establish a plan to review the policy which should address the timing of the initial review, frequency of subsequent reviews and an overview of the review process.
2. *Measuring productivity and performance*. A primary criticism of alternative work arrangements is that the reported benefits do not have supporting empirical data (Powell & Mainiero, 1999). As it is related to the review process, the institution

should consider how productivity and performance will be documented and measured while employees are utilizing alternative work arrangements.

Conclusion

Alternative work arrangements are both popular with employees and beneficial for organizations (Swanburg, Pitt-Catsouphes, and Drescher-Burke; 2006; Powell & Mainiero, 1999). In fact, in May 2001, almost 29 million full-time workers had flexible work schedules in which employees varied their start and work times (Swanberg et al., 2005). These numbers are impressive; however, they do not include employees who work at colleges and universities as the literature about such arrangements is almost exclusively situated in the context of the corporate environment.

This study is significant because it provides insight into how proven strategies used in corporate human resource models can be implemented in higher education (Buck & Watson, 2002; Lorden, 1998) with the intent to resolve detrimental employment issues that have been identified within student affairs. While it is impossible to write an alternative work arrangements policy that fits every employee's circumstance, college and university administrators should strive to develop guidelines that are comprehensive, detailed, and offer as much information as possible to employees about the policy.

Compensatory time is a common benefit for employees who work more than 40 hours per week (Dishman & Murphy, 2007). Likewise, alternative work arrangements such as flex-time, compressed work week, job sharing and telecommuting offer flexibility in lieu of monetary compensation. These benefits are prevalent in many organizations; however, they are less pervasive though appropriate for post-secondary institutions. By implementing a policy that encourages and provides formal opportunities

for work-life balance, institutions may benefit from increased job satisfaction, higher morale, and ultimately, reductions in employee turnover. The benefits of these types of non-monetary incentives have the potential to positively impact not only student affairs practitioners but all university employees.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Bias Statement

The purpose of this bias statement was to articulate my theoretical framework and acknowledge my biases about the research topic. This document was written specifically for the auditor of my study and given to him as part of his review of my study.

Theoretical Framework

My research topic explores the experiences of employees who utilize alternative work arrangements in a university setting. Given the deliberate intersection of the human resources and student affairs professions, applying a theory about employee behavior is relevant and appropriate to this study. I have chosen to ground my study through the lens of Herzberg's Two Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1966) which is a conceptual framework that suggests a relationship between internal and external motivators which can ultimately impact job satisfaction and thus, employee turnover.

Herzberg's (1966) theory espouses two types of factors: intrinsic motivators related to what a person does and external hygienes related to the work environment. Employees who value the intrinsic place importance on aspects such as, "feelings of accomplishment [and] recognition" (Volkwein & Parmley, 2000, p. 97) and, "the work itself, such as teaching and research, and recognition of that work through achievement of tenure and promotion" (Rosser & Townsend, 2006, p. 127). Conversely, extrinsically motivated individuals consider, "levels of compensation, administrative support, and working conditions," (Rosser & Townsend, 2006, p. 127) the dimensions of pay and security, and the physical environment (Volkwein & Parmley, 2000). The tendency of

student affairs staff members is to place higher value upon intrinsic versus extrinsic motivators (Davidson, 2009). These motivators directly relate to job satisfaction.

I selected Herzberg's framework because of the increased needs within student affairs to address high attrition rates (Evans, 1988) and to seek to identify and rectify the sources of employee turnover (Evans, 1988; Rickard, 1982; Johnsrud et al., 2000; Rosser & Townsend, 2006). Johnsrud and Rosser (1997) determined that in comparison to employees in other areas within an institution, student affairs staff left at a higher rate due to their perceptions that the university did little to reward their service beyond what was written in job descriptions. It is clear that employees' motivators and expectations influence impact job satisfaction; as a precursor to turnover, job satisfaction matters.

My Biases

With 15 years of professional experience in student affairs, I have spent countless hours beyond 40 hours per week coordinating and/or facilitating late night and weekend events for students. I rarely, if ever, requested compensatory time to account for the disproportionate number of hours I worked, and over time, I relegated this expectation as one that is acceptable within the profession.

Becoming a supervisor forced me to pay closer attention to issues of burnout, work-life balance and ultimately, employee retention. As I attempted to compensate employees for regularly working extended hours, late evenings and weekends, I was informed I was not authorized to offer accommodations such as time off or flexible time. A perpetual cycle of turnover has plagued the division of student affairs at my current place of employment over the last 10 years, and while certainly many other factors could

influence an employee's decision to leave, job dissatisfaction in one or multiple areas is a direct precursor to turnover (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002).

I readily acknowledge my own bias of believing that the lack of support for flexibility within the workplace has, among other factors, contributed to poor retention for student affairs practitioners. My position is that although the development and maintenance of compensatory time policies can be convoluted and difficult to generalize to one profession, it is prudent that universities consider implementation of policies that encourage work-life balance and retention of employees.

Retention efforts must be unique to individual employee's wants and needs. Jackson, Moneta, and Nelson, 2009 asserted that "a student affairs organization that avoids unnecessary and frequent turnover will be attentive to staff needs in a variety of ways….retention also depends on various personal accommodations, including flextime…" (p. 352). Having been directly impacted by the cyclical effect of frequent turnover, I firmly posit that the human and financial implications that are inherent to the search process necessitate the establishment of both formal policies and informal practices that may curtail the perennial process of hiring and training new personnel.

APPENDIX B

Data Table

	Research Questions	**Corresponding Question(s) in Interview Protocol**
1.	What expectations regarding flexibility did employees have upon accepting employment at the institution, if any?	Section A – 6, 8, 9
2.	What types of alternative work schedules do student affairs employees utilize?	Section A – 3 Section B – 13
3.	What are the benefits to employees who utilize an alternative work schedule, if any?	Section A – 11, 13 Section B – 15, 17
4.	What are the challenges to employees who utilize an alternative work schedule, if any?	Section A – 12, 13 Section B – 16, 18
5.	What recommendations would employees who use alternative work arrangements make to institutions that are seeking to develop such a policy for its employees, if any?	Section A – 14 Section B – 19

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

Section A – Employee (study participant)

1. Describe your current position (title, primary duties and responsibilities).
2. Discuss your level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with your current position.
3. Describe your alternative work schedule (how many hours a week do you work? What hours? What days?)
4. How long have you been employed at the institution?
    - If before 2007, describe your thoughts about the development of the alternative work arrangements policy.
5. How did you become aware of the University's alternative work arrangements policy?
6. For what purpose(s) did you request an alternative schedule?
7. Describe your supervisor's support, or lack thereof, of your request to work an alternative schedule.
8. How does your ability to determine your own schedule affect your thoughts about the work environment?
9. Describe your thoughts on flexibility in the workplace (whether it is important/necessary or not; did you have expectations of flexibility prior to accepting employment at the institution?)
10. How does your department ensure effective delivery of services if employees who are on alternative schedules are not available when students request their assistance?

- What about during peak times such as orientation, first/last weeks of school, major programs, etc.?

11. What benefits have you gained as a result of working an alternative work schedule, if any?
12. What challenges have you faced as a result of working an alternative work schedule, if any?
13. Discuss your thoughts about the effectiveness and impact of the policy to employees, particularly within the division of student affairs.
14. What recommendations would you make to an institution that is seeking to develop and implement a university-wide alternative work arrangements policy?

Section B – HR Representative or other Stakeholder *(note, this is an informational interview only. The information ascertained from this interview will be utilized as contextual and background information in the study)*

1. For what purpose was the policy developed? (historical context)
2. Who were the primary stakeholders in development of policy and what were their specific roles?
3. What was the timeframe for policy development?
4. What institutional and/or other organizational politics/culture impacted the policy development process?
5. How/are employee classes differentiated within the policy?
6. How is the policy being assessed? What data is collected and how is it used?
7. Describe the process for getting approval for the policy (how was the policy passed - Senate, other governing bodies, etc.)?

8. What is the policy (copy of policy language)?
9. What is the total number of university employees who utilize an alternative work arrangements plan?
10. How many of this total number are employed within the division of student affairs?
11. What types of alternative plans are available?
12. Describe revisions that have occurred to the policy since its inception. What was the impetus of the revisions?
13. What challenges did you or the committee face during the development of the policy, if any?
14. What challenges did you or the committee face during the implementation of the policy, if any?
15. What are the benefits to employees as a result of using alternative work arrangements, if any?
16. What are the challenges to employees as a result of using alternative work arrangements, if any?
17. What are the benefits to employers as a result of using alternative work arrangements, if any?
18. What are the challenges to employers as a result of using alternative work arrangements, if any?
19. What recommendations would you give to an institution seeking to design its own program (lessons learned)?

APPENDIX D

Flexwork Arrangements Policy at the Research Site

Policy Overview

The [University] provides a variety of flexible working arrangements, at the discretion of department, to enable employees to serve customers, meet [University] and departmental goals, and balance personal and professional responsibilities. Participating in a flexible working arrangement is a privilege and not a right.

Policy Statement

Flexible working arrangements are optional work arrangements that may be discontinued at any time. After consultation with the employee, managers determine the employee's work schedule and the employee must maintain the agreed upon schedule. The employee and / or the department may end the arrangement by providing written notice a minimum of 14 calendar days in advance. Flexible Working Agreements should be reviewed on an annual basis and telecommuting agreements shall be limited to periods of no more than 12 months and after review, may be extended annually in 12-month increments.

Flexible schedules should not cause a non-exempt employee to work overtime or cause any employee to work on existing holidays or conflict with leave allocation practices. Exceptions should be approved in advance by the Associate Vice President of Human Resources. Occasionally, an adjustment in an employee's work schedule may be required on a short term basis and such adjustments would not be a part of the Flexible Working Agreement.

Telecommuting is limited to [t]emps and regular employees, who have completed the provisional employment period. One exception is that any [t]emp or regular employee seeking accommodation under the American Disabilities Act may be considered for telecommuting if it provides a means of reasonable accommodation for the employee's needs. Such requests shall be made through the unit's HR Representative using the appropriate procedures for requesting reasonable accommodation (see Procedure 8.15, Campus Disability Compliance) and must be approved by the appropriate unit head or his / her designee.