

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by David G. Luter entitled "The Meaning of Community: Exploring the View of Student Affairs Officers." I have examined the final electronic copy of the thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in College Student Personnel.

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The Meaning of Community: Exploring Views of Student Affairs Officers

A Thesis

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Degree

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ABSTRACT

Using Boyer's six principles of community as a conceptual framework, this study examined perceptions of community among student affairs educators (SAEs). Additionally, this research inspected the extent to which perceptions of community influence policy, programming, and practice. Using one-on-one in-depth interviews and qualitative theme analysis, ten SAEs offered their perceptions of community and their applicability to professional practices. Results indicated general consistency in defining "community" as a concept. However, when asked about campus community, SAEs described factors that could either inhibit or enhance campus community. Eight factors emerged as being of concern to SAEs in this study: impact of globalization on campus community as a result of technology; importance of negative experiences to the development of campus community; the student affairs professional sense of community; impact of size on quality of campus community; impact of fragmentation on campus community; relationship between campus community and surrounding community; conflict between individuality and community; and importance of social interaction within campus community. Finally, SAEs in this study reported that perceptions and understandings of community only modestly impacted their day-to-day work as administrators.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Community has been dubbed a socially-constructed concept (Hosking & Morley, 2004). As such, it tends to provoke different meanings for different populations.

“Community” may mean a homogenous group of people sharing similar goals on one hand, while it may mean a heterogeneous group of people engaging in debates on the other. Given recent trends of modern society (e.g. the rise of technology and globalization), it is hard to imagine there may be a unifying agent in society that binds humans together in a meaningful way. That is, a number of scholars debate where community exists in today’s complex society (Freilich, 1963; MacQueen, McLellan, Metzger, 2001; McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

The debate surges on about the meanings of community (Etzioni, 1996; Freilich, 1963; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Stacey, 1969). This debate continues even in fields where developing “community” is a primary focus of everyday activities, such as city planning and community development. Scholars and practitioners cannot agree on the meaning of “community development” (Bhattacharyya, 2004, p.5). Indeed, definitions of the word “community” have changed over the last thirty years in numerous contexts, and it seems that few agree on a consistent meaning (Bell & Newby, 1974; Etzioni, 1995, 1996; Fink, 2003; Stacey, 1969).

Yet, the idea of “community” remains important to society. Scholars across diverse fields of study consistently publish articles, write books, and give lectures about “community” (Astin, 1993; Bowen, Mancini, Martin, 2005; Kepe, 1999; Mills, 2004).

This is particularly true in education (Astin, 1993; Boyer, 1990, McDonald, 2002).

Despite the lack of agreement on the meaning of “community” in educational contexts, educators are urged to continue to promote its essence in primary, secondary, and higher education. For example, The Boyer Commission recommended that research universities cultivate a sense of community: “Research universities should foster a community of learners. Large universities must find ways to create a sense of place and help students develop small communities within the larger whole” (Kenny, 1998, p. 34).

Historically, faculty members have been responsible for shaping the curriculum in higher education (Lucas, 1994). On the other hand, student affairs educators (SAEs) served as agents of “in loco parentis” policies and upholders of moral and social values (Komives & Woodard, 1996). Today, SAEs are typically viewed as partners in the educational enterprise (Miller & Prince, 1976; American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 1994), playing a significant role in creating meaningful out-of-classroom experiences for college students, including the creation of a healthy campus community.

Statement of the Problem

It seems clear that student affairs, as a profession, values “community” (Boyer, 1990; Evans & Reason, 2001; Gardner, 1996; McDonald, 2002). In fact, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) published a document entitled *Learning Reconsidered* which indicates that, in order to fully help students succeed in college, SAEs must understand and appreciate community (Keeling, 2004).

Despite this espoused commitment, little research has been conducted to understand SAEs' perceptions and meanings of "community." Dr. Ernest Boyer, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching at the time, published a landmark report named *Campus Life: In Search of Community* (1990). This was one of the few studies conducted to understand how SAEs and university presidents understand and feel about campus community. In this study, Boyer set forth six principles. *Campus Life* claims communities should be *purposeful* in setting academic goals, *open* to expression, *just* in celebrating diversity, *disciplined* in holding students accountable, *caring* for all students, and *celebrative* of a university's traditions. His work calls institutions to examine and reestablish feelings of community on campus.

Other works examine definitions of community (Astin, 1993; Bhattacharyya 2004; Etzioni, 1995, 1996), how students perceive community on campus (Cheng, 2004; McCarthy, Pretty, Canto, 1990; Clark & Hirt, 1998; Nathan, 2005), and the importance of building community on campus including "best practices" or examples of how to do so (Barr & Upcraft, 1989; Coye, 1997; McDonald, 2002; Spitzberg & Thorndike 1992; Terrell & Watson, 1996, VanHecke & Buckingham, 1993). Boyer's work influenced some of these works as many adopt his six principles of community: purposeful, just, open, disciplined, caring, and celebrative (e.g. Coye, 1997; Davis, Crawford, Cutright, Fry, Liu, Trevor, 1997, Kane & Croft, 2000; McDonald, 2002; VanHecke & Buckingham, 1993). Yet, very few studies explore the meaning of community for SAEs. This is the gap addressed by the present study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand how SAEs perceive “community” on campus. Specifically, it was designed to explore SAEs perceptions of campus community and how such perceptions influence their work with students. The following questions will guide this research project:

1. What does the concept of “community” mean to SAEs?
2. How do SAEs perceive campus community?
3. How does their understanding of community and their perceptions of campus community guide the formulation and implementation of university policies, practices, and/or programs?

Significance of the Study

Since the concept of community is a cornerstone of the student affairs profession (Keeling, 2004, Boyer, 1990), it seems reasonable to assume that those who work in student affairs might have a “working” definition or understanding of community that guides their work with students. Thus, it is an important research venture to attempt to understand SAE’s notion of community.

Given the qualitative nature of this study, it allows participants to guide this study—to share individual definitions and perceptions of community. In gathering different perceptions of community, this research hopes to influence and guide student affairs practice. Additionally, since SAEs set policies and programs for college students, SAEs’ perceptions of community may be related to or influence the underlying assumptions on which policies and programs are based. In analyzing SAE’s perceptions

of community, data will be compared and contrasted to see where their perceptions are similar and, in some cases, dissimilar.

These findings might prove useful for several constituent groups. First, other SAEs should look to this study to further understand how those working in student affairs understand and define community. Researchers hope that, from others' perceptions of community, fellow SAEs will expand their meanings, connotations, and theories of community to inspire new ideas, interventions, policies, and programming to foster a stronger sense of community on campus. This is especially true for traditional functional areas of student affairs (e.g., residence life, student activities, orientation, judicial affairs, Greek affairs, minority student affairs). However, any administrator or educator who seeks to foster a sense of community on campus may benefit from this study.

Faculty at different institutions might also find these results provocative. Student affairs constantly attempts to proverbially bridge the gap between extracurricular and curricular activities (Barr & Tagg, 1995; National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA], 1989). Faculty understanding of SAEs' perceptions of community could perhaps encourage a richer understanding of the philosophies that undergird and guide policy and practice in student affairs. Such an awareness might serve faculty members well when working collaboratively with student affairs administrators.

The same may be true for parents of college students. Results from this study provide a "picture" of how student affairs administrators perceive campus community. Their understanding of community may or may not be consistent with that of parents. To

the extent this is true, these two groups may struggle to find common ground. From this study, parents may gain an understanding of what guides certain administrative practices carried out by SAEs.

Other administrators in the field of student affairs such as chief student affairs officers and graduate students could find utility in these results. In regards to chief student affairs officers, they are instrumental in organizing and maintaining student affairs divisions. The results of this study might enhance their knowledge of the principles of community, how their staff members perceive community, and how that understanding impacts professional practice. This could result in a more focused effort in building community both on campus and beyond campus walls. As far as graduate students are concerned, they could benefit from understanding how those currently in student affairs define community. Since graduate students within higher education will one day lead the field of student affairs, it would be helpful for them to have a clear understanding of how SAEs understand community and how this understanding shapes day-to-day decisions within the profession.

Implications

Implications of this study are important for student affairs policy, practice, and research.

Policy

This study could have significant implications for the philosophies that directly influence policies set on campus. For example, some institutions use Boyer's six

principles of community as a means to develop ways to handle student policy violations (VanHecke & Buckingham, 1993). VanHecke and Buckingham go on to explain how the chosen three Boyer principles influence this arbitration process. This study will help to understand how SAEs' perceptions of community influence policy formulation and implementation using "voices" of administrators. Further, this study seeks to examine whether or not Boyer's six principles are still relevant to the abiding mores that exist in today's increasingly complex higher education environment. An update to Boyer's principles could be useful in guiding the formulation of future student affairs policy to reflect new understandings of "community."

The concept of "community" is already shaping higher education. Several universities have adopted "principles of community" "as fundamental to on-going efforts to increase access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all of its members" ("Virginia Tech Principles of Community," 2005). Updating how higher education practitioners understand community could show that these principles need further consideration.

Since "community" reaches past university walls, this study could influence the formulation of policies for "town gown" relationships. Historically, universities and surrounding communities can have unclear relationships with different power dynamics depending on the institution that can either be beneficial or harmful to both parties involved (Leonard, 2000; Miller, 1963). Some initiatives are already in place attempting to link curriculum with community needs (Dardig, 2004). This study will initiate conversations about SAEs' roles in further linking universities to surrounding towns

depending on the scope of SAEs' definitions of community. Conversations of this nature would hopefully lead to policy that would institutionalize student affairs' role in building community on multiple levels.

Practice

It is unclear to what extent the idea of community actually influences student affairs practice (Boyer, 1990). Community is a foundational dimension to the student affairs field. It might frequently appear in administrators' conversations about how community influences practice. An example of how community can influence day-to-day practice would be incorporating Boyer's principles into a Division of Student Affairs vision statement and guiding principles (Moore & Carter, 2002). Even if it does not relate directly to Boyer's community characteristics, SAEs should have some sort of principles of community underlying their practices. Assessment techniques could be used to assure community principles are being clearly communicated when programming to students. This study could influence all dimensions of practice—planning, implementation, and evaluation of student affairs divisions.

For example, student leaders, a group with whom SAEs work closely, could also benefit from articulated definitions of community. Having comparative definitions of community could influence the manner in which student leaders are trained in terms of leadership and professional development. Clearly articulated definitions of community could help guide different trainings, such as resident advisor, orientation leader, and Greek life leaders. This articulated understanding could result in a more focused approach to training which would reflect an understanding of community as understood

and supported by those in the field of student affairs. Training sessions could then be evaluated on the basis of whether or not students understand certain philosophies of community that influence their work.

Research

Since researchers anticipate changing higher education landscapes given current contexts of globalization and technological advancement (Nair, 2003; Woodard, 2000), it is possible that understandings of community are transforming in this current context of higher education. In general, this study will inspire research about changing understandings of community within higher education, not just student affairs. Additionally, to the extent that SAEs and student perceptions of community differ, research may be needed to examine how the two understandings can become more complementary. Examining how these can be more closely related could help assure students and SAEs are speaking in a common language. Finally, there is a scarcity of research in higher education that seeks to incorporate aspects of the surrounding communities in definitions of “campus community.” If surrounding communities remain missing in SAEs’ definitions of community, more research might be needed to examine why this is the case and whether new definitions should be developed.

Delimitations

As in any study, this research had some initial delimitations. First, this research only extends to those within the field of student affairs. This study does not investigate perceptions of community among policymakers, higher education scholars, faculty

members, students, and other higher education stakeholders. Though the purpose of this study is not to generalize across the population, this limitation may only make this study transferable to a smaller sect of higher education studies.

Further, this study will only sample SAEs in a small geographical location. Given that this is a qualitative study, a large geographical location is not needed in order to glimpse into the minds of SAEs to understand how they perceive community. A convenient sample is used composed of nearby colleges and universities. This convenient sample provides a picture of how some SAEs understand community and will further the intellectual discovery of this sometimes ambiguous term “community.” A convenient sample also allows the possibility of the researcher having a previous relationship with some of the participants (i.e. at the researcher’s home institution). This limitation must be confronted head-on in an attempt to bring integrity to the findings.

Organization of Study

This study will be organized into five chapters. Chapter One presents the problem statement, purpose, and definitions. Chapter Two summarizes the literature on this issue. Chapter Three describes the methodology. Chapter Four presents results from the data analysis. Chapter Five discusses the findings and highlights several conclusions that can be drawn from this study.

Definitions

Though the study is a qualitative one that will be guided by participants’ perceptions of community, it is useful to present some definitions of community before

delving into the complex literature surrounding this area. The following definitions are useful for the present study:

1. Community: a community is “a unified body of individuals; the people with common interests living in a particular area; an interacting population of various kinds of individuals (as species) in a common location; a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society; a body of persons or nations having a common history or common social, economic interests; society at large; joint ownership” (Merriam-Webster, online). Community is a laboratory of discovery in which we come to value the possibilities found in mistake and error in serendipitous moments. Community is a venture in human learning and association, where moral meaning—concepts of justice and fairness, of human goodness and depravity, of rights and responsibility—may be factored from moments that can be both elevating and wrenching to the human spirit. Community is a dance of paradox, in which personal aspiration and personal sacrifice are found in embrace. (Bogue, 2002, p.6-7)
2. Perceptions: observations and feelings held individuals, often a product of experiences (e.g. personal, professional, and academic) and self-reflection, often having an emotional connection.
3. Meaning: A “meaning” is how one makes sense of a concept. “Meaning” is a personal definition held that influences thoughts about anything related to that topic.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Community within higher education was studied extensively by Ernie Boyer, a prolific scholar in educational philosophy and many others. This review of the literature was organized into five categories. First, multiple definitions of community were presented to lay a general foundation for scholarly work and philosophical considerations. Next, Ernie Boyer's framework of community was explained in detail to provide a lens through which community can be understood. Building upon Boyer's conceptual framework, the next section summarized the literature that has been influenced by Boyer's foundational work and studies that employ his understanding of this complex concept. Fourth, literature examining perceptions of community by different constituencies was reviewed to paint a picture of how community is understood on college campuses. Finally, literature that links perceptions of community and professional student affairs practice was presented to understand how frameworks have been put into practice. This literature review was meant to explore and understand how community was generally framed in the literature and to examine whether theory and practice are related.

Definitions of Community

There was, and still is, a large debate about the fundamental meaning of "community." This disagreement has even led to a questioning of the viability and

importance of studying community. For example, Stacey (1969) argued, “It is doubtful whether the concept of ‘community’ refers to a useful abstraction...certainly confusion continues to reign over the uses of the term community” (p.134). Broadly, especially from a sociological perspective, “community” was a foundational term referring to social networks and relationships. Community, according to Etzioni (1996), encompassed two dimensions: (a) multiple “affect-laden relationships” between groups that supported one another and (b) some commitment to a certain culture (e.g. traditions, norms, and values) (p.127). In an earlier work, Etzioni proposed that community is “sharing in the public realm” but has an emotional dimension which also values diversity (p.93). From a political perspective, Etzioni proposed three kinds of community: (a) communities of ideas (political parties), (b) communities of crisis (people bound together by a particular social problem), and (c) communities of memories (based on belief systems such as religion). In addition to Etzioni, Bogue (2002) claimed, “a sense of community in any setting signifies the presence of what I call an agenda of common caring and grace” (p.7). These conceptualizations served as a guiding light by which an understanding of community was broadened.

Etzioni provided a useful foundation upon which to build an understanding of community in a higher education setting. One of the early conceptualizations of community within student affairs and higher education was presented in Gardner’s (1996) “Building Community”, spurred by realizations of changing demographics and climates on college campuses. His discussion was based around ten qualities of a healthy community: wholeness incorporating diversity; shared culture; good internal

communication; caring, trust, and teamwork; group maintenance and governance; participation and shared leadership tasks; links with the outside world; development of young people; forward-looking viewpoint; and well-developed community maintenance. Gardner's original work in 1989 only included eight qualities; the final two qualities were added in 1996.

Gardner's work at that point in time reflected an overall concern about community on college campuses in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Perhaps one of the most foundational works on "community" in terms of higher education was published by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This organization published Boyer's community framework, a prominent work that attempted to conceptualize community in higher education (1990). Calling for a revival of community on campus, this document recognized student life has a "dark side" (p. xiii). A host of challenges faced college campuses; among them are racial and ethnic tensions, general discourtesy among students, students' ignorance about governance structures, and substance abuse. Additionally, Boyer's model called attention to a disconnect between in-class and out-of-class activities. Boyer recognized an expansion of student services, particularly implemented by student affairs educators. This expansion, Boyer noted, occurred because of a concern for fostering a sense of community while on campus. Boyer's framework unveiled six principles of communities within higher education that should guide "day-to-day decision making on the campus" (p.7). Communities should be *purposeful* in setting academic goals, *open* to expression, *just* in celebrating diversity,

disciplined in holding students accountable, *caring* for all students, and *celebrative* of a university's traditions.

Boyer's understanding of community spurred debate within higher education about community. For example, Astin (1993) delivered a keynote address about the lack of community on college campuses. Astin, a prominent scholar within higher education and student affairs, identified three values overtaking college campuses: materialism, individualism, and competitiveness. Not only could these values be found in students, but they also could be found in faculty and academic departments. He addressed this lack of community and called for faculty to formulate innovative teaching pedagogies that would hopefully encourage student learning and, therefore, enhance community on campus.

More recently, Nathan (2005) observed that students define community much differently today than in previous years. Nathan examined the role of choice in a student's definition of community. Students associated with different kinds of self-chosen activities and "ego-based" associations which defined a student's sense of community on campus (p.55). University officials often surveyed students to identify which activities would interest them, which often resulted in a narrowly tailored and fragmented version of community. Since many students freely chose which events interested them, a narrow and fragmented idea of community proved to be problematic. This understanding of community involved no inclusion of shared values, traditions, and norms. Notice also that the student conceptualization of community included neither academics nor personal development.

Conceptual framework

Community was often discussed in higher education and student affairs used elements of Boyer's (1990) model as a base. In Boyer's community framework, he posited a six-dimensional framework of community:

First, a college or university is an educationally *purposeful* community, a place where faculty and students share academic goals and work together to strengthen teaching and learning on campus.

Second, a college or university is an *open* community, a place where freedom of expression is uncompromisingly protected and where civility is powerfully affirmed.

Third, a college or university is a *just* community, a place where the sacredness of the person is honored and where diversity is aggressively pursued.

Fourth, a college or university is a *disciplined* community, a place where individuals accept their obligations to the group and where well-defined governance procedures guide behavior for the common good.

Fifth, a college or university is a *caring* community, a place where the well-being of each member is sensitively supported and where service to others is encouraged.

Sixth, a college or university is a *celebrative* community, one in which the heritage of the institution is remembered and where rituals affirming both tradition and change are widely shared. (p. 7-8)

These six principles of community were a result of a large-scale study of college presidents and chief student affairs officers. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the American Council on Education jointly conducted the National Survey of College and University Presidents (382 institutions). Additionally, the American Council on Education and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators coordinated the National Survey of Chief Student Affairs Officers (355 institutions). These data sets, completed in 1989, yielded findings about life on campus as experienced by undergraduate students.

Based on the research, university and college presidents and student affairs officers shared similar concerns regarding community on campus. Based on the concerns shared by these groups, Boyer's group organized six principles that could offer guidance in handling these concerns on campus. These six principles proposed by the Carnegie Foundation were meant to serve as a model for "day-to-day decision making on campus" (Boyer, 1990, p. 8). This study examined the extent to which these six principles were reflected in the language that SAEs use to define and describe their own perceptions of community.

Works influenced by Boyer

An exhaustive review of the literature indicated that Boyer's study remained the pioneering publication exploring campus community. It was helpful to examine this literature to understand what impact *Boyer's* original conceptualization had on the literature. Spitzberg and Thorndike (1992) continued Boyer's professional legacy by publishing an important volume on creating campus community. In fact, this work

served as the full manuscript that expanded Boyer's model while providing concrete application techniques. Challenges facing campus communities were examined (e.g. racism, sexism, campus crime, substance abuse). Their discussion climaxed with a recommendation for campuses to create a so-called "Compact for a Pluralistic Community." This document sought to structure relationships between individuals, groups, and institutions and required that subcommunities and campus stakeholders approved this compact. An action plan for campus leaders to improve campus community was recommended. Leaving little to the imagination, Spitzberg and Thorndike explained in detail through a 20-step program how exactly to implement a "community in action" on campus (p.165).

Spitzberg and Thorndike provided quite a roadmap that can be used as a guide to create campus community, but other documents provided more specific ways to create community in accordance to Boyer's model. Kane and Croft (2000) literally walked through Boyer's six principles and provided questions that SAEs and university officials should ask themselves when planning a program. They also called for creating an "organizational compact" that a particular division could adopt as guiding principles throughout the year (p.66). In a case study example, VanHecke and Buckingham (1993) picked three principles from Boyer's work—just, disciplined, and caring—and illustrated how they are applied at Virginia Wesleyan College. A "Community Arbitration" process, or a system that handled violations of student policy, was examined. They continued to explain how the chosen three Boyer principles undergird this arbitration process.

Boyer's conceptualization of community influenced how student affairs educators discuss, understand, and assess departments and programs on campus. Gehring (2001) referenced Boyer's understanding of community to describe an ideal toward which those working in higher education should work. The nature of student judicial systems, as a result of allowing lawyers to be included in the student judicial process, caused students to see their relationship with other students as an adversarial one. When this occurs, "[this adversarial relationship] not only reinforces the tenuousness of social bonding, but actually eliminates the opportunity for it to take place" (p.466). More specifically, residence life utilized Boyer's framework for assessment purposes. Herbst and Malaney (1999) use Boyer's six principles to assess a residential community specifically for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students. Further, the authors defined community through Boyer's framework and assess whether or not students and staff members experienced community as a result of this residential experience.

In relation to Greek life, Whipple and Sullivan (1998) referenced Boyer to understand what community means on campus. This article examined Greek letter organizations to raise points about the challenges they face within higher education. The authors claimed that one main reason these organizations existed was to create community among students on campus. To take this further, they quoted Boyer (1990) as saying:

What is needed, we believe, is a larger, more integrative vision of community within higher education, one that focuses not on the length of time students spend on campus, but on the quality of the encounter, and relates not only to social

activities, but to the classroom, too. The goal as we see it is to clarify both academic and civic standards, and above all, to define with some precision the enduring values that undergird a community of learning (p.7).

Greek letter organizations were one attempt to create community by universities, but the article was critical of whether or not Greek communities created positive and intellectually purposeful communities on campus. Boyer's work provided the author with a framework through which to understand community.

Beyond student affairs functional areas, Boyer's framework addressed hindrances to establishing a favorable campus climate for establishing community. Taylor (1998), writing about how college impacted a person's sense of tolerance, used Boyer's framework as a model for his definition of tolerance. Taylor defined tolerance as "an openness to human differences that leads to acceptance and respect" (p.283). Taylor's definition specifically pulled from Boyer's definition of a just community, one where "diversity is aggressively pursued" (Boyer, 1990, p.25). He further urged that student groups "should try to explain their own purposes and understand the purposes of others" (p.31). Diversity and understanding of different populations within higher education were also investigated.

Rezmierski (1994) raised the issue of technology censorship on college campuses. The author used three of Boyer's principles of community—open, just, and disciplined—to spark dialogue amongst university administrators about whether or not access to certain websites should be censored. Rezmierski (1994) commented, "If we are to achieve Boyer's notions of an open, just, and disciplined community where freedom of

expression and civility are affirmed, where persons are honored and valued, and where individuals will self discipline for the sake of others, ‘electronic access to potentially offensive material’ is a topic to be engaged” (p.244). This article served as yet another example of Boyer’s work engaging higher education in conversations about how to improve a sense of community on campus.

Touching on the issue of transgender students, Pettitt and Kruttsch (2004) directly applied Boyer’s six principles to how campus community can be more positive for transgender students. These recommendations directly applied to the Department of Residence Life for resident advisor programming. Pettitt and Kruttsch thoroughly explained each principle and provide specific ways in which residence halls can be more “welcoming” for this “invisible population” (p.14). Recommendations ranged from celebrating November 20th as Transgender Remembrance Day to creating disciplined nondiscrimination policies speaking to gender identity and gender expression. Boyer’s applications seemed limitless.

Falkenberg (2003) also pulled from Boyer’s framework. A call for community within higher education is examined through the lens of the Rule of St. Benedict, a religious doctrine that guides the spiritual life of Benedictines, a faith based on following the ideals of St. Benedict. Used previously to guide communities of monks in the sixth century, it stressed a balance between prayer and work to find peace in life and in the community of monks (“Rule of St. Benedict,” 2006). Falkenberg set out to study the extent to which Benedictine institutions of higher education used the Rule of St. Benedict as a means to create community on their campuses. The author recognized Boyer as “one

of the most noted advocates of the community ideal in higher education” (p.3). The author further mentioned Boyer’s six principles of community. The fact remained: Boyer has laid the foundation for most conversations surrounding the idea of community within higher education. Even a former president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) commented about community as a reaction to Boyer’s foundational framework while making a Presidential address to ASHE members (Thelin, 2001).

Perhaps the most Boyer-inspired work was provided by McDonald and associates’ (2002). Authors gave a diverse set of examples showing how Boyer’s hopes for campus community can be put into context. Bogue (2002) attempted to define community Boyer as a springboard for other conceptualizations of community. Bogue described how celebrative communities inherently possessed a spiritual connection. He contended, “There is a spiritual center to this work...sustaining hope and persistence in the face of dark journeys is an act of faith” (2002, p. 16).

McDonald et al.’s edited volume (2002) was filled with authors who grapple with Boyer’s framework in search of a way to apply his work to various work settings. As an example of this, Moore and Carter (2002) used Pennsylvania State University’s multi-campus system to illustrate how Boyer’s principles can be enacted. Among many other suggestions, they recommend using Boyer’s principles as foundations for grant proposals which used community service as a way to lay foundations to understand community. Service activities, in turn, enhanced a student’s sense of community on and off campus. They also proposed incorporating Boyer’s principles into their Division of Student Affairs’ guiding principles. They further provided assessment tools to measure whether

or not the methods are actually working to create campus community (Roper & Longerbeam, 2002). Since most (approximately 74%) college students were educated through public research universities, this model can help reach millions of thousands of students (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

McDonald (2002) developed a scale, the *College and University Community Inventory* (CUCI), to assess an institution's effectiveness in efforts to create a campus community. Developed to assess Boyer's six principles, McDonald desired to assess student perceptions of community. Astoundingly, discussions about campus community frequently occurred absent of student voices. CUCI proved to be a useful tool for measuring campus community among students. His study surveyed 445 students at 16 institutions in an attempt to understand students' understandings of community and how they varied along institutional characteristics. The six-scale instrument examined "Mission and Curriculum, Membership Rights and Responsibilities, Respect for Diversity and Individuality, Standards and Regulations, Service to Both Students and Community, and Institutional Rituals and Celebrations" (McDonald, 2002, p. 148). His findings suggested that individual difference in student characteristics had equally as much chance to manipulate a students' sense of community as institutional characteristics. His study remains one of the only instruments bringing students voices to the table when discussing campus community.

An entire section of this literature relating to Boyer's model identified the need for a fundamental restructuring of many dimensions of university life. Moore (1998) directly spoke to chemistry educators about Boyer's report. Speaking to research

universities, Moore pointed out that transforming community at modern research universities seemed to be a daunting task if beginning from scratch. Further, many universities already made steps to change the higher education environment beginning primarily with restructuring undergraduate curriculum. Similarly, Gardiner (1998) called for a focusing of the university experience that would lead to college graduates having more of a capacity to “think critically, solve complex problems, act in a principled manner, be dependable, read, write, and speak effectively, have respect for others, be able to adapt to change, and engage in life-long learning” (p.71). Boyer’s work was cited throughout this article and serves as a groundwork for restructuring campus community (see also Rader, Piland, & Pascarell, 2002).

Perceptions of Community

Undoubtedly, Boyer’s work influenced how those within higher education understood and intellectually grappled with the idea of community. However, Boyer’s study reached beyond simply examining what community meant in higher education. One purpose of this present study was to examine how SAEs perceive and define community in the context of their everyday work environment. A body of literature examined perceptions of community. This work crossed disciplinary boundaries, but the common goal of understanding how people experienced and defined community linked together a variety of academic works.

Since perceptions about community are psychological constructs, it was necessary to review a body of literature which examines a psychological sense of community (Sarason, 1974; Tartaglia, 2006). As an example of crossing disciplinary boundaries,

Sarason (1974) not only formulated another foundation for an entire discipline, but he also defined what is meant by a psychological sense of community (PSOC): “the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure” (p.157). Obst, Smith, and Zinkiewicz (2002) outlined the evolution of what effects PSOC had on community psychology literature. Obst, Smith, and Zinkiewicz concluded, though, that authors “McMillan and Chavis (1986, 1996) [provided] the best foundation upon which to build our understanding of community” (Obst, Smith, and Zinkiewicz, 2002, p.121). McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) theoretical framework led to the development of the Sense of Community Index (SCI) developed by Chavis, Hoge, McMillan, and Wandersman (1986). Community psychology as a field seriously cared about “sense of community”. Being a field born out of community tensions, their field was in the business of measuring whether or not people feel a sense of community in order to empower them to be agents of social change (Sarason, 1974).

Given the context in which community psychology exists, it seemed natural to link community psychologists’ grappling with the concept of community to the debate over community in higher education and student affairs. Just as Sarason’s work was foundational to the field of community psychology, Boyer’s framework was foundational to the field of student affairs. Both documents gave new language scholars use to understand the sometimes overwhelming concept of community.

One major piece of literature that connected the fields of student affairs and community psychology is McCarthy, Pretty and Catano's (1990) piece studying the psychological sense of community and its relationship to student burnout. Their study employed a shortened version of Chavis's Sense of Community Index (SCI), a 27-item burnout scale, and a 117-item psychological and physical distress questionnaire. 360 undergraduate students completed the survey and showed strong intercorrelations between sense of community, burnout measures, and GPA. Sense of community was significantly related and negatively related to psychological troubles. T-test analysis revealed that students with a higher sense of community had lower burnout scores on the burnout inventory.

Though not inspired by Gardner, Boyer, or Etzinoi, their study used a sense of community framework born out of community psychology that encompassed four dimensions: membership, influence, fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. These four dimensions agreed in part with previous frameworks of community proposed by higher education scholars. McCarthy et al.'s (1990) study recognized that campus community could in fact play a role in student burnout. Student burnout sometimes resulted in attrition. Interventions to combat student burnout "should not only focus on individual students (i.e., improving their coping skills) but should also include students' college community" (p.215). This study examined students' perceptions of community by using a short version of the Sense of Community Index (SCI) developed by Chavis & Pretty (1999). In other words, SCI was merely one part of this assessment, but it was not the focus. This study covered student burnout more in

depth. McCarthy et al.'s (1990) study did not cover student perceptions in depth. Rather, it uncovered a link between student burnout and whether or not this affects a student's sense of community on campus.

More directly tied to Boyer's six principles of community, Clark and Hirt (1998) used the *Student Residence Environment Scales* (SRES) to measure student perceptions of Boyer's principles. Boyer's principles were converted to measurable outcomes in this assessment tool. Their study attempted to determine whether smaller residence halls provide a greater sense of community than larger halls. Findings suggested that students living in larger residence halls experience a greater sense of community, as defined by SRES. More importantly, Clark and Hirt's discussion sparked thoughtful debate on students' perceptions of community. They offer two thought-provoking questions: "Do higher scores like cohesiveness, civic responsibility, and involvement reflect a greater sense of community among residents?" and "Do higher degrees of comfort, mattering, emotional support, academic achievement, and personal development necessarily equate with higher degrees of community?" (p.302). Clark and Hirt concluded that more research about student perceptions of community was needed.

Astin (1993) also reported about student perceptions of community. If a "lack of student community," defined as "infrequent socializing among students, little student interactions outside of class, and a high degree of student apathy," existed, then students are less likely to be satisfied with their college experience (p.27). Also included in a "lack of community" was the lack of quality interactions with faculty members. The lowest levels of student community was characterized by faculty holding low opinions of

student academic capability, having low commitments to teaching and student development, and fostering poor relationships within the institution. Students' perceptions of community had the largest effect on overall college satisfaction when compared to 150 other institutional characteristics examined in Astin's study.

Cheng (2004) employed Janosik's (1991) *Campus Community Scale*, another scale directly based on Boyer's six principles. Cheng (2004) discovered three specific aspects of college life that relates to their sense of campus community. First, a student's sense of belonging correlated with their perception of being treated in a caring way by the university. In other words, students liked to feel "at home" while at college (p.227). Next, a student's sense of being alone on campus was the biggest impediment on their sense of community. Finally, "quality social life on campus" augmented a feeling of community on campus (p.229). A student's social life included not only groups of friends, but also organized social and other types programming at the institutional level. Interestingly, findings also suggested that students can still be involved on campus but lack a sense of community.

Finally, McDonald (2002) developed a scale, the *College and University Community Inventory (CUCI)*, to assess an institution's effectiveness in efforts to create a campus community. Institutions were compared among regional location, institution size, and Carnegie classification. Southeast colleges and universities frequently scored higher on the index. Results also showed that institutional size had smaller effects than anticipated on perceptions of campus community. With respect to Carnegie classification, Comprehensive Colleges and Universities scored highest. Two-year

school students consistently scored lowest. McDonald's CUCI proved to be a useful tool for measuring campus community among students. His study was foundational in bringing students voices to the table when discussing campus community.

However plentiful "perceptions of community" literature may seem, hardly any studies studied student affairs educators specifically how they define community. This study was designed to address this gap in the literature while also adding to the literature about general community within higher education.

Linking perceptions of community and student affairs practice

One area of student affairs literature directly linked to community is that of "learning communities." Lenning and Ebbers (1999) defined a learning community as "...an intentionally developed community that will promote and maximize learning." One outcome of learning communities was making students feel a sense of community within higher education. Lenning and Ebbers seemed frustrated with the state of community on college campuses: "Too often the concept of community in higher education is paid only lip service, and its potential goes unrealized" (p. iii). Citing Boyer's six principles as a basis for learning communities, they defined learning communities as, "...an intentionally developed community that will promote and maximize learning" (p. 8). The authors spoke directly to Boyer's *purposeful* community as a foundation for establishing learning communities. By purposeful, Lenning and Ebbers alluded to intentional attempts to enhance college experiences for students. Their document included a historical perspective of learning communities, steps an institution

should take when establishing a learning community, and how to overcome challenges to the process.

A student who feels a sense of community on campus was more likely to feel more connected to the life of the university. A feeling of community hopefully made that student feel more comfortable with and more connected to the university (Tinto, 1993a). If students feel more comfortable and connected to the university, they had a stronger chance of persisting in college. These conversations about how to improve campus community were in the name of student persistence. Those involved with higher education hoped to foster a positive sense of community to help students adjust to college in hopes that the student will ultimately graduate.

Other literature written by Tinto specifically addressed the attempt to build community on campus. Tinto (1993b, 1997, 1998) took a perspective that went beyond simply creating organized programming by student affairs staffs. For example, Tinto (1993b) examined programs like Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs) and Coordinated Studies Programs (CSPs). These programs enrolled small groups of students in courses linked together by a central theme. Teaching in these courses happened in conjunction with faculty from many disciplines and upperclassmen students. These groups help facilitate discussion about coursework and general college transition experiences through intimate discussions among peers. Students who enroll in these types of programs persisted at a higher rate. Participation in these groups proved to be a significant independent predictor in student persistence because these classes helped students connect to the university, which strengthened the students' institutional commitment.

In another article on learning communities, Tinto (1998) specifically called for “learning communities,” the formal name for FIGs and CSPs, to enter the dialogue. Learning communities offered two concepts to students: shared knowledge and shared knowing. Students who participated in these communities are more likely to see learning as a coordinated process, not just a random selection of courses. Again, this allowed students to experience a connection to the university, helping to facilitate that match between institution and student.

In addition to learning communities, perceptions of community were linked to other campus-wide student life concerns: alcohol abuse, Greek life, freedom of speech, campus safety, and campus policy enforcement (Spitzberg & Thorndike, 1992). Researchers Spitzberg and Thorndike analyzed each issue, described its history within higher education, and offered suggestions for way to build community ion spite of these challenges. For example, student alcohol abuse could be addressed by several programs already existence. Created by the Department of Education, a network of higher education institutions existed called the Colleges and Universities Committed to the Elimination of Drug and Alcohol Abuse. Endorsed by the American Council for Education, the organization set membership guidelines and offers ways to go about addressing this issue on campus. Spitzberg and Thorndike continued to offer a case study of an institution’s attempt at dealing with the alcohol problem on campus. Their entire publication outlined each campus community challenge and offers suggestions for how to practically address each issue.

Brown, Brown, and Littleton (2002), as contributing authors to William McDonald's edited volume *Creating campus community: In search of Ernest Boyer's legacy*, provided a case study of Carson-Newman College's Boyer Laboratory for Learning, a model designed to transform the traditional residential college experience. Fueled by Boyer's call for a connection to be made between what students learn in the classroom and how they live outside the classroom, Carson-Newman's Laboratory for Learning was a collaborative effort among faculty, student affairs educators, and students. Comprised of residential teams in the residence halls, these Boyer Lab teams assumed responsibility for creating shared experiences for students, faculty, and staff to share in the residence halls. After implementing the Boyer-inspired Learning Laboratory on campus, assessment studies have shown that students who participated in Learning Lab events are more likely to perceive their Carson-Newman College experience as positive.

Not only was Boyer's community framework functional in creating campus programming, but it also provided the University of Connecticut with a framework to reexamine the entire undergraduate experience. As many states recalled, the economic recession of 1989-1992 caused brutal budget cuts at many public research universities. With legislators cutting the University of Connecticut's funding, the university had to reexamine its programs and services being offered. The Division of Student Affairs underwent serious strategic planning which contributed to the overall University of Connecticut's strategic plan, *UConn 2000*. Boyer's principles undergirded the Division of Student Affairs's resulting document from the strategic planning session entitled "A

Common Ground Agenda.” The document accented such points as diversity, respect, building a community on and off campus, and comprehensive student learning. *UConn 2000* eventually morphed into a public policy initiative used to persuade the state to reinvest in the University of Connecticut. New facilities, refurbishing campus landmarks, reformatted student conduct codes, new campus traditions, and facelifts to regular student activities such as orientation all resulted from the *UConn 2000* initiative. Boyer did serve as an outline for many worthwhile institutional refocusing campaigns, campus activities, university ceremonies, and student retention efforts (see also Carey & Fabiano, 1999).

Restatement of purpose

Community affects many dimensions of the undergraduate experience. Boyer took notice of this fact, and his studies under the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching helped to bring the importance of community to light within higher education providing a clear, focused articulation of community principles. In discussing community, Boyer placed importance outside of the classroom. Since SAEs usually handled students outside the classroom, it is helpful to understand how they define and perceive the idea of “community.” As Lenning and Ebbers (1999) recall, “Too often the concept of community in higher education is paid only lip service” (p. iii). It seems curious that few studies examined student affairs educators’ perceptions of community. Student affairs literature called student affairs to create meaningful out-of-class experiences, especially creating community on campus (Miller & Prince, 1976; American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 1994). Does the field of student affairs know what SAEs are working toward establishing? Let the author revisit the

original purpose of this study. The purpose of this study was to understand how SAEs perceive “community” on campus. Specifically, it was designed to explore SAEs perceptions of campus community and how such perceptions influence their work with students. The following questions will guide this research project:

1. What does the concept of “community” mean to SAEs?
2. How do SAEs perceive campus community?
3. How does their understanding of community and their perceptions of campus community guide the formulation and implementation of university policies, practices, and/or programs?

The next chapter describes the methodology employed for the purposes of this research activity. Chapter Four presents findings from this qualitative analysis. The final chapter discusses the implications of key findings and highlights general conclusions that can be drawn from the present study.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter describes how this research study was designed and how it was executed. In addition, the chapter provides details about the steps involved in data collection and analysis.

This study sought to explore SAEs perceptions of “community” on campus. Specifically, it was designed to examine relationships between perceptions of community and how such perceptions influence their work with students. The following questions guided this research project:

1. What does the concept of “community” mean to SAEs?
2. How do SAEs perceive campus community?
3. How does their understanding of community and their perceptions of campus community guide the formulation and implementation of university policies, practices, and/or programs?

Epistemology

Epistemology refers to a belief about knowledge. It refers to a lens through which one is able to understand and conceptualize a general approach to studying or knowing the unknown. All research was guided by either an implicit or explicit epistemology which also alludes to the research’s intent (Creswell, 2003). From an epistemological perspective, this research came from one prominent way to view knowledge: interpretive (Chua, 1986). This study was designed to explain a particular social phenomenon:

namely, the idea of community. The explanation came from the words of individuals, in this case, student affairs educators. This study presented individual ideas about the meaning of community and attempted to interpret those responses into meaningful statements for the profession of student affairs. These meaningful statements could inform practice, influence policy, and guide future research.

The researcher intentionally used a broad term “community” throughout the study to avoid leading participants’ thoughts toward on-campus versus off-campus settings. In addition, the same language was used to explore how their perceptions influence policy, programming, and practice. Done this way, the researcher hoped to learn whether notions about community tend to be more campus-centered or off-campus centered.

Method

This study was interested in exploring personal definitions and perceptions of community lending itself to a qualitative orientation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As Merriam (1998) explained qualitative research, individual perceptions of community resembled many unique trees making up the forest of perceptions. Each tree should be studied in relation to how it contributes to an overall forest. In other words, each student affairs educator had his or her unique perceptions about community and their own interpretation of how their perceptions influence their work with students. Each individual’s perspective was worthy of close examination in a qualitative context.

Qualitative research methods permitted the researcher to paint a “rich, thick” picture of SAE’s perceptions of community on campus and to provide compelling data on how such perceptions were perceived to impact their work with students. By “rich thick”

data (Geertz, 1987), the researcher alluded to information that will significantly contribute to the study at hand. “Community” is an observable experience which can be created and known; therefore it was a phenomenon that merited research attention.

The study targeted participants’ perceptions of community. Perceptions were complex, multi-faceted ideas and verbalized recounts of lived experiences. Perceptions were defined as self-reported understandings where the participant and his/her experience was everything. Therefore, it was necessary to use a methodology that allowed the researcher to uncover these complex, multi-level concepts known as perceptions.

One way to unpack such perceptions was to employ in-depth interviewing as a means of collecting many levels of information. Demographic data helped to paint a background picture that set the tone or “context” for the participants’ definition of community, their perceptions of community, and their beliefs about the extent to which such perceptions influence policy, practice, and programming. This study attempted to uncover perceptions of the “insider” (Jones, 2002). That is, this research allowed those in charge of building community on campus to reveal their perceptions of community and to unearth the way in which their own perceptions influenced their work as administrators.

The study sought to “describe or articulate cognitive experiences from the standpoint of the cognizer” (Pietersma, 2000, p. 8). In this case, cognizer referred to student affairs educators (SAEs), the participants of the study. This research sought to explain or “clarify” views held about community among student affairs administrators (Pietersma, p. 8-11) using a qualitative technique, namely individual in-depth, one-on-one interviews. In order to achieve appropriately thick, rich, plentiful, and usable data

usually provided by qualitative research studies, the researcher paid close attention to the research setting by allowing the participant to choose the setting. This method allowed participants to be in a comfortable space to ensure full disclosure and honest responses. It was the researcher's hope that interviewees chose research settings in which they could respond to questions with candor and in the style of their choosing.

Sample

Data for this study were drawn from three institutions: (a) a state-supported research extensive co-educational institution in the Southeast with a combined undergraduate and graduate population of 27,000; (b) an state-supported liberal arts co-educational baccalaureate mid-Atlantic university with a combined graduate and undergraduate population just short of 3,500; and (c) a private baccalaureate co-educational religious liberal arts college in the Southeast with a combined undergraduate and graduate population of 2,000. These three institutions were chosen on the basis of a feasible regional study. Each institution was unique (one private religiously affiliated liberal arts, one public liberal arts college, and one public research university). Ten student affairs educators were interviewed and included, three from two institutions and four from the other institution, and included: five males and five females; seven Caucasians/Whites and three African Americans/Blacks; one participant had 0-5 years of experience, six had between 10-20 years of experience, and three reported having over 20 years of experience; and three participants worked in Housing, four worked in Student Activities, one worked in Judicial Affairs, one worked in Leadership Programs/Orientation, two worked with general "Student Affairs," three worked in

Minority/Multicultural Student Affairs, and one worked in outdoor recreation. Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic data.

In this study, the researcher used “purposeful sampling” for “information-rich” cases (Coyne, 1997). In other words, the researcher chose administrators that would be able to provide meaningful data for the study. Administrators were chosen based on a conversation with the Dean of Students at each institution. After hearing about my study, the Dean of Students was able to provide me with some administrators at each institution who are charged with “building community” on campus.

Data Collection Procedures

Research began after the project had been approved by the University of Tennessee-Knoxville Institutional Review Board and upon completion of a thesis proposal defense (proposal defended: January 17, 2007). Once approved, the researcher contacted the Dean of Students at each institution via phone and electronic mail to ask for two or three participants who fit the sampling criteria (see Appendix C for copy of initial invitation). To participate in this study, participants were required to be classified as “student affairs educators” or “student affairs administrators” as defined by “persons who are both knowledgeable and experienced in designing and operating mechanisms that assure the smooth and effective operation of the institution and also promote the educational and personal development of all its students” (Winston, Creamer, Miller, 2001, p.5). Student affairs educators were identified and chosen at the discretion of the Dean of Students at each institution. If the Dean of Students failed to respond to the initial invitation, or if the Dean of Students could not provide enough participants, the

researcher would have used professional contacts from each institution. For example, the researcher could have used contacts made at various student affairs conferences including the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the Western Carolina University Service Learning Symposium.

Once contacts were made either through the Dean of Students or through the use of professional contacts, the researcher called participants to set up a time for the interview. During the phone call, the researcher described the study and asked whether or not they still felt comfortable participating. If participants agreed, the researcher asked what the best time and location would be for an interview.

Interviews were scheduled and conducted with participants at their home campuses. All interviews were scheduled over three weeks. The researcher contacted the administrator in advance to agree on a location, and the researcher made a reservation in the location agreed upon by the participant. In some cases, the participant found it easier to make a room reservation given that the participant had easy access to campus facility reservation systems. The researcher traveled to each campus, by car, and spent two days conducting face-to-face interviews. Expected interview time was 60 minutes, but it required some flexibility depending on the interviewee. The interviews were conducted according to the following procedure. First, the researcher explained the purpose and intent of the study. Then, participants were asked to sign and complete the informed consent form (Appendix D). Next, the researcher asked a series of questions from the interview protocol and used probes to acquire additional information when necessary. Interviews concluded when the interview protocol was exhausted, the participant

indicated that they were finished and had no more to contribute for the purposes of the study. Finally, participants were asked to complete a simple demographic form that would be linked to their transcripts (Appendix E).

Individual student affairs educators were to be queried in such a way as to understand their perceptions of community based on their lived experiences. In addition, they were asked to describe, albeit self-reported data, how these perceptions influence their work with students in the areas of policy and program formulation and implementation.

The interview protocol was developed by the principal investigator of the study and a faculty advisor at the University of Tennessee. The questions were developed on the basis that they could obtain responses that would offer insight into the posed research questions. The protocol was then subjected to expert review by three faculty members at the researchers' home campus and one faculty member from another institution in the Mid-Atlantic region (see Appendix A). The interview protocol consisted of six questions designed to elicit information about administrators' perceptions of community and how their perception influenced their work with students.

The interview protocol was also pilot-tested with a group of administrators from the University of Tennessee. Administrators were contacted over a three-week time period and participated in an interview in a setting chosen by the administrator. The researcher administered the interview to simulate the actual research setting. After each question, the researcher paused allowing the interviewee to offer feedback on each question. Interviewees indicated whether the questions were reasonable, awkward, or

repetitive. The pilot test was conducted to check for ease of reading, clarity, and to determine whether the questions yielded the type of responses desired by the researcher.

All Interviews were audio tape-recorded. Tapes from interviews were kept in A 316 Claxton Addition at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Only members of the research team had access to taped interviews. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher.

Reliability

Before analyzing data, several measures were taken to ensure the credibility of the study. Before employing the interview protocol, the instrument was subjected to “expert” review to ensure that the questions adequately measured what they were purported to measure. In addition, the instrument was pilot-tested with a small group of administrators prior to this study. This technique allowed the researcher to gauge question effectiveness and to determine which questions might need to be improved.

Other steps were taken to enhance the reliability of the study. All interview locations were decided upon by the interviewee in an attempt to make participants feel at ease with the interview. Interviews began by establishing rapport with participants. This was achieved by engaging in discussion about their jobs, their institutions, and anything else disclosed by participants. This additional information helped to establish a context surrounding their responses. For example, some institutions may have exhibited a higher-than-usual commitment to community service. This institutional characteristic could shed light on what influenced their definitions of community at that specific institution. In addition, some SAEs could reveal that they are dissatisfied with their job,

which could reveal something that could influence their definitions of community. After conducting interviews and transcribing participant responses, member checking was employed. Member checking “consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In this study, the researcher sent the results section to each participant to solicit reactions, responses, additions, and feedback to ensure that participants felt that their views were accurately reflected. If participants wanted to make any changes to their transcriptions, they were free to make those changes to enhance the accuracy of data.

Analysis

Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher read through them entirely to get a sense of general perceptions. Next, the researcher reread all transcripts coding key words, phrases, and segments according to the method described below. Finally, the researcher used theme analysis to categorize and collapse the categories that related to each other.

To code transcripts, theme analysis was used. Using Boyer’s framework, the researcher analyzed the transcripts with Boyer’s six pillars of community in mind: open, celebrative, just, disciplined, caring, and purposeful. Using a list of synonyms for these concepts, data were analyzed to see whether or not Boyer’s framework related to student affairs administrators’ definitions of community (see Appendix B). Each pillar of Boyer’s framework had a code, and responses were coded based on the correlating pillar of community. For example, any response that alluded to Boyer’s “disciplined

community” was designated with the letter “D.” Clearly, some of the responses fell outside of Boyer’s six principles of community. The researcher remained open to these responses and created new categories for such responses.

The researcher also used theme analysis to gauge the extent to which perceptions of community influenced institutional policies, practices, and/or programs. Coding was used to identify whether it was related to “policy” (written institutional policies that guide work), “practice” (generally accepted institutional practices and procedures), or “program” (any active or passive event spearheaded by the institution). These responses were coded as either “PO” for “policy,” “PR” for “practice,” or “PGM” for “program.” Coding allowed the researcher to easily refer back to certain responses when compiling results.

The next chapter presents the results of this study. Chapter five discusses the findings in the context of the nature of higher education and student affairs practice. In addition, I discuss the implications and applications of the results.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This chapter presents findings from ten one-on-one in-depth interviews with student affairs educators (SAEs) from three different institutions. Results are presented in terms of the three research questions:

1. What does the concept of “community” mean to SAEs?
2. How do SAEs perceive campus community?
3. How does their understanding of community and their perceptions of campus community guide the formulation and implementation of university policies, practices, and/or programs?

As mentioned previously, the researcher’s purpose of this study was to understand how SAEs perceive “community” on campus. Specifically, it was designed to explore SAEs perceptions of campus community and how such perceptions influence their work with students.

The chapter is organized in order of these three research questions. First, SAE definitions and perceptions provide insights into what community means to such individuals. Next, SAE’s perceptions of campus community are presented. Finally, a discussion about the extent to which perceptions of community impacted or influenced day-to-day implementation of policies, practices, or programming concludes the presentation of findings. To close the chapter, other individual reflections by participants that meaningfully contribute to the discussion of community in higher education are offered for consideration.

Question 1: What does the concept of “community” mean to SAEs?

When SAEs were asked about their definitions of community, while their definitions varied, generally they defined community as a multi-faceted entity that usually unites groups of people by similar interests, values, or ideals. These groups of people generally collaborate to accomplish a task or goal. Together, they often interact to create a special feeling of support and commonality.

Half of the participants shared this original definition in terms of the campus community. In essence, the concept of community meant a higher education community. For example, when asked about community, a male administrator offered:

Community in student affairs as I see it should be multifaceted. Of course you have the administration, the chancellors, deans, directors. Then you have a lot the foot soldiers—the coordinators of the programs, student leaders, the graduate students...I think the notion of community, to me, connotes [*sic*] a collaboration and collaborative efforts in terms of ensuring that students feeling a part of the campus community.

In his case, campus community emerged as central to his operational definition of community. However, his understanding was consistent with the general definition which emerged from every participant’s response. Four other SAEs responded in a similar way when asked to define community broadly.

While they affirmed the same theme of collaboration, shared interests, inclusive, supportive, respect, and a common goal, four other participants defined community as separate and distinct from higher education environments. One of them, a female administrator, offered:

I’m just thinking of all the people, of all places, of all the resources, of all the problems, of all the benefits. It’s all-

encompassing... It's not selective. It's literally the good, bad, and ugly...It's learning how to exist within in that. Being accepting. Does it mean that you have to all believe in the same thing? No. You just have to be accepting of one another. And...most definitely mutual respect and trust.

As evidenced by her response, higher education did not initially surface in her perceptions and definitions of community.

Standing alone, one participant's perspective of community rested in the surrounding community. Instead of general perspectives or even campus-focused ideas about community, this female participant perceived community in terms of the surrounding city community. Her comments revealed this focus:

[In] some places, the community automatically welcomes in the campus and students. [This city] has so many other things going for it...We aren't [the city], and [the city] isn't [the university]. So that's a very interesting dynamic for some folks that come from some college towns...It has to be that way. It has to be all-encompassing. Otherwise, the university is going to struggle, or the town or the city is going to struggle because while we each have our own individual struggles and situations, we all share the same ones. We all share the same challenges. We're all part of the same community.

Earlier, this participant defined such things as sports, faith-based entities, and schools as being a part of the "community" she understood. She focused on the surrounding community resources and relations as a basis of her understanding of community.

Question 2: How do SAEs perceive campus community?

Most participants did not answer this question specifically but rather spoke about campus community in terms of factors that concerned them. These factors could either inhibit or enhance campus community. Eight factors emerged that related to

circumstances or characteristics which could impact their understanding of campus community in some way. These eight factors were: the impact of globalization on campus community as a result of technology; the importance of negative experiences to the development of campus community; the student affairs professionals' sense of community; the impact of size on the quality of campus community; the impact of fragmentation on campus community; the relationship between campus community and surrounding community; conflict between individuality and community; and the importance of social interaction within campus community.

Impact of globalization on campus community as a result of technology. Six administrators mentioned globalization and technology as a concern for the development of campus community. They seemed concerned and seemingly uncertain about how it would come to shape their understanding of campus community. Further, they seemed equally unsure about its potential impact on students' perceptions of campus community. Technological advancements like cell phones, internet, and iPods appeared to impact SAEs' perceptions of community. They believed that these advancements challenged the very nature of community. In times past, community had always been associated with face-to-face interactions.

Several administrators seemed overwhelmed by the growing idea of a global community. While struggling to comprehend the idea, they expressed concern that globalization could negatively impact understandings of higher education by focusing less on human-human connections and more on human-computer connections across

national and continental boundaries. One administrator explained his struggle with the idea of an online community:

Can you have online communities? Can you have virtual communities? I don't know the answer to that. By definition, probably. You can get in chat rooms with people who share similar values, yes. But what's lost and what's gained?

Another, a female administrator addressed the loss of human connection:

As we move through the millennial generation, we see the impact of that in our communities and we see that our students really aren't connected. They really aren't communicating with each other. Text messaging just doesn't cut it. Instant messaging doesn't get it. And they're becoming more isolated in terms of their interactions.

That quote represented a common theme shared by six participants, a growing concern about globalization's impact on a healthy campus community.

Importance of negative experiences to the development of campus community.

Half of the administrators identified negative experiences as being fundamental to the development of a functional campus community. They acknowledged that community was often associated with positive experiences. Further, they agreed that communities were often supportive and tended to connect individuals with similar values. However, these participants felt that negative experiences could also help develop campus communities just as much as positive experiences. Some SAEs originally perceived community as the result of positive experiences but quickly corrected themselves allowing for the possibility of negative and adverse experiences to further develop a sense of community. Student death and other crises were mentioned by some

administrators as a time when negative events result in or promote the development of community.

Conflict in community was sometimes perceived to be negative, but one female administrator articulated how she felt about supposed “negatives” in a community and its impact on a given community:

I think it's the negative things that cause people to grow and step outside of their comfort zones. The positive things, I think they get people to buy into the community. But what keeps them there, well... You're going to have issues. It will never be perfect for the entire year. So if you can make your way through a couple of conflicts and struggles, I think you end up being stronger for it as a community. And I think those are the most successful ones.

According to participants, struggle in community had as much potential to foster campus community as harmony. They mentioned open dialogue and dissension as additional aspects that could promote campus community. They perceived that conflict, infighting, and quarreling could unite campuses just as easily as they could divide them.

The student affairs professional sense of community. As student affairs professionals, half of the SAES in the study perceived it important to nurture and build community on campus. In fact, this idea came across as a professional duty to develop community on campus. One male administrator illustrated this point by looking to student affairs as a model for developing community across campus. He offered:

I believe in this idealistic higher education community where everybody on the payroll is responsible for student learning... We are looking for better ways to better integrate our housekeepers into the community. Because they're also partners in our teaching and learning. As I'm sure you know... a housekeeper in a residence hall does affect learning. I think student affairs could be a model for the

rest of the campus. Does that housekeeper in the classroom building have that same team approach? Housekeepers in most residence life operations are part of the team.

As a student affairs professional, he perceived his role was to incorporate multiple constituencies into developing a stronger sense of community and to set the pace on campus to establish an expended notion of campus community.

Not only did these SAEs perceive themselves as charged with building campus community, but some of them perceived themselves as a part of a community of fellow SAEs across campus and within the student affairs profession. They received that fellow SAEs would support their efforts at building campus community and could serve as resources when problems arose. A female administrator explained this idea:

I think about the general community in terms of in the field. I think of my colleagues that are at different institutions. Some are in [my functional area]. Some are in upper-level administration...Our interactions have stemmed from graduate programs, or just being introduced by mentors or others. But I think about the individuals I communicate with via e-mail, or on the telephone, I see at conferences, I see at meetings, or sometimes I work with on presentations, other things. I look at that as professional support network. The interaction isn't as consistent in other communities, but it's still there in terms of being supportive and being a resource for me. Whether I need to talk to them about student affairs things, or whether it's about the administration, at other institutions.

Other administrators perceived co-workers and other staff members as important to their understanding of campus community. This "professional support network" assisted them in feeling a part of the campus community and therefore more invested in that community.

Impact of size on quality of campus community. Half of the participants felt that the fewer the people involved in any given community the stronger, more fulfilling the

campus community. Most of the participants mentioning this idea worked at smaller institutions.

A male participant from a small institution was convinced that small group structures were the only option for developing campus community. He stated, “I’ve always been sold on the notion that we will always be in groups. And the smaller the group, the greater the likelihood of community. And that community is intentional.” This participant also referenced that in this age of globalization, small group structures were disappearing. Other respondents indicated that smaller college campuses were more conducive to campus community because less bureaucracy existed, and there were fewer layers between administrators and students. Additionally, smaller campuses, liberal arts institutions in particular, offered an interdisciplinary approach to learning which could fuse academic and student life initiatives. Campus community, in these SAEs’ perspectives, was more organic at smaller institutions.

Impact of fragmentation on campus community. Five SAEs in this study expressed concern about the effects of fragmentation on campus community. While talking about different sources of fragmentation, they were fearful of the divisive effects of fragmentation to community. Participants noted that communities could frequently exclude, eliminate, and ignore others who were outside of a given community. By their nature, communities are limited to those who share a common interest or value. Two participants who commented about fragmentation came from research one institutions. Diversity in these administrators’ minds could both build and restrict communities.

Greek Life was mentioned as fragmenting communities on campus.

Fragmentation in this regard was viewed as a threat to community. If administrators could not address different sub-cultures on their campuses, such as Greek Life, they felt the sense of community would diminish on campus. If too much fragmentation occurred on campus, they perceived it as a failure on their part to unite students by discovering or building common interests and goals. Fragmentation was also perceived as adversely impact students' ability to think creatively and include others in community decision-making. For the participants fragmentation clearly posed dangers and threats to campus community and was a reality in higher education. One administrator observed, "With all of us trying to work together...to solve issues, sometimes those separations in our communities....I think those put shackles on us a lot in terms of creativity and finding solutions."

Relationship between campus community and surrounding community. Four participants expressed a desire to include the surrounding community into their understanding of the campus community. In fact, they perceived that campus community could be improved if surrounding communities were included more frequently in conversations of campus community. One participant even explained how she felt responsible for familiarizing herself with community resources in order to be a greater support for her students. When students needed information about local resources, this administrator felt as if she should know this since it could help her students to feel more connected to the campus and then to the surrounding community.

A sense of obligation to the surrounding community entered some administrator's dialogue about this subject. One male participant expressed a strong desire to include surrounding areas in his formulation of campus community:

I think we create our own world on the hill, literally, figuratively, symbolically, but really literally. Particularly as a land-grant institution, you know these institutions have been given the unique charge of meeting the needs to people across the state or the commonwealth, at various levels. But clearly we are viewed as a research institution, we seem focus on that, which is good. But even in that context we still need to act with a lot more with the grassroots issues and efforts. There are things happening daily in the community, that the college can play a role in supplying what is the intellectual power, economic power, political power to influence policies and issues. I think in a way it would enrich the average citizen.

In his words, being connected to surrounding community helps students to advance to "higher level thinking." He desired students to make connections between programming, academics, and surrounding community issues. When this happened, a sense of campus community could be significantly improved.

Conflict between individuality and community. Four participants conveyed their realization that there is an element of individual sacrifice associated with being in a community. Since only four administrators—at least one from each institution—revealed a concern about self-sacrifice in communities, this theme cannot be considered overarching or prevalent theme. However, its presence in the study made it worth exploring in some detail.

Some administrators questioned whether or not a group of strong individuals could exist together in a community. A female participant noted that marketing in student affairs are frequently based around student self-interest fostering a mentality of

“what is in it for me.” She recognized the need to push students, and herself, to think beyond self when interacting within communities. Still, from another institution, a male administrator considered this characteristic of communities to be a central theme to his definition. Over his years of experience, he claimed to be “less me, more community.”

Community is where everybody's is looking out for each other...not the “me.” It's the “what's best for all of us.” We might have to make concessions, but it's not about me. It's about the community....The interest of the whole takes precedence over personal interest. In a university, community means how you can do the most good for the most people [and] not what's best for one individual. Although individualism is raked high in higher education. But if what we do for one individual isn't good for 50 people, we ought not be doing it.

He refers to an “individual/community dichotomy” that is inherent when discussing communities. Individuals must forgo an element of individuality in order to become part of a group making it even more difficult to teach Millennial students, often referred to as the special generation, about the virtue of community.

Interestingly, participants offered a view quite opposite of this “individual/community dichotomy.” Most administrators referred to communities as places that everyone could simply come and be who they wanted to be and be supported for it. However, in four SAEs' calculations, individuals usually found themselves giving up an element of individuality in an attempt to actively participate in any community.

Importance of social interaction within campus community. Four participants spoke to a different kind of community, a more social approach to higher education community. These SAEs placed greater value on protecting the social dimension of campus community and lesser value on academically-driven and focused community.

According to one male administrator, students want a place “where can they just go and hang out and see other students.” Another male administrator from a different institution said that college is one of the only places they live together, work together, and “sort of interact.” A female administrator discussed how informal communities shaped her understanding of community in higher education. At a place where she lived some years ago, a central post office existed where everyone had to come check mail. Because she lived above that post office, she knew almost everyone in the town. Her positive reflections revealed her enjoyment of the informal side to community. Later in her interview, she revealed her desire to be able to know administrators across campus. Those relationships “were very important” to her. Social connections and relationships proved to be of significant value to these participants. They felt that campus community benefited from a socially conducive environment in their views.

Question 3: Does their understanding of community and their perceptions of campus community guide the formulation and implementation of university policies, practices, and/or programs?

When this question was posed to SAEs, most of them paused to formulate a response. When participants responded, it seemed that perceptions and definitions of community had only a modest impact on policy, practice, and programming. Simple examples were usually offered, with only two exceptions. For example, one male administrator said that the community arose as a value when considering mission reevaluation and strategic planning. A female administrator mentioned that when formulating a policy about space reservation management, she questioned whether or not

the policy was fair and applicable to all student groups. Generally, however, understandings of community and perceptions of campus community did not significantly seem to impact day-to-day student affairs work.

Notable exceptions to this finding came from two administrators at the same institution. In one case, residence hall discipline levels had climbed at this institution. Her understanding of community seemingly impacted her intervention with students through the use of that school's "covenant." She explained this intervention.

Everybody will follow respect, scholarship, integrity... [E]very year when students come in they have to sign that they'll abide by this covenant. [L]ast year in the residence halls...we made it a [living] document. It was posted; we talked about it hall meetings....We try to instill in them as a community, scholarship comes first. Anything that comes interfering with someone else getting academics done is a problem. Obviously respecting each other and integrity [is important]... [We tried] to make it more of a community feel based around this covenant in the residence halls. As a result, students are turning in other students more for damages. We have less damage. Overall there's more of a respect in [the] building amongst each other. That for me has been a transformation of seeing a community work if they base it around a central idea...It's been wonderful!... It's a nice place to live now.

This community-based intervention urged students to take pride in their living space and resulted in a decrease in damages. This administrator called to students in the name of community, and they responded.

Faced with an alcohol problem on campus, a male administrator at the same institution reported that he had dialogued with the campus community.

Here on campus, we've had this discussion of really sort of cracking down on drinking on campus, alcohol on campus, where they can do that, what that would be like in terms of the social standpoint. There were a group of students

pushing back saying, “You are really trying to damage our community.” And we pushed back and said, “Should your community be built around your use of alcohol? Or should it be built on something more than that?” We think we have changed the culture such that alcohol is not such a large part of what being a college student here is about. Or the students have hidden it from us so that we don’t see it as much as we used it. Either way, I think it impacts the culture, the community. We seem to have a campus that is more about academic endeavors and being successful with that than about getting drunk two nights a week.

This administrator designed an intervention that forced students to consider what community meant to them. Again, in the name of community, this practice resulted in a more wholesome community.

It is also worth noting that all these SAEs from this institution mentioned an institutional focus on community. They indicated that “community is important” and “we talk about community a lot here.” This suggested that the institution strategically focused on community.

Additional Reflections

Qualitative methodology allows for outliers to be represented in the discussion. A few individual observations made by certain participants added meaningfully to the discussion of community. The three notions they contributed included: communities are made to be left; the importance of 3rd spaces; and the importance of minorities to community.

Communities are made to be left. One participant, coming from a background in clinical counseling, made it a point to comment on something quite outside of conventional thinking about communities. When the researcher asked him, “What is it

about some groups that make people want to come back,” he paused. His next comment explained his thought process:

I think one of the things about groups is that you don't keep coming back. For me, one of the differences between family and other groups, communities, is that with family you can't leave. Students do leave communities all the time. So I don't know that it's a given that people are going to continue to come back unless they continue to view the purpose and the values as worthwhile. And unless they continue to think they have something to contribute. I could list others. So I think, yeah, people do leave.

This SAE viewed communities as temporary entities that linked people with shared values and interests *at one point in time*. The other nine participants usually discussed strategies that would make students want to always come back to a specific community. This specific participant's perception of community helped to understand communities as temporary entities for people during certain periods of their lives. As a concept, community is fluid across space and time. Community is not necessarily a permanent structure. Rather, communities meet human needs at any given point in a human's life.

Importance of 3rd spaces. A male administrator recalled a book entitled *The Last of the Great Third Spaces* written to explain the idea of a space that was not home or work. In previous years, people may have found this place at church or at a park. The concept of a 3rd space forced people to think about the question: Where can people go to interact with each other and socialize? The participant reflected on the changing nature of how we define spaces:

[W]e got into this separation of everything...And we've pulled a lot of those 3rd places into our personal spaces. Now it's hard to find, or define, where the 3rd grade places anymore. People are more transient. People are more

separated and defined. We don't combine functions anymore.

He also referred to these places as “magnets” for people. People can work there. People can socialize there. It's a unique place that fosters a unique community, and he claimed it should appear more regularly on a college campus. To create “third space communities”, not academically rigorous communities, should be the goal of higher education community according to this participant. Campus community to him should be in terms of a third space where students can come together and be themselves.

Minority community importance to higher education. Appearing in only two interviews, a multicultural perspective was brought to the table. A female administrator working in minority student affairs noted that her office was there to provide a sense of community and further support for students of color on campus at a predominantly white institution. Her voice in this matter helped to put an image to this idea:

[It's about] the burden you bear [when students are put on the spot in terms of representing their race], and the pressure of dealing with stereotypes, and trying to disband them. And trying to get them to understand what their own personal identity is. I think there are several factors that work against our students in terms of empowering them and having a sense that they're not empowered in this setting. What we do is try to help them really process that and to empower them through various programs and services. [It's about] getting them to talk about those experiences. A lot of times they'll experience something individually, but not have a chance to process that.

This account reminded the researcher about special populations in higher education and the challenges faced by these populations. Further, an understanding of community is not complete without taking into account all voices in that community. Various members of any community face special challenges that are not known and understood by all

members in a community. This quote reminds those involved with communities that invisible struggles and battles influence what kind of experience one encounters within a community. If these populations are not taken into account, communities will be in danger of not providing supportive environments for everyone involved in that community.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Discussion, and Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to understand how student affairs educators (SAEs) perceive “community” on campus. Specifically, this study was designed to explore SAEs perceptions of campus community and how such perceptions influence their work with students. Three central questions guided the research:

1. What does the concept of “community” mean to SAEs?
2. How do SAEs perceive campus community?
3. How does their understanding of community and their perceptions of campus community guide the formulation and implementation of university policies, practices, and/or programs?

To answer these research questions, ten in-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted with SAEs from three institutions across the southeast. This chapter summarizes key findings from the study. Then, the researcher revisits Boyer’s community framework to explore the congruence of participants’ responses to that framework. Findings are discussed in terms of their cohesion with or contradiction of existing literature, including unanticipated or surprising findings. Several conclusions will be drawn about the notion of “community” in higher education based on findings. Finally, several implications for policy, practice, and future research are proposed to close the study.

Summary of findings

The findings of this study fall into three sections consistent with the research questions. First, a common definition emerged that was generally held by SAEs in this study: community is a multi-faceted entity that usually unites groups of people by similar interests, values, or ideals. These groups of people generally collaborate to accomplish a task or to create a special feeling of support and commonality.

Second, eight themes emerged as factors that SAEs were concerned about that could either inhibit or enhance campus community. These included:

- *Globalization, fueled by technology, threatened traditional communities;*
- *Negative experiences were important to the development of campus community;*
- *Student affairs professionals shared a special community which includes an obligation to foster a sense of campus community;*
- *Size impacted the quality of a campus community;*
- *Fragmentation had potential to negatively impact campus communities;*
- *SAEs wanted to include surrounding communities into campus communities;*
- *A dichotomy existed between individualism and community; and*
- *Social interaction was important to developing campus community.*

Finally, perceptions and definitions of community only marginally impacted SAEs' policies, practices, and programs. Only two participants from the same institution revealed a substantial influence of community on daily work as an administrator.

Boyer's framework: Its relevance to findings

In every interview, traces of Boyer's framework were evident. There were only four cases in which one dimension was overlooked in SAEs' definitions or understandings of community. However, it should be noted that participants spoke about community in a different way than Boyer. Boyer's framework posited six ideals of community that could be used by institutions to create a so-called "campus compact" that could guide "day-to-day decision-making on campus (Boyer, 1990, p. 7). Participants generally spoke about these concepts without knowing it, casually weaving them into conversations about community, campus community, and day-to-day work. Only two participants directly cited Boyer's six principles. The next section outlines each of Boyer's conceptualizations of community and gives an overview of how each was manifested itself in the participants' understandings of community and perceptions of campus community.

Purposeful. To the SAEs in this study, purposeful communities usually included protecting the academic environment to ensure that students were able to learn lessons from their communities. Several statements were made that evidenced a dedication to communities having a purpose. In this case, one purpose of communities within higher education was academic life. In line with Boyer's original meaning of purposeful communities, SAEs in this study acknowledged the importance of academic and intellectual purposes to campus community environments.

Open. Every SAE interviewed perceived open communication, respect for ideas, or an opportunity for dialogue as instrumental for higher education communities. In the

spirit of Boyer, participants valued such things as honest and open communication where voices of dissension were accepted as standard procedure. It was clear that many respondents valued open communities in which individuals felt mutual respect and listened to by others. Other professionals stressed the importance of dialogue and feedback within the community. They felt that students should always be allowed to offer their suggestions of how to improve communities. This idea epitomized Boyer's pillar of an open community where free speech is protected.

Just. Boyer placed high value on a just community, "a place where the sacredness of the person is honored and where diversity is aggressively pursued" (Boyer, 1990, p. 7). Some administrators were explicit about the value they attached to diversity. To some SAEs, community depended upon all members of the community being of equal importance.

However, many administrators varied in their explanations of the importance of a just community. Though the SAEs conceptualized a just community in different ways, it seemed clear that diversity and individuality were important to their understanding of community. Boyer's discussion of a just community involved discussions about racial tensions, prejudice, tolerance, and similar groups of students coming together. Diversity was another dimension of higher education communities. Two SAEs specifically described the importance of having diverse groups of students involved and invested in the campus community. Without diverse perspectives, communities could not reflect the entire student body. A natural link existed between Boyer's just community and a dimension mentioned by participants in this study.

Disciplined. Among the participants, consensus formed around the idea of responsibility, accountability, and behavior management's impact on community. Boyer linked these principles together in his pillar of a disciplined community. Supporting this idea, eight of the ten SAEs made several observations about campus discipline, policy enforcement, and community responsibility. Community accountability also emerged in administrators' discussions. According to participants, members of a community should always feel a strong sense of duty to fellow community partners. Boyer called for a community that strongly adhered to community governance procedures in the name of the common good. SAEs appeared to be concerned with the same interpretation of a disciplined community where students are held accountable to their fellow members in the attempt to bring integrity and loyalty to the campus community.

Caring. Perhaps the most widely agreed upon dimension of Boyer's framework, a caring community, proved to be essential to SAEs conception of campus community. In this area, SAEs referred to a sense of belonging, common interests, service to others, relationships, and support. Administrators hoped that higher education communities fostered a supportive environment where people could generally have a warm and positive experience. Sometimes administrators recalled their personal responsibility for ensuring this feeling for students, while others simply noted this pillar's importance for a healthy community.

A sense of community within the higher education work environment was just as important to some administrators. They wanted to be familiar and friendly with co-workers to be able to get tasks done in some kind of pleasant fashion. Boyer envisioned a

community in higher education comprised of supportive groups that essentially personalized the community for all higher education community stakeholders—faculty, staff, and students. Generally, SAEs perceived communities to be places where people could go for support and relationship.

Celebrative. SAEs in this study had the least to say about Boyer’s final pillar of community, a celebrative community. Though participants had little to say, this dimension of community still was represented with little detail. Some SAEs directly mentioned having a sense of community at events like homecoming, division-wide celebrations, and sporting events. From his publication, Boyer’s idea of a celebrative community included the value of institutional history derived from events, stories, and rituals. These dimensions help to develop allegiance among those involved in that community. However, SAEs understandings of a celebrative community seemed more surface-level than in that these events were seen as simply giving students a common experience on which to draw. Celebrative communities to these participants seemed to be less valued than other elements of community.

Other observations about Boyer. As mentioned, only two administrators directly mentioned Boyer’s six principles of community. Interestingly, Boyer’s framework remains one of the only frameworks of community within higher education.

Finally, since Boyer’s six principles were generally found laced throughout SAEs’ perceptions of community and campus community, it would be fair to take his framework as in line with student affairs’ general understanding of community.

However, the framework did not prove to be a comprehensive tool to describe higher education community, as many emerging notions fell outside Boyer's framework.

Discussion

To make the study relevant to existing literature, this section will link this study's findings to existing literature in two ways: (1) findings that were in line with existing research and literature and (2) findings that were not in line with existing research and literature.

Findings in line with existing research and literature. Generally, findings seemed consistent with existing research and literature. Laying a groundwork for community studies outside of higher education, Etzioni referred to some communities as being communities bound together by crisis (1996). That is, at times, communities need some sort of crisis to survive. Several administrators echoed Etzioni's idea of community speaking about negative experiences causing community. Mentions of student death and controversial institutional administrative decisions pointed to "crises" that could occur on a college campus that could unique moments in which students, faculty, staff, and surrounding community members affiliated with certain colleges and universities could join together to support each other. Perhaps conflict could serve as an essential ingredient to a healthy community.

Astin's comments were well-reflected in administrators' reflections and perceptions of community (1993). Specifically, during a speech offered as a keynote address on a college campus, he recalled three unfortunate factors associated with contemporary higher education students and their understanding of community:

materialism, individualism, and competitiveness. While materialism and competitiveness were not directly mentioned in interviews, traces of individualism were laced throughout various interviews. Some SAEs expressed a sincere concern for the state of community on campus and with higher education. To some SAEs, students were not connecting with each other and the general campus community as much as they perceived them to do so in the past. Globalization and technology appeared to be driving forces in this disconnected idea of community. Though Astin delivered his speech fourteen years ago, his concern for these three concepts lingers in SAEs' perceptions and definitions of community.

Further, comments by Astin posited that students who infrequently socialize are less likely to feel a sense of community on campus and therefore to be disconnected from it. Many administrators in this study described communities as places where students could come together and interact, and emphasized "the importance of social interaction in campus communities." Perhaps the best example of this concept was expressed by the participant who valued "3rd spaces," environments where campus community could be fostered. This administrator emphasized social dimensions of community and deemphasized intellectually purposeful communities as unimportant to student success and personal satisfaction in higher education. Astin hit the proverbial nail on the head with his observations about social interaction within communities. Cheng (2003) also discussed students' needs to have a quality social life on campus in order to feel a sense of community. Positive socialization and social interaction appeared to be a pillar of community within higher education and student affairs.

Sarason's (1974) concept of a psychological sense of community included: "the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure" (p.157). Results of the study showed interdependence and interconnection as an emerging theme in SAEs' conversations about community in terms of globalization and collaboration. SAEs in this study appeared to perceive communities as places where people are connected and work together under a set of shared values and goals. This idea was reflected in how they perceived their work on campus, which frequently required them to work with other departments, students, and administrators. Most understood students as connected to each other by higher education—a unique period of any person's life. Additionally, some SAEs understood it as their role to educate students about how to be effective members of various communities. Clearly collaboration, interdependence, and globalization were manifested in these administrators' perceptions of community.

Literature also directly addressed using community-based frameworks to manage discipline-related situations. Several professionals in residence life/housing perceived policy violations as violations of the entire community. Spitzberg and Thorndike (1992), authors who worked alongside Boyer in producing the *Campus Life* document, specifically wrote a chapter in their book on handling alcohol-related situations. Two administrators from the same institution discussed handling alcohol-related incidents using a community paradigm where violations are perceived to be against the entire community. Since one stated research question related to the extent to which community

impacted practices carried out by SAEs, and two administrators explicitly indicated that community did impact their practices, these findings appeared to be in line with existing literature.

Finally, it was clear that Boyer's *Campus Life* publication, which provided the community framework under investigation, was well-represented in administrator's thoughts about community in student affairs. For all intents and purposes, Boyer's framework could be the most comprehensive and accepted framework for community in higher education.

Findings unconnected to existing research and literature. Existing literature and research painted a picture suggesting that applications of community-related interventions within student affairs were endless (Brown, Brown, & Littleton, 2002; Herbst & Malaney, 1999; Kane & Croft, 2000; Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Pettitt & Kruttsch, 2004; Rezmierski, 1994; Tinto, 1993b, 1997, 1998). However, research revealed few grounded examples of how community impacted interventions. Given the value placed on community by student affairs, it would be reasonable to expect more of a theory-to-practice approach to community in student affairs.

In the same vein, Boyer (1990), Spitzberg and Thorndike (1992), and McDonald (2002) all mentioned instances of the community's impact on restructuring and refocusing of student affairs divisions around the idea of community. However, this idea was only mentioned twice in the study. In their positions, the participants could impact division-wide planning, yet hardly any mention of community impacting division-wide planning emerged from the interviews. From the literature, it seemed to be a favorable

and realistic application of community within student affairs. However, the findings of this study did not support this application.

Perhaps the largest disconnect between results and the existing literature was the relationship between surrounding communities and student affairs. Several student affairs administrators had at least a desire to connect themselves and their students with surrounding community issues and groups. Hardly any literature explored this idea or practices for how student affairs could or should interact with society at large.

Speculations and general impressions. When reflecting about Boyer's *Campus Life* public publication, one could gain a dismal sense of campus community. After all, his research approached the study of campus community from a perspective of asking university presidents and chief student affairs officers about what they thought what was wrong with it. The data used by the Carnegie Foundation asked questions such as "Which of the following would improve campus life" and "Out of the following, do you think this problem has gotten worse, stayed about the same, became less of a problem, or are no longer a problem?" The six pillars of community almost always addressed problems faced by presidents and chief student affairs officers. For example, since racial harassment was a problem identified by these populations, the authors recommended that all institutions should model a just community that celebrates diversity. Also, since some students have a shallow understanding of academic life, this group recommended that higher education environments be more academically purposeful.

That being said, overall impressions about community were not dismal among the study participants. Certainly some administrators worried that community on campus

was not as strong as in previous years, but the impression was not of a declining state of campus community. Administrators frequently described campus community as a positive thing that certainly faced challenges, but campus community was not faced with terrible circumstances that required immediate attention. Contrary to Boyer's original dismal data on campus community, this study revealed generally favorable perceptions of campus community.

In terms of fragmentation, about which a number of participants spoke, a question comes to mind: Do SAEs and the university system enable fragmentation of communities in higher education? Student organizations are perhaps the manifestations of fragmentation in student affairs. SAEs constantly encourage students to get involved in groups narrowly tailored to student interests. Asian Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and many other ethnic students have student groups that connect similar students. Could such fragmentation divide higher education instead of unite it? Given the number of separate groups in higher education, how many collaborative bodies exist? Student Government Associations exist to unite student groups, but Student Government Associations can sometimes face frustration and cynicism by the average students because of its bureaucratic nature. Large universities, which often educate most of society's students, are often decentralized organizations that struggle to communicate effectively with its various divisions. Does the field of higher education and student affairs enable fragmentation of communities?

In general, SAEs frequently would pause to collect their thoughts about community. Admittedly, the study required participants to put language to a concept that

can be perceived to be ambiguous. One administrator commented, “I don’t even know if I can define community.” Another administrator simply said, “It’s hard to put words on,” referencing that community was just a feeling that one felt. That same administrator commented at the end of the interview, “You made me think hard today!” Again, given the value placed on community in student affairs, it seemed reasonable to anticipate that SAEs would have an operational definition of community that would be put to work daily. In reality, it could be that administrators “muddle through” their understandings of community without a conscious understanding of the term.

Two particular interviews stood out for different reasons. First, an administrator who was not originally selected for the study provided insight into dimension of community which was completely unanticipated. After completing an interview at one institution, an administrator pulled the researcher aside and asked the composition of interviewees. After disclosing this information, the administrator said in a disappointed tone, “You don’t have any African American perspectives represented. You need that in your study.” When she pointed me to an additional participant, she pointed me to a previously unheard voice in conversations about community in student affairs.

This administrator’s perspective emphasized the cultural education of African American students in her perspective on community. More broadly, her role as a student affairs administrator included service and empowerment to minority students with an emphasis on African Americans. Her association with community seemed inherently linked to culture and ethnicity as a means of educating students about heritage and

identity. This non-traditional perspective has not historically been well-articulated in the student affairs community literature.

Another interview stuck out for a different reason. One administrator seemed to be on a different plane of thinking about community; to have a higher vision. Though this contributor mentioned Boyer's six principles least of all participants, he seemed to provide a more sophisticated, inspiring vision of community. If community perceptions were a poker game, the participant saw Boyer's community and raised him a sense of vision.

This administrator's perceptions of community grew from a time in his life when he was beginning to start a family. He moved to a neighborhood filled with many people who found themselves in a situation similar to as him and his wife—newly married and looking to have children. When they began to have children, the neighborhood started a co-op for child care: "If you needed to go shopping, and didn't want to take your kids, you could leave them with other people on the street. So, if you had 2 kids, and were gone for 2 hours, you would owe the co-op 4 hours...[T]hey kept this updated roster. You could look...and see who owed time." He continued to say, "[T]hat's a real good community that you'd like people to be able to have in neighborhood and relationships with each other, and people knowing each other and having fun." His vision of community could be boiled down to three pillars: a balance between individual and community, redefinition of 3rd spaces in communities, and re-establishing responsibility in community. As simplistic as this may seem, this perception could serve as its own community framework for higher education.

Perhaps the researcher anticipated hearing more visionary and high-level perceptions of community among SAEs. The previously mentioned participant, though, proved to be the only administrator with a sophisticated yet practical definition and perception of community. Even this administrator's perception of campus community—3rd spaces—seemed more thought-provoking and visionary.

Admittedly, a prior relationship had been formed with this participant, as he worked at the researcher's home institution. It could be entirely possible that this previously established working relationship colored the analysis to an extent that this contribution could be over-emphasized in this discussion. Conceivably, since the researcher greatly respected this participant, his perceptions may have seemed more personally relevant to the researcher. This could have made the researcher think more highly of his responses and perceptions. Qualitative research calls for candor about pre-existing biases in the research process; therefore I share this information to be open with readers.

Conclusions

Two fundamental conclusions can be drawn from this research:

- *SAES are concerned about community and have a general desire to protect the idea of community.* SAEs in this study generally reported community as being a unifying concept that brings people together to accomplish a task. Those within communities often support members within a certain group in hopes of fostering respect. SAEs also identified several factors that could inhibit and enhance

campus community. These factors lead the researcher to conclude that SAEs hope to guard the idea of community as a pillar of the profession.

- *SAEs should be training students to live in a community outside of higher education, but it is unclear the extent to which they understand this expectation.*

Higher education serves as a microcosm for students. SAEs should be fostering a “training ground” for students to live in a community beyond higher education.

Student affairs as a profession claims to care about community and its relationship to society, and not simply campus community. However, most participants in this study discussed community in terms of the campus community. Virtually no participants discussed their obligation to train students about living in community outside of higher education.

Implications and recommendations

Research should always be done in the name of putting findings to work, so this section could perhaps be the most critical to this research document. Implications for policy, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research are provided in this section.

Implications for policy. Conceivably the most applicable policy recommendation is through traditional functional areas of student affairs handling discipline. Moving from a student discipline paradigm to a community paradigm could help frame policy violation in terms of violating the community, as noted by a male participant in this study. For the administrators who mentioned this applicable and tangible policy change, this shift proved to be successful in decreasing the amount of damages or framing the

“discipline” in a less harsh fashion. Educational moments could come more frequently when using a community paradigm since students could feel more socially pressured to adhere to community standards.

This study could also help influence academic policy at the graduate level. Graduate preparatory programs in student affairs could benefit from discussing personal philosophies and operational definitions of community. By doing this, it could help graduate students to enter the field with a true value for the community ideal within higher education. Perhaps various theories of community could be presented, and students would struggle with putting those theories into practice. Having community engrained into student affairs graduate-level curriculum could help to confirm the profession’s commitment to this valued concept.

Implications for practice. On a more informal basis, SAEs help guide public programming which spills over into the surrounding community. Though programming does not constitute formal “town gown” relations, SAEs could feasibly take into consideration surrounding community needs as well as student needs to guide program formulation. SAEs could serve as a voice to students asking, “How could this program fit in with what our community demands in terms of programming?” This question should be asked because higher education institutions should have a responsibility to the surrounding community. When factoring in the surrounding community, this could have a positive impact on campus community and general sense of community on campus by fostering a sense of inclusion. If all members of the community who are impacted by

higher education—students, faculty, staff, and the surrounding community—were considered in programming decisions, the sense of community could become stronger.

As an example, when a student leader plans a program through student activities, it would be proactive for someone to assess what issues the surrounding community has been facing in previous months. If the service economy is on the upswing in a local community, perhaps students might think to invite a speaker on how to foster growth of a more service-based economy. This simple practice might send a strong message of consideration to the surrounding community.

In terms of fragmentation, it might be a useful practice to encourage more collaborative meetings among student groups. As mentioned earlier in the discussion, many student organizations exist to meet the needs of a diverse student body. However, rarely does any coordination exist between different groups except in terms of SGA. Why could not certain groups sit down together at least once or twice per semester to coordinate programming efforts? On a similar note, why could not student affairs groups meet with academic professionals to coordinate programming? One male administrator mentioned a desire to have a more coordinated and cohesive approach to programming to ensure that student affairs can supplement and reinforce academic-related concepts. These efforts could perhaps become more organic if various groups on campus communicated with each other.

Student leaders could be trained on how to understand their role in community. As part of student leadership training, it could be useful to include some form of community awareness and assessment. This is important, again, because students should

be learning how to live in a community after leaving higher education. Students should understand how to assess their role within a community and how to carry out that role through interactions and programming. For example, if a student leader is being trained on his/her expectations for a position, it might be helpful to articulate a responsibility to various communities and how to go about addressing those communities when planning future events. If this idea is not communicated to students, it would be less likely that students understand their responsibility on a more broad scale. Training could be a first step in helping students understand their role in any community. This training could be an important first step in civically engaging students in examining what their role will be once leaving higher education.

Many universities are unveiling “principles of community” in light of emerging tensions on campus (e.g. “Virginia Tech Principles of Community,” 2005). These principles are formal statements that share university expectations to guide behavior and decision making. Why could the same not be done for student affairs as a profession? Community, as a principle and as an expectation, is not well-discussed in student affairs professional associations. That is, formal “principles of community” do not exist for the student affairs profession despite an espoused commitment by the profession to the idea of community. In *Learning Reconsidered* community is mentioned, but details about community are lacking. The field of student affairs ought to have formal guiding “principles of community” in an attempt to steer professionals in terms of guiding everyday practice.

Recommendations for future research. Boyer's (1990) research about community remains the single most comprehensive work about community in the field of higher education. More comprehensive research ought be conducted to examine the current relevance of his research. This study revealed seven themes that fell outside of Boyer's six principles. Could there be more if this study was expanded? His study should be expanded to a broader collection of higher education stakeholders—all levels of student affairs professionals, students, faculty, and community members. Different constituents might have unique perceptions of community in higher education. Expanding community studies in higher education could shed light on what community means to these stakeholders.

Boyer's framework should be tested to examine its relevance. Since some emerging themes found in this study related to a changing, more diverse society (i.e. globalization, fragmentation), perhaps Boyer's framework is out of date. Also, Boyer's framework should be tested for its applicability to all student affairs officers, including entry-level professionals. This population has been left out of current research about higher education community. It would be interesting to see whether or not entry-level SAEs would have differing perceptions of community.

Two voices are missing in terms of community studies in higher education: faculty members and surrounding community members. First, it is unclear the extent to which faculty members impact the campus community and therefore the overall sense of community within higher education. If SAEs understood faculty's perceived role in community on campus, this information could be used by practitioners in student affairs

to steer their relationship with faculty members. Also, this information could help SAEs to coordinate programming with the academic side of campus. It is equally unclear how surrounding community member perceive higher education communities. Aside from higher education in general, do surrounding community members know about the role of student affairs on a campus?

Additionally, Boyer's study approached community in a quantitative fashion. In other words, large data sets were examined to produce these six principles. Not belittling quantitative research, but perhaps some factors were overlooked in the Carnegie Foundation's survey instrument. The study of community in higher education needs more attention from both a qualitative perspective as well as a quantitative perspective.

As referenced earlier, student affairs has been left out of the discussion of "town gown" relationships. Asking SAEs about their perceptions and hopes for "town gown" relationships would be valuable to the body of knowledge within student affairs. What do student affairs professionals think about surrounding communities? Do they have any opinions about what university public relations should look like? These questions are not represented in mainstream research in student affairs.

Also, research paying particular attention to minority populations in higher education should be considered. Community means various things to various groups of people. Minority groups share a special connection—a culture of societal misunderstanding, stereotyping, and in some cases, rejection. Minority populations should be asked how they perceive community. This perspective could easily be left out of mainstream research on community.

Future research about the congruence or disconnect between SAEs' and students' perceptions of community is needed. To what extent are these congruent? Since SAEs work alongside students and provide support to students, it would be helpful to know whether or not SAEs' perceptions of community match students' expectations and understandings of community. If SAE perceptions are not congruent with student perceptions of community, SAE-initiated programming and interventions could be ineffective for reaching students.

Finally, this study should be replicated and expanded. One administrator in this study claimed that it would be interesting to see the results of a nation-wide study done about understandings of community in different areas of the country. Perhaps results would not change much, but it would be fascinating to examine how cultures and backgrounds of people from diverse geographical backgrounds perceive community in their respective higher education institutions. Community is not well-understood by student affairs researchers, and any further research to fill gaps in the community literature should be conducted.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

The Meaning of Community: Exploring Views of Student Affairs Officers

1. Please define or describe “community” in your own words as it pertains to your career. People have different understanding of community. Would you share with me your understanding of community? Please define or describe “community” in your own words. As a follow-up: What about that notion (community) in a work context?
2. What factors or experiences, in your professional or personal work life, contributed your understanding of community? How did you come to your understanding of community?
3. Think about your day-to-day work as an administrator. How does this definition or your understanding of community influence the policies and programs you administer on a day-to-day basis? (That is, how is your understanding of community reflected in your work with students?)
4. How have your experiences with students shaped, impacted, and/or developed your understanding of community?
5. Has your definition of community changed over time? And, if so, how has your definition of “community” changed over the years you have worked in a higher education environment?

If the administrator/educator does not mention the “scope” of a community, I plan to probe using the following question:

6. Give me an example of a time and place in which you experience community on campus.

APPENDIX B

Synonyms/ trigger words used in data analysis to determine the extent to which Boyer's framework influences student affairs professionals' definitions of community.

<u>Purposeful</u>	<u>Open</u>	<u>Just</u>
Academic goals	Expression	Diversity
Faculty	Civil/civility (of words)	Different/difference/variety
Learning	Freedom of speech	Access
Classroom/Class	Speech	Equality
Academic advising	Protest	Justice/social justice
Teaching/Teacher	Ideas	Fairness
Studying/study groups	Courtesy	Equal(ity of) opportunity
Education	Values	Mixture
Tutoring	Complaint	Unique
Schoolwork	Dialogue	Distinction/distinct
Exams/Tests	Discourse	Assortment/Array
Intellectual	Conversation	Affirmative action
Scholarly	Exchange of ideas	Support
Lecture(s)	Marketplace of ideas	Different places
Educational programming	Thoughts	Variation
Instruction/instructor	Consideration	Equity
Library	Listening	Prejudice/Prejudicial
Critical thinking	Reasoned discourse	Historically under-
Information	Communication	represented
Group work	Clarity of understanding	Minority
Course of study	Censorship	(enrollment/student
Idea exchange	Viewpoints	organizations)
Curriculum	Language	Economically deprived
Literacy	Respect	Race
Reading	Standards	Tension
Seminar(s)	Harassment	Inclusion/Inclusive
		Campus climate
		Heritage/traditions
		Gender
		Sexual harassment
		Tolerance
		Sensitivity/Sensitive

<u>Disciplined</u>	<u>Caring</u>	<u>Celebrative</u>
Campus policies	Well-being	Tradition
Judicial affairs	Service	Heritage
Policy enforcement	Care	Ritual
Alcohol/drugs	Worry	Habit
Discipline	Concern	Common experience
Control	Sensitive	Custom
Order	Aware	Practice/common practice
Authority	Insight/insightful	Legacy
Behavior management	Want the best	Celebrate/Celebrations
Restraint	We owe it to our students	Enjoy
Acting up	Like	Athletics
Policy violation	Fond/fondness	Founding
Obligation/commitment	Warm	History
Respect	High regard	Times past/olden times
Governance	Bothered	Shared experience
Common good	Love	Collective
Duty	Devoted	Cooperative
Procedures	Relate	Memories
Conduct (code of)	Affirm	Rites
Standards	Humane	Convocation
Responsibility	Social bonding	Orientation
Rules	Belonging	Events
Crime	Connect (ions/ing)	
Law enforcement	Family	
Vandalism	Loyalty	
Security/Safety	Group membership	
Regulations	Action	
Dishonesty	Community service	
"Civic dimensions of campus life"	Outreach	
	Giving	

APPENDIX C

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 2007

To: Dean of Students, University of Tennessee

From: Gavin Luter, Master's Candidate, University of Tennessee-Knoxville

I am conducting a research study about student affairs educators' perceptions and definitions of community within a higher education and student affairs setting. My data collection consists of interviews of two or three administrators who are charged with "building community" within higher education and student affairs.

I come to you asking for two or three student affairs educators who "build community" for your institution. Any administrator who experiences and builds community for your institution would be a perfect fit for my study. If you have any administrators in mind, please contact me via electronic mail, dluter@utk.edu.

This research is in partial fulfillment for the thesis requirement for the University of Tennessee-Knoxville's College Student Personnel graduate program. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. The thesis is under the direction of Dr. Terrell Strayhorn, Assistant Professor at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. If you have any questions about the integrity of the study, please contact him at (865) 974-6457.

I appreciate your consideration and hope to hear from you soon.

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent

The purpose of this study is to examine how student affairs educators (SAEs) define “community” in the context of their work. This is a qualitative study and hopes to have participants define “community” in their own words. Participants will be student affairs administrators at three higher education institutions: The University of Tennessee, Maryville College, and University of North Carolina-Asheville. Interviews will be given 3-5 administrators at each institution.

Procedures. If you agree to participate, you will agree to participate in an interview lasting between 30 minutes and one hour. Interviews will begin with collecting basic demographic information about participants and will continue with questions about community within their work. The purpose of this study is to understand perceptions of community and how this definition influences daily work of SAEs with students. Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed for research purposes only.

Risks. There are no major risks associated with participating in this study. If at any time you feel uncomfortable during the interview, please feel free to end the interview. If any other major problems persist after being interviewed, please contact the principle investigator to seek outlets for counseling.

Benefits. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant. However, the study will produce valuable information about the nature of community within higher education and student affairs workplaces. Also, this study will directly yield contributions to the growing body of literature about community in higher education.

Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality. Your interview will be held in strictest confidence. Tapes of interviews will be kept in the co-principle investigator’s office in A316 Claxton Addition at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Only members of the research team will have access to your interview. Interviews will be transcribed by the researcher at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Tapes will be destroyed in May 2007.

Compensation. There is no direct compensation for participating in this research study.

Participation. Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

Contact Information. If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Gavin Luter or Terrell L. Strayhorn, at A316 Claxton Addition, and 865-974-

6457. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Compliance Section of the Office of Research at (423) 974-3466.

Participant's Responsibilities. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

1. I will participate fully and candidly in the interview.
2. If at any time I feel uncomfortable during the interview, I will withdraw from the study. I understand there is no penalty for withdrawing.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____
Date _____

Investigator's signature _____
Date _____

APPENDIX E

ID #

Gender

Ethnic background

Highest degree achieved

Functional area in which you work

Years of experience/years in the field of student affairs

APPENDIX F: TABLES

Table 1: Demographic Comparison of Participants

<i>Survey Respondents</i>	<i>n</i>
Gender	
Female	5
Male	5
Race/Ethnicity	
White/Caucasian	7
Black/African-American	3
Years of Experience	
0-5	1
5-10	0
10-20	6
20+	3
Functional Area ¹	
Housing	3
Student Activities	4
Judicial Affairs	1
Leadership	1
Programs/Orientation	
Student Affairs	2
Minority/Multicultural	3
Student Affairs	
Outdoor Recreation	1

¹ Numbers may not add up to 10, as several administrators indicated several functional areas in which they work.

VITA

David Gavin Luter was born in Hampton, Virginia on August 23, 1983. He was raised in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia, having lived in Carrollton, Smithfield, Newport News, and Suffolk. Gavin attended grade school and junior high school at Nansemond Suffolk Academy, Kiln Creek Elementary, and Hines Middle. After attending Woodside High School in Newport News for two years, Gavin completed high school at Nansemond River High School in Suffolk.

Gavin continued his education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI&SU, commonly referred to as “Virginia Tech”) and graduated with a B.A. in public and urban affairs with a concentration in public and nonprofit management and a minor in sociology. From there, Gavin completed his M.S. in College Student Personnel at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville.

Gavin has accepted his first professional position with the Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. He will be working with civic education initiatives on campus.