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The Perceptions of Recent Business Graduates of The Transition Experience From The Collegiate Environment to The Work Environment

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THE PERCEPTIONS OF RECENT BUSINESS GRADUATES OF THE TRANSITION

EXPERIENCE FROM THE COLLEGIATE ENVIRONMENT TO THE WORK

ENVIRONMENT

by

Gloria Jean Davis

A dissertation submitted to the Doctoral Program Faculty in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Educational Leadership

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

Spring, 2010

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DEDICATION

I would like thank my friends and family who without their continued love and support this accomplishment would not have been possible. My husband Kenny, daughter Katrina, mother Christine, and other friends and family have reassured me and provided me with words of encouragement during my down times and celebrated with me at every milestone. I especially want to thank my Saturday study group, Cheresa, Janet, Pam, Sue, and Vicki. These ladies helped me to continue to work, even when I did not have the desire to do so. Last but most of all, I want to thank my chair, Dr. Elinor Scheirer, whose knowledge and wisdom ensured a quality piece of work. Her dedication went far beyond what is expected of a dissertation chair. Dr. Scheier, I thank you for your dedication and patience with me through this process.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study represents an examination of the perceptions of 18 recent business college graduates of their transition experiences from college to the workplace. The participant's ages ranged from 23 to 28 years including 4 males and 14 females of diverse racial and ethic groups. One-on-one, semi-structured, open-ended interviews were the primary method for data collection. Using excerpts from the participants' interviews, the data were examined and analyzed using content analysis (Patton, 2002) and educational criticism (Eisner, 1998). The data were organized into three main topics: the importance of organizational socialization, the complexity of mentoring in the workplace, and the continuation of young adult development. The findings include the newly hired graduates' feelings regarding the support received from educators and employers in their transition into the workplace, what should be done to assist them in the transition process, and their continued optimism about their futures with their employers and their desire to succeed.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Graduation from college is an exciting time for students and their families. For students who complete their four-year degree programs, there is a great sense of accomplishment, excitement, and relief. One assumption is that completion of a four-year college-degree program will lead seamlessly into a successful professional work life. Graduates from colleges of business understandably expect to move readily into appropriate positions that will provide entrée into successful career experiences. But, as with any change, anxiety comes with the transition of entering into the world of work. The present study examined the experiences of recent business graduates as they transitioned from college into the workplace.

Transition Experiences

Transitions occur throughout every adult's lifetime. For graduates entering the workplace for the first time, the transition from college to work is a major life change. Thus, the educational community responds to this challenge with thorough preparation for students who will later transition from college to the workplace.

To become a professional in many fields of study, completion of the four-year bachelor's degree program is only the beginning of a successful professional career. While transitioning from one environment to another, graduates face challenges in learning the new environment, learning the new job, and understanding the culture. Top-

performing companies also desire to retain their new hires in order to remain competitive (Dreher & Daugherty, 2001). Although transitions seem logical to expect as one moves from one setting to another, individuals who are experiencing transitions do not typically expect such challenges (Wood, 1995). Quite often, recent graduates from colleges of business experience difficulty in their first jobs upon graduation (Penttila, 2005). As a consequence, both employers and educators can have roles in facilitating the transition process. The literature describes partnership efforts and specific programs in both colleges and businesses that support graduates as they move to employment (Alliance for Management Education Task Force, 2006). The literature also points to efforts in some professions to meet graduates' needs for assistance during the transition from college to the workplace.

Successful efforts in facilitating students' transition process exist in several educational settings. Formal structures are in place to assist students in preparing for the actual work they will be performing upon graduation. The K-12 sector of public education, nursing education, and teacher education recognize the need for structured programs to assist students in their transition from the school environment to the work environment. The success within these programs indicates that other educational programs might also consider how to facilitate the transition of their students into the workplace.

Examples of Transition Experiences

An abundance of research exists regarding high school-to-college and high school-to-work transitions. There is a need to better prepare high school students for college. Some high schools have tried to meet this need by increasing the rigor of the

senior-year curriculum through college and pre-college options, enabling students to begin college studies before they graduate from high school (Bonesteel & Sperry, 2002). Many high school graduates do not attend college and therefore require some preparation for immediate entry to the workplace. Recognizing this need, educational leaders are helping to prepare graduates for the workplace through traditional programs such as Job Corps and trade schools. In addition, partnerships are forming between states and business leaders to raise academic standards and better prepare high school graduates for the workplace (Achieve, 2006).

Preparation programs in the nursing profession also include practical field experience as part of the college student's program of study. The review of the related literature discusses these experiences as an example of how the nursing profession has worked to provide a smooth transition experience for new nurses as they enter their work environment and the nursing profession.

Another profession that has developed formalized, structured programs to prepare graduates is teaching. Teachers are prepared to begin their chosen careers within a four-year program of study which includes internship and field experiences that take place in actual classroom settings. For these graduates, the path to success is clear due in part to the field experiences that are included as a part of the college experience. Success in the transition from college to the workplace is facilitated when experienced teachers mentor student teachers (Follo, 1999). Other efforts in teacher-education programs extend beyond the traditional four-year degree program and include intense relationships with local schools (Jones, 2002). These approaches to preparing teachers thus recognized that

field experiences are necessary during initial preparation and that initial preparation is not in itself enough for a smooth transition to a career.

Business Graduates

Once students complete the necessary coursework and graduate with the four-year college degree, they must face the transition into the day-to-day work of their chosen field. For some graduates, this process may be a relatively smooth transition due the preparation received during their educational experiences and because of the benefits from outside support. For example, some colleges and universities are partnering with business to provide internship opportunities for students. Across New England, colleges are entering into agreements to "commercialize faculty research" and contract out their strategic expertise. "Businesses, in turn, are providing scholarships and internships, funding university research programs (to the tune of more than $170 million annually in New England) and giving their execs time off to teach on campus" (Harney & Doan, 2003). Internship programs can also produce a pool of candidates for full time positions.

> The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) reports that a recent increase in internships reflects the fact that employers are using such formal programs to test out potential hires. NACE estimates that roughly 70 percent in the Northeast led to fulltime job offers in 2008. About three-quarters of those job offers were accepted, so a little more than half of all internships resulted in full-time employment last year. NACE also found that just over 90 percent of new recruits at firms with formal internships program were still employed after one year, compared with only 60 percent of new recruits at firms without a formal program. (Sasser, 2009, p. 2-3)

These types of efforts assist students in making their transition into the workplace easier. However, other students may need systematic support in meeting the demands of those transitions. In spite of the efforts of American businesses and colleges to provide opportunities for student internships, "most observers would agree that the potential for

collaboration has not been maximized (Alliance for Management Education Task Force, 2006, p. 8).

Business graduates may not be sure of the directions they will take upon graduation. These graduates who have not majored in a specialized field, such as accounting, finance, marketing, or transportation and logistics, face even more challenges regarding their career paths. The years of education no doubt open doors to opportunities in the business world, but, due to the generalized nature of a degree in business administration, many graduates do not receive specific training in any one discipline. Transitions may be more challenging for graduates who possess no specific licenses and the accompanying preparation for particular work responsibilities. Teaching, nursing, and some business professions such as accounting and finance require licensure or certification to work. On the other hand, graduates with a business administration or general business degree will, in many cases, enter the workforce via entry-level jobs due to lack of experience in a particular area. This entry-level work serves as the beginning of the transition period into the workplace.

Much information is available regarding the number of new hires who terminate their employment during the first year. "Newly hired employees decide whether or not to stay with their employer within the first six months of their employment (Wright, 2008, ¶ 9). Indeed, "As many as 4 percent of new employees leave their new jobs after a disastrous first day" (Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2009, p. 2). Studies also exist regarding the factors that may relate to less-than-satisfactory experiences in beginning business careers. However, educational leaders and business

organizations know less about what recent graduates experience as they move to the workplace to determine what might help them as they begin their business careers.

The perspectives of the graduates themselves might inform faculty in business colleges and leaders in business organizations so that these graduates might better prepare themselves for their business careers. New hires' perceptions of their transitions may benefit educators as they examine the college courses and experiences found to be most valuable as they entered the workplace. Learning how the new hires felt about their orientation experiences, the support they received, and recommendations they might offer may benefit employers of new business graduates. Therefore, learning new information about these business graduates might help both educators and employers assist in the transition process as these graduates begin their professional careers.

As the success rate of college graduates transitioning into the workplace might increase, college enrollment might also increase. Businesses would continue to recruit from colleges and universities if they found that the students were prepared not only for the workplace but also for the transition process.

The perspectives of the recent graduates may therefore benefit the efforts of colleges to provide richer curricula and the efforts of businesses to support the transition of new hires into the workplace. The success of both the graduates and the businesses in which they work may thus be enhanced. The success of the business graduates will benefit the organization, making it more successful and profitable, in addition to building the confidence of the new hire.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the present study was to explore the perceptions of recent graduates majoring in general business administration of the transition experience from the collegiate environment to the work environment. Specifically, the research question investigated the following question: What are the perceptions of recent business graduates of their transition experience from college to the workplace? Thus, the researcher explored a phenomenon that had not been fully reported in the literature (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). In so doing, the researcher udescribed aspects of the cultural and social transition from college campus to the workplace in terms of how new hires themselves understood the process. Because of its emphasis on exploring a topic from the standpoint of participants in order to seek understanding, the study was a qualitative research endeavor.

Rationale for the Study

The rationale for the present study related to the desire of business leaders to attract and retain business graduates. Business leaders are concerned with retaining employees and reducing turnover. Corporations are challenged with managing three generations of employees at once, each with differences in values, expectations, and attitudes (Kyles, 2006). The participants in the present study are the youngest of the generations. Business leaders must learn how best to manage this group of employees in order to retain them as an important part of a successful workforce. What these new hires perceive about their transition experiences may assist businesses both in retaining them and in developing their skills to benefit the organizations.

In addition, the study relates to the challenges facing business colleges in meeting student needs. For example, colleges must acknowledge the differences between the new wave of Millennial students in higher education and those students who have preceded them. Understanding how these students see the world as they enter the workforce can help faculty and administrators provide appropriate learning opportunities (Denham & Gadbow, 2002). Specifically, understanding how these recent graduates perceive their transitions into the workplace may enable faculty to modify the college curriculum to support this process more effectively.

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

Business Degree – a business degree defined as the culmination of a four-year curriculum covering the broad range of topics related to administration, finance, accounting, ethics, and policy.

College of Business – a University organization that maintains a program focusing on obtaining an undergraduate business degree. A school offering instruction in business administration (*Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 1996, p. 189).

Culture - the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and so on of a people or group, that are transferred, communicated, or passed along as in or to succeeding generations (*Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 1996, p. 337). The culture of a group is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group uses to solve problems (Schein, 1993).

Mentoring – the act of teaching or coaching. (*Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 1996, p. 848). For the purpose of the present study, the focus is on mentoring in the workplace, specifically, formal mentoring programs. In the workplace, the mentor works with an individual in a one-to-one relationship, paired usually by the human

resources department and designed to foster organizational goals and to help new employees become acclimated to the workplace culture while learning from experienced practitioners.

Millennial Generation – Also known as generation Y or the Millennials, those individuals born between the years 1980-2000 (Denham & Gadbow, 2002). This generation is also described as the net generation, the digital generation, and the echo boom generation (Gardner & Eng, 2005).

New Hire – any employee new to a position within the organization (Feldman & Brett, 1983, p. 258), especially someone entering the workplace as a full-time employee for the first time following graduation from a business program.

School-to-Work (STW) Programs – programs designed to assist secondary students in their transition to employment. Generally, training occurs in work-study programs during the junior and senior years of high school. The term also refers to activities, experiences, and opportunities that prepare students for the world of work, such as youth apprenticeships, mentoring, internships, job-shadowing, career exploration, and the integration of academic and vocational curriculum (Bonds, 2003, p. 38).

Socialization - the influence of an organization on a new employee through either formal or informal channels and experiences that shape the employee's behavior (Hill & Bahniuk, 1998).

Transition – the passing from one condition, form, stage, activity, or place to another (*Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 1996, p. 1421). In the present study, the term represents the challenges and characteristics identified as part of the movement from college to the workplace.

Workplace – the office, factory, or place where one works (*Webster's New World College Dictionary*, 1996, p. 1539).

Summary

Undergraduate business students spend much of their time in college settings and in some cases with part-time employment. Upon graduation, these students make the transition from college to full-time employment in their chosen profession. Due in part to the nature of the degree, the transition for these students may not be an automatic process. The process of how these young people move from college life to work life is complicated and deserves attention. Given that the importance of transitions is recognized in many areas of education—high school-to-work programs and the nursing and teaching professions, for example—it makes sense that business graduates should receive the same support.

Studies exist regarding the factors that may relate to less-than-satisfactory experiences in beginning business careers. However, there are few specific programs geared to transitioning business graduates from the college environment into the very different business environment. The perspectives of the graduates themselves might therefore inform faculty in business colleges and business organizations so that these graduates might better prepare themselves for their business careers.

As the success rate of college graduates transitioning into the workplace might increase, college enrollment might also increase. Businesses would continue to recruit from colleges and universities if they found that the students were prepared to work. The perspectives of the recent graduates may therefore benefit the efforts of colleges to provide richer curricula and the efforts of businesses to support the transition of new hires

into the workplace. The success of both the graduates and the businesses in which they work may thus be enhanced.

Chapter One has provided an introduction to the study designed to explore the perceptions of recent business graduates of their transition experiences from the collegiate environment to the work environment. The development of programs in fields outside of the colleges of businesses provides a rationale for recognizing that transition experiences matter to students. The argument for the present study included the recognition that the perceptions of recent graduates as they entered the workplace could inform efforts by educators and business leaders both to prepare and to support these new hires purposefully.

This chapter outlined the purpose of the study and the rationale for the study based on the assumptions that transitions are difficult for graduates as they enter the workplace and that understanding their experiences can inform efforts to make those transitions more successful. Chapter Two examines the literature as it relates to the transition experiences of business graduates. Seven topics are identified and examined which are relevant to research regarding the transition of business-college graduates to their first positions in the workplace. The conceptual framework of the study depicts several components that are relevant to the transition process and that provide the foundation for the present study. Chapter Three describes the methodology for the study, including the qualitative research design, data collection methods, description of the participants, a preview of the data-analysis processes, and limitations of the study. Chapter Four describes the data analysis process in detail and provides analysis of the qualitative data collected for the study. The participants' descriptions of their experiences

are presented and analyzed for understanding. Chapter Five summarizes the study, offers

conclusions from the study, suggests implications from the study, and provides

recommendations for educational and organizational leaders to help facilitate the

transition experiences of newly hired business graduates.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review of related literature examines seven topics relevant to research regarding the transition of business-college graduates to their first positions in the workplace. The first topic considers why young people choose to attend college, no matter what major they might choose. This discussion also establishes the background for understanding students' enrolling in business colleges. Second, the review acknowledges that employers of these college graduates have expectations regarding the specific skills necessary for the workplace and outlines such general expectations. Third, the review contextualizes the transition of college students into their first positions by highlighting efforts within other educational settings to support the transition experiences of students into the workplace. The literature review then discusses the role of culture in these transition experiences by describing the cultural differences between the collegiate environment and the work environment and the role of leaders in helping new hires bridge these differences. The review next examines the need for the socialization of new hires into their organizations, including techniques such as mentoring and orientation programs designed to help recent graduates assimilate into the workplace culture. In addition, the review explores the emergence of the multigenerational workforce that in turn challenges the efforts of leaders to facilitate the transitions of these new hires. Finally, the review considers the responsibilities of organizational leaders in providing an

environment that is conducive for the successful transition experiences of newly hired employees.

The topics of the review interrelate, so that discussion of the topics in isolation cannot represent fully the literature base for the research study. Therefore, examination of the interrelationships among the topics leads to a conceptual framework relevant to the present study. The chapter closes with a description of how these topics relate to each other in the context of this research.

Desire for Education

A college degree can be the credential for success in the world of work (Wonacott, 2003). Thousands of high school graduates begin college each year with the idea of landing that ideal position after graduation. There is a payoff for attending and completing a college degree program. In terms of employment, there are increased career opportunities, better promotional opportunities, higher earnings, and lower unemployment (Dohm & Wyatt, 2002). Statistics have confirmed the increased potential for higher earning and employability among college graduates. Data published in the *Occupational Outlook* for the year 2000 indicated that increased education increases employment opportunity (Dohm & Wyatt, 2002, p. 5). Similarly, such data indicated that with increased education, unemployment rates dropped from 3.5% for those with high school diplomas to 2.3% for those with bachelor's degrees (Dohm & Wyatt, 2002, p. 5). In addition, earnings potential also increased based on years of further education completed. In 2000, median earnings of year-round, full-time workers aged 25 and over with high school diplomas were less than all others who had degrees ranging from an associate's degree to a doctorate or other professional degree (Dohm & Wyatt, 2002).

The data also indicated that there was a correlation between increased education and subsequent employment opportunities. More recent data indicate similar findings:

> New information from the U.S. Census Bureau reinforces the value of a college education: workers 18 and over with a bachelor's degree earn an average of $51,206 a year, while those with a high school diploma earn $27,915. Workers with an advanced degree make an average of $74,602, and those without a high school diploma average $18,734. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005)

Therefore, many high school graduates move on to attend college to receive bachelor's degrees in order to increase their opportunities and earnings potential.

Because people pursue education beyond the compulsory in hopes of achieving professional success and acquiring higher salaries in the future, they pursue these educational experiences with certain expectations. As they complete their education, they anticipate how their expectations might become reality as they make the transition from college to the workplace. While students have certain expectations when they enter the workplace, employers also have expectations that the college graduates will bring knowledge and skills to the workplace to increase the success of their organizations..

<div align="center">Employer Expectations</div>

Employers expect that graduates from baccalaureate business programs possess a range of skills—from basic skills in reading and mathematics to basic knowledge regarding the world of business. Also desired is competency in soft skills such as verbal communication and relationship-building that are required to be successful in the workplace. These skills provide new graduates with the ability to "work in teams and in collaborative situations" (Alliance for Management Education Task Force, 2006, p. 8). It is important to discuss employers' expectations to determine how their expectations compare with those that students develop. Given the complexity of the transition process

from college to the workplace, the role of employers in that process is relevant. It is also important to discuss the employer's role in the transition process and where employer responsibility begins in assisting with the transition process.

Basic Skills

What do employers want from today's job applicants? Heinemann (1996) stated that, "employers want everything they've wanted before . . . and a whole lot more" (p. 1). Employers throughout the nation have recognized that qualified and well-trained employees are perhaps the most critical factor to sustained growth and competitiveness (Cheney, 2001). Therefore, the focus on business growth leads employers to look for increased competency and knowledge from their new hires (Filstad, 2004). They cite a wide variety of skills and competencies that they find necessary for the success of their businesses.

Employers have been concerned about their ability to find the candidates able to do the jobs that will be available in the future (Wallhaus, 1996). As corporations become involved in more global enterprises and continue to evolve, the need is greater to have employees who can meet the challenges of the changing workplace. "Employers are placing a high priority on what they commonly refer to as 'workplace skills' or 'basic skills.' . . . Employers want assurances that the employees are well prepared, and they believe these assurances should be couched in well defined performance standards" (Wallhaus, p. 6).

Soft Skills

In years past, employers wanted skills directed toward individual personality: honesty, good personal appearance, good attendance, pleasant attitude, and the ability to

follow directions (Poole, 1993). Although employers continue to desire these characteristics in potential employees, a review of the literature reveals employers require a new set of skills. Humanistic or soft skills (Centko, 1998) are just as important as technical or task-oriented skills: (a) human skills or the ability to work with others in a positive manner to achieve a goal; (b) negotiation skills that allow employees to overcome conflict by compromise, accommodating, and collaborating with others; (c) adaptability or the ability to adjust to a constant changing environment, sometimes acting as a change agent within an organization. In addition, as workers prepare to enter the workforce, they need skills including critical thinking, problem solving, and technical job skills (Whitman, 2001). Shubin (1993) discussed the need for employees to have communication skills, customer-service techniques, and professional conduct. The soft skills are just as important to employers in their search for the best candidates as the basic skills. Finding employees with these skills is important as organizations continue to be even more diverse in the age and experience level of employees.

A study conducted by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) and the Department of Labor addressed the issue of skills necessary for the workplace. They found that employer expectations have increased drastically. Workers need to have a new set of skills to be successful. The basic academics of reading, writing, and computation are still needed, but employers have included a broader set of skills. In the past, this increased skill set would have been for managers only. Employers now want employees who have problem-solving skills, listening skills, negotiating skills, and knowledge of how to learn (Lane, 1992). Kretovics and McCambridge (1998) noted that employers most often seek candidates with communication, leadership, team, and other

soft skills. This need for multi-dimensional skill sets holds true for technical positions as well. Heinemann (1996) noted that in the field of electronics and computer technology, teamwork and communication skills are important. Employees need to be able to work well in groups and possess the ability to communicate with co-workers verbally and in writing.

Not only do employers want employees with relationship-building skills and academic achievements, but they also want candidates to have various experiences outside of the classroom. Selection and participation in extra-curricular activities provide the employer with a sense of the student's goals and personality. Folsom, Lenz, and Reardon (1998) conducted a survey at Florida State University of companies participating in career fairs. The top three activities desired by companies for job candidates were (a) work experience that is paid and job-related, (b) leadership roles in student organizations, and (c) membership in student academic professional organizations.

Meeting Employers' Expectations

Employers are relying on these desirable attributes to begin their search for college graduates as candidates to work in their organizations. However, employers are finding it challenging to recruit qualified candidates for employment. Over 1800 employers participated in a survey commissioned by the Center for Workforce Preparation in 2001 (Cheney, 2001). Respondents indicated difficulty in recruiting employees. The challenges included candidates with poor employment skills and inappropriate skill sets for the available positions.

It is becoming more evident to employers that educating future employees is a shared responsibility between corporations and educators. If employers want the best employees, they must begin to invest by developing partnerships. Furthermore, "research has increasingly shown that relating learning to work can strengthen academic learning by giving a coherence to academic studies that is difficult to create when subjects are taught independently or in the abstract" (Bailey, 1997, p. iii). The more recent literature also holds the employer accountable to find ways to train employees and prepare them for the work that they will be responsible to do (Tyler, 2008b).

<div align="center">Transition Experiences</div>

Transitions are stressful for people in many situations as they move from one situation to another. So, too, with students as they move from one level of education to another or from the educational environment to the workplace. In the 1970s, the role of transitions was noticed as students in high school moved from the educational environment to the workplace. Research and program development regarding these school-to-work experiences appeared. In addition, research has increasingly focused on the transitions of students from high school to college and from college to professional occupations. In examining the transitions from high school to college and school-to-work, the present study includes a discussion of related literature to compare the issues and challenges faced by students. In addition, a discussion of the formalized structure of nursing and teacher transition processes provides examples of the efforts to focus on the transition process for those professions.

To become a professional in many fields of study, completing the four-year bachelor's degree program is only the beginning of a successful professional career.

While transitioning from one environment to another, graduates face challenges in learning the new environment, learning the new job, and understanding the culture. While transitions seem logical to expect as one moves from one setting to another, individuals who are experiencing transitions do not typically expect such challenges (Wood, 1995). Quite often, recent graduates from colleges of business experience difficulty in their first jobs upon graduation (Penttila, 2005). Thus, both educators who are preparing those entering a profession and those employers receiving the new hires must assume responsibility to assist those individuals in the transition from college to the workplace. According to Dreher and Daugherty (2001), top-performing companies must be better than their competitors at recruiting and retaining top talent. Therefore, they must be certain to assist new hires in acquiring new knowledge and skills when they are hired and as the job environments change.

Students themselves recognize that transitions can be complex and emotional experiences. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) conducted focus groups in various parts of the country regarding the concerns of high school and college students. The findings indicated the following:

> Students from both the college and the high-school focus groups associated a wide array of positive emotions with college, but the high-school students' anticipation about college was mixed with anxiety about making the transition to college life successfully. The college students reported high levels of stress related to the demands of college life and preparing for the job market, while the high-school students expressed particular concern about the need for a very clear sense of their future employment goals and a specific choice of major to lead them to those goals. (Humphreys & Davenport, 2005, p. 1)

Therefore, students see transitions from the academic world to the work world with mixed emotions, both positive and stressful.

Several levels of education have formal structures in place to assist students in preparing for the actual work they will be performing upon graduation. The secondary level of public education, teacher education, and nursing education recognize the need for structured programs to assist students in their transition from the school environment to the work environment. These three examples indicate that other educational programs might also consider how to facilitate the transition of their students into the workplace.

School-to-Work Transitions

Much literature on transitions focuses on the transition from secondary school to the workplace and the preparation students receive while they are making the transition. Without some preparation for the experience, students are left on their own with limited knowledge to prepare for the challenges that they will face as they transition into the workplace.

> The transition from school to work can be difficult. Job seekers must have well-developed literacy, communication, and technology skills to enter a vocation and remain on the job. Schools that give students meaningful preparation can ease this transition to the world of work. . . . School-to-work (STW) has become an umbrella term for activities, experiences and opportunities that prepare students for the world of work, such as youth apprenticeships, mentoring, internships, job shadowing, career exploration, and integration of academic and vocational curriculum. (Bonds, 2003, p. 38)

An additional option for high school students is Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs. These programs are advanced programs that provide additional opportunities through preparation and training for students, whether or not they plan to attend college. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2003), the focus of career and technical education has begun to change. In the past, the focus was on preparing high school students for entry-level jobs that did not require any additional

education beyond high school. Today, jobs that pay sufficient wages to support a family and to offer opportunities for advancement require strong academic skills and education and training beyond high school. Rosenbaum and Deil-Amen (2004) recommended a systematic regional and community response to the problems of bridging the transition between school and work.

Recognizing that many high school graduates will not attend college, leaders in the secondary education sector are also preparing graduates for the world of work. Because some 30% of high school students do not graduate (Achieve, 2006, p. 5), the educational system would be remiss in their duties if this large population of students did not receive some type of preparation to transition them into the workplace. Educators at the secondary-education level have acknowledged and created many formal structures in order to prepare high school graduates for their chosen paths, whether that path is the workplace or the college campus. This commitment is not new. Training for labor positions, Job Corps, trade schools, and other educational programs have been available to high school students for many years.

Most recently, the nation's governors and business leaders have partnered to create a bipartisan, non-profit organization, Achieve, Inc., to help states raise academic standards, improve assessments, and strengthen accountability to prepare all young people for postsecondary education, work, and citizenship (Achieve, 2006). The intention was to provide the necessary background so that students would be able to pursue further education or work successfully once they graduate from high school. The partnership has identified a large gap between what high schools expect and what colleges and employers demand, that is, an "expectations gap" (Achieve, 2006, p. 3). To address this issue and

attempt to close this gap, states have moved forward in requiring all students to complete a "college-and-work-ready curriculum" (Achieve, 2006, p. 3). As of 2006, 8 states had enacted college-and work-ready graduation requirements, 12 states planned to put college-and-work-ready requirements in place for their students, and 7 additional states had raised their graduation requirements since 2005 (Achieve, 2006).

High school-to-College Transitions

As previously mentioned, much of the literature has focused on the high school-to-work transition. Although educators have been working to transition students from high school to college for many years, educators are still struggling with this issue. The transition from high school to college provides another example of the challenges students face during transitions and the efforts of educators to assist them.

In reviewing the related literature, there are similar concerns that educators have for the transitions that students face when transitioning from high school to the workplace and from secondary education to the college environment. How students manage this transition has received attention from scholars with the concept of "strategies" emerging as an important theme (Clark, 2005). The research followed students' experiences during their freshman year by looking at the kinds of challenges they faced, both inside and outside of the institution. The research showed that the transition experience was different for students depending on their family experience. For traditional students, defined as students who had a family history of attending college, social integration was perceived as the most prominent challenge in their transitions to college. For the non-traditional students, defined as first-generation college students, the transition to college was more complicated, with a combination of academic, social, and cultural challenges

(Clark, 2005). The study also found that students faced many challenges inside and outside of the institution. The students responded to the challenges by developing strategies to manage these situations. These results demonstrate that the challenges students face during the transition from high school to college are different for everyone and that students learn to handle these challenges by developing strategies to fit their particular situations.

College faculty have perceived the difficulty in the transition as a result of students lacking information regarding the challenges they may face in the transition process from high school to college, not because of a lack of preparation, a lack of interest, or a lack of motivation (Rosenbaum & Deil-Amen, 2004). Some of the solutions to ease the transition from secondary education to college focus on (a) faculty visits to high schools to make students feel valuable, (b) visits to high schools by students who have successfully made the transition, (c) examples of the types of examinations the students can expect when entering college, and (d) on-going visits from college instructors and college students to the high school.

Due to the dramatic increase in the education and skill requirements for all occupations (Carnevale, 2001), the educational system makes efforts to prepare students for the transition to college during the high school years. One project addressed the challenges of transition from the high school environment to college by aligning secondary and post-secondary curricula (Alexson & Kemnitz, 2003). The intent was to move towards an educational system that provided students a seamless transition between secondary and post-secondary institutions. This project found that curriculum and

guidance from educators, while important for the student success, were not the only factors that influential in the transition from high school to college.

Efforts to establish smooth transitions can be complex. For example, as colleges and universities begin to admit the most talented students as early as the junior year, some students have been tempted to "coast through" the senior year because of the perception of the senior year as a time to relax and to sign up for a less rigorous courses. This behavior is problematic because many colleges want to see students challenging themselves. To better prepare high school students for college, some high schools have tried to combat this temptation by increasing the rigor of the senior-year curriculum through college and pre-college options that enable students to begin college studies before they graduate from high school (Bonesteel & Sperry, 2002).

Some school systems have used methods to prepare high school students for the college experience by establishing collaborations between schools and higher-education institutions (Palmer, 2000). Programs such as dual credit and concurrent enrollment, tech prep, middle college high schools, and distance learning are designed to make the transition for various students more successful. Partnerships such as these have assisted students in managing the challenges of the transition experience.

Transition Experiences for Nurses

The educational experiences in professional preparation programs provide examples of how the challenges of transitions can be met. Preparation programs in the nursing profession include practical field experience as part of the college student's program of study in order to bridge academic learning and the demands of the workplace. Nursing students receive clinical education as part of their preparation prior to receiving

their professional licenses. In addition, nurses typically begin their careers with an eight week orientation period that includes mentoring and assistance by a more experienced nurse. Ellerton and Gregor (2003) noted that nurses described the first three months on the job as an intense learning period; however, they rated themselves as average for their readiness for practice. These examples of clinical experiences and workplace orientation programs demonstrate how the educational institutions and the employers can support the transition process.

Recognizing that the clinical training received by nursing students was not meeting the needs of some students, some hospitals have taken the lead in developing programs to provide additional clinical experiences that have not been available during preparation. "Columbia University's training model is an example of the preparation needed for this level of professional practice" (Mundinger, Cook, Lenz, Piacentini, Auerhahn, & Smith, 2000, p. 322).These recently developed programs focus not only on the practical knowledge that nurses must need to do their jobs, but also on assistance to the nurses as they became socialized and transition to the role of registered nurse. Although these extern programs are new, initial results suggest that this type of program benefits the students who participate, as well as the institutions that provide such programs.

In addition to the early training that nurses receive, programs are also beginning to emphasize the idea that quality care requires continuous learning throughout a nurse's career. One example of this change is the integration of a continuous quality improvement learning program developed in Norway (Kyrkjebø, 2006). The program was designed to integrate the philosophy and methods of quality improvement into

nursing students' learning. The program involves personal improvement, practice-related instruction at training wards, observation and practice, clinical studies, cross-educational student projects, and thesis writing. The state of Florida offers a 12-week internship program for pediatric nurses and a five-month internship program for operating room nurses (Florida Nursing License & Certification, 2004). These examples demonstrate continued commitment by health care institutions to the preparation and success of their nursing graduates.

These efforts to support nurses in their transition from the preparation environment to the workplace setting indicate that both the preparatory setting and the employers have roles to play in successful experiences. In addition, once the transition process is completed, long-term professional development is important to meet changing circumstances.

Transition Experiences in Teacher Education

One profession that has developed formalized, structured programs to prepare graduates is teaching. Teachers are typically prepared to begin their chosen profession within a four-year program of study which includes internship and field experiences that take place in actual classroom settings. For these graduates, the path to success is clear due in part to the field experiences that are included as a part of the college experience.

One example of the structured programs provided for student teachers was the Integrative Studies Major Program (Thompson & Smith, 2004). This program was designed to prepare teachers to maximize learning for all students by emphasizing knowledge and skills standards. The program provided teacher candidates with hands-on experience working with students, peers, and university professors. Evaluation revealed

that the program assisted new teachers in transitioning from student to professional teacher and that student teachers found value in becoming prepared for the classrooms in which they would eventually be teaching.

Other programs are five-year programs that begin during the undergraduate years. These programs allow students to focus exclusively on preparing to teach during the graduate year. These programs include "year-long school-based internships that are tightly integrated with coursework on teaching" (Darling-Hammond, 2005, p. 23). Most recently (2009), the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), a national organization that ensures quality in teacher education, plans to introduce a new approach to accrediting nearly 700 teacher education programs that prepare a majority of the nation's teachers. As part of the initiative, the current effectiveness of field experiences for prospective teachers will be investigated. The results will be used to inform a "comprehensive, best practices sequence of teacher candidate field experiences".

These approaches to preparing teachers not only recognized that field experiences are necessary during initial preparation but also assumed that initial preparation is not in itself enough for a smooth transition to a career. Recent literature affirms the belief that continued professional development is needed for teachers to be effective. "Effective professional development is intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice; focuses on the teaching and learning of specific academic content; is connected to other school initiatives; and builds strong working relationships among teachers" (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009, p. 44).

The transition experience includes the specific training for the position in addition to preparation to enter the culture of the chosen profession, with the expectation of continued professional development.

Business Graduates' Preparation for the Workplace

As discussed in the rationale for the present study, business-college graduates face transitions as they move into the workplace. For some graduates, this process may be a relatively smooth transition due the preparation received during their educational experiences and because of the benefits from outside support. However, other students may need systematic support in meeting the demands of those transitions. In spite of the importance of American businesses to the success of the economy and thus the importance of business graduates to the economy, there are few structured training programs available to assist business graduates with their transitions to the workplace.

Preparation of business students is the first step towards their success in the workplace. There is disagreement among researchers as to the role and success of business schools. Bennis and O'Toole (2005) observed that business schools have "lost their way" (p. 151). Business programs are facing intense criticism for failing to impart the skills and preparation and even failing to lead graduates to good corporate jobs. They further noted that business schools follow the scientific model to educate, hiring researchers versus practitioners. Carlson and Fleisher (2002) concurred that the colleges and universities could improve in terms of developing young learners; however, their view differs from that of Bennis and O'Toole. Instead of moving to a more professional curriculum, they argued that the move to treat students as customers has lessened the rigor of the curriculum and teaching methods. "Conversely, many deans and faculty of

business schools believe business leaders misunderstand their teaching and research missions and the importance of *rigorously* developed and validated teaching and scholarship" (Alliance for Management Education Task Force, 2006, p. 7).

Unlike nursing and teacher preparation programs, there are not a significant number of organized programs available to assist business-college graduates in their transition from college to the workplace. On the other hand, business leaders are making efforts to increase the support they provide for new hires. Efforts to provide mentors in the workplace and new employee orientation programs are two of the tools leaders are using to assist business graduates in the transition process. These programs are important and will be discussed in subsequent sections of the review.

<div align="center">Two Cultures</div>

Given that students are transitioning from the college culture to the organizational culture, the characteristics of both cultures are relevant to the challenges students face in their transitions. First, the college culture is relevant to understanding the transition because that culture is the one recent graduates know and with which they are comfortable. Second, the organizational culture is the one the graduates will transition to and must adapt to and with which they must become comfortable.

College Culture

Although this research study is focusing on the transition from the academic environment to the workplace, it is necessary to discuss the process of how students manage in the college environment. This culture warrants discussion because most students have learned to work within the college culture for at least the previous four years prior to entering the workforce on a full-time basis.

Colleges create campus climates in which students feel they belong and are valued in order to enhance their persistence to succeed in order to increase graduation rates (Kuh, 2001). An institution's cultural properties affect almost everything that happens at the college or university. Kuh defined college culture in more specific terms:

> The collective, mutually shaping patterns of institutional history, mission, physical settings, norms, traditions, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behavior of individuals and groups in an institution of higher education and which provide a frame of reference for interpreting the meanings of events and actions on and off campus. (Kuh, 2001, p. 25)

However, Kuh noted that there is little research that focuses on the impact of culture on student persistence, satisfaction, and achievement.

For many students, while attending college, they have their first opportunity to be independent from their parents. When the students are not in scheduled classes, they are free to do what they choose to do with their time. In college, students may choose to attend classes or not, they may choose to drop a class if the class is not what they expected. In order to provide some opportunity to become involved with the college campus, some colleges offer orientation programs to encourage student participation in the campus experience. For example, Berkeley's orientation is mandatory and acquaints students with their peers and faculty, helps students feel comfortable in their new environment, and encourages them to become active participants in campus life (Berkeley College website, 2010). Students are assumed to be adults as demonstrated by laws that protect student privacy. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). During the college years, students begin to make choices for themselves with little to no parental guidance as they move into adulthood.

Just as when newcomers enter the workplace organizations, newcomers to college campuses are socialized to adopt the values, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions of the institution they are joining (Kuh, 2001). The process by which this socialization occurs may determine whether the student has a successful experience. Similar to the change in the environment and culture as students move into college, changes also confront students as they enter the workplace.

Organizational Culture

The environment within an organization, whether or not purposefully created, is a culture. Employees are affected by the culture of their organization simply by the fact that they are a part of the culture from day to day. "Organizational culture is a social energy that moves people to act. Culture is to the organization what personality is to the individual—a hidden, yet unifying theme that provides meaning, direction and mobilization" (Kilmann, 1985, p. 64). In addition, the culture of a group is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group uses to solve problems (Schein, 1993). Three cultures exist within the management of an organization (Schein, 1996): (a) the "operators," who are the line manager and workers make and deliver the products and services that fulfill the organization's mission; (b) the "engineers," who share a common occupational culture and include the core designers and any functional group; and (c) the "executives" who are the entrepreneurs, founders of companies, and CEOs.

Some researchers have concluded that the characteristics of culture in an organization may determine the level of job satisfaction for employees. Odum, Barrett, and Peles (1997) conducted a study of transportation organizations and found that the bureaucratic nature of the organization, the culture which dominated their sample of

transportation organizations, was not the type of culture most conducive to the development of employee commitment, job satisfaction, and teamwork. Nystrom (1993) found that employees in strong cultures tended to express greater organizational commitment as well as higher job satisfaction. In examining the relationship between job satisfaction and organization culture, Lund (2003) found that various culture types evoked higher levels of job satisfaction. The present study concluded that a culture characterized by an emphasis on mentoring, loyalty, and tradition, in addition to a culture that places an emphasis on innovation, entrepreneurship and flexibility, elicited significantly higher levels of employee satisfaction. These studies indicate that an organization's culture can have a definite impact on employee job satisfaction and longevity on the job.

Adjusting to a new environment is a task faced by all new hires. For example, they may not be prepared for the fast-paced culture of some organizations (Gundry & Rousseau, 1994). Facilitating this adjustment is not easy for the employers. Employers need to plan to orient new employees to the culture and environment. Further, organizational leaders may forget that procedures and cultures differ from company to company and that it takes time for a new employee to adapt. In addition, because newcomers are likely to experience and incorporate as their own the more perceptible and concrete aspects of culture such as norms and patterns of behavior before they are able to internalize values or interject culture-based assumptions, employers must actively seek to help new employees understand the complex and subtle characteristics of a company's culture.

The Multigenerational Workplace

For the first time in American history there are three generations in the workplace at the same time (Pew Research Center, 2010). In addition, a fourth generation may be represented in the workplace if employees decide not to retire at age 65. Significant differences exist among these generations of employees. This complex work environment is challenging for new hires, their colleagues in the workplace, and the employers.

Employers must be aware of these differences and be prepared to acclimate the new hires to the workplace by helping them to recognize the differences and developing strategies to cultivate their talents (SHRM, 2009). And, because many of the employers of these newly hired graduates are themselves of a different generation, they need to understand the characteristics of the newly hired graduates, their needs, expectations, and learning styles in order to manage their work. In addition, the peers of these new hires are also of different generations, a situation that can present challenges for the new hires in terms of learning how to work with the different generations.

Generational Differences

The way prior generations who are still in the workplace were trained to work is different from the generation entering the workplace today. After World War II, America experienced a large increase in the population that today is referred to as the Baby–Boom generation. The two generations who followed are known as generation X, born between the years 1960-1980, and generation Y—also known as the Millennials, born between the years 1980-2000 (Denham & Gadbow, 2002). This last generation is also described as the net generation, the digital generation, and the echo-boom generation (Gardner & Eng,

2005). Significant differences exist between the Millennial generation and the employees whom they encounter in the workplace upon graduation. The particular challenges that they may face are unique. Gardner and Eng noted that they are more ambitious and optimistic than Generation X, lead a faster-pace lifestyle, and favor different values and learning styles than their predecessors. These characteristics challenge organizations in managing, training, rewarding, and developing this group of graduates as they are entering the workforce. Organizations need to be aware of this generation's preferences and work styles in order to orient them to the workplace.

In addition, this generation learns differently in comparison to previous generations because they are the most technologically savvy of all the generations. The workplace is diverse and is changing, requiring organizations and educators to adopt a new pedagogy that will embrace all the differences of the new workforce and promote equality (Bierema & Merriam, 2002). Valuing the characteristics and differences of this group of graduates will help both organizational and academic leaders better prepare these graduates for the challenges of the 21st century workplace (Denham & Gadbow, 2002).

Managing the Millennial Generation

The Millennial generation is the name given to the young people born in 1980s and 1990s (Alsop, 2008). This generation has also been labeled generation Y and generation next. "The NetGeneration and the iGeneration also are popular monikers because young people are so technology oriented and always connected to an iPod or other digital device" (Alsop, 2008, p. vi). The participants in the present study are members of this Millennial generation. The Millennial generation approaches the work

environment differently due in part to their familiarity with the technological tools they have grown up with, such as computers, I-pods, e-mail, Twitter, and Face book. The Millennials' expectations for work differ from the employers' expectations and their peers' expectations. Recent literature describes the expectations Millennials have for training as they enter into their new positions.

> Millennials expect engaging learning experiences, whether they take place in the classroom or online. Early exposure to the sophisticated programming techniques of television and video games has left them with high expectations for all forms of communication — they assume employers will communicate via highly produced, interactive media. Employers can address this need by supplementing static training with simulations and other forms of learning that require active participation. (Ambrose, 2007, P. 1-2)

Like all new hires, Millennials face challenges during their transition into the workplace. However, Millennials have a need for recognition (Alsop, 2008) that may lead to challenges for organization leaders because managers may not be accustomed to providing employees with continuous feedback.

Leaders may need to modify their current thinking when it comes to managing this new generation of employees. The techniques that have been used to attract and retain the best employees will have to change to meet the needs of the Millennial generation employees. Millennials have high expectations of themselves and a need to be recognized for their successes (Coomes & DeBard, 2004). Leaders may find it difficult to manage the Millennials "need for immediate gratification that stems from their experience with technology". (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p.   ) Millennials may also have unreasonable expectations for their environments and experiences (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Leadership strategies are needed to create cultures that will accept diversity that includes this generation and their specific traits.

Leaders of organizations need a new set of strategies to manage this generation of employees along with the prior generations that exist within the organization. Leaders can begin by providing opportunities for employees to learn to appreciate each other's differences by using team-building activities and mentoring programs. These types of programs contribute the socialization process for the new hire discussed in the next section of this review of the literature.

<div align="center">Socialization in the Workplace</div>

Socialization is a large part of the new hire's transition experience. New hires have to learn everything about how to function in the organization. Therefore, a discussion of socialization includes how new employees gain the necessary knowledge to become successful contributors to their organizations and the efforts organizations are making to assist in the transition process.

Socialization is defined as "the process that adapts employees to the organization's culture" (Robbins, 1998, p. 607). According to Schein (1968), "organizational socialization is the process of 'learning the ropes,' the process of being indoctrinated and trained, the process of being taught what is important in an organization or some subunit thereof" (p. 2). Feldman (1976) defined organizational socialization as the process by which employees are transformed from organization outsiders to participating and effective members. How the socialization process occurs depends on formal and informal tactics that insure the new hire will become comfortable in the environment and able to perform successfully. Organizations must create an environment for new hires so that they are able to meet other employees and learn the culture.

New hires are not familiar with the business of the organization. In addition, they may feel alone and find it difficult to feel a part of the organization. The socialization of the new employee may be an important factor in determining the new employee's overall decision to remain with an organization. Previous research (Klein & Weaver, 2000) regarding socialization found that the knowledge gained about the organization in the orientation training program may help new employees develop social relationships with other organizational members. That is, having a better understanding of the history, traditions, and values of the organization may help new employees engage co-workers in discussion, join with others in conversations, and be quickly accepted.

Attention to this need for socialization has increased as employers strive to retain newly hired employees. Early in their employment, new hires decide whether or not to stay with the organization (Wright, 2008). "As many as 4 percent of new employees leave their new jobs after a disastrous first day" (SHRM, 2009, p. 2). Therefore, during the initial socialization process, newcomers develop attitudes and behavior that are necessary to function as a member of the organization (Ardts et al., 2001). An important aspect of the socialization process occurs as the new employee learns to get information and adapt to the new environment. Newcomers get information mainly by observation of peers, managers, and a mentor if available. They also ask questions, approach others, read written materials, and create situations where others have to respond with the aim of observing the reaction (Ardts et al., 2001). Socialization reveals much about the culture and the rules of behavior as the new hire gains permanent status and is allowed to enter the inner circles of the group, where group secrets are shared (Schein, 1993).

Previous literature on socialization puts much of the responsibility of the new hire's initial socialization and career development on the employer (Schein, 1988). More recent literature has placed more of this responsibility on the individual new hire. Some human resource theories now embrace the philosophy that each person is responsible for his or her own career. "Self-steering" workers are required, with the organization only conditionally involved as a facilitator (Ardts et al. 2001).The organization's role then becomes one of supporting, encouraging, and providing opportunities. This type of relationship tends to produce employees who are less loyal due to the loose form of commitment from the organization (Ardts et al. 2001).

Whether or not the new employee takes most of the responsibility for his or her own socialization into the organization, the initial orientation is the responsibility of the employer. Some literature suggests that a well-developed orientation program results in higher levels of organizational commitment and job involvement.

> The first year with an organization is the critical period during which an employee will or will not learn to become a high performer. The careful matching of company and employee expectations during this period can result in positive job attitudes and high standards. (Cascio, 2005, p. 311)

This introduction into the organization is crucial in the formation of the new hire's opinion of the organization.

Socialization of New Hires

There is some debate about the distinction between socialization and new hire orientations (Garavan & Morley, 1997). Orientation as a concept usually refers to specific programs which take place in the short term, while socialization is a process of change which occurs over a much longer and generally unspecified period of time.

Socialization begins when new hires join an organization. Employment is a challenge for the newcomers who face new situations and need knowledge of the organization and skills to perform their new jobs (Filstad, 2004). Although a new hire may be defined as any employee new to a position within the organization, "there are systematic differences between first jobs in organizations and transfers or promotions within organizations that should make the adjustment process quite different for job changers than for new hires" (Feldman & Brett, 1983, p. 258). Indeed, a transition from school to first-time, full-time, career-related employment is an anxious time due to the additional challenges faced in comparison to the transition from one work organization to another (Louis, 1980).

Being new to an organization may be stressful for an employee (Miller & Jablin, 1991). In the case of recent college graduates, the graduates or new hires leave what is known, the academic environment, and move into the unknown, the work environment. Newcomers leave membership in one group and organization to join another, set aside portions of their old identities for new identities commensurate with their new employers, and abandon accustomed roles in order to learn new roles and new sets of expectations. Holton and Russell (1999) described this transition in terms of variables present for the new hire: (a) the new hire's level of readiness for the organizational entry, (b) the new hire's adaptation tactics, and (c) the organization's plan to develop the new hire. These variables are important to the socialization of the new hire. Louis (1980) identified three key features for understanding the new hire's experiences in making sense of an unfamiliar organizational setting. These entry experiences are described as (a) change, or the difference between old and new settings; (b) contrast, or the experience of new

settings as compared to previous experience; and (c) surprise, which represents a difference between the new hire's anticipations and subsequent experiences in the new setting. Therefore, new hires need social support (Feldman & Brett, 1983) in order to learn the business, understand their goals, and excel at a fast past.

In addition to the challenges of entering into a new organization, the hierarchical structure of some organizations may not be the best fit for some graduates (Moravec, Wheeler, & Hall, 1989). "Graduates have little patience with hierarchical roles and are not interested in 'paying their dues.' They want work that uses and continually expands their skills so that they can be entrepreneurial generalists rather than narrow specialists" (p. 56).

Another challenge for new hires is managing the conflict that they encounter in the workplace. Myers and Larson (1997) identified and examined the types of conflict that college students reported encountering during their early work experience. According to the authors, higher education can play an important role in helping college graduates confront the challenges of the workplace, especially work-related conflict. Students need to learn how to manage various work conflicts as they orient themselves to the workplace culture. In addition, organizations can provide orientation programs to help new hires learn the culture and provide tools to manage situations.

The expectations of new hires in business organizations today may be different from what employers believe or are prepared to provide. Nonetheless,

> decades of research establish the fact that three major human needs can be satisfied by gainful employment: (a) the need for the basic economic resources and security essential to lead good lives; (b) the need to do meaningful work and the opportunity to grow and develop as a person; and (c) the need for supportive social relationships. (O'Toole & Lawler, 2006, p. 8)

Therefore, employers need to meet the expectations of the Millennials along with meeting the needs traditionally associated with employment.

Providing direction for new hires is critical. New hires are in particular need of guidance as they attempt to learn the organization's business practices, policies and preferences (Messmer, 2004; Tyler, 2008b). Continuous feedback in addition to formal appraisals can minimize the learning curve and ensure a productive start (Messmer, 2004) in addition to keeping them interested in their jobs (Ryan, 2007). Further, providing guidance and resources can help new hires feel welcome and be successful. On the other hand, new hires can develop their own coping strategies to manage situations in the new organization (Feldman & Brett, 1983). New hires can also look to others for support in coping with the stress of a new job.

Orientation for New Hires

Socialization occurs through formal and informal channels. One of the traditional tools used to assist new hires in their transition into the organization is through a formal orientation program. All organizations have some form of orientation for new employees (Cirilo & Kleiner, 2003), ranging from a few hours to a few weeks. There are three general components of orientation: pre-orientation activities, orientation to the organization, and orientation specific to the job (Cirilo & Kleiner, 2003). For this discussion, the focus will be on orientation to the organization.

A well-designed orientation program is essential for a long-term employment relationship (Hacker, 2004). Ensuring that new employees get the support they need is critical to keeping employees motivated to work for the long haul. Thus, orientation is more than introducing new employees to co-workers and completing the standard

paperwork. The process needs to include providing new hires with a technical roadmap or—the big picture of the organization—including an internal overview of systems and opportunities to align with team members. In short, the effort is to make new hires feel welcome.

Organizational orientation is designed to acquaint new employees with the culture of the organization, communicate the new employees' responsibilities to the organization, and communicate the organization's responsibilities to them (Cirilo & Kleiner, 2003). The typical components of new employee orientation include company history, nature of the business, organizational philosophy, mission and structure, employee benefits, organizational policies and procedures, facility tour, and staff introductions. For many organizations, new employee orientation is a short presentation about work hours, benefits, policies and procedures, a tour of the facility, and a sign-off that the new hire received all of the important information. Effective orientation programs provide more substantive content, use more vivid presentation techniques, provide participative learning methods, and require more involvement from management (Hacker, 2004).

Orientation is the beginning of the new employee's experience with the organization. In addition to receiving information, orientation is usually the first opportunity for the new hire to interact with other employees and begin the socialization process (Klein & Weaver, 2000). This introductory period is important for employees to gain information about the job duties and manager expectations. Many times employers assume that new employees will ask questions, but new hires tend to keep questions to a minimum for fear of appearing incompetent (Penttila, 2005). For a new hire, whether

experienced or a recent college graduate, getting acquainted to the new environment can be stressful.

Furthermore, most orientation programs are not designed to address the specific needs of recent college graduates new to the workplace. In most cases, employees of all age groups, experience levels, and skill levels are in the same session together. Although orientation is the first opportunity for employees to begin their socialization process, most orientation programs are not designed to provide any individualized attention to the new hire.

In order to focus on the individual and demonstrate commitment to developing long-term career opportunities, organizations may design formal programs to better acclimate the new hire into the organization. To prepare employees for the responsibilities of their positions, the workplace needs to become a campus for continued learning beyond the initial orientation (Shubin, 1993). Thus, this commitment to learning extends to all employees in order to create "a learning organization—an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future. For this type of organization, it is not enough merely to survive" (Senge, 1994, p.14). By creating a work environment in which these employees can flourish and reach their full potential, companies can improve productivity and maximize their profits.

Mentoring for New Hires

The socialization of the new hire may include some informal channels that shape the employee's behavior. Through these informal channels, employees may develop a mentoring relationship by choosing someone to be a mentor. The literature describes many aspects to mentoring. In order to make the transition into an organization easier,

many organizations have developed formal mentoring programs for new employees. In the workplace, mentoring is a one-to-one relationship, usually created by the human resources department and designed to foster organizational goals and help new employees become acclimated to the workplace culture, while learning from experienced practitioners (Hansman, 2001). The mentor's role includes coaching, counseling, and assisting employees as they transition into the organization (Robbins, 1998).These programs are designed to continue where orientation ends by providing a one-on-one relationship for sustained career development.

Whether the mentor relationship is developed formally or informally, within a structured or non-structured program, the literature describes this relationship as valuable in most situations to prepare a student or employee for the transition ahead. The success of the protégé may not be determined by whether or not the mentoring relationship is a part of the formal organized program or an informal relationship cultivated out of common interests. Ragins, Cotton, and Miller (2000) conducted a survey using a national sample of 1,162 employees to examine the relationships among job and career attitudes, the presence of a mentor, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the perceived effectiveness and design of formal or informal mentoring programs. The authors found that satisfaction with a mentoring relationship had a stronger impact on attitudes than the presence of specific characteristics of a given mentoring program.

The literature on mentoring has focused on the stages of mentoring, the functions of mentoring, and the outcomes from mentoring programs. Some of the literature focuses on mentoring in specific professions, for example, mentoring relationships with accountants (Kyles, 2006), librarians (Level & Mach, 2005), and in education with the

mentoring of principals (Ehrich & Hansford, 2006). Much of the literature focuses on the positive aspects of mentoring. Kleinman, Siegel, and Eckstein (2001) found that mentoring significantly contributed to the socialization and learning of accounting professionals. They also found that in order for mentoring programs to be effective, mentors must share information that permits professionals to better understand the goals, values, and politics of the organization.

Scandura, Tejeda, Werther, and Lankau (1996) examined the perspectives of all participants in the mentoring process. They found that beyond the obvious benefits to the protégé or new hire, the mentor receives benefits as well. Ragins and Scandura (1994) found that men and women were equally willing to mentor and reported equivalent expected costs and benefits of being mentors. In addition, the mentor's role in the organization may be seen as having greater legitimization, especially when mentoring is valued in the organizational culture. "King-makers" who gain referent power not only attract loyal followers but also earn the respect and admiration of peers for being keen spotters of talent (Scandura et al.).

Mentoring relationships have had positive results in academic organizations. Goodwin, Stevens, and Bellamy (1998) conducted a quantitative study of mentoring programs in higher education in the State of Colorado. The respondents perceived their mentoring experience as positive and characterized the experience as supportive, caring, respectful, and valuable. These positive results may be based on a careful selection process or just plain luck that the mentor and protégé were a good match.

Selection of mentors may depend on factors such as common interests and gender. Whether using such criteria in selecting mentors is beneficial is debatable

(Ragins & Scandura, 1994). Even with the best of intentions, some mentoring

relationships are not successful. Mentors and protégés might not share enough common

interests to form and maintain a successful relationship (Hansman, 2001). In addition, the

choosing of the mentor and protégé may lead to failure of the relationship. Mentors may

be chosen because they may best represent the corporate culture rather than because they

have common interests with the protégé (Hansman, 2001). Sometimes mentors are not

trained properly in the mentoring process and their roles as mentors. For example, if the

employee is judged too quickly by a mentor and a negative perception is developed,

everything the employee does only reinforces the negative impression (Penttila, 2005).

Therefore, the organization's leadership has the responsibility to assure careful selection

of mentors and to offer appropriate training for them.

Organizational Leadership for Transitions

Organizational leaders must take responsibility to assist in the facilitation of the

transition process for new hires into their organizations. Leadership theories can inform

the strategies that leaders may adopt to create the organizational culture and to support

the mission and values of their organizations. Supporting the transition of new hires into

the organization requires leaders acknowledging the need to transform the current

environment (Hater & Bass, 1988) to an environment designed to respond to the needs of

new hires in the workplace. Ongoing support from executive leaders to provide programs

that will provide continuous learning and development for the new hire is required.

A transformational leadership approach may be useful in meeting the challenges

of transitioning new hires into the workplace because of its employee focus and its

concern for the values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals of the organization

(Northouse, 2001). New hires need leaders to facilitate change and transform the new hires as they learn the culture of the organization. "Transformational leadership involves assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings" (Northouse, 2001, p. 131) Transformational leaders are "leaders who provide individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation, and who possess charisma" (Robbins, 1998, p. 374).

Transformational leadership strategies may assist leaders in developing cultures that will help new hires as they enter the workplace. A transformational approach may be useful in helping to develop a culture that supports orientation and mentoring programs that will provide the first steps for new hires to begin a process of continued learning (Senge, 1994). A transformational approach may also be useful in helping leaders create the training programs for new hires so that they may learn what is important in the organization (Schein, 1968).

Although transformational leadership is one theory that may be used for creating and supporting changes in organizational culture at an executive level, day-to-day relationships must be cultivated and maintained by the supervisor or manager. Transactional leadership focuses on the exchanges or transactions that occur between leaders and their followers (Northouse, 2001). Transactional leaders "guide or motivate their followers in the direction of established goals by clarifying role and task requirements" (Robbins, 1998, p. 374). For example, a manager who offers a bonus to an employee who surpasses organizational goals or who provides immediate feedback regarding job performance is modeling transactional leadership.

New hires want feedback on their performance during their first days and months of employment. A transactional approach encourages frequent feedback and recognition of employees (Northouse, 2001) that would assist managers in meeting the needs of the new hires as they make their transition into the workplace. For a new hire, a manager who provides feedback after completion of a project would be another example of transactional leadership. These examples help employees grow and develop and keep them engaged. Employees who are engaged will continue to perform and work towards helping the organization become successful.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework informing the present study included several components. First, the literature recognizes that employers need to help new hires transition into the workplace. A smooth transition process benefits both the new hires and the employer. New hires benefit by receiving needed information about the organization and by learning how they fit into the organization. When employees experience a smooth transition into the organization, they feel valued and are eager to learn new skills. From the perspective of the organization, the new hires are thus more likely to remain with the organization and contribute to the organization's success.

The conceptual framework for the study also included the recognition that the role of leadership and the strategies used in assisting these new hires can be critical to their successful transition into the workplace. Therefore, leadership theories are relevant to the ways in which employers see themselves involved in the transition process of the new hires. Employers also have specific expectations of what new hires should be able to do

as they begin their work lives. Several approaches, such as orientation and mentoring programs, exist to manage the transition process of new hires as they join the workplace.

Concomitantly, the new hires themselves bring their backgrounds to their new positions; they have experienced both a collegiate culture, and they have grown up as part of a Millennial generation. As they interact with the workplace setting via orientation programs and mentoring programs, they become socialized into the organization. Figure 1 below describes the conceptual framework that guided the present study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The Transition Process of New Hires into the Workplace
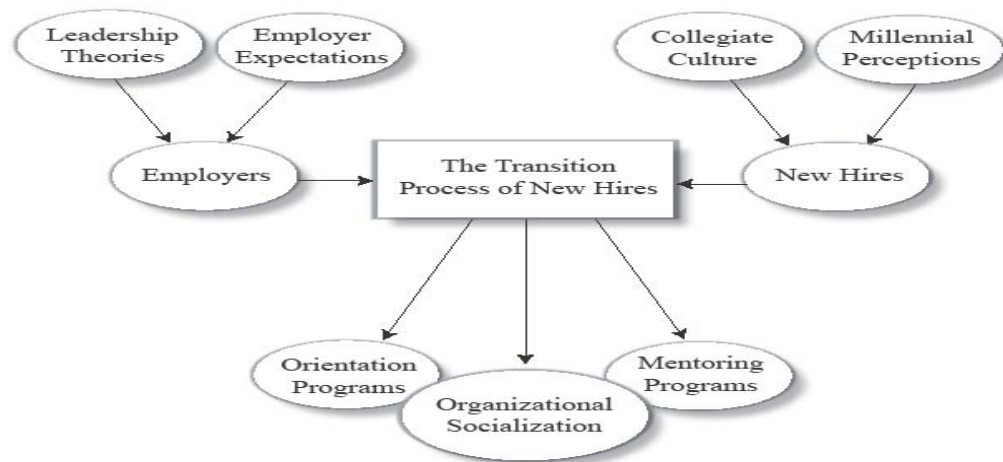
The transition process of new hires into the workplace is complex and involves the efforts of both employers and the new hires themselves. The perspectives of these new employees can inform those in the workplace who are responsible for facilitating

their successful transition. The present study focused on the perspectives of new hires in one geographical area of the United States as they reflected on their own transition experiences.

Summary

This review of related literature identified seven topics, all which relate to the research topic of the business school graduates' experiences as they make the transition from college to the workplace. First, examining the reasons why young people choose to attend college and the student's expectations for success led to a discussion of the expectations the employers hold as these graduates enter the workplace. The review of related literature then continues into a discussion of the challenges graduates face upon entering the workplace and the efforts made by employers to meet these challenges. The literature acknowledges the existence of the multigenerational workforce and the challenges employers face in managing three generations at once, including the new hires as members of the Millennial generation who possess unique characteristics. Lastly, the review focuses on how leadership theories might clarify the work of organizational leaders as they shape environments supportive of successful workplace transitions.

Chapter Three provides a discussion of the qualitative research design used for the present study in order to investigate the perceptions of recent business graduates regarding the transition experience from college to work. It also presents a detailed account of the methodology for data collection and an overview of the procedures used in data analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The research question for the present study was the following: What are the perceptions of recent business graduates of the transition experience from the collegiate environment to the work environment? In order to investigate the perceptions of recent business graduates regarding the transition experience from college to work, a qualitative research approach was chosen.

Using a qualitative research approach produces data that are rich in the description of people, places, and conversations and, therefore, are not easily managed by statistical procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Qualitative research refers to research strategies that share certain characteristics. Marshall and Rossman (1999) categorized the traditions of qualitative research in three areas: those focused on individual lived experience, those focusing on society and culture, and those with an interest in language and communication. Because the present study sought to access how graduates described the complexity of their own personal experiences and perceptions of the transition experience from college to the workplace, a qualitative approach was selected. In addition, because qualitative research approaches are designed to access complexity (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), the design of the present study recognized that participant perceptions would be complex.

Qualitative research is also interpretive at the same time as it is grounded in the lived experiences of people (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Further, a qualitative approach to inquiry can bring value to the participants' experiences and can provide an avenue for them to share their perceptions of those experiences (Eisner, 1998). Thus, the use of a qualitative research approach in the present study provided a way to give voice to the participants as they described their experiences in their own words.

Data Collection Methods

The goal of the present study was to capture the perceptions and attitudes of the participants; therefore, a qualitative interview approach to data collection was particularly useful. The emotionalist interview approach (Silverman, 2006) was used to access the perceptions of the participants regarding their transition from college to the workplace. In an emotionalist approach, the interviewer engages with participants who actively construct their social worlds. The primary goal is to gather data which offer insight into participants' experiences (Silverman, 2006).

Given that one cannot observe participants' perceptions, interviewing becomes a natural approach to data collection (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). A key assumption operates when selecting this approach to data collection—"that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out what is on someone else's mind" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). In essence, qualitative interviewing focuses on gathering the stories of the participants.

Interviews have particular strengths. An interview is a useful way to obtain large amounts of data quickly (Patton, 2002). When more than one person participates, the interview process yields a wider variety of information across a larger number of

participants than if there were fewer participants. Furthermore, face-to-face interviews enable immediate follow-up and clarification of ideas (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Researcher skills

All qualitative research methods require the researcher to be deeply involved at some level in data collection and data analysis. The researcher becomes involved in the sense that he or she tries to convey and to interpret the participants' perceptions and behaviors. The researcher is the primary tool for the study (Merriam, 1998).

Although interviewing as a technique may allow the researcher to gain valuable information, it is a challenge for the interviewer to be able to encourage the participants to share their thoughts. Indeed, "the quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). To obtain the perceptions of the participants, it is necessary for the researcher to listen to their individual experiences—"to listen to what people have to say about their activities, their feelings, their lives" (Eisner, 1998, p. 183).

On the surface, interviewing does not appear to be a difficult task. However, to conduct an interview that allows the participant to feel comfortable enough to share information requires the interviewer to have some skill. Interviewers should have superb listening skills and be skillful at personal interaction, question framing, and gentle probing for elaboration (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Experience as an interviewer in human resources for many years was most useful during the process of interviewing the participants for the present study. I am comfortable interviewing others and perceive myself as having the ability to help others feel comfortable in an interview situation. Years of working with employees and talking with

them about difficult topics provided me with the skills needed in effective interviewing, such as listening, offering eye contact, encouraging clarification, communicating empathy, and allowing periods of silence when appropriate to provide participants time to formulate their responses. Furthermore, experiences in various industries, including telecommunications, finance, and benefits administration, provided me with the ability to communicate with employees holding many different positions in the business world.

During the process of interviewing young professionals with little experience, probing was sometimes required to allow for thoughtful and complete responses. My connoisseurship was valuable because I was able to develop probing questions quickly when participants were not as immediate in their responses. For example, when the participants were having difficulty answering questions or providing examples of their experiences, I was able to use probing questions to stimulate their thoughts which enabled the participants to recall and provide descriptive responses. In addition to assisting me in shaping interview questions, my experience as a human resources professional and as an experienced interviewer in the world of business allowed me to use cues such as eye contact and body language to ask participants to clarify their perceptions.

The Interview Questions

The semi-structured interview involves the development of open-ended questions. The open-ended nature of the approach allows the participants to respond from their perspectives. This approach requires skillful wording of each question prior to the interviews. Semi-structured, open-ended questions based on topics drawn from the review of the literature guided the face-to-face interviews with 18 recent graduates of

business programs who worked in the Jacksonville, Florida, metropolitan area at the time of the interviews.

The interview questions suggested by the review of related literature were also designed to engage participants conversationally in order to prompt their thinking regarding their perceptions of their transition experiences. Various types of questions permitted participants to describe the many dimensions of their experiences from their own perspectives. For example, question types included those focusing on demographics, experience, opinion and values, and feelings (Patton, 2002). The full list of questions is provided in Appendix A.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

The selection of participants was guided by purposive sampling (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The objective was to collect information through interviews regarding the transition experience of recent graduates of general four-year business-degree programs. Their studies focused on the general area of business administration and not on business specialties such as accounting, marketing, or human resources. This decision included those graduates who did not have specific transition paths to professional work. The participants also were to have at least one year but no more than two years of workplace experience prior to being interviewed for the study. This criterion included participants who were still new to the workplace and who had the potential to recall their recent transition experiences from college to the workplace.

The participants were volunteers recruited through members of a local chapter of the Society for Human Resources Management. I received access from the president of the local chapter to address the chapter membership and to request members to recruit

volunteers from their respective organizations. A flyer summarizing the focus of the study and the criteria for participant inclusion was distributed to the membership (see Appendix B). Announcements at local meetings, in addition to placing advertisements in the chapter monthly newsletter, were also used to assist in the recruiting process.

This original plan for access to this group did not provide sufficient participants for the research. As a result, an additional avenue for recruiting participants included the use of the flyer within the newsletter of a group of young professionals. Although more time was required to recruit additional participants, the effort yielded a diverse group of participant volunteers.

The number of participants interviewed included all individuals who volunteered as a result of this two-stage recruiting process and who met the criteria for participation in the study. A total of 18 graduates volunteered for the study. Participants were 23 to 28 years of age with undergraduate degrees in business. The participants worked in various industries and positions related to business. To avoid a conflict of interest, no employees from my own organization were selected as participants in the study. The resulting group of 18 participants interviewed included 4 males and 14 females; 6 Whites, 8 African Americans, 3 from India, 1 from another Asian country. Fictitious names were used in place of the participants actual names for confidentiality.

One-on-one interviews were scheduled with each potential participant. Meetings were scheduled in quiet locations that provided time for uninterrupted discussion. Public libraries in convenient locations for the participants were the primary meeting places. Typically, the interviews were scheduled at the end of the work day in the evenings. The time of day varied between 5:00 pm and 8:00 pm. A tape recorder was used with the

permission of each participant in order to capture the entire interview. My goal was to help the participants feel comfortable in sharing their experiences. Observation can also play an important role during the interview process because body language and other nonverbal behaviors contextualize the spoken words (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Therefore, I also took notes to help later in placing the transcribed interviews within the conversational events.

<div align="center">Ethical Considerations</div>

The researcher has primary responsibility for maintaining ethical standards during the course of the study. These issues include protection of the participants, obtaining informed consent, respecting participants' rights to privacy, and honesty with professional review boards (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The design of the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of North Florida, Jacksonville, Florida (see Appendix C). Participants were assured of confidentiality with regard to information shared during the interview process (see Appendix C for a copy of the informed consent form used in the present study). Although there was no promise of anonymity, participants were assured that employers would not receive any information regarding the participants' perceptions of their transitions into the workplace.

Security of the data is always a concern with any research study. In the present study, the data were transcribed from tape-recorded interviews and were stored on disks and on a password-protected computer hard drive, all placed in a secure location. Once the tape recorded data are transcribed, the tapes will be destroyed. The electronic data were also stored in a password-protected digital file maintained in a secure location. Three years after the conclusion of the study all data files are to be destroyed.

Another dimension for ethical consideration lies in the process of transcribing interviews because of the possibility to misinterpret the meaning of statements. Therefore, participants were offered an opportunity to review the transcription of their interviews in order to provide any corrections and clarifications.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

As the interviews were completed, the task of transcribing the data began. The detailed transcriptions of the recorded interviews were necessary for a credible description and convincing interpretation of the data (Eisner, 1998). Transcription was continued daily as interviews were completed. Transcription of each audiotape took approximately 6 hours. Although transcription of the tapes was a tedious process, the process was extremely beneficial because it provided familiarity and intimacy with the participants' specific descriptions of experiences. This familiarity with the data provided a transition between data collection and data analysis and generated "emergent insights" (Patton, 2002, p. 441).

Once all of the taped interviews were transcribed, I organized the printed transcriptions into a three-inch binder for easy access and began reading the transcribed interviews. I first read all of the transcriptions in one sitting; then I re-read portions of the transcripts at different times to get a sense of the points that were important to the participants. A cross-classification matrix was completed in order to search for dominant topics and perceptions (Patton, 2002). This approach enabled the generation of new insights about how the data could be organized and to "look for patterns that may not have been immediately obvious in the initial, inductive analysis" (Patton, 2002, p. 468).

After the initial organization of the data, I began to observe patterns in the data that could be identified as themes or categories (Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2006). Chapter Four provides a detailed description of the steps followed the data analysis process.

Limitations

Along with the strengths of interviewing as a data collection strategy, this approach has limitations. Indeed, all research approaches have their limitations. As with all qualitative research, the researcher plays an important role in the interviewing process. Therefore, the interviewer needs to have skill in developing rapport with the participants so that they trust the interview process and share their perspectives openly. In this way, the interviewer engages with the participants while avoiding interjection of his or her own personal feelings and expressions.

The purposive sample of participants in the present study and the geographic area they represent may also be seen as limitations. However, the generalization process of qualitative research does not include making statements about all others outside of the group interviewed. Instead, generalization involves transferring lessons learned in one situation to other situations that may be comparable (Peshkin, 1993; Eisner, 1998). Data analysis procedures used in the present study recognized these alternative approaches to generalization.

The importance of the researcher as a tool in the qualitative research process may suggest another limitation. However, the researcher's experience and skills, that is, the researcher's connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998), provided avenues to knowledge that might not have otherwise been available. Other researchers

could access other knowledge, but the knowledge developed by one experienced

professional would still be worthy of consideration.

Summary

The present study focused on recent business graduates' perceptions of their

transition experiences into the workplace. Students' perceptions might be important to

those in the workplace and in institutions of higher education who could assist them as

they make the transition from college to the workplace. The qualitative research methods

used in the overall design of the study were selected in order to capture and describe the

students' perceptions. Open-ended interviews were the primary data collection method.

The recruitment of the participants, the procedures for data collection, and the initial

procedures for data analysis were also described. This qualitative research approach

guided data collection, through interviews, that, in turn, led to developing understanding

of participants' perceptions of their transition experiences. Chapter Four includes the

description of the specific data analysis processes used in the present study and the

presentation of the results of the data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter Four presents the analysis of the data collected for the present study. The

study examined the experiences of recent business graduates as they made their

transitions from college into the workplace. This data analysis describes the perceptions

of the participants who volunteered for the study. Their descriptions and stories are

presented with the goal of providing knowledge to those who may support the transition

experiences of others who move from college to the workplace.

The chapter begins with a description and explanation of each stage within the

data analysis process. The discussion includes the contribution of seven components to

this complex process: (a) researcher experience, (b) researcher knowledge, (c)

connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998), (d) the review of related literature, (e) experiences while

collecting data, (f) organization of data, and (g) topic formation. The discussion continues

with a description of the strategies used to analyze the data, content analysis (Patton,

2002) and educational criticism (Eisner, 1998). Together, these descriptions and

explanations elucidate the qualitative data-analysis research process followed in the

present study that is also represented in the diagram found on page 50 (see Figure 1).

Following this detailed description of the data analysis process are discussions of

the results of the data analysis according to three general topic areas—the importance of

organizational socialization for new employees, the complexity of mentoring in the

workplace, and the continuation of young adult development. The final topic, the

continuation of young adult development, required additional analysis that included three

sub-topics—the high expectations of the participants, training, and the real-world. The

data analysis process is explained in the next section.

<div align="center">The Data Analysis Process</div>

Both my knowledge and experience assisted me in understanding the perceptions

of the participants and provided a means to analyze the participants' experiences. This

process is identified as "connoisseurship" or "the art of appreciation" (Eisner, 1998, p.

63). My connoisseurship became a major tool for identifying the topics for the initial

review of related literature. Similarly, this connoisseurship contributed to the process of

data analysis.

The data analysis process began with an understanding and use of the researcher's

prior knowledge and experience as tools. My knowledge of the human resources

profession was useful in the development of the semi-structured interview questions that

would begin to guide data collection. To begin data collection, one-on-one interviews

were conducted with volunteer participants who were recent college graduates. My

experience in working with young graduates who have made the transition into

organizations where I have worked provided a unique understanding of their challenges. I

collaborated with the participants to select an environment that would allow for

confidential discussion in convenient locations for the participants. My experience as an

interviewer was valuable in the data collection process. Making use of open-ended

questions and probing techniques engaged the participants and encouraged them to

provide richer descriptions of their experiences. Once the data were collected, the

information had to be organized.

The process of organizing the data began with transcribing the tape-recorded interviews.

Once transcribed, the data were reviewed several times and memoranda were developed

as a means of formulating topics for analysis. Two strategies—content analysis (Patton,

2002) and educational criticism (Eisner, 1998)—provided a means to construct an

overview of the data (Silverman, 2004). Content analysis included searching for recurring

words, phrases, and concepts within the data. Therefore, I began to list some of the topics

based on the recurrent words and phrases that the participants articulated in their

interviews. In addition to content analysis, the four dimensions of educational criticism—

description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics —provided a structure for

developing meaning from data analysis as depicted in Figure 2.

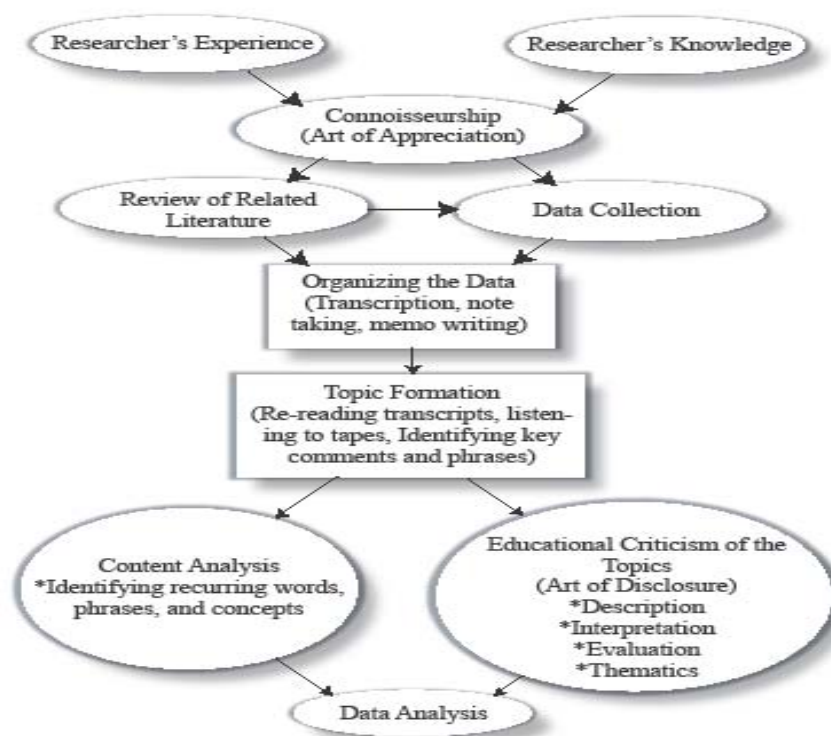*Figure 2: Diagram Data Analysis Process*

Figure 2 depicts how the steps in this process related to each other. Following the diagram are descriptions of each step in the process.

Researcher Experience

My experience in facilitating the transition of recent graduates into the workforce was a valuable tool during the qualitative research process. Specific to the present study, my work as a human resources professional for many years assisted me in analyzing the data. I have held various positions in the profession, including specialist positions in recruiting and staffing and positions which manage all aspects of the human resources domain. My experience as a vice president of human resources in one corporation provided an overall understanding of an organization's challenges in attracting and retaining newly hired employees. I have assisted employees as they made their transitions into the organizations where I worked. My experience in developing, implementing, and conducting orientation programs helped to understand the challenges new hires may encounter in their transitions.

My experience in the profession provided me knowledge that enabled me to understand and appreciate the descriptions and perceptions of the participants in the study. For example, when participants described their experiences of the first day on the job, I knew from my experience and knowledge what human resources best practices suggest for that first day. Thus, although experience is important in analyzing data, researcher knowledge is equally beneficial as a tool to analyze qualitative data.

Researcher Knowledge

The knowledge that the researcher brings to the subject is valuable as a tool in organizing the data and in recognizing possible topics of importance. This knowledge

may be acquired through actual experience, on-the-job training, and formal education. The knowledge acquired through informal methods is legitimate; however, this knowledge is enhanced as a tool with formal education in the field. According to Eisner (1998), "the level of anyone's connoisseurship can be raised through tuition" (p. 69). Thus, in addition to my experience, a master's degree in human resources and active involvement with professional organizations increased my knowledge base within the human resources profession.

Connoisseurship in Data Analysis

Experience and knowledge contribute to what Eisner (1998) termed "connoisseurship." My understanding and appreciation of the complexity of the process of acclimating new employees into the workplace enabled me to bring a perspective to the participants' situations as they were described during the interviews and as data analysis proceeded. This understanding and appreciation are identified as "connoisseurship" or "the art of appreciation" (p. 63). It is the "means through which we come to know the complexities, nuances, and subtleties of aspects of the world in which we have a special interest" (p. 68). However, this process is not liking or agreeing with a statement, opinion, or idea. Appreciating a situation or experience or knowing about it does not necessarily mean agreement with the view as it is described. According to Eisner, "nothing in connoisseurship as a form of appreciation *requires* that our judgments be positive" (p. 69). In these ways, researcher experience and knowledge became tools used in analyzing the data collected from the participants during the interview process. This connoisseurship assisted in the development of relevant topics to organize the data during the process of reviewing the tape-recorded interviews and written transcripts.

Review of Related Literature and Data Collection

Initially, connoisseurship influenced the process that governed the literature review by determining the topics worthy of consideration. These topics included the skills required for initial employment in business, employers' expectations of new hires, and organizational culture and socialization. These areas of the literature provided a context relevant to the research question. Although the research question focused on the transitions from the post-secondary level of education to the workplace, the literature review also provided a brief discussion of the literature developed in studying student transitions from secondary education to the workplace in response to recent efforts focused on workforce development. Literature regarding student transitions in other contexts provided additional examples of how this concept might be applicable to the experiences of business students: student transitions from secondary education to post-secondary education and student transitions from nursing programs and teacher education to initial employment.

The initial review of related literature contributed to the development of the interview questions. Once the initial review of related literature was complete, the collection of data using semi-structured interviews began. The interviews were conducted and tape-recorded for future review and transcription. As data collection proceeded, additional topics in the literature appeared relevant, given participants' descriptions of their experiences. Specifically, my own connoisseurship and their discussions led to the identification of the growth and development of young adults as an additional topic for the review of related literature.

Organizing the Data

I began a review of the content to identify patterns of experiences the participants described (Patton, 2002) by making handwritten notes as patterns and commonalities among ideas became apparent. Memo-writing was then used to bring these ideas together and to develop them from single words into concepts (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Memos helped to tie different pieces of data together in a "cluster" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 69) to show how a particular piece of data functioned as part of a general concept. During the process of writing the memos, reviewing some related literature on the specific topic was necessary to interpret and contextualize participant statements.

Figure 3: Concept Map

Topic Formation

The next step was to review and to organize the concepts into a concept map or causal network (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 133). Figure 3 represents the resulting concept map developed.

I began to develop the concept map by listing some of the topics based on the recurrent words and phrases that the participants described in their interviews. My knowledge and experience of the hiring process helped to make the topics apparent as I listened to the recorded interviews and as I read the transcripts over several times. I began to develop topics to capture these thoughts which helped to organize the data that participants used to describe their experiences.

To expand analysis of each topic, I asked simple questions in reference to the topic: who?, what?, when?, where?, why?, and how? This classic approach (Patton, 2002) is a significant part of professional writing and of our understanding of the everyday world. Journalists also use these questions as part of an investigative approach, as they observe, interview, and analyze records (St. John, 1985).

For example, the participants described situations during which they were assisted in their transition experiences. The concept of mentoring as a tool to assist the participants in their transitions to the workplace was apparent after reviewing the transcripts. Taking the concept of mentoring as a topic, questions were developed that related to the transition experience. The questions included the following: (a) Who does the mentoring? (b) What type of mentoring program is appropriate? (c) When does the mentoring occur? (d) Where does the mentoring take place? (e) Why is mentoring necessary? (f) Why is mentoring important? (g) How is the mentoring taking place? (h)

How long is the mentoring period? Using these basic questions, an outline was created to develop a given topic that, in turn, guided the presentation of the analysis of the data. For mentoring, that outline included the following items: definitions of mentoring, need for mentoring, role of mentors, the need for a mentor, who should mentor?, and where/how should the mentoring occur?

This process was used to develop each topic, eventually leading to three topics for detailed descriptions and interpretations in data analysis. Because some data were relevant to more than one topic, the topics were not considered discrete.

Nonetheless, these one-word topics— mentoring, socialization, and development–needed to be developed further to capture the meaning and voice of the participants. Therefore, the one-word topic was formulated into an actual descriptive concept phrase. For example, the one-word topic mentoring was finally developed as "the complexity of the mentoring process in the workplace." The other two topics were similarly expanded: the topic of "socialization" developed into "the importance of organizational socialization in the workplace" and the topic of young adult development became "the continuation of young adult development." Once the process was completed for each topic, the steps for critical analysis began.

<div align="center">Data Analysis Strategies</div>

Content Analysis

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews with the participants were analyzed using a combination of two strategies to construct meaning: content analysis, using an inductive approach (Patton, 2002) to produce a comprehensive overview of the data (Silverman, 2004), and educational criticism (Eisner, 1998). Content analysis

includes searching for recurring words, phrases, and concepts within the data. It is used to refer to "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2002, p. 453). This inductive approach identified recurrent phenomena in the experiences described by the participants and recurrent relationships among them (Miles & Huberman, 1984, Silverman, 2004). In doing so, the process yields a relatively systematic and comprehensive summary or overview of the data set as a whole (Silverman, 2004, p. 182).

Educational Criticism

The second strategy for data analysis, educational criticism, is the effort by the educational connoisseur to make public the complex and subtle aspects of the phenomena being analyzed because it provides a means through which others' perceptions are increased and understanding deepened (Eisner, 1998, p. 86). Through educational criticism, participants' interview data were organized, described, interpreted, and evaluated to provide meaning and understanding for others.

Criticism is not to be viewed as a negative activity but is to be seen as a way to develop understanding. Criticism provides connoisseurship with a process to facilitate understanding of the data by others. "For connoisseurship to have a public presence, we must turn to criticism" (Eisner, 1998, p. 85). When using educational criticism to analyze the data, the researcher must avoid making judgments and personal interpretation because the purpose is to interpret the "participant's voice" for the public.

Educational criticism makes use of four dimensions to disclose the meaning of participant data: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. This structure

guided the analysis of each of the three topics. Description provided an illustration of the participants' experiences through the use of the specifics and details they shared. The participants' stories were told and specific examples were described. Once description was complete, interpretation followed to give context to what was described, to "illuminate" (p. 95) the descriptions given by the participants. "If description can be thought of as giving an account of, interpretation can be regarded as accounting for" (Eisner, 1998, p. 95). The third step in the process was an evaluation of the data. The purpose of evaluation is to determine if the participants' experiences provided growth, inspiration, and contributions to their learning. Evaluation in the present study, for example, extended the interpretations by addressing how the participants felt about their transition experiences and what was important to them. Evaluation of what is seen was "vital" in providing a complete analysis because educational critics have the task not only of describing but also of appraising (p. 99). The final step in analyzing the data was thematics. The goal here was to determine the essential features of what was learned within the present study and what these participants have offered. And, because "the theme embedded in the particular situation, extends beyond the situation itself" (p. 103), thematics supports what in the study might have value for others.

Organization of Discussion

The data analysis strategies and processes described above provided a means to give voice to the participants of the study regarding their perceptions and experience of the transition processes from the collegiate environment to the workplace.

The analysis of the data yielded three topics that captured participants' accounts of their experiences. These topics—socialization, mentoring, and young adult

development—provided a means to organize the analysis of the data. As data analysis continued, the topics developed into descriptive phrases: (a) the importance of organizational socialization; (b) the complexity of mentoring in the workplace; and (c) the continuation of young adult development. Figure 4 below depicts the process of data analysis, including the topics for the presentation of the results of data analysis.

Figure 4: Topic Development
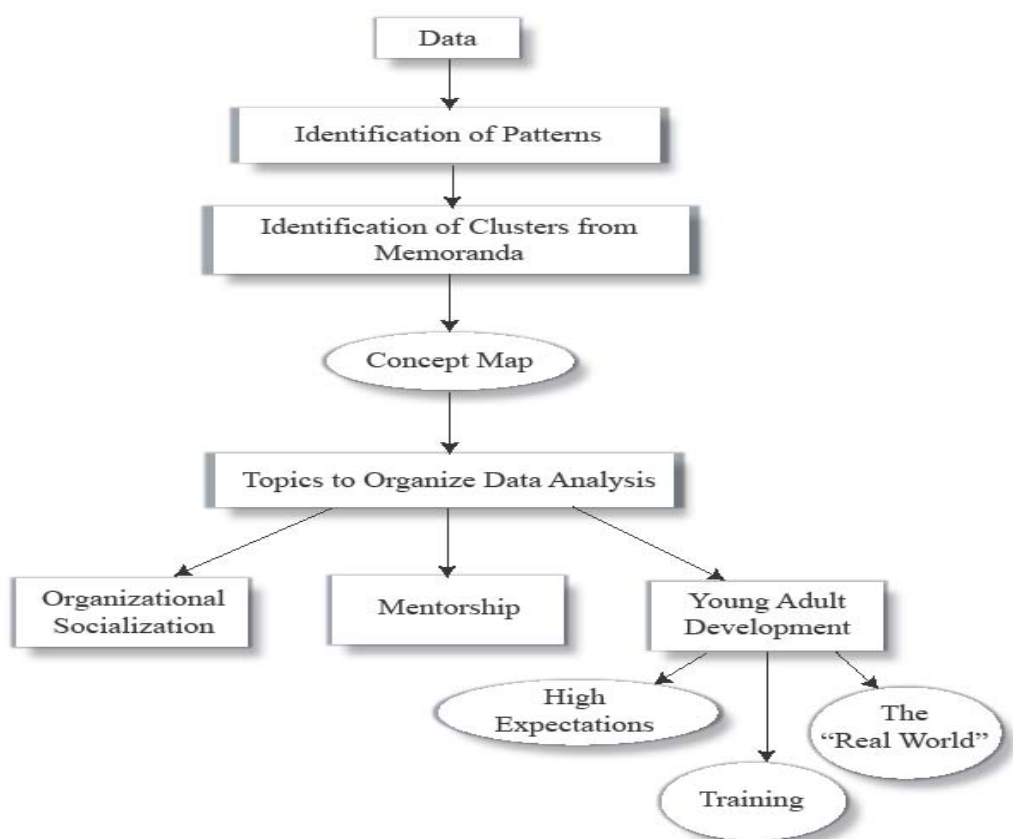
The sequence in the discussion of the topics from the data analysis that follows reflects the progression of the transition experiences of new hires. That is, new hires first encounter the need for organizational socialization; then they seek mentoring and other processes that lead to their growth and development as young adults. However, even

though such a logical sequence may be useful, the relevance of certain data to more than one topic area yields some overlap within the discussion.

The first topic presented in the analysis is the importance of organizational socialization for the participants. The perceptions expressed by the participants' regarding their desires to feel valued as part of their organizations are described. The analysis demonstrates how of the participants valued understanding and feeling a part of the culture of the work environment as they made their transitions. The complexity of mentoring in the workplace is the second topic presented as part of the discussion of data analysis. This topic became apparent from the participants' perceptions as they described their needs for guidance as they made their transitions into the workplace. The analysis indicates how the participants perceived the importance of mentoring in the workplace for new employees. The final topic focuses on the continuing growth and development of young adults while they make the transition from college to the workplace. In the review the dilemmas faced by the participants are described indicated they strived to meet their high expectations of the organization, their need to become effective members of the team through training, and their realization of the real world as they continue their development into adulthood.

The presentation of the dimensions of the data analysis for each topic is organized according to Eisner's four steps in educational criticism; that is, it moves from description to interpretation and then to evaluation and thematics. The description phase includes excerpts from participants' interviews to represent and clarify their perceptions. The analysis proceeds from these descriptions to interpretations of the descriptions. The

evaluation of the data and the discussion of thematics comprise the last two components in the discussion of the analysis of each topic.

The Importance of Organizational Socialization for New Employees

Description

As the participants shared their transition experiences from college to the workplace, they discussed the socialization experiences and the culture of their organizations. The participants shared the physical aspects of their environments, the location of their desks or work spaces, work space design and conditions, and the diversity or lack of diversity represented by their co-workers. Participants in the study described situations they experienced while becoming familiar with the culture and environment of their organizations. They described how they felt being new employees and whether or not they felt comfortable and welcome.

The participants experienced changes that presented them with some challenges and adjustments. For example, Jennifer described her experiences as she became accustomed to the dress code.

> The culture was so different from what I was used to. Everyone is in a suit, well not a suit, but a tie and shirt. Women are very professionally dressed, . . . so visually there was a huge difference. There's a lot less laughter in a big atmosphere like that than there is in a small atmosphere like my previous internship. . . . It was so lackadaisical then. You get into a Fortune 200 company and everything is straight-laced, you know.

Here, Jennifer acknowledged the contrasts between the college culture and her work culture.

The norms in an organization may be totally different for the newly hired employees than those that they had experienced previously. Thus, the new hires perceived a need for the organizations' representatives to provide explanation and

description for acceptable norms and behavior. For some new hires, guidelines regarding

appropriate dress may prove to be very different to the new employee when compared to

campus dress. Heather described her new environment and similarly experienced what

she considered to be some kind of culture shock:

> I moved to Augusta, Georgia, which is known for the racism. The man I actually worked for had two secretaries, and they weren't allowed to wear pants. They could only wear skirts and stockings and heels, and so the environment was very different coming from Jacksonville [Florida].

Heather noted that her work environment was very different than what she was

accustomed to and seemed to relate the differences in culture to her relocation to a new

city.

One of the first experiences for the participants once hired into a new positions is

the company introduction or orientation. The participants described experiences with

very organized programs lasting for up to a week to situations where no introduction or

orientation existed at all. Some participants in the study were impressed with the

orientation they experienced in their organizations. Amanda described her orientation

experience:

> I worked at [Metropolitan] Hospital, and they had the best orientation because it was a full day; they give you the history of the hospital. I remember their slogan was [that] even if you weren't a doctor or a nurse or a care provider, every person's position in the hospital contributed to making a difference for the patient.

Similarly, Heather had a good experience:

> When I began my career, my orientation was really good. It was very in-depth. It was literally like a three-week process where you come in and the first day is about benefits, you know, how to maneuver around the campus. And then, throughout the process, it teaches about the . . . different facets of a company.

Katherine's descriptions of her orientation experience reflected points made in the

literature regarding orientation as a basic introduction to the new organization with a

focus on benefits, policy, and procedures:

> You would be in training for two or three days and then you would go to the new-hire orientation which would explain the foundations of the business and introduce you to some representatives that were higher up in the business. They would explain your benefits and how that worked, who you need to call. . . . normal, general questions that everybody would need to ask, like, where's my time sheet go, who's my manager.

These descriptions offer examples of positive orientation experiences.

Shay described a very different experience of her first day and her expectations of

orientation:

> I just remember, my first day, I got a letter from human resources that said to report to the location where I would be working at 8:00 in the morning. So I get there at 8:00, and the door is locked. Nobody's there [laughter]. . . . Guess I was expecting more of an orientation on what I was supposed to be doing, but that didn't happen. I had the job description, but it doesn't go into detail about what you're supposed to be doing.

Shay's expected some kind of introduction to the organization, but no orientation

experience occurred.

As the participants continued within their organizations, they began to develop

relationships with their peers and leadership teams. Participants described these

experiences as an important aspect of their work lives. The literature also refers to the

impact of joining a new organization in terms of employees' changing patterns of

behavior. "Joining an organization implies assimilation into patterns of thinking and

behaving" (Gundry & Rousseau, 1994, p. 1063). The participants in the present study

described feelings of belonging and feeling welcome when they felt that their

contributions added value to the organization. In addition, the participants described

processes that appealed to them in terms such as experiencing the atmosphere of

"family," helping co-workers, participating in organizational groups and activities such as

affinity groups and community activities, and feeling that they "fit" with the organization.

Cathy described the feelings she experienced in her socialization in the

organization:

> I think [my company] is like one big team really; we all help out, we all work together and . . . even outside of work. I think, you know, if someone was moving, I think any of us would probably meet that person on a Saturday and help them move. We call each other the . . . family and that's literally how it is and how it feels in that work environment.

This example reflects a socialization process that went beyond familiarity with policies

and procedures.

The new hires perceived a need for new employees to feel comfortable in the

environment in order to build relationships. This socialization into the work culture and

feeling a part of the family helped the new hires to feel welcome and valued. Katherine

also described the feeling of a "family" environment in the culture of her organization

and provided an example of how this culture was manifested.

> [My company is] a very family-oriented company . . . and every Wednesday they would have [a breakfast]. . . . we had our own chef, and he would cook everybody in the company breakfast every Wednesday morning. And it was just great because you got to speak to everybody. There was maybe like 100 people that came to this breakfast, and it was all on the administrative side that would go and attend. It was great because you got to talk to people and know them, and it was just a good family time.

The literature recognizes the participants' desire for socialization and the importance they

attached to socialization within to the organization's culture. In their efforts to become

familiar with the organization, new employees tend to seek job-related information from

supervisors and emotional information from co-workers (Filstad, 2004, p. 396).

Furthermore, as members of the Millennial generation, that is, those 23 to 28 years of age, the participants in the study needed to be social and connected to friends and family.

Participants in the present study indicated that they valued close-knit work environments in which peers became like family and enjoyed each other, not only as co-workers but also as friends. These organizational relationships appeared to be important to the participants, especially early in their careers. The literature supports the perception of the participants that friendships in the workplace are important. For example "a quarter of people meet their lifetime partner at work, while 7 out of 10 men and 9 out of 10 women make lasting friendships that extend beyond the workplace" (Collins, 2000, p. 13). More than 70% of employees described by Collins said that they felt a sense of loss when changing jobs due to the loss of friendships and that a support network could be more significant than loss of self-esteem or income (p. 13).

Interpretation

The term organizational socialization appears in the literature to describe the culture of organizations and how employees work within the cultural norms of a specific organization. More specifically, "organizational socialization is the process of 'learning the ropes,' the process of being indoctrinated and trained, the process of being taught what is important in an organization or some subunit thereof" (Schein, 1968, p. 2).

The socialization of new hires into the organization is a process that begins on the first day of employment. One of the primary tools used in the socialization of new hires into an organization is new-hire training or new-hire orientation. These orientation programs are designed to introduce both experienced and novice employees to their new positions, the people they work with, the culture of the organization, and its values and

mission (Klein & Weaver, 2000). These training programs can play a critical role during socialization by providing newcomers with a variety of important information (Klein & Weaver). Socializing oneself into a new work environment can be difficult for all new hires, including experienced workers and career changers. However, the interview data documented that entering the work environment for the recent college graduates can be even more difficult due to the additional changes accompanying the transition into adulthood.

The participants' descriptions of their expectations for the first day on the job and their expectations for orientation indicated a need for information about the organization's culture and norms in order to be successful in their jobs. They wanted preparation for the situations that they might encounter when they entered the workplace. Based on the participants' descriptions, they felt that the orientation experiences were lacking in substance when too brief. Although some participants described a pleasant experience during orientation, some participants did not have any orientation at all. The literature describes similar experiences for new hires. "Too often, new employees have bad experiences when they start their jobs. The new hire is ready for the job, but the job isn't ready for the new hire" (Lavigna, 2009, p. 65).

Although the orientation process is a necessary tool in the education and transition of new hires into the workplace, orientation is not designed to move beyond the initial introduction to the organization. Socialization continues beyond the first day through several months, when most employers evaluate new hires to assess their progress. Deliberate efforts on the part of the organization to socialize new hires are therefore important. When little to no attention was given to the participants during their first days

of employment, they were disappointed and did not feel valued. The experiences during the first days of employment that the participants did have were both negative and positive. These first impressions were important to the participants. When listening to these descriptions, I was able to hear the excitement or disappointment in the voices of the participants while describing their experiences. The first few days of employment provided an unforgettable impression for these participants as they began to observe the organizational culture.

Corporate culture from the participants' perspectives included their perception of company policies regarding appearance in the workplace, policies regarding communication within the organization both verbally and in writing, the organizational structure or hierarchy, and general interactions with their peers. The culture of the organization was part of the real world that the participants perceived they would have to navigate. The literature supports the perceptions of the participants by summarizing necessary activities for the new employees' introduction to the organization: (a) an introduction to the written and unwritten elements of organizational culture; (b) learning how to navigate the organization; (c) an opportunity for meeting colleagues; and (d) an opportunity to have questions answered (Lavigna, 2009).

The literature also cites the need for information regarding the dress code. In some cases, employers assume that the new employees know how to dress for work, when in fact they may not know this information. The new hires of the Millennial generation may dress as they did when attending classes in college.

> Newly hired Millennial employees at George Mason University (GMU) in Fairfax, VA., were creating an impression, and it wasn't good. Some were showing up for work in "flip-flops and revealing clothing," says Lori Ann Roth, Ph.D., director of training and development. The gentlemen were wearing jeans

with boxers showing; the ladies were wearing low-cut jeans with thongs showing and spaghetti strap low-cut tank tops. As a result, Roth continues, "we received many requests [from managers] for a class we call Professionalism at Work. One of the issues covered in the class includes dressing as an office professional and not as a student". (Tyler, 2008a, p. 1)

Such occurrences vividly underscore the gap between the expectations of employers regarding dress and the possible behavior of new hires.

Understanding the dress code was important for the participants. They wanted information to enable them to dress in a manner similar to their peers so that they could feel comfortable in the organization and not "stand out" as the new employee, as Jennifer described her concern. In addition, participants needed to understand the environment in terms of day-to-day interactions with peers. Further, participants wanted to know how to conduct themselves with their peers. They needed to know whether it was acceptable to talk with each other while working, or whether people preferred to avoid communication. They wanted to know if the environment was casual or more serious or, as Jennifer described the culture, "straight laced." Typically participants discovered this type of information via personal observation of peers and leaders to determine how they should conduct themselves.

Also important were the relationships that the participants formed early in their employment in the organization. Employee events when all or groups of employees gathered socially were enjoyable to the participants. These events provided an opportunity for the participants to get to know their peers and vice versa. These events were fun and allowed for the employees to experience each other in a different atmosphere.

These examples demonstrate how socialization began for these participants in order to support them in adapting to the culture and norms of the organization. The new hires wanted help in navigating the work environment and in learning the culture in order to gain support for the challenges they faced as they learned their respective jobs.

Evaluation

The participants expressed the point that, as new employees, they needed to adjust their behavior to the culture and mores of the organization. "Individual learning in organizations can be de facto coercive persuasion when organizational learning and culture change require that learners develop appropriate attitudes and thinking" (Schein, 1999, p. 163). Participants understood that they were expected to conform to the culture of the organization; however, it was difficult as a new hire when little guidance was provided. Most felt that learning the culture was "trial-and-error." To avoid the consequences of an intern's not knowing the expectations for dress, Jennifer, as a recent new hire, took it upon herself to talk with the student about her "low-cut" blouses. Others in the office thought the attire was inappropriate for the office, but the intern was never told. Feeling empathy for the intern, Jennifer talked with her and explained the appropriate dress. She thus demonstrated how socialization might occur. New hires should not have to guess what the norms are or be left to discern them on their own and perhaps too late.

It is important for new employees to be socialized into their new environment as soon as possible. The participants described experiences with adjusting to the dress code in their new positions. Appearance policies and dress codes are important as they help the new employee to come prepared in the appropriate attire and immediately feel part of the

organization. Employees need to have access to this type of information immediately as part of their socialization. This "rapid socialization enables the employee to gain more self-confidence, to feel capable of performing the job better, and to have a better understanding of the organization's history, norms and rules" (Chao et al.1991, p. 10). As demonstrated in these examples, organizations use orientation programs to begin to introduce the new employee into the organization's culture. These orientation programs can differ in the extent to which they provide information about the broader organization, in addition to information about the job and immediate work environment (Klein & Weaver, 2000). However, the experiences described are just the beginning of the new hires' learning with regard to how organizations operate.

Once employees enter a firm, a variety of socialization methods can more fully integrate them into the company environment in the weeks and months beyond the first day (Fogarty, 1992). The appropriate socialization can mean the difference between success and failure on the job. Cohen-Scali (2003) described two types of guidance in her discussion of the transition experience from college to work: "Direct Integration in the World of Work" and "Progressive Socialization by Work." As the titles suggest, direct integration is the move from college to work without any internship or apprenticeship; in contrast, the progressive socialization transition provides the opportunity to gradually move into the world of work through an interim work experience. The participants in the present study were socialized by the direct integration method because they went directly into the workplace and began the socialization process by using the tools offered by the organization. Certainly, some type of progressive socialization would be a better solution than socialization only considered during the first few days of work. Employers need to

partner with educational institutions to provide opportunities for internships to provide the initial socialization and begin the transition into the workplace.

In some cases, as new hires, the participants needed information regarding the basics to function in the workplace, such as appearance, and this information was not provided. The organization's culture, mission, and values were not explained. In one case, the employer did not provide the new employee with her work hours. Shannon stated, "My manager didn't tell me my hours of work, so I made up my own hours." Her manager was later upset that she was not arriving at work until after 9:00 AM each day. Lack of information leads to a vacuum, and, if the new hire fills it inappropriately, then the issue is compounded.

As the participants began to describe their experiences, it was apparent that the social aspect of work was important. Many of the new hires in this age group were new to the city or area where they worked, with no friends or family nearby. They had left their friends at college and were beginning new lives. In these situations, work became the place where friendships and sometimes romantic relationships were developed. For example, some participants in the study were relocated to North Florida to attend college, and then remained in North Florida after graduation. Katherine moved from Maine, and Jonathan moved from South Florida. Heather moved away from North Florida to Georgia for her new position. In addition, three of the participants were new to the country having relocated from India to the United States to attend college and then to take their first jobs. The move to a new job in addition to the move to an unfamiliar city created a loss for the newly hired graduates. Therefore, the workplace became the place to develop friendships and the feelings of family.

Thematics

The participants clearly articulated the need for businesses to offer meaningful orientation. The participants who experienced some form of an orientation program noted benefits that were not evident in the perspectives of those who had no orientation. Those who had no orientation felt less valued and more lost during their first day and first days of employment.

In addition to the need for an orientation program, the need for friendships and a desire for affiliation were expressed by the participants. These descriptions of the social aspects in the transition experience repeatedly revealed their desire to belong. The participants often described their peers and co-workers as friends. The participants used phrases like "it feels like a family" to describe the close friendships with their co-workers. The participants described relationships and how the co-workers related to each other. They described co-workers as caring and helpful. These descriptions represent a common thread among the participants regarding their desire for belonging and the need to feel closeness to others in the new organization.

The participants' expectations for friendship in the workplace were evident. However, these expectations may not be realistic if the organization does not explicitly respond to them. Leaving the collegiate environment, where these newly hired graduates had many friends to share learning and personal experiences, and moving to the workplace where these friendships may not develop may be difficult. The need to belong is recognized by Maslow's hierarchy of needs just after the fulfillment of physiological

needs and those related to safety and security (Newstrom, 2002, p. 4). If the organization

responds to these needs, it also can benefit.

> Many potential benefits can be derived from workplace friendships, both for individuals and for organizations. . . . Specifically, workplace friendship increases support and resources that help individuals to get their jobs done. Through friendship, individuals obtain support from others; managers find allies, instill loyalty, and stand up for people who support them. (Berman, West, & Richter, 2002, ¶ 7)

Therefore, rather than considering friendships as problematic, these relationships can be

supportive not only for new hires but for others as well.

The interview data described the desire of the participants to receive a thorough

orientation and information regarding the organizational culture which would assist them

in developing relationships while learning their specific jobs. The theme developed from

this analysis demonstrates the participants' need for information and support and the need

for affiliation. However, organizational socialization moves beyond the first day and first

few days of employment to the weeks and months that following when new employees

continue to need assistance. Providing mentors is one way to foster on-going

socialization for new hires as they transition from college to the workplace.

<div align="center">The Complexity of Mentoring in the Workplace</div>

Description

The participants described their need for solid orientation on the first day of

employment in addition to their desires for affiliation. Mentoring can fulfill both needs

because a well-designed program can provide the needed information for the new hire

while providing a relationship to satisfy the desire for affiliation. This topic describes the

participants' perceptions regarding mentoring programs for the newly hired.

For these participants, mentors were described as confidants who provided support to them as they navigated the workplace. The mentor helped to identify and explain the unwritten rules of the organization. The unwritten rules of the workplace may be taught to newcomers by peers or coworkers, but, if the newcomers are not able to establish relationships early on with someone to assist them through the transition, they may fall behind in "learning the ropes" (Schein, 1968, p. 2).

Mentors may come from various sources−not only the workplace. Heather discussed the fact that new graduates have to use the resources that are available to them. She described how she relied on the mentors in her personal life to assist her as she transitioned into the workplace. These mentors were able to provide guidance in areas where her parents did not have the experience or skill.

> I had some godparents who were really great who helped encourage me . . . and say, "OK, this is what you do; this is how you get around it." You network with people, you find people, you know, in the business and say, "Hey, if I need to come on Saturday afternoons, just show me, tutor me, and mentor." Then, this is what you have to do, and that's what I did.

Participants reported that they needed someone to talk to about concerns they have as new hires in the organization. They valued the help they received.

Some participants were able to take advantage of opportunities to work with a mentor via formal programs. Lindsey described her relationship with her mentor. She appreciated the fact that she could ask her mentor frank questions. She desired to know the truth and "the real deal." She could ask questions "off the record" about subjects that may be more personal, such as about clothing and hair styles, questions that may be gender-specific and culturally specific. For example, as an African American working for an insurance company, Lindsey wanted to know if it were acceptable to wear her hair in

braids, a traditional African American hairstyle. Fortunately for this participant, her

mentor was female and African American, a situation that provided some cultural

knowledge. In these situations, having a mentor to turn to for advice is essential. "I was

able to ask her all kinds of questions, like what to do with my hair when I'm out [doing

field work] and just that kind of stuff. So that was really helpful for me."

Ronald offered another example of a positive mentoring experience. He described

his experience in a mentorship program with his employer as a one of his most pleasant

experiences since beginning work.

> The most pleasant experience [that] I felt was beneficial to me is taking part in a mentorship program with a director. I've learned so much. I've learned a lot about, not just about me, but other people in the company. I see traits that I'd like to emulate that are in that person, [traits] that I'd like to be able to show. That's probably the most positive that I've seen in taking part in that [program].

Similarly, Jennifer described her experience with the mentor who was assigned to work

with her in her new position in the organization.

> She's very encouraging; she is very patient when we learn new projects. She understands that I am a recent college graduate and I may not know everything about the corporate world, so she is very catering to helping us understand.

Amanda also shared a positive experience as she described her appreciation for the

experience of working with a mentor in her role in customer service. Her voice tone and

eye contact projected her strong feelings about the support she received from the

experience.

> It's great to have someone to go to and talk to and say, you know, there are just some things I've been thinking about or you know, [there are] things I'm concerned about, or something like that. Just to have a place to vent. I think that is really good.

These examples from the participants demonstrate the benefits of good mentoring

experiences.

Mentoring also provides opportunities for new hires to learn about the organization. Learning the unwritten rules of the organization brings confidence to the newcomer and, with this confidence, an ability to approach the specific tasks of the job more positively. "Mentors are heroes in our lives who bring a fresh perspective to the process of self-reflection. Trusted mentors are able to light a candle within" (Laughlin & Yopp, 2006, p. 23). Mentors may also use examples of their experiences to further explain a situation or to make a point. Telling stories helps the new hire connect with the mentor and the organization through "a detailed narrative of past management actions, employee interactions, or other intra- or extra-organizational events that are communicated informally within the organization" (Swap, Leonard, Shields, & Abrams, 2001, p. 103).

The traditional mentoring process includes examples of mentors' own experiences, communicated through "story telling," that are helpful to new hires. Reflecting on their work experiences can help mentors explain to a protégé more easily how to manage a particular problem. For example, Katherine described an experience with her manager during which he used his knowledge to advise her.

> Like I asked him, "What do you see about me that I should change, or what is it that I can do personally to help me grow in the company and in the organization?" And he's very good. He'll sit there with me for half an hour and just answer my questions and give me some guidance from what he's picked up through the organization in order for me to grow.

The participants thus found value in having someone provide guidance by talking and sharing information.

Lindsey questioned her mentor regarding the mentor's decision to change positions within the insurance organization due to extensive travel requirements. The participant appreciated the open and honest response she received from her mentor:

> She was like, "I've reached a point in my life where I'd like to settle down, and it's kind of hard to do that when you're in and out and back and forth, especially if you're trying to get into a relationship and things like that. Everybody's not understanding with that, especially with guys. They say they are, but they're really not." So she was like, I just want to settle down. OK, understandable, that makes sense.

This story provided Lindsey a framework for considering her own future in terms of the time she would commit to the position she had that required a significant amount of travel.

The participants expressed the desire to have mentors in whom to confide and from whom to learn. Some participants specifically described a desire for honest relationships. Jonathan described his appreciation for his mentor's honesty and felt that the mentor was an inspiration.

> Honesty is what really inspires people. They don't want to hear. "Oh you're doing fine, and you're [really] not doing fine. [They don't want to hear,] "Don't worry about it," and then find out that they're hopelessly inadequate. But rather, [they want to hear,] "What you're doing really isn't enough, but you can do this and this, and it won't be that hard and you'll be ready." That [honesty] drives people to do better.

Jonathan also described two professors, a husband-and-wife team, who were younger than the average professor at his university and served as mentors to the students. They, too, presented forthright descriptions of the workplace.

> [The instructors] would give us real-life scenarios, and I think that's what helped me relate to them and feel a little more at ease about getting out there. Because they were saying, "It's not going to be easy when you get out there. They're [employers] going to expect you to do things, and [if there is a problem] it doesn't matter if it isn't your fault. They're going to expect you to take responsibility, that's just the way it is. . . . If you can survive it, you'll get a management

> position, and then it will be a different culture there and you'll learn to survive there [as well]." I think that what they told me about their experiences and [what they] told us [in terms of] what to expect, rather than have us read books about interpersonal communication, [they] had us experiment with it. They told us what happened in their lives. . . . And I think that helped us relate.

These descriptions indicate that for mentors to be effective, it is important that they be trustworthy and provide honest feedback.

The participants focused on mentoring programs and the value these programs could provide to new employees. They referenced their individual experiences to describe the benefits of mentoring. Some participants also described how mentoring programs were of value to the employer because the mentor taught the employee the importance of establishing and maintaining good customer relationships. Amanda asserted:

> [Employers must] teach your employees about building that [customer] relationship, because it may be the one and only time they interact with that customer, and that employee is the face of your company. You want to possibly lose a long-term customer, because you have this brand new employee that doesn't have a clue.

This idea is supported by the literature. "Companies that have implemented the more personal mentor-mentee program report it to be rewarding for both sides, noting that each party in such a relationship teaches the other" (Silverman, 2007, p. 4).

Interpretation

The participants in the study described mentors as confidants and support persons with knowledge to guide them in their transitions into the workplace. The literature acknowledges the idea of having an advisor for these new employees, specifically for the age group represented in the study. For the Millennials, who are used to their parents being involved in every decision they make, input from parents or a trusted advisor is essential in their decision-making process. In the workplace, Millennials need close

supervision and instantaneous feedback (Klie, 2008, p. 8). The participants who worked

with mentors described positive experiences that they remembered vividly. The

participants expressed enthusiasm and joy with smiles and laughter when describing their

experiences with their mentors. They described feelings of comfort in having a person

dedicated to them individually with whom to share concerns and from whom to get

advice when needed. The participants believed it was important to have a trusted

confidant with whom to share concerns that they might not feel comfortable sharing with

their manager or others in the organization. For example, the participants' concerns about

the dress codes and hair styles could not be easily shared with everyone. For those

participants who had mentors, these types of specific questions could be addressed.

Participants desired to have relationships with someone to assist them in their

transition from college to the workplace. They provided examples of structured or formal

mentoring programs as well as unstructured, informal mentoring programs as possible

solutions to fill this perceived void in their transition experiences. They also recognized

the importance of having someone with whom to spend time just to talk. For example,

Katherine described her manager: "He'll sit there with me for half an hour and just

answer my questions." Although a new employee may be lucky enough to develop a

friendship, a friend rather than a mentor may not have the time to spend with the

individual on a consistent basis. When a mentor is assigned to the new hire, there is the

expectation that time will be spent together; therefore, the mentee does not need to feel

guilty about using the mentor's time.

Mentoring also requires the mentor to be willing to share personal experiences.

The participants appreciated stories told by their mentors that would assist them in coping

with their transitions. Lindsey's description of her mentor's decision to change positions within the company serves as an example once again of how honesty shared by the mentor can influence the thinking of a mentee.

Participants believed that mentors should also point out areas where improvement might help them avoid recurring mistakes and provide growth. They did not want the mentor just to tell them when they were doing well, . . . to be "nice." As Jonathan pointed out, new hires do not want to hear that they are doing fine and then find out that they are "hopelessly inadequate."

Evaluation

The participants' described their situations as they entered the workplace and their perceived need for mentorship programs. Several participants concluded that there was value in mentoring relationships as a tool to assist them in their transitions to the workplace. Even participants who did not have the exposure to a mentoring relationship perceived value in such programs. Their perceptions reflect the literature that supports mentoring programs for new hires in the workplace. Mentoring is used by a diverse group of organizations to assist employees in a wide variety of ways, from career development to achieving equality in the workplace based on gender or ethnicity (Goodyear, 2006).

The idea of having a mentor to assist new hires is not a new concept. Mentoring has long been a practice in business to assist new hires and existing employees with the transition into new positions or as a result of promotional opportunities. Mentors provide one means for organizations to take an unstructured learning environment where the manager expects the new hire to master the practical work activities and to create a

structured environment to focus on the needs of the new hire to ensure that standards are achieved (Berkeley, 1994).

Organization leaders are also encouraged to offer mentoring to the employees to retain the best talent. Effective mentors can provide new employees with the guidance needed to navigate through their new environments. The recent "war for talent" (Smith, 2006) has increased the need for mentors within organizations that are trying to attract and retain high-quality employees.

The literature supports the descriptions and roles of mentors desired by the participants. Mentors are experienced professionals in any given area who provide guidance to newcomers. In the workplace, human resources departments pair individuals for one-to-one relationships designed to foster organizational goals and to help new employees become acclimated to the workplace culture while learning from experienced practitioners (Hansman, 2001). Chao et al. (1991) described mentorship as "an involved working relationship between a senior (mentor) and junior (protégé) organizational member" (p. 4).

Because mentoring programs yield benefits in the workplace, establishing a strong program requires that businesses consider whether the program should be formal or informal and how to recruit mentors (Stead, 1997). The participants described both formal and informal mentoring programs as means to fill the perceived need for a one-on-one relationship with a knowledgeable person. The participants provided examples of the traditional mentoring format in describing what they considered to be a positive process for assisting in the transition from college to the workplace. Formal mentoring programs systematically match mentees with mentors based on parameters set by administrators

who have little personal knowledge of the mentors or mentees (Moore, Miller, Pitchford, & Jeng, 2008). Therefore, some literature suggests that new hires may prefer the informal type of relationship which allows them the freedom to choose as mentors those with whom they have personal connections and with whom they feel comfortable having candid conversations about professional issues (Moore et al., 2008).

In the present study, some participants did not feel the need for a mentor. For example, for those who work in some smaller organizations, making contact with senior leaders was easier with leaders readily available to answer questions. Brian explained that the ability to have open access to leaders reduced his need for a mentor. He described his experience: "Because our particular department is small, it was easy to talk to somebody or just call somebody that I already know and say, 'How do you do this?' . . . And the manager is, most of the time, . . . always available." The literature supports the point that not all new hires desire a formal mentor. "Many learners find effective substitutes for conventional mentors, and, while needing support for their workplace learning, obtain this from a variety of helpers other than a conventionally-defined mentor" (Stead, 1997, p. 219).

Participants recognized that not all mentoring programs work well. Ronald acknowledged the fact that mentors have to be a good fit for the job of mentoring:

> Companies need to have people in the mentorship program that are able to transfer their knowledge and have accomplishments . . . because there's a saying, "garbage in, garbage out." If you have a person that's mentoring that's not exactly the best person in the world, you don't want the bad apple in there. You want someone that's accomplished. So maybe there should be some type of a screening.

The quality of the mentors is important; not everyone can be a mentor. According to the

Society for Human Resources Management, mentors need certain characteristics to be

successful.

> The first key to being a mentor is the willingness to help others learn, achieve and advance. Although a senior manager may be an excellent role model, not everyone possesses the necessary skills to be a strong mentor. In addition to having a genuine interest in helping others (including willingness to make the necessary time commitment), a master mentor exhibits characteristics that include: (a) strong interpersonal skills, (b) organizational knowledge, (c) extensive network of resources, (d) exemplary supervisory skills, (e) technical competence, (f) personal power and charisma, (g) patience and risk taking, (h) status and prestige, (i) knowledge about the profession, (j) ability to share credit, (k) emotional maturity, and (l) willingness to be responsible for someone else's growth and advancement. (Lockwood, 2004, ¶ 7)

Besides these characteristics for mentors, organizations need to ensure that those selected

to be mentors are engaged and have a desire to participate in the program.

Although some issues exist with mentoring programs and all new hires may not

feel the need to have a mentor, mentoring is still considered to be one of the best tools for

an organization to use in training and developing employees. Mentoring programs can

play an important role in the organization for the newly hired college graduate who is

transitioning into the workplace. For some, having a mentor is essential to their success.

For modern organizations, mentoring programs make sense, save money, and can lead to

higher retention of employees because these programs can help employees be successful

in their jobs (Laughlin & Yopp, 2006). Even in the current environment where employees

no longer remain with one employer for their entire careers, "mentoring programs still

have a place in the 21st century" (Bridgeford, 2007, p. 1).

Thematics

The last step in analyzing data using educational criticism is the development of

themes. The formation of themes means identifying messages that are pervasive in the situation being described (Eisner, 1998). The message that re-occurred in participants' descriptions was their need for personal attention during this transitional period from college to the workplace. The participants expressed feelings of being "alone" during their transition experiences.

For many of the participants, this transition experience was their first time away from the security of their parents who had been supportive through every other transition to this point in their lives. Therefore, the need to have a relationship with an experienced person, such as a mentor, in whom they could confide and from whom to learn was perceived as important to the initial success of these newly hired business graduates. Though the mentor is not taking the role of a parent, the need for knowledge and guidance from a mature, experienced person was desired. Even those participants who did not feel that mentors were necessary to assist in the transition acknowledged the need for a relationship with someone who would understand their feelings and would help in overcoming their feelings of aloneness during this time in their lives. From the participants' perspectives, the organization should provide that needed guidance.

The Continuation of Young Adult Development

Description

The final topic within the analysis of the data recognizes that the participants were still developing as young adults. Three sub-topics—the high expectations of the participants, training for new employees, and the acknowledgment of requirements in the real world—represent the descriptions of the participants. (Figure 4 illustrates the

relationship between these three sub-topics and the major topic of young adult development.)

High Expectations

The analysis of this topic begins with the participants' expectations as they entered the workplace. The focus of the present study was to examine the transition experiences of participants as they moved from college to the workplace. While managing the college-to-work transition, the participants were experiencing another transition as well. They were at a time in their lives when they were continuing the transition into adulthood. The stories told by the participants provided a window into their feelings and represented their innocence and naïveté. Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson was one of the first to note the continuing development of young people in his stages of development model (Whiting et al,1991). Erikson's model categorizes ages 18 to 30 years as the sixth stage, intimacy versus isolation. This stage is associated with the development of intimacy with others. Thus, in their transition to the workplace, the participants were experiencing an aloneness that they wished to overcome.

The participants' expectations varied depending on their own previous experience and family culture. For example, their expectations for early success in the workplace were not always met. Katherine was not particularly happy in her job working in the customer-service industry. Her current job was not the type of position that she expected after graduating from college. She expressed her disappointment with her job prospects as she began her job search. "I find that I am either over-qualified or under-qualified, and so I am falling more into a black-hole situation finding positions that are less than, . . . less than, [pause] anticipated, I guess." Pavla described her high expectations for salary

because she was the first in her family to graduate from college. "My parents didn't go to college, so I didn't know. I thought I was going to make all of this money by getting the degree, and it didn't happen like that."

Justin shared how his experiences surprised him, given that he had not thought about how his life would change upon graduation. He described his conversations with his friends as they discussed the realization that full-time work was not for a short period of time, but instead would be an everyday commitment, five days a week, for most of their professional lives.

> I expected to be successful when I started out, and I didn't quite realize every challenge and every obstacle that I was about to face. . . . I never realized what I was getting into when I got out of school. I never realized [the work schedule] 8-to-5, the Monday through Friday.

> My friends and I, we all just kind of looked around and said, "Did you know when we were in school that we were getting into 'this,' Monday through Friday? This is what we have to do for the next umpteen years. . . . Did you know this?" [laughter]

The descriptions of these moments of reality seemed to come together as the participants described their expectations and the actual outcomes at this early stage in their work lives. Participants' expectations were not realized in some cases due to their lack of forward thinking regarding how their lives would change after college. The lifestyle changes and accommodations that the participants had to make created some disappointment.

Cathy described expectations in terms of "worry" or anxiety regarding the lack of experience she had in the area of accounting.

> I actually was working at the company in my very last semester, and I transitioned into full time after I graduated. When I was starting out at [my company], . . . I was worried because I had zero experience, none whatsoever, and when you start out at a company as an accountant, they really are looking for candidates that

have experience in accounting. Well, here I am graduating with a four-year degree in accounting and zero experience, and I got really lucky with a company that was OK with that, because, again they were like, "Well, we just want you to have that firm foundation. . . . We're going to teach you how to do our way of accounting, so it doesn't matter what kind of experience you have."

Participants felt some insecurity in their ability to do their jobs due to a lack of experience. They expressed concern in their desire to meet the employers' expectations.

Chrissy expected to be able to find a human resources position in which she could use her knowledge. She described her disappointment when she was not able to find a permanent position. She later realized a temporary position would be a good training opportunity and used it to develop her skills for a permanent position in the future.

I felt like I was diverse in my knowledge, so I was looking more for a generalist role, and it appeared that I really could only get an assistant role. . . . So I finally did find one that was really only a temporary job. I had to take the temporary job and hope to improve myself, which I did [laughter]. But going into it, I was a little disappointed. I kind of wanted more, and I found that I knew more about the laws than my boss did.

Participants felt disappointment when they realized that academic knowledge would not necessarily earn them a full-time position immediately after graduating.

Other participants experienced some feelings of disappointment because they did not feel that they were using all of the education they received. Jennifer decided to continue her education while continuing to work at her first job after undergraduate school. She expected to use the higher-level education in her new position. She was disappointed when she did not get an immediate return on her investment of additional education.

I was thinking, I'm getting all this information, all this business information, like especially at the MBA level, since I just started my MBA. Upon graduation I had all this knowledge and I only used a quarter of it, so my expectations, I think, will change in the fact that I want to use my other knowledge that I haven't been able to use. So as far as me looking into the finance field, or something in finance

related to logistics, like those are my expectations. I want to use all the knowledge that I've gained that I'm not using now.

Participants' sometimes felt that continuing their education would bring an immediate increase in their level of responsibility or a higher-level position. When they did not get this immediate result, they were disappointed.

Lindsey provided a case for a new-hire being pleased with her position. Her expectations were exceeded because the position she was offered was more exciting than she had hoped for. She was working in the insurance industry and was able to travel to areas affected by storms in order to assess the damages. The position itself and the training provided by her organization had exceeded her expectations.

> This job has been beyond what I would have expected because I was not looking to go into the insurance industry. I didn't even know these types of positions were out here. The catastrophe unit that I'm a part of, our catastrophe services, is only about 10 years old. So, it barely was running when I even graduated, so it's like, it is kind of new as far as the department goes; but with storms and things like that, it's only going to get better.

When the participants' expectations were exceeded, they were excited and continued to learn and develop skills in their new jobs. There was a sense of anticipation in that they looked forward to every new challenge.

Training

As the participants began their first jobs after college, they realized that they did not have the work experience of their peers and described their experiences as they began to develop in their specific jobs. Elizabeth discussed how she managed her challenges as a young professional who was aware that she did not have the experience of some of her co-workers.

> I'm young, and I have several employees who are older than me. Because they feel like I don't know a lot of things, and I'll be the first one to say that they

[peers] have a lot more experience. If they tell me something, and that's the way they feel, then I'm not going to take and then hold a grudge because you told me that you didn't like what I said or you didn't like what I did.

Jessica described how she managed to prepare for her new role. Part of her role was to make presentations for clients. Because she did not feel that she was ready to make the presentations, she decided to educate herself in order to take on these responsibilities.

I really couldn't do much service [with clients] without really knowing the products that I needed to know. When they put me right out with the clients, I was kind of "taken aback and I needed to say "OK, you don't know enough, you can't go out there and represent this company that has 13,000 employees until you know a little bit more." So I kinda tried to speed up my learning process by quizzing myself and doing extra modules on-line and asking tons of questions because I knew I wanted to get out there.

These participants demonstrated maturity and self-sufficiency and realized their deficiencies in order to take steps to prepare for their responsibilities.

The participants described their initial expectations as quite different from the actual realities. For example, participants expected thorough training and detailed desk procedures but were surprised that in many cases there was little training. Ronald described the fact that he needed to develop training guides for himself in order to learn his job.

There was a person who would sit with me, but there was no formalized training. I had to take my own notes. There were no desk procedures or methods and procedures established. So coming in, I didn't know how to update the system. Someone had to sit there and tell me, and [I] wrote it down on my little piece of paper. There were no established processes for a new person coming in that didn't know how to orient [himself or herself] to do their job to the tee. There was a lot left to be interpreted, and I found a lot of short cuts that I wasn't supposed to find, but that was because there were no defined procedures. You know, I was told, here's A through Z, now go for it . . . given the [bare] bone structure, and that wasn't even properly given, in my opinion.

Shannon described her experience as a female in a male-dominated construction industry.

As a newly hired employee, she received little-to-no training from her manager. She

described her experience as difficult, but she was committed to being successful.

> I had to tough it out and do what was available to me, and that meant when I was in undergrad, I took a graduate-level course to get extra experience. . . . So, that's what I had to do [in this situation].

These examples demonstrate that, although the participants' expectations for training

may have varied, they were able to assess their situations and work within those

environments.

In addition to describing how expectations were not met, participants

acknowledged the help they received from co-workers and team members. Jessica was

very positive as she described her experience learning her job.

> They're very supportive, they're very understanding. My co-workers were not afraid to tell me . . . to allow me to learn from their experiences . . . their negative experiences. . . . They weren't afraid to say, "Here's where I fell on my face and you know, I went straight down, and I'm going to tell you what happened to me so it doesn't happen to you." Maybe it was an experience that I wouldn't necessarily need to fall on my face for. They gave me a lot of pros and cons about my personality, how it would help me in the job, maybe things that I could kind of alter or change up a little bit. Probably the best thing was that all of them at some point had touched my client base; so, before I went out to meet my clients for the first or second time, they were able to give me a background which helped me so much.

Justin was equally positive regarding his experience when seeking support from more

senior members of his organization. He was interested in learning leadership skills. He

needed guidance on the types of positions in his organization that would provide

leadership training to help him begin his move into a management role.

> Well, I was asking around and putting some feelers out to some of the people that I look to as leaders. I told them that I'd like to be a better leader, and I'd like to get here. "What would be a good way to do this?" They had suggested that a way to management is through the learning and communications facilitation role, and I

> had never thought of that role until it was brought up to me. When I looked at it [the position] even further, I thought this is a great way [to move into management]. I'm not technically a manager, and really couldn't even be a manager without having three years of experience. Here is a great way I can step immediately [into management] and have a huge influence over people.

These new hires appreciated the informal assistance co-workers provided them as they became more experienced within their organizations.

Jonathan described the support he received when he was invited to an event to which an employee at his level would typically not have been invited. He also described the culture in terms of the support he received and how the departments worked together.

> We have a sports market [industry event] every year in Monaco. . . . And basically the only [people] that would go every year would be the senior vice president of our company and the director of sales. They're the only ones that would need to go because the work that's done is refining the contract or maybe finalizing contract negotiations or things like that; but, um, they invited me to go to Monaco. It was a pretty good trip. I got to go to France and then to Monaco for the first time in my life. . . . That was exciting. The organization itself is great. We interact with different departments, . . . marketing brand broadcast along with domestic broadcast. We're the international television, and we get full support from all of the departments and vice versa. When they ask us for anything regarding international distribution or anything international at all, we give, or provide whatever support we can.

The participants appreciated the opportunities to learn through experiences such as traveling and working with senior members of their organizations.

Lindsey also described a positive experience during her initial training with her organization. She was extremely impressed with the training program and described it as one of the best in the industry. She observed that once people have experience in this organization, other companies in the industry seek them out and try to hire them away due to the organization's reputation in the industry.

> The training was extensive because our company is number one in property and casualty in the country; we're the biggest insurer. Our training is bar none; our training is so extensive that other insurance companies, once they find out you're

a claims adjuster, they will try to recruit you, you know. "Why don't you come over here? We'll pay you more." . . . A lot of us already know the game; we pretty much expect that. A lot of companies don't have as good an employment record as my company.

Katherine described the informal assistance she received from her manager as a similar process of positive development within the company.

It was a very good experience, because being in a small company, you're the human resource person, the manager, you're the supervisor, you're the marketing director [you do it all]. He's very good; and he'll sit there with me for half an hour and just answer my questions and give me some guidance from what he's picked up through the organization in order for me to grow.

Cathy's expectations were met in terms of training when she began her accounting position. In addition to training, she gained confidence when her CEO (Chief Executive Officer) acted as her mentor.

Well, it's actually kind of neat, 'cause the training. I expected for them to go ahead and train me in their way of accounting, and that's exactly what they did. And, also, too, with starting out as an intern, since it's a small company, we have a very small accounting department, literally just the CFO (Chief Financial Officer) and, then, now, my position which is staff accountant. We have two accounts payable and one accounts receivable. When I started as an intern, the CFO, he actually worked as my mentor preparing me for that staff accountant position that I was going to get when I graduated. And, so, he really worked with [me] and was teaching me a lot of things I was going to be doing when I graduated and giving me confidence that I was going to be able to handle it, by teaching me the way to analyze reports−getting ready for that next step.

These examples demonstrate the positive experiences that participants had when co-workers and managers provided support to assist them during their transitions. This support occurred informally and through deliberate financial and personal investments made by the leaders in these organizations toward the development of the new hires.

Real World

During the interviews, participants reflected on their first experiences in the workplace. Some of them used the expression "real world" as they described their

experiences in comparing the collegiate experience to the workplace experience.

Katherine had relocated from Maine to Florida and described her experience of living on

her own for the first time without the conveniences of living in her parents' home. She

jokingly wanted to revert to her school years because that period in her life was familiar

and comfortable. She even seemed to get anxious describing the experience to me during

the interview.

> I know that when I graduated, it was a complete reality shock for me. I did not
> know what was hitting me, and I fell into like a deep depression. I was like I need
> to go back to school because that's all I know. You know, for 23 years, that's all
> you did was go to school. You went from grammar school to middle school, from
> middle school to high school to college and then that's it. Now it's like I'm out in
> the real world, and I'm having all these bills. And where am I going to live? And
> this bill comes every month [laughter] and the normal price of groceries. I
> couldn't believe it. I was like, "Gosh, I've got to pay this like every two weeks. I
> don't' have any food in the house. And I've got to cook something [laughter].
> And there's no cafeteria. Where's the cafeteria [laughter]?"

Perceptions of their new lives in the real world also included disappointment that

expectations were not met. Amanda needed time to transition from the classroom to the

work environment.

> When you get out of the classroom, you're expecting it to be a certain way and
> it's not, and that can be very disheartening. And I know that for me it took a
> minute for me to be like, "Man I didn't think it was going to be this way."

Once in the workplace, the participants began to realize the challenges they would face in

learning their new jobs in addition to managing their everyday lives as independent

adults.

Heather described how her expectations changed after working in the "real

world." She was encouraged by her professors in terms of her abilities and what she

might anticipate after graduation. "When I came out of college, based on what my

professors and my counselor said, jobs in mass communications, they start off at $55K.

That's what I wanted to make, with no experience, and that's not realistic." She therefore

focused on learning "something new" to "build off of that" toward another position. She

even acknowledged that she was learning what she actually was worth. "I now know

what I can ask for and how to negotiate properly so that I get what I want and the

employer gets what they want."

In their reflection on their college experiences and preparation for the workplace,

the participants used the term real world to compare college to the workplace and made

recommendations for improving their undergraduate experiences. Brian discussed the

benefits he experienced from classes with professors who connected the work to current

business practices, "rather than the ones that . . . have a prepared slide that they use for

every class and go through it." Lindsey recommended that classes should be:

> More real-world. It's like it can be a class environment at the beginning of the
> semester, but, by the end of the semester, it should be more real world. I mean,
> change the rules, you know by the end. In the beginning you're a student, but, by
> the end, you should more working world [experience].

Similarly, Megan both described her experience in the classroom as focusing on theory

and recommended a more "hands-on" approach.

> When I look back at my management and business administration courses, I feel
> like I was taught business within a classroom. We had all the literature to read
> through like books, books written by marketing gurus, management gurus. But, I
> feel like that there should be more hands-on. I did my internship while I was in
> my last semester and that gave me a lot of hands-on. And, I did like that three
> months of internship and that was very helpful to bring all the theory I learned
> together to say, "This is the real world."

Even so, Heather cautioned that internships are not as demanding as regular employment

because they are not competitive. Heather added a pointed recommendation that

educators "need to be truthful" about what students should expect upon entering the

workplace. To that end, she suggested that instructors

> Bring in real companies and let students go through the interview process, so when we get out there, we don't make stupid mistakes. . . . I think they need to provide us real-world experiences. Maybe we need to have mock interviews, so you can see what it's like to get rejection. . . . You know, you see what it feels like to be out there competing with someone else who has XY experience. They don't tell you there's somebody else [other candidates] out there. There's one job and you're competing with someone else, so being realistic and telling you that.

Participants thus provided specific recommendations for educators to help them make their transition to the workplace easier and comparable to the experiences they faced when they began their careers.

Interpretation

The participants provided many examples with descriptions of their experiences. These events were described in terms of the participants' expectations for their transition from college to the workplace, for their actual training once they entered the workplace, and, finally, the real world as the participants continued their transitions into adulthood. The participants were at times surprised by recognizing their own expectations about their transition to work. Expectations for job offers, immediate success, and high salaries were evident in the stories. Participant expectations began to diminish for some as they began working and determined that the reality of the workplace was different than they had envisioned. In addition, the participants were experiencing the realties of living alone and managing household responsibilities for the first time.

The participants also expected that their employers would provide training as they began their jobs. Most were surprised when little and, in some cases, no training was provided. Some, however, were pleasantly surprised when comprehensive training was provided.

When the participants faced unexpected situations, they described them as "real-world." In using the term the "real-world," the participants made comparisons between their collegiate experience and their full-time work experience after graduating, for example, in their references to the experience of relocating and living alone for the first time. Their acknowledgment of such changes suggested that some of the participants felt immense pressure from the full-time work experience and from having to learn to manage a household.

There were also expectations for the new graduates to be mature and adult-like in their ability to learn their jobs. However, not all new graduates may be as ready as employers may desire. Using internships as a transition tool may be helpful for college students, though the reality of the permanent job may still be different from the internship experience. When Amanda commented, "Man, I didn't think it was going to be this way," she implied that it took her some time to realize that internship was not like the full-time job.

Evaluation

The purpose of evaluation is to determine if the participants' experiences provided growth, inspiration, and contributions to their learning. Based on the responses of the participants, some lessons can be learned from understanding their transitions into the workplace. Analysis of the interview data suggests that the participants' expectations were often not met. The participants' expectations for early success were influenced in part by instructor and parental expectations. A study of juniors and seniors of the same age group as the participants in the present study determined that the participants wanted opportunities for learning and promotion, recognition of their ethical standards, and the

ability to make a difference in the world by doing their jobs thoughtfully and well (Rawlins, Indvik, & Johnson, 2008). Similarly, the participants in the present study desired the opportunity to learn their jobs in order to become experienced members of their organizations.

Understanding the expectations of these new hires also leads to recognition of their stage in young adult development. The transition from adolescence to adulthood is taking longer today (Gitelson & McDermott, 2006). Young people are waiting longer to complete their education and marry, if they choose to marry at all. Of the 18 participants in the present study, only two were married at the time of the interviews. This longer period indicates that young adults in the workplace are continuing their transition into adulthood over a longer period of time. Furthermore, due to changes in culture and in the institutions that are central to human development such as the school, family, and the workplace, young people must learn to grow and develop by taking a path that is different from the traditional path of their parents and grandparents (Gitelson & McDermott, 2006).

The participants were also in the beginning stages of developing their professional identities. Although young adults enter the workplace with concerns, attitudes, values, and cognitive ability, socialization by work, on the other hand, reflects the personal qualities that develop in young adults confronted with the working world (Cohen-Scali, 2003). Experiences in the workplace contribute to the continuation of development from adolescence to adulthood. The transition into the workplace becomes the first environment within which these professional identities begin to develop.

Thematics

The participants in the present study expressed their expectations for success. Their need for training when entering the work force was apparent. Indeed, the growth and development of the young college graduate is not complete, although most employers may assume that these graduates are ready to "hit the ground running" with little training or mentoring necessary. An additional point is that the participants themselves realized that they needed to manage their expectations and to be realistic in their professional growth.

Each of the three sub-topics for this discussion of the continuation of young adult development—expectations, training, and the real world—contained descriptions of reflection and a realization that the participants had misconceptions about the reality of the workplace and how they would transition into their new roles. Participants themselves eventually realized that they would need training and significant time in their jobs in order to be successful. The participants noted that in some cases training was not provided to the extent they had expected. In cases where training was provided, the participants realized how much they had to learn to become proficient in their positions. The concept of the "real world," therefore, encompassed many challenges as the participants made comparisons between their collegiate experiences and their workplace experiences.

<div align="center">Summary of Data Analysis</div>

Using excerpts from the participants' interviews, the data were examined and analyzed using content analysis (Patton, 2002) and educational criticism (Eisner, 1998) in order to find meaning in the participants' stories and descriptions regarding how they made their transitions from the collegiate environment to the work environment. Using

the two strategies for data analysis, the data were organized into three main topics: the importance of organizational socialization, the complexity of mentoring in the workplace, and the continuation of young adult development. Analysis of data relevant to each of these topics included the four steps associated with educational criticism: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. Such an approach provided readers with rich descriptions of participants' perceptions of their experiences, interpretations of these perceptions, an evaluation of how these perceived experiences contributed to their learning, and the themes embedded in their accounts of their experiences.

This description of data analysis can be helpful in providing information for those educators and business leaders who may be assisting business graduates in their transition from college to the workplace. Chapter Five extends the discussion of data analysis, for example, by recommending how employers' and graduates' expectations might change and how leaders might help facilitate the transition for new hires into the workplace.

Chapter Five begins with a summary of the study's purposes, the literature relevant to its foci, the research design and methodology, and the key points from the analysis of the data. Topics developed from the data analysis provided a structure to develop conclusions and recommendations for both educational and organizational leaders.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Chapter Four included the analysis of the interview data from the 18 participants in the present study. The analysis focused on the meaning business graduates developed as they made their transitions from the collegiate environment to the work environment. The participants' perceptions were collected using one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. Data analysis was based on content analysis (Patton, 2002) and the use of educational criticism (Eisner, 1998).

This final chapter first provides a summary of the study, its purpose, related literature supporting the design of the study, and specific methodology to guide both data collection and data analysis. Next, the summary of the study discusses the three topics developed in the analysis of the data: (a) the importance of organizational socialization; (b) the complexity of mentoring in the workplace; and (c) the continuation of young adult development. Conclusions are then offered from what was learned from the study, implications for leaders are discussed, and recommendations for leaders are provided. Lastly, the chapter offers recommendations for future studies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to explore how recent college graduates with business degrees described and understood their transition experiences into the workplace. The primary purpose was to learn how recent graduates connected their

preparation for the workplace to the cultural and social transition processes from the college campus to the workplace.

Summary of Related Literature

Educators spend years preparing students for their chosen careers. Employers spend resources to attract and retain talent for their organizations. The present study examined the experiences of business graduates in their transition from the collegiate environment to the work environment.

The review of related literature examined seven topics relevant to research regarding the transition of business-college graduates to their first positions in the workplace the desire for a college education, the expectations of employers for new hires, transition experiences of students into the workplace, the roles of college culture and organizational culture in the transition experience, the need for the socialization of new hires into their organizations, the emergence of the multigenerational workforce, and the responsibilities of organizational leaders in facilitating the successful transition experience of new hires.

Desire for Education

Many young people still seek a college education after graduation from high-school. The literature indicates that a college educated employee will still have a higher earnings potential than an employee with a high school education alone. The literature indicates that skills for employment have changed creating the change in employer expectations.

Employers' Expectations

Employers are in a constant battle with competitors for talent. Depending on the economic conditions, recruiting may be difficult as employers try to attract the best employees who can do the job; will do the job; and fit with the organization. Employers agree that qualified and well-trained employees are perhaps the most critical factor to sustained growth and competitiveness (Cheney, 2001). Employers continue to expect new hires to have what are considered basic characteristics such as honesty, good personal appearance, good attendance, and the ability to follow directions (Poole, 1993). Employers' expectations of new hires have also expanded beyond the ability to carry out task-oriented skills for specific jobs. They also expect employees to have the soft skills that allow them to work well in team environments.

Transition Experiences

The literature provides examples of educational programs that are making efforts to assist newly hired graduates in their transition experiences. For example, high school-to-work, and the nursing and teaching professions have provided needed support for newly hired graduates as they enter their professions.

Two Cultures

Recent college graduates are leaving the college culture of nurturing, friendship, and social activities to move into the workplace culture which may be more rigid, structured, with less social activity. The literature describes how the newly hired graduate has to navigate the two cultures and move successfully from one cultural experience to the other.

Organizational Culture and Socialization

Employers must realize the importance of providing basic knowledge of the organization's culture from the very beginning of the employment relationship. The culture and norms of an organization must be shared with new hires to help them feel accepted in their new environments. Acclimating new employees to the organization quickly (Hansman, 2001) encourages a positive experience for the new hires. Orientation programs can be the first step in these processes with the provision of mentors as a way to continue the socialization of new hires.

Thus, employers cannot expect new graduates, fresh out of college, to know and understand the norms of the work environment. Employers have to make an investment in their employees and consider the employees as human capital.

Multigernerational Workplace

The workplace has changed, and, for the first time, there are three generations in the workplace, and possibly a fourth, as some who are able to retire are continuing to work. The phenomenon presents a challenge for employers as they make efforts to manage the multigenerational workplace.

Leaders' Responsibility

The literature places some responsibility for assisting new hires on the organizational leaders. Organizational leaders have the knowledge to help assimilate new hires into the culture of the workplace.

Methodology

A total of 18 participants volunteered for the study. Recruiting occurred through local human resources professionals in the greater Jacksonville, Florida, area who were

members of a local chapter of the Society for Human Resources Management. A total of

4 males and 14 females representing Caucasian, African American, Asian, and Indian

backgrounds volunteered to participate in the study.

The research question was as follows: "What are the perceptions of business

graduates of their transition experiences from college to the workplace?" Such a question

led to the choice of a qualitative research design because of its focus on the complexity of

the graduates' perceptions and the goal of understanding their experiences from their

point of view. Qualitative research approaches are designed to access such complexity

(Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Qualitative research is also interpretive and grounded in

the lived experiences of people (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). A qualitative approach was

needed to accomplish to the goal of the study, that is, to examine the participants'

perceptions and bring value to those experiences. In addition, the study provided an

avenue for the participants to share their perceptions of those experiences (Eisner, 1998).

Thus, the qualitative approach provided a voice for the participants as they shared and

interpreted their transition experiences from college to the workplace.

The one-on-one interview was selected as the primary method for data collection

to develop rapport with the participants and to gain the necessary rich data from each

individual. The interview approach (Silverman, 2006) was used to capture the

perceptions of the participants. The primary goal was to gather data that offered insight

into participants' experiences (Silverman, 2006). Using a qualitative approach, questions

were designed to prompt thought and to encourage conversation with a purpose (Dexter,

1970, cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 71) about the participants' perceptions. The interviews

were scheduled with each participant and averaged from 45 minutes to two hours in

length. The semi-structured interview questions were open-ended to prompt discussion from the participants. Questions ranged from being general in nature regarding the participants' decisions to choose a business program to more specific questions regarding their experiences in their first jobs.

Summary of Data Analysis Topics

The first topic presented in the analysis of the data was the importance to participants of organizational socialization during the transition to the workplace. This topic described the experiences of the participants as they learned the culture of the workplace environment and how the participants perceived these socialization experiences within the workplace. The analysis emphasized that the participants needed to understand the culture and to feel a part of the work environment as they made their transitions.

A second topic in data analysis focused on the complexity of mentoring in the workplace. This topic examined the perceptions of the participants as they discussed the need for assistance in the workplace during their transition from the collegiate environment to the work environment and the role of mentorship in providing such assistance.

The final topic examined the continued growth and development of young adults while making the transition from college to the workplace. Discussion here included three sub-topics imbedded in the participant data—the high expectations of the participants, the need for training for new hires, and the recognition by new hires of the characteristics of the real world outside of college and the youth culture. The topics developed from the processes of data analysis provided a framework to suggest

implications for leaders in both education and business so that these participants might be better able to make the transition to the workplace from the collegiate setting more smoothly. In addition, there are implications for organizational leaders where these new graduates will become employees.

Conclusions from the Study

The analysis of the data resulted in four conclusions. First, newly hired graduates expressed that employers were not doing enough to assist them in their transition into the workplace. Newly hired employees need specific assistance in becoming socialized into the organization. The eventual success of the new hire will depend on many factors including the new hire's ability to learn the new role and the employer's willingness to facilitate the transition into the workplace. The participants described examples of their need for knowledge and for understanding of their new work environments. New hires want to get to know their peers, learn the culture of the organization, and understand how they fit in the organizational structure. This socialization process helps the new hires to feel valued in their new roles. These new hires wanted one-on-one mentoring opportunities when they began their employment. The participants expressed the desire for an experienced person to be provided as a mentor during their initial employment. Although many participants in the study did not have a mentoring relationship in their organizations, they had prior experience with mentoring relationships in their lives and found these relationships to be valuable. The need for confidents with whom they could share concerns and from whom they could learn was described as important to the participants.

Second, the participants felt that educators were not doing enough to prepare them for the workplace. Newly hired graduates had high expectations for success partly due to the messages they received from educators. The participants wanted more practical examples and real world experiences to be offered by educators to help prepare them for the workplace.

Third, even though the participants felt their employers were not doing enough to assist them in the transition process, they remained optimistic about their futures with their employers and wanted to do well. The participants called on their previous experiences with part-time work to learn and manage difficult situations. They were willing to meet the challenges and work through their difficulties to the best of their abilities.

Finally, recent college graduates were surprised by the challenges they faced in their personal lives during the period of transition into the workplace. Newly hired graduates are in the process of developing as young adults while they are becoming proficient in their new positions. Although employers may have the expectation that recent business graduates are mature and ready to handle their new positions, development is still occurring. These recent graduates continue to need assistance as they both learn their new roles in the organization and learn to manage financial realities, domestic demands, and the other day-to-day responsibilities, possibly for the first time in their lives.

<div align="center">Implications for Educators and Business Leaders</div>

To assist this generation of new hires as they make their transition from college to the workplace, leaders have to make a serious effort to focus on the concerns of new

hires. Executive leaders must set the tone to make the care and guidance for new employees a priority in general, with a focus on the inexperienced worker.

1. Transformational leadership is needed to address the needs of this Millennial generation. Transformational leaders are defined as "leaders who provide individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation, and who possess charisma" (Robbins, 1998, p. 374). Employees from the Millennial generation have needs that differ from those of previous generations. Unlike those generations who have preceded them, they have different ideas about work. Organizational leaders need to aware of their needs in order to attract and retain this generation of employees. Transformational leaders "pay attention to the concerns and developmental needs of individual followers" (Robbins, 1998, p. 374). Therefore, both educators and business leaders face the task of integrating members of the Millennial generation into their organizations.

2. Transactional leadership is needed to adopt an attitude of taking "care" of the employees and creating a culture that has a social and emotional element. Transactional leaders "guide or motivate their followers in the direction of established goals by clarifying role and task requirements" (Robbins, 1998, p. 374). This generation of employees has grown up with technology and is accustomed to using technology in their day-to-day lives. Understanding the needs of the Millennial generation will help organizations to prepare these employees for their responsibilities. For example, maintaining connections with family and friends and checking information on the Internet during the workday is part of this culture. Embracing this desire and creating a culture that allows for some connectivity during the work day may be considered when the position allows. Other examples of supporting relationships in the workplace include

establising environments that allow for flexibility in the workplace when appropriate, developing opportunities for employee collaboration and socialization, and providing flexible benefit plans that support work-life balance.

3. Business and educational institutions can create strategic partnerships in order to better prepare young graduates for their transition. Some educators are currently seeking to develop partnerships with local business leaders to accomplish this goal of enriching the business curriculum. One approach is to establish an advisory board (Katz, 2009). Obviously, business should not dictate overall curricula; however, in a business degree program, it is important for students to develop the skills that are relevant for today's employers. This study can be one starting point in determining if curricular changes may be necessary. Thus, the study may serve future graduates in business colleges or business programs through improvements in curricula leading to more successful transitions into the workplace.

4. Current expectation of employers and newly hired graduates may be somewhat unrealistic on both sides. Employers and graduates may both need to reflect on and, perhaps, question their expectations regarding the transition process in order to clarify realistic goals and to develop appropriate support strategies. Maintaining unrealistic goals, which are not achievable, may lead to a feeling of failure and frustration. Setting realistic goals for new hires will be achievable and therefore create a sense of accomplishment in the newly hired graduate, that will help to build confidence and lead to success.

Recommendations for Practice

The present study suggested several recommendations for leaders in higher education and in business regarding their roles in assisting new business graduates in the transition to the workplace.

1. Employers need to provide mentoring for new employees as they transition into the organization. Participants in the study consistently discussed the need for assistance and guidance upon entering the workplace and as they began their transition into learning their specific jobs. Employers need to address the needs of new employees who are entering the workplace for the first time in order to increase the probability of success and long-term employment with the organization. Some form of mentoring, whether formal or informal, is needed as an intentional effort to assist newly hired graduates as they make their transition from the collegiate environment to the work environment.

The participants stated that the use of mentors would be helpful as a tool for new graduates making the transition into the workplace. The employer needs to determine what type of mentoring program is best for the organization. Laughlin and Yopp (2006) described the most common mentoring formats: (a) traditional mentoring or one-to-one mentoring that places one adult in a relationship with another adult for a specified length of time; (b) group mentoring that involves one adult mentor forming a relationship with a group of up to four other people; (c) team mentoring that involves a mentor working with small teams of mentees to address common issues; (d) peer mentoring that provides an opportunity for adults to develop a relationship with another adult, with each individual working together as equals for mutual benefit; and (e) e-mentoring that regularly connects one adult with another adult in a virtual environment. Any of the formats

described may be selected depending on the organizational culture, resources available, and type of industry and position. In addition to the format, the organization's leaders would need to determine if the mentoring program should be a formal or informal program. In any case, the benefits of implementing a mentoring program can be long-term for both new employees and the organization.

2. Educators need to include realistic examples as part of instruction. The participants often referred to the "real-world" and adopted this term to describe the environment they would encounter when they left the collegiate setting. The participants perceived that more real world examples and experiences within their college programs would have helped them to be prepared for their transition. Examples of real workplace situations and simulations would allow the participants to imagine themselves in the situations they would face once they entered the workplace. Although participants understood the need for educators to provide theory, they also recommended that educators incorporate real-world examples as much as possible so that they could apply theory once they entered the work environment.

3. Employers need to provide orientation and culture training to socialize all new hires. This process needs to be extended beyond the first day of employment because the relationships in the workplace are complex and need time and effort to develop. Employers must provide orientation for all new hires to share basic information and to create a foundation for success. The participants expressed their excitement in learning about their organizations. The need to understand the organization's mission, goals, and policies is real. Employers cannot hold employees accountable for following the rules if the rules are never explained to them. Employers need to explain expectations for

behavior and the philosophies of the organization to ensure that new employees understand how to manage their behavior and work within the organization.

The employer must socialize new employees into the organization's culture as they move beyond the first day and first days of employment. If a mentoring program is in place, mentors can begin the process of socialization as the mentoring relationship develops. The participants in the present study reported that they defined socialization beyond merely workplace connections; they wished to remain connected to friends and family constantly as evidenced by their cell phones, Blackberrys, and other technical devices. One research study on generational differences confirmed that these participants, as Millenials, "view technology as key to socializing and networking, with 85% as members of a social networking site such as Facebook" (Klie, 2008, p. 8).

This focus on networking leads to Millennials' desire to multi-task so that they may be connected to their personal lives even while working (Rawlins et al., 2008). Company activities and social events that allow for employees to come together in a social setting provide a way for these new employees to come together, to get to know other employees, and to have fun. The participants wanted to become a part of the culture and "fit into" the organization. Recent literature supports the participants' perceptions and provides recommendations for employers in terms of creating a good fit between the organization and the employee. "An understanding of the organizational cultural preferences of new hires is required in order to achieve a person-organization fit—the key to reducing job turnover and maintaining a committed workforce" (Edgington & Grady, 2008, p. 31). This "the need to connect" reflects the socialization process in two ways: (a) being socialized into the organization is viewed as desirable by Millenials, and

(b) these Millennials need assistance in how to navigate professional and personal social relationships in ways appropriate for the work environment itself. Employers must help the new hires fit into the organizations where they are beginning their work lives.

4. Employers need to recognize that young graduates are still developing into adulthood and therefore need to make accommodations to help them navigate the work environment as they grow and develop. Participant interview data consistently provided instances that demonstrated that participants were feeling alone and were in a period of growth and development in their lives. In addition, some participants were new to the geographical locations where they were working and some were living on their own for the first time in their lives. Many in this age group may just be learning how to manage domestic duties such as handling financial obligations and running a household completely on their own. These changes in their lives, coupled with the transition to the workplace, can be overwhelming to young adults. Some businesses respond to these needs and provide a progressive benefits package as one way to assist this group with non-traditional services such as flexible schedules, dry cleaning pick-up at the office, discounts for some domestic services, and financial planning.

<div align="center">Recommendations or Future Studies</div>

The present study leads to additional research studies focused on the needs of businesses and how to provide graduates with the skills to meet those needs. Further research will need to be conducted in order to determine what changes in curriculum should be considered to prepare students for the workplace they will enter. For example, several research questions could be appropriate to pursue.

Perceptions of employers about newly hired graduates' level of readiness.
Recent studies have identified deficiencies in graduates from educational programs in
their preparedness for the workplace. The American Society for Training and
Development surveyed 217 employers in 2008 regarding their training of newly hired
graduates from high school, two-year, and four-year college programs. "Almost half of
respondents—representing manufacturing; financial services; non-financial services; and
education, government and other nonprofit organizations—said they have to provide
readiness training for new hires, with the majority rating their programs as only
'moderately' or 'somewhat' successful." (Minton-Eversole, 2009, ¶ 1). These statements
are created from an assumption that the newly hired graduates will come prepared to
work. Future studies should address the types of training needed for new hires and the
results of the training provided.

*Changes in curriculum may be considered to prepare Millennial students for the
workplace.* In the initial review of the related literature, there was an abundance of
information on teacher and nursing preparation and the transition of those graduates into
the professional environment. Business educators need to address the issues that nursing-
preparation and teacher-preparation programs have been grappling with for years. Future
studies may be conducted to develop curricula that meet the needs of business in the 21st
century. Participants in the study noted that they wanted more preparation for the
workplace, and they felt that real-world examples to supplement the theory presented
would be helpful in preparation for the workplace.

This initial research regarding the perceptions of new hires may trigger an interest
in further research regarding how to address the challenges faced by new graduates and

their transitions from college to the workplace. The study may also encourage additional participation by industry in assisting students with their transitions. Clearly, the complexity of the transition process deserves research. For example, observational studies regarding their behaviors in the workplace would be informative. And, follow-up studies as those new hires progress in their careers could provide a longitudinal perspective on professional development.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

This chapter summarized the related literature, the supporting design of the study, and the specific methodology that guided both data collection and data analysis. It also provided a summary of the three topics determined to be relevant from the data analysis: (a) the importance of organizational socialization; (b) the complexity of mentoring in the workplace; and (c) the continuation of young adult development. The present study examined the perceptions of recent business graduates of their transition experiences as they moved from college to the workplace. Through their descriptions, the study provided a better understanding of the issues, concerns, and disappointments experienced by recent graduates as they began their business careers. An understanding of the needs of the new hires will help educational and organizational leaders provide assistance to college graduates of business programs as they make their transition into the workplace. As other professional transition programs demonstrate, the assistance that a student receives may be crucial in making a successful transition from college to the workplace. Both higher education and business leaders play significant roles in guiding business graduates through the transition experience. By working together, these organizational leaders can develop tools and techniques to better prepare graduates for this transition. The

recommendations offered as a result of the present study not only will serve the needs of

the new hires but also will help employers develop individuals so that they will be better

able to meet the challenges they will face in their careers.

APPENDIX A

University of North Florida

Division of Sponsored Research and Training

Participant Interview Questions

Submitted by Gloria Davis

Summer, 2007

The objective of the study is to investigate and describe the perceptions of recent business graduates and how they perceived the transition experience from the college environment to the work environment.

The specific research question is: What are the perceptions of recent business graduates of the transition experience (organizational socialization) from the collegiate environment to the work environment?

Interview Questions for the Dissertation Study:

1. What prompted you to choose a major in business?

2. How would you describe your undergraduate business courses?

3. Which undergraduate business courses did you find the most valuable? Why?

4. What do you remember about your undergraduate studies that you use in your current work environment?

5. What did you expect when you began your first position after receiving your business degree?

6. How did those expectations relate to your early work experiences?

7. What courses or experiences from college have you used recently in your current work environment?

8. What was the orientation process that you experienced at your organization when you began your career?

9. What support do you receive from your co-workers as you have begun your career?

10. What support have you received from your supervisor or manager as you have begun your career?

11. How would you describe the culture of your work environment?

12. What have been the most pleasant experiences you have had as you have begun your business career?

13. What have been the most challenging experiences that you have had as you have begun your career?

14. What recommendations do you have for a business trying to develop an orientation process for their new employees?

15. What else would you like to share about your transition from college to the workplace?

APPENDIX B
Sample Newsletter Request for Participants

Participants wanted for Research Study

As part of fulfillment for requirements for the Doctoral program in Educational Leadership from the University of North Florida, Human Resources professional and SHRM member Gloria Davis is seeking participants for a research study.

 The purpose of the study is to describe the perceptions of recent business graduates transitions from college to the workplace.

- Participants must be a graduate of a business degree program.
- Participants must be between 22 and 28 years of age.
- Participants should have no more than 2 years of full time work experience after degree completion.

Volunteers will be available to meet with the researcher for approximately 1 to 1-1/2 hours for an interview.

If you meet the criteria above and are interested in participating, please contact the researcher:

Gloria Davis, SPHR
gdavis1216@bellsouth.net

Appendix C
(Institutional Review Board Approval Document)

Appendix D

University of North Florida
Division of Sponsored Research and Training
Guidelines for Informed Consent
Submitted by Gloria Davis
Summer, 2007

1. <u>Source of the Research</u>: The research for this project is being conducted as part of the requirements for completion for the Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership with the University of North Florida.

2. <u>Voluntary Participation</u>: Participants are volunteers ages 22 – 28 years. There are no apparent risks to the volunteers as a result of their participation in the present study. Volunteers are adults who choose to participate. There is no monetary benefit for participation in the present study. They may choose to discontinue their participation at any time for any reason or no reason. Choosing to discontinue in the study will result in no loss of any benefit to the participant.

3. <u>Confidentiality of Records</u>: Data collected during the course of the study will be transcribed from tape to hard copy for final presentation. Electronic data will be stored in a password protected, digital file on a CD that will be maintained in a secure located away from the researcher's place of business. The data will be maintained until the project and any written analysis are completed. In any case, after five years from completion of the dissertation research, all data will be destroyed.

4. <u>Risk to Participants</u>: There are no apparent risks to the participants. Thus, no compensation for injury or medical treatments are necessary to participate in the study.

5. <u>Who to Contact</u>: For answers to pertinent questions about the research and in the unlikely event of research-related injury to the participant, contact Dr. Kathaleen Bloom, Chair, UNF Institutional Review Board, (904) 620-2684 for questions regarding the rights of research participants.

6. <u>Methods and Procedures:</u> The research question for the present study is: What are the perceptions of recent business graduates of the transition experience from the collegiate environment to the work environment? In order to investigate the perceptions of recent business graduates regarding the transition experience from college to work, a qualitative research approach has been chosen. The researcher must access personal points of view and the perceptions of the participants' own

experiences. In order to capture these perceptions, interviewing will be the primary method of data collection. The participant will be required to participate in a one-on-one structured interview. The interview will be conducted in an agreed upon location by the researcher and the participant. Local public libraries with quiet rooms will be suggested locations. The interview will be no longer than two hours in length.

7. <u>Foreseeable Risks to Participants</u>: There are no foreseeable risks or discomfort to the participants in the present study.

8. <u>Benefits to Participants</u>: Volunteers will be provided with the opportunity to share their concerns, perceptions, and understanding of their transition experience from college to the work environment. The volunteers will be provided with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and articulate their concerns which may be helpful for the work environment in the future.

9. <u>Alternative Procedures:</u> There are no alternative procedures or courses of treatment for participants in the present study.

10. <u>Compensation:</u> There is no monetary or other compensation to volunteers who participate in the present study.

11. <u>Minors as Participants:</u> No minors may be participants in the present study nor could minors be substituted in any circumstances. The minimum age requirement for the study is 22 years of age.

12. <u>Parental Consent:</u> No parental consent is required for participation in the present study since minors cannot be participants.

13. Signatures:

_____

Participant Name   Date

_____

Principal Investigator   Date

A copy of the Informed Consent, signed by the participant is to be retained by the researcher and a duplicate is to be given to the participant.

NOTE: If in the judgment of the IRB the participants are not at risk, informed consent may be delivered orally and signatures may not be required. In special cases that are clearly justified, the informed consent procedure may be waived by the IRB.

*While children may be legally incapable of giving informed consent, they nevertheless may possess the ability to assent to or dissent from participation. Out of respect for children as developing persons, children should be asked whether or not they wish to participate in the research. Where appropriate, the IRB may choose to review on a case-by-case basis whether assent should be sought from given individuals. The federal regulations do not require that assent be sought from children at any specific age, but their assent should be sought when, in the judgment of the IRB, the children are capable of providing their assent, taking into account the ages, maturity, and psychological state of the children involved.

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Vita

GLORIA J. DAVIS, SPHR

Birth Date:
Place of Birth:

SUMMARY

Experienced instructor with over 10 years experience teaching in post secondary education. Experience includes Undergraduate and Graduate Business Management programs. Experience with adult learning modality, uniquely qualified to provide instruction to meet the needs of students and fulfill organizational goals for achievement.

FACILITATION EXPERIENCE

Instructor - University of Phoenix, 1998 - Present
Employment Law, Organizational Behavior, Human Resources Management, Business Management. University approval to teach over 20 courses in various programs.
Instructor – University of North Florida, Division of Continuing Education, June, 2006
Human Resources Certification
Instructor– Jones College, 1998 - 1999
Business Courses, Labor Relations, Employment Law
Instructor – Jacksonville University, 1999
Business Management Program

EDUCATION

Candidate for Doctoral Degree, April 2010   University of North Florida, Jacksonville Florida
MA Degree, Human Resource Development   Webster University, Jacksonville, Florida
BA Degree, Business Administration   Loyola College, Baltimore, Maryland

PUBLICATIONS

Case Study, Understanding FMLA, February 2006
http://www.shrm.org/hrresources/casestudies_published/CMS_015707.pdf
Case Study, Implementing a Health Care Savings Account, September 2005
http://www.shrm.org/hrresources/casestudies_published/CMS_013982.pdf

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Senior Manager, Benefits - Convergys Corporation (Present) - 2 years
Human Resource (Program Manager) – ING (Formerly Citistreet) - 1 Year position, 8 years total
Operations Manager – 1 Year in position, 8 years total (Promoted to Program Manager)
Employee Relations Manager - 6 years
Vice President, Human Resources – Coastline Federal Credit Union - 2 years

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CERTIFICATION

SPHR Certification by HRCI, since 1998, Currently certified through 2010
Diversity and Workforce Readiness Director, SHRM Jacksonville 2010