ABSTRACT

Universities employ more than one million administrative and non-faculty professionals, constituting a large and expanding employment category with the greatest growth over the last 30 years in mid-level professional positions. Women comprise nearly 60 percent of this professional category in research universities, suggesting that this may be a professional home for women in higher education. The rapid growth of these professionals necessitates a better understanding of their place in the institution, how they are being used to meet the needs of the university, and how institutions allocate resources to these areas. This study explores the primary roles and activities of mid-level professional staff in the context of the contemporary American research university, with attention to the gendered nature of this professional category. Research was conducted using qualitative fieldwork in a public research university, focusing on three functional areas: academic, business, and external affairs. The research is driven by a conceptual framework using Acker’s gendered organizations, and Whitchurch’s conceptualization of the changing nature of university professional labor. The study found that mid-level professional staff are important mediators for institutional strategic change, their work being focused by senior administrators to help the university reposition itself to compete in various markets. Participants have experienced an intensification of work accompanied by reduced resources, in the context of few opportunities for professional advancement and a general sense of job insecurity. Professional staff are taking on
roles that support the university’s strategic initiatives and are responding to the changing needs of the campus, creating new professional spaces. And while women and men occupy somewhat different spaces on campus, participants’ responses suggest that this is a group in which gender is less problematic than it is in other campus groups. However, it still does not solve systematic gender inequality across the university. Policy implications for institutional management are emphasized.

INDEX WORDS: Mid-level Administrators, Gender, Women, Third Space, Gendered Organizations, Higher Education, Public Universities, Qualitative
MID-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE-PROFESSIONAL STAFF IN AN AMERICAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITY: EXPERTISE, GENDER, AND CHANGING PATTERNS OF PROFESSIONAL LABOR

by

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DEDICATION

For Judith
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .............................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES ..................................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Statement ........................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of Study ....................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background ....................................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design ............................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of Dissertation .......................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 LITERATURE REVIEW ...........................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing Staffing Patterns in Universities ..........................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Level Administrative and Professional Staff ...............................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and Universities ..........................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Framework .........................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS .......................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions ...............................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions and Confidentiality ...........................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology .............................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods ....................................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study .......................................................................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positionality and Assumptions

4 THE UNIVERSITY

Employment Structure
University Budget and Salaries
Strategic Plan and Organizational Restructuring

5 THE WORKERS AND THEIR WORK

Defining Their Labor
“Stuck in the Middle”: Working in the Hierarchy
Professional Spaces

6 THE UNIVERSITY AS WORKPLACE

Dealing with Change
Professional Development and Career Mobility

7 GENDER AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF

8 CONCLUSION

Summary of Major Findings
Policy Implications
Positionality, Methodology, and Directions for Future Research

REFERENCES

APPENDICES

A Recruitment Materials
B Informed Consent Form
C Participants
D Research Questions, Conceptual Frame, Data, and Interview Questions
E Interview Guide

219
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: All University Staff by Headcount and Employment Status, 2008-09 ......................... 70
Table 2: Faculty by Rank and FTE, 2008-09 ........................................................................... 72
Table 3: Carver State University Professional Staff Salaries by Quartiles, 2008-09 ............... 79
Table 4: Participant Salaries by Professional Group ............................................................. 79
Table 5: Average Salaries for Full-Time Faculty and Professional Staff in Academic Colleges, 2008-09 ................................................................................................................. 87
Table 6: Professional Staff Salary Comparison, Carver State University to CUPA-HR National Salaries, 2008-09 ........................................................................................................... 89
Table 7: Professional Staff Opinions About the Faculty ......................................................... 121
Table 8: Participants with Children, by Gender ................................................................. 173
Table 9: Distribution of Female Professional Staff in Academic Colleges ..................... 178
Table 10: Administrative Directors, by Area and Gender .................................................. 180
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Overall Employment Trends at Carver State University, 2004-2011</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Total Non-Student Staff Compared to Enrollment Growth, 2004-2011</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Percentages of Non-Student Staff by Headcount, 2008-09</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Faculty by Rank, FTE, and Gender, 2008-09</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Job Category and Gender Distribution of Support Staff, 2008-09</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Salary Comparison of Support and Professional Staff by Quartile Medians</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>University Organization Chart</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Average Salaries for Faculty and Professional Staff in Academic Colleges, 2008-09</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Gender Comparison by Employment Category at Carver State, 2008-09</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

The postsecondary education sector employs more than 3.9 million individuals in over 7,000 public and private institutions across the United States (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2011). More than one million are administrative and non-faculty professionals, constituting a large and expanding employment category with the greatest growth over the last 30 years in mid-level professional positions such as coordinator, director, specialist, and manager. Universities now employ as many, and in some cases more administrative and professional staff than full-time faculty, and it is the only postsecondary employment category aside from graduate students to grow in the past decade—experiencing a 6% increase overall, while all other categories have dropped by an average of -8% (Zaback, 2011). In a time when colleges and universities are under fire to slash personnel-heavy budgets, this group has come under increased scrutiny. While many decry administrative growth, we do not actually know much about non-faculty university professionals outside of the senior/executive realm. We do know that women comprise almost 60 percent of this professional category in research universities, suggesting that this may be a professional home for women in higher education.\(^1\) The expansion and restructuring of university activities and institutional purposes have changed the nature of academic work and of the university, altering the ways in which we operate. “As public universities have been pressured to become more like businesses, university managers have become the major reshapers of the academic workplace” (Gumport, 1997, p. 127). Following Barley and Kunda’s (2001) proposition

\(^1\) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS): Fall Staff, 2010
regarding the interdependence of work and organizational structure, we cannot understand how the university operates without understanding the nature and functions of this sizeable professional group.

The purpose of this study is to explore the primary roles and activities of mid-level professional staff in the context of the contemporary American research university, with attention to the gendered nature of this professional category. Little scholarship exists to understand the roles that mid-level professionals play in the university, or to explain inequalities by sex that seem to persist in the institutional administrative structure (Rosser, 2000, 2004). The rapid growth of these professionals necessitates a better understanding of their place in the institution, how they are being used to meet the needs of the university, and how institutions allocate resources to these areas. While much has been written about unchecked administrative growth and excessive spending, little research has been on professional staff “in its own right” (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004). This study provides a space to hear from the university’s “anonymous leaders” (Glenny, 1972), “unheralded heroes” (Scott, 1980), “invisible workers” (Szekeres, 2004), and “unsung professionals” (Rosser, 2000) about what they do and how they define their labor.

**Significance of Study**

This study is important because it contributes to our collective understanding about how universities are currently organized, and the nature and forms of labor that are being used to support university activities. In an early exploration of the subject, Scott (1978) observed that the “administration is presumed to support the major activities of the institution, but increasingly it has itself become one of the major activities” (p. 8). To understand and consider the implications of this observation requires a qualitative investigation. Secondly, we need better data. Rhoades (2007) recently noted, “the distinctive and disaggregated character of support professionals in higher education is not reflected in the national data” (p. 129). Unfortunately, current national
data on postsecondary staff are based on broad categories that explain little about what these professionals actually do and how their work supports their institutions. Not only is the net cast too wide, current data do not capture how professional work changes while titles and categories may not. This makes it difficult to research these individuals or to make comparisons across institutions. This study recognizes the complexities of broad-based, quantitative research on the topic, and attempts to address some of the questions that the data cannot answer. Finally, this study recognizes university staffing as a policy issue (Kogan, Moses, & El-Khawas, 1994). How should we meet the changing needs and demands of the constituencies we serve while managing the institutional contexts in which we work? How should we think about these changes and the effects on professional and managerial structures and their labor?

Background

Administrators in the Literature

Much of the extant literature about university administrators can be categorized into three fairly predictable themes. Scholarship on leadership seeks to identify what makes a successful leader, either by extolling the virtues of great university leaders throughout history, or focusing on traits and characteristics of sitting presidents (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007). These studies delineate leadership behaviors, contexts, and organizational cultures in which successful leadership occurs (Lincoln, 1991). The second area focuses on practical advice for hiring and managing administrators, professional skill development, compensation, and career paths (Moore et. al, 1983; Moore & Twombly, 1990). Most of these studies target senior administrators such as presidents, provosts, and deans. The scholarship in these areas is largely anecdotal, descriptive, or based on “best practices.” The third theme is not only a subject of scholarship, but also threads

---

2 National data on postsecondary staff and faculty are typically cited from the US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Administrative categories include Education/Administrative/Managerial and Other Professional (support and service).
through the assumptions of many writers, that of the bloated administration. Scholarship in this theme often cites the growth of the “administrative lattice,” which is defined as “the proliferation and entrenchment of administrative staff at American colleges and universities” (Stanley & Adams, 1994, p. 22; Zemsky & Massy, 1990). Many writers in the scholarly literature as well as in the industry press call for slashing administrative budgets, for getting rid of perceived bloat. A few scholars have made headlines for heralding the end of the university as we know it on the backs of fat cat campus administrators (Bousquet, 2008; Ginsberg, 2011; Newfield, 2008; Tuchman, 2009; Vedder, 2004).

This study focuses on mid-level, non-faculty professionals who occupy positions that are primarily administrative, support, or managerial in nature. This group has been variously termed “midlevel administrators” (Rosser, 2000, 2004), “administrative managers” (Whitchurch, 2004), “professional managers” (Whitchurch, 2007), “academic professionals” (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), “non-academic staff” (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004), and “managerial professionals” (Rhoades, 1998) in the literature. The lack of consensus about what to call this group reveals the problem of how define them and their work. Gumport and Pusser (1995) noted 17 years ago that “there is no uniform definition in higher education research of what constitutes administration or administrative functions” (p. 496), and this continues to be a problem for conducting useful research (Szekeres, 2004; Whitchurch, 2008a). The limited extant literature has placed the majority of mid-level administrative positions in an occupational segment of their own, revealing that individuals who occupy these positions are unlikely to be able to access the traditional administrative ranks that lead to top university posts (Moore et. al., 1983; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2000; Twombly, 1988).

A few scholars have acknowledged the growing numbers of middle level administrators and professionals in universities. Rhoades and Slaughter (1997) noted that in the late 1970s and 1980s, their numbers grew by 100 percent, increasing even through budget cuts and reductions in
other university employee groups. More specifically, in the 1970s and 1980s universities hired more non-teaching professionals than any other category, and nearly twice that of faculty members (Grassmuck, 1991). This growth may have been spurred by an increased need to comply with federal and state laws, the expansion of federal research dollars, growth in student enrollment, institutional aspirations, and external pressures for reporting and accountability (Brainard, 2009; Callan, 2002; Ehrenberg, 2001). Rhoades and Sporn (2002) noted that while these professionals have a claim to valuable expertise, they do not enjoy the same level of professionalism as faculty because they are supervised by managers, do not have academic freedom, and have no right to their intellectual property. They also generally receive less compensation than faculty for their work, and are ineligible for tenure. These “managerial professionals” are engaged in instruction and student services, research, and service/outreach; they are “central production workers” on college and university campuses (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997, p. 23).

It is important to recognize that there are clear philosophical differences in the purposes of the university, and how staff should be deployed; some view administrators as only support for research and instruction, while others view administrative activity as essential to new modes of knowledge production in a time when universities are expanding their borders (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2010). Recent scholarship out of the United Kingdom has revealed new forms of activity within universities that blend formerly distinctive administrative and academic roles, thus constructing new professional roles and identities (Whitchurch, 2008a, 2008b). Administrative and professional staff are more highly educated and doing more project-based and boundary-spanning work than ever before, thus upsetting former assumptions about the bureaucratic and functional nature of their work (Szekeres, 2004). This new line of inquiry prompts compelling questions about the shifting priorities of American universities, and how these changes are affecting institutional labor.
Universities as Workplaces

In the past 30 years, nations have experienced unprecedented changes in economic and political boundaries. Globalization has shaped the kind of work we do, what we produce, and how we interpret the world. As a result of the shift to a global knowledge economy, governments have turned to universities as sites of “national wealth creation” (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997, p. 37). Universities have pursued this goal with gusto, resulting in a seemingly single-minded focus on technological and research expertise in order to compete in global markets. This pursuit is driven by reductions in government spending on undergraduate education, expectations for increased productivity, restructuring of public resources, and growing corporate and strategic partnerships. Elite universities have become political and economic power players that want to maintain their historic position as primary sites of knowledge production. Not only are academics are under extraordinary pressure to participate in this pursuit as entrepreneurs, but all campus employees are expected to do more highly skilled and specialized labor at a faster pace in order to compete in a variety of markets that universities now serve (Anderson, 2006). Universities also concentrate on local and national markets for students, donors, and consumers of educational materials and products of the university “brand” (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Many scholars around the globe have documented these profound changes in the higher education landscape. While there are disagreements about the mechanisms and consequences of these changes, scholars generally agree on the driving forces. Public funding for universities has been declining since the 1970s, brought on in part by recurring economic crises and demographic developments that compete for state funds. This has resulted in reduced public investment in undergraduate education concurrent with increased student enrollments and a fundamental shift in societal expectations about the purpose of higher education (Clark, 1998; Zusman, 2005). External influences on the university have contributed to the transformation of the nature and character of academic work and institutional activities. The undisputed trends for universities are
toward more centralized management and activities to generate institutional revenue from the federal government, private donors, industry contracts, and increased tuition (Clark, 2002; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Public universities’ “…efforts to generate revenues through entrepreneurial initiatives have expanded since the early 1980s” (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002, p. 4). Universities now look to areas of the campus that can become more entrepreneurial, resulting in expanded fundraising and development, increased tuition and fees, research grants and contracts, and technology transfer (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997). And while there is no dearth of scholarship bemoaning the loss of the old ways, Slaughter and Leslie (1997) caution us that the changes are here to stay.

The changes in institutional purposes have altered the nature of academic work and of the university as a workplace (Gumport, 1997). The faculty has become stratified through a dual market labor market in which some win full-time, tenure track positions, while growing numbers create piecemeal careers from part-time, contingent, and contract labor. Faculty are also now stratified by field, with departments that are able to bring in more research dollars and industry partnerships being more likely to maintain full-time faculties with higher salaries (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997). The expansion of distance education programs means that course instructors may never step foot on a college campus and have varying levels of control over the curriculum that they teach (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Administrative and professional staff are becoming “increasingly central” to entrepreneurial universities; they staff offices of instructional technology, research institutes, services to students, development offices and foundations at the central level as well as in units throughout the institution (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002, p. 16). They have diverse areas of expertise and fill a growing need for specialized expertise in certain managerial areas, such as business affairs, finance, instructional technology, and legal counsel. The goals of the managerial university require that some positions be open to the outside, as strategic needs for certain types of skills and abilities may be needed. At the same time, new
professional orientations are emerging that emphasize the “qualities associated more with the
managerial and market…namely, the capacity to work in teams, to be cost conscious and results
orientated, to respond to exogenous criteria of quality, and to be able to create and sustain
networks both within and across the higher education boundary” (Kogan et al., 1994, p. 29).

Research Design

Research Questions

This study seeks to understand how mid-level university professionals define their labor
in the context of the changing research university. Professional networks are explored, as well as
the relationships between professional staff and other members of the university community. The
study asks, is their work central to the academic and scholarly functioning of today’s university?
Since there are so many women in this category, the study questions whether these positions are
defined in terms of gender, where women are located in the structure, and how administrative and
professional staff perceive their employment experiences in terms of gender. The study considers
whether these mid-level professional positions are women’s places on the university campus.

Methods Overview

The research approach is primarily qualitative, emphasizing fieldwork at one institutional
site. Interviews were conducted with 43 mid-level professional staff at a public research
university designated as Very High Research Activity by The Carnegie Foundation. The public
research university is chosen as an institutional context over other types (such as comprehensive
colleges or community colleges) because it is a primary place of knowledge creation, power, and
prestige. Research universities employ the most diverse staffing categories of all postsecondary
institutions, and although the overall rate of staff growth has been the slowest (10% at research
institutions; 18% at 4-year baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral institutions; and 19% at 2-year
colleges, from 2001-2009) of all higher education sectors, this growth reflects more full-time
(versus part-time) positions (Zaback, 2011). Additionally, while research universities employ large numbers of women as staff and faculty, they are the least likely of all higher education bodies to achieve sex equity in senior faculty and senior administrative posts (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Li & Carroll, 2006). The research questions and methodology are driven by two conceptual frames that attempt to view the work of professional staff in new ways. I use feminist organizational theory that interrogates the gendered nature of identities and experiences within the university (Acker, 1992), and a new conceptual framework that focuses on the development of mid-level university professional roles (Whitchurch, 2008c).

**Organization of Dissertation**

The dissertation is organized into eight chapters. The first chapter serves as the introduction, providing a general overview and background for the study. Chapter 2 surveys the literature on the changing staffing patterns in universities, including explanations for the growth in administration. The extant scholarship on university mid-level administrators and professional staff is explored, as well as what we know about women in administration. This chapter also presents the conceptual lenses through which the research is understood. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and methods, including the research questions, definitions, and data. Research participants are introduced, and procedures for collecting and analyzing data are explicated. Chapter 4 introduces the research university that served as the institutional context for the case study of professional staff, with a focus on employment structure, budget and salaries, and the strategic changes that have shaped the work of its faculty and staff. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the interviews and supporting data that address the research questions. Chapter 5 is titled, “The Workers and Their Work,” and explores how professional staff define their labor, their relationships with other staff and faculty, and some issues particular to this group. The viability of new concepts about the changing nature of university professional labor is considered. Chapter 6
is broadly titled, “The University as Workplace,” and concentrates on how changes in the institution have intensified the work of professional staff. The chapter also discusses problems that professional staff face in terms of their own career mobility, with a focus on the psychological contract that they make with the university wherein they make some concessions but gain in other ways. Chapter 7 deals with the complex question of whether this group is gendered, with a focus on ways in which the university attempts to address gender equity, and how it undermines its own efforts by ignoring the experiences of professional staff. Data are analyzed using the conceptual frameworks, and alternatives and inconsistencies are considered. Chapter 8 concludes the study, wherein the research questions are revisited and findings are summarized. Policy implications for institutional management are emphasized.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of work, occupations, and organizations has been a major field of scholarship in sociology, economics, and labor studies since the early twentieth century. Questions of where people work, how they get jobs, and how work is organized have been studied and theorized extensively in the US, Europe, Australia, and Canada, as researchers have sought to understand the operation of labor markets and the experience of work. Until the 1950s, most of this research focused on working class or blue-collar labor such as manufacturing and agriculture, and managerial labor in those contexts. Professional fields and what was initially categorized as the “semi-professions” began to be studied in the mid-century, but theoretical development of the professions took a different path. The professions were not specifically linked with the development of other occupations, and the study of the professions within organizations is still somewhat lacking. Caplow and McGee’s 1958 book, The Academic Marketplace, turned attention to higher education faculty, providing an empirical view on the professoriate. Since then, faculty labor markets and trends have been studied in depth. Unfortunately, as the economy and the university have changed, research has not kept up with the changing higher education workforce (Rhoades, 2007). Universities now employ as many, and in some cases more administrative and professional staff than faculty, consuming ever larger shares of the institutional budget. Full-time, tenured and tenure track faculty positions make up smaller portions of the total faculty, and their workloads have changed to reflect a more intense focus on research and scholarship. Women are more likely than in years past to be found in the professoriate, in senior administration, and in professional positions across campus. While the context for these changes has been explored in depth, workers’ experiences have received uneven attention (Rhoades, 2007). This chapter will
explore what is known about the careers and work experiences of higher education administrators, how they are viewed in the context of the managerial university, and the significance of using a gender analysis to understand the experiences of mid-level professional staff. A conceptual framework is presented that may be helpful in understanding the roles and activities of professional staff and their mobility in colleges and universities. Broad trends in higher education and recent empirical work will be used to suggest extension of these concepts to create a picture of what is happening in the field.

**Changing Staffing Patterns in Universities**

**Changing Faculty**

There is no question that university staffing patterns have been changing, and the issue that has received arguably the most attention is what has happened to faculty positions and workloads. Although total numbers are up to meet the increased student enrollment (Clery, 2011; Desrochers & Wellman, 2011; Li & Carroll, 2006), the percentage of full-time, tenured and tenure-track positions for all institutional sectors has fallen, comprising 32% of the faculty in 1999, and just 27% ten years later (Clery, 2011). The numbers of part-time and full-time non-tenure track faculty have been growing; faculty make up the largest numbers of part-timers on campus, rising from 40% in 1993 to 46% in 2003 (Li & Carroll, 2006), and approximately 55% in 2011 (Desrochers & Wellman, 2011; Knapp et al., 2011). Part-time faculty now number 1.3 million in all postsecondary institutions (Knapp et al., 2011). Associate’s colleges are the primary sites of part-time academic labor (69% of the faculty there), and while research universities are the least likely of the public institutions to employ faculty on a part-time basis, numbers are increasing there as well (from 55% of the faculty in 2000 to 58% in 2008) (Desrochers & Wellman, 2011).
The restructuring of academic labor in its modern configuration has been happening since the mid-1970s. Budget reductions resulting from the 1970s economic recession coupled with an imbalance in supply and demand for faculty by 1970 resulted in the development of a dual labor market for faculty (Barrow, 1995; Roemer & Schnitz, 1982). Promoted by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in 1972,³ the dual labor market used non-tenure track and part-time appointments for institutional flexibility in the face of budget cuts and fluctuating student enrollment. This low cost, “flexible” labor pool was firmly in place by the late 1970s, when approximately 30% of new full-time positions were off the tenure track (Roemer & Schnitz, 1982). The secondary labor market that was created by this strategy has become problematic for academic careers, as those who cannot obtain coveted positions in the primary labor market (full-time, tenure-track) typically suffer low wages and permanent instability with “little or no opportunity for advancement and little possibility of entering the core workforce” (Barrow, 1995, p. 171). It supports a “two class system” with women more likely to be located in untenured, unranked positions such as adjunct, lecturer, and instructor (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Knapp et. al, 2011).

Some things have changed in the academic labor market since Caplow and McGee’s foundational study. There are more PhDs and more non-academic competition for PhDs, there are more women and minorities in the professional labor market, and universities are more concerned with credentials as a test of quality (Burke, 1988). Faculty now constitute a sizeable contingent of professional groups that have joined collective bargaining units—about 44% of full-time and 26% of part-time faculty in 1994—though largely in postsecondary sectors other than research universities (Rhoades, 1998, 2007). The emphasis on research has intensified, and not just for faculty at research institutions (Milem, Berger, & Dey, 2000). States began reducing

appropriations to higher education in the late 1980s, and public universities embraced management strategies from the corporate sector to deal with shifts in revenue. Program reductions and retrenchment in the 1980s, and large numbers of faculty retirements in the 1990s made room for administrators to maximize flexibility in faculty hiring (Barrow, 1995). Baldwin and Chronister (2001) declared it to be a new era, concluding that the traditional full-time, tenure-track faculty model is no longer adequately meeting the needs of a complex society. While they did not call for the end of tenure, the authors uncritically supported the secondary labor market and advocated giving contingent faculty more rights. In contrast, Slaughter (1993) took aim at management discourses of “economy and efficiency,” arguing that university managers used fiscal exigency to strategically dispose of faculty and departments that could not position themselves close to the market.

Scholars who study faculty now focus on the changing nature and conditions of academic work in research universities. Academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) offers a model to understand the current era for university academic labor in the context of a rapidly expanding enterprise. Academic capitalism brings attention to the entrepreneurial pressures for faculty and administrators to search for and obtain external funds. This includes research grants and contracts, partnerships with industry, and increases in undergraduate tuition and fees. An explicit goal and underlying assumption of academic capitalism is institutional and disciplinary prestige maximization. This means hiring the faculty who will produce important research and publish in the top journals, bring in large grants and contracts, and attract the best graduate students. The quest for prestige and competition for faculty has not changed much since the postwar years (Burke, 1988; Caplow & McGee, 1958), but academic capitalism has ratcheted up the stakes by increasing stratification by disciplinary field.

4 While the overall increase in part-time faculty is cause for concern, it may not constitute a war on tenure, as many assume. The percentage of tenured faculty did not change between 1975 and 1995, maintaining at around 52% (Chait, 2002).
by institutional sector, between institutions, and often by gender (Gumport, 1997; Metcalf & Slaughter, 2008; Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997). Thus, faculty salary and institutional resource allocation are differentiated by those who are seen to bring in external funds and contracts (like biotechnology, physics, and engineering), and those who do not (like the humanities and social sciences).

**Growing Administration**

 Administrative and non-faculty professionals are the largest and fastest growing employee group on today’s university campuses, accounting for as many as half of all university employees (Knapp et al., 2011; Li & Carroll, 2006). Opportunities abound for working outside the traditional faculty-chairperson-dean administrative career ladder; middle level positions such as coordinator, director, specialist, and manager proliferate in academic affairs, business and administrative offices, human resources, information technology, athletics, student affairs, and external affairs, as well as in research centers and institutes. Entry points for employment in these areas vary, as do duties and responsibilities, salary levels, and opportunities for advancement (Rosser, 2000). This growth has generated a lot of concern about institutional spending and priorities. While some scholars (Ginsberg, Tuchman, Vedder) have gained a lot of attention from their outrage at the administration, many others say that today’s campuses could not be run without them.

How much as the administration grown? It is difficult to know. Duryea (1973) noted that by 1900, “the managerial burden of the president had begun to necessitate what has become a burgeoning administrative bureaucracy” (p. 24), and professors who at one time served in administrative capacities part-time made way for full-time administrative staff. Although criticisms about administrative growth are nothing new, there were not enough empirical data on the subject by 1973, when Blau published the results of his study of 115 institutions in *The Organization of Academic Work*. Blau found that the ratio of administrators to faculty seemed to
be higher in small colleges than on larger campuses (reported in Brown, 1981). Early research on administrative growth in other industries suggested that the proportion of administrators to the rest of the staff decreases as the organization grows in size, and shows little relative increase over time (Hawley, Boland, & Boland, 1965). Hawley et al.’s (1965) survey of faculty-staff sizes at 116 postsecondary institutions matched those findings. While data collection on higher education staff has improved, studies of administrative ratios on university campuses are not common. Most recent research utilizes IPEDS data to review overall numbers, or CUPA or other national data to make salary comparisons. Generally, it is agreed that making comparisons across institutions is impracticable because universities categorize their administrative functions and positions differently (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002).

Since the 1970s, postsecondary institutions have built their administrative and professional staffs at a much faster rate than estimates from earlier in the century. The majority of this growth occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, as campuses hired nearly double the number of non-faculty staff members as faculty (Grassmuck, 1991). From 1979-80 to 1989-90, the number of mid-level administrators and professionals at colleges and universities grew by 62%, and the administrative and managerial category grew by 25% (Grassmuck, 1991).5 While Grassmuck reported that faculty positions increased by 14% during this same period, she noted a critique by Lee Hansen that these data were incomplete because they did not report part-time employment. We know that in the past 20 years, academic institutions have increased their numbers of faculty by 50%, but most of those positions have been part-time (Brainard et al., 2009; Zaback, 2011). Mid-level administrative positions have continued to increase during rough economic times, though at a much slower rate; non-faculty administrative and professional positions grew 4.5% between 1989 and 1992 (Nicklin & Blumenstyk, 1993),6 and about 6% between 2001 and 2009.

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5 Based on survey data collected by the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission.
6 Ibid.
It is important to note that executive level positions have not grown significantly at public institutions in the past three decades (Desrochers & Wellman, 2011; Nicklin & Blumenstyk, 1993), and actually experienced a 20% reduction since 2001 (Zaback, 2011). The current national trend is toward a reduction in all staff and faculty categories except for mid-level administrative and professional positions. And even though total numbers are up, there has been an overall decrease in the number of all staff per 100 students FTE (Zaback, 2011). Universities in other countries have been experiencing changes similar to those in the United States, namely increased accountability and reporting requirements, increased student numbers, pushes for privatization of public institutions, more managerial control, involvement in market competition, and declining government resources (Szekeres, 2004, 2006). The growth in mid-level, nonacademic staff has been noted in Australia (Szekeres, 2004, 2006), Norway (Gornitzka, Kyvik, & Larsen, 1998), and the United Kingdom (Whitchurch, 2007).

The growth in professional positions in higher education mirrors growth in professional fields in the wider labor force. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projected the largest occupational growth to occur in professional and related occupations, accounting for a 16.8% increase and 5.2 million new jobs from 2008 to 2018 (Lacey & Wright, 2009). Another 1.7 million new jobs are expected in management, business, and financial occupations for a 10.6% increase in that category. The biggest growth is expected in health care (1.4 million new jobs), educational services (1.3 million new jobs), and the professional, scientific, and technical services industry (1.2 million new jobs) (Lacey & Wright, 2009). Overall employment is expected to rise by 10.1%, resulting in 15.3 million new jobs, and jobs requiring postsecondary education will grow faster than categories requiring less education.

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7 Based on IPEDS data.
8 Between 2001 and 2009, executive/administrative and managerial staff dropped 20%, clerical/secretarial/technical staff dropped 24%, service/maintenance/skilled crafts dropped 20%, and faculty dropped 4% for all public institutional sectors (Zaback, 2011).
**Why the growth?** In the past 110 years, the size of the university administration has grown with student enrollment and faculty employment. Duryea (1973) chronicled what was perhaps the first growth spurt, occurring in the early 1900s. Presidents began adding staff to assist them in securing financial support, promoting positive public relations, handling student admissions, and tracking credit hours. By 1914, most universities had a registrar, librarian, bursar, and clerical staff, and were beginning to hire vice-presidents and deans. That the administration has grown is certain, but unfortunately, there has been little empirical evidence of why it has grown, the mechanisms by which it has increased, and what it means for the university (Leslie & Rhoades, 1995). Based on an extensive review of the literature, Leslie and Rhoades (1995) used economic assumptions of nonprofit behavior and institutional theory to propose explanations for increases in administrative costs. They predicted that universities would make investments of financial resources and staff to: maximize revenues in pursuit of status and prestige; respond to increasing federal and state regulations; manage increasing organizational complexity; compensate for less faculty involvement in administrative functions; further administrative agendas; respond to increasing environmental uncertainty; and position their institutions to participate in corporate markets. These propositions are echoed in the extant scholarship as well as in the sentiments of institutional leaders and analysts.

A main argument that analysts and institutions make for the need for more professional staff is compliance with federal and state regulations (Brainard, Fain, & Masterson, 2009; Grassmuck, 1991). Federal and state laws regarding financial aid, occupational and environmental health and safety, affirmative action, and human subjects research, as well as state policies concerning accountability, student learning assessment, and economic development have been cited as significant burdens for colleges and universities. Rising demand for data from governments and the public have contributed to the development of offices of institutional research, quality assurance, strategic planning, and college-level assistant deans (Kogan et al.,
“Increased pressure for institutional development and control…has led to the employment of officers in a new range of tasks that derive in part from the persuasions of public policy rather than academic development” (Kogan et al., 1994, p. 61).

Secondly, as universities pursue a varied portfolio of funding, universities need more staff to manage the resulting relationships with funders. Tolbert’s (1985) study of 281 public and private universities found that resource dependency was related (albeit unevenly) to the growth of administrative units and non-faculty professional staff to handle the increasing responsibilities and complexities that came with those funds. Federal research dollars come with requirements for reporting, strict financial auditing, and regulatory enforcement. Institutions have created administrative offices to pursue new sources of funding; evidence indicates that extensive growth has taken place in such areas as technology transfer, legal affairs and patenting, and research administration (Brainard et al., 2009; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2008). Development, events management, and alumni affairs offices have cropped up on campuses both in central administration and in academic colleges to tap private donors (Kozbarich, 2000).

A significant portion of the administration is devoted entirely to students. As student populations have expanded and diversified in the past 50 years, the functions of universities have changed in regard to students (Kogan et al., 1994). Offices of admissions, financial aid, and housing have grown to handle the sheer numbers. Institutions attempt to provide for a range of student needs, including health centers, recreation centers, and services for students with disabilities (Brainard et al., 2009; Farrell, 2009). Prestige maximization extends to students, as competition for their tuition dollars has led to the expansion of academic and student affairs in areas such as academic advising, instructional technology, tutoring and special academic services, mental health counseling, housing, study abroad, and student activities. Colleges invest in more staff and infrastructure to meet increasing student expectations for college as a “lifestyle experience” that they consume (Knapp et al., 2011; Kogan et al., 1994). Additionally, staff are
needed to support campus technology, distance learning, continuing education, and high school-to-college collaborations (Nicklin & Blumenstyk, 1993).

Some of these attributed causes of administrative growth and organizational change have been studied empirically, but many have not. While the facts of external forces such as increasing government regulations, shifting student demographics, new forms of technology, and changing resources are generally not disputed, there is no consensus about the mechanisms by which these events have affected the organizational structure of universities. Barley and Kunda (2001) cautioned that an overreliance on environmental forces as the cause of organization change is a weakness in organizational theory. They advocate a focus on the work that individuals do in the organization to link “microorganizational processes” to “macroorganizational changes” as a basis for empirical understanding of these mechanisms (p. 79). Human action is a key to how and why organizations change.

**Do administrators drive up higher education costs?** Scholars, legislators, students, parents, and the media seem to agree that college costs too much. Tuition has been increasing at extra-inflationary rates since the 1970s, with annual public tuition sticker prices rising an average 3-6% per year in recent years (Johnstone, 2001). Costs to students have indeed increased, but the relationship between tuition and undergraduate education is complicated and difficult to discern; tuition covers a fraction of educational costs, and university budgets cover far more functions than those related to undergraduate instruction (Johnstone, 2001). A wave of criticism in the 1980s focused on the escalation of administrative costs and the apparent inability of institutions to enforce fiscal discipline and efficiencies (Leslie & Rhoades, 1995; Zemsky & Massy, 1990), although there was little evidence to prove that administrative costs were getting out of control (Hansen & Guidugli, 1990). The concept of the “administrative lattice” accompanied the “academic ratchet,” which reduced teaching loads to accommodate university faculty members’ desires to focus on their own research and extra-institutional professional activities (Archibald &
Feldman, 2008; Massy & Zemsky, 1994). Other explanations for cost increases have included poor institutional management, more expensive disciplines, and government regulations that have increased data collection and reporting responsibilities (Archibald & Feldman, 2008, 2011; Leslie & Rhoades, 1995), as well as initiatives with the private sector, auxiliary enterprises, licenses and patents, franchising, real estate, and other market-seeking investments (Hearn, 2006; Slaughter & Rhoades, 1997). Although intended to generate revenue, these activities do not always pay for themselves, and institutions may have passed on many of these expenditures to students through hikes in tuition and fees (Hearn, 2006).

Countering the discourse of out-of-control spending, faculty and administrators at many campuses say that they are “doing more with less,” coping with budget cuts, furloughs, restructuring, and increased workloads. Indeed, they may be doing just that this year. The Delta Cost Project documented a recent shift away from spending on administration to protect instruction and student services (Desrochers & Wellman, 2011). But is the overall trend toward spending more on the administration? Johnstone (2001) argued that higher education costs are not, in fact, “out-of-control,” but rather are increasing at similar rates to the rest of the economy, and public university salaries are actually lagging behind the private sector. He argued that additional costs are due to increased federal, health, and safety regulations; reporting requirements for admissions and financial aid; and restrictive state finance laws that do not allow institutions to save or transfer unspent balances to the next fiscal year. In an analysis of IPEDS inflation-adjusted panel data at master’s institutions, Hedrick, Wassell, and Henson (2009) concluded that while increases in administrative expenditures slightly outpaced instructional expenditures from 1984 to 2000, there is no evidence for claims of administrative bloat. Using time-series data, Archibald and Feldman (2008, 2011) compared higher education to similar industries that require highly educated labor and have been subjected to increased federal regulation (physicians, lawyers, and dentists), and found comparable rates of growth. They
proposed that higher education, like other personal services, might suffer from Baumol’s “cost
disease,” which ties rising service costs to the attempt to maintain quality (Archibald & Feldman,
2008, 2011) and boost institutional prestige (Leslie & Rhoades, 1995) whether or not there exists
evidence of increased productivity.

What about the growth of professional staff in universities? Certainly the addition of
well-paid personnel would fatten the budget. Archibald and Feldman (2008) found that while the
numbers of non-professional workers have been falling in medicine, law, and dentistry, higher
education has made the biggest move away from non-skilled labor, increasing their professional
labor force at a higher rate than comparable industries and decreasing skilled labor categories.

Leslie and Rhoades (1995) cited the expansion of non-faculty professionals over faculty as one of
the primary drivers of increased administrative costs, and Zemsky and Massy (1990) called the
growth in hiring of professional staff an “extension of the administrative lattice.” It is interesting
that while some scholars accuse the administration of self-aggrandizement (Leslie & Rhoades,
1995), others cite the faculty’s desire to shed certain responsibilities (e.g. teaching, mentoring,
advising, admissions, etc.) as the justification for hiring more professional administrators
(Archibald & Feldman, 2011). Gumport (1997) contended that administrative positions are
necessary to respond to faculty specialization and withdrawal from organizational activities that
used to be part of their duties. “The increased centrality of these actors can in part be accounted
for as a necessary organizational adaptation in which managerialism filled a vacuum of inactivity
that stemmed from faculty specialization and the segmentation of academic work” (Gumport,
1997, p. 121). Slaughter (personal conversation) also pointed out that starting in the 1990s,
administrators at research institutions incentives to specialize, focusing on research, patenting,
and other activities to generate external revenues. Barley (1996) argued that today’s work is
information-driven and personnel-heavy, and Archibald and Feldman (2011) contended that the
knowledge economy necessitates a new kind of higher education, requiring an investment in professional staff and technology to meet the rapidly changing demands.

**Mid-level Administrative and Professional Staff**

**Who are They and What Do They Do?**

Although a handful of scholars have written about mid-level university administrators over the years (Bess & Lodahl, 1969; Glenny, 1972; Moore & Twombly, 1990; Scott, 1978), little scholarship exists to understand the roles that these professionals currently play in the university. There have been a few pieces of research that have given serious attention to this growing group of professionals. One of the first researchers to focus on middle managers in American higher education was Robert Scott in the mid-1970s. His surveys and interviews of 200 mid-level college and university professionals constitute the most comprehensive qualitative study of this group to date. At that time, most of the administrative growth in universities was in this mid-level category, and their work activities were not well understood (Scott, 1980). Scott defined mid-level administrators as deans and directors who reported to the vice-presidential level, and included officers in academic affairs, administrative affairs, student affairs, and external affairs; librarians; and supervisors of non-exempt staff. These professionals were responsible for supplying and allocating resources to campus, coordinating and complying with external regulations, and working with students to help them be successful (Scott, 1980). They were the “knowledge professionals” who contributed information to support key decisions (p. 388). At the time of Scott’s study, most of the mid-level administrators were men, but he predicted that those positions would soon attract increasing numbers of women and minorities. Individuals came to these positions from a variety of fields inside and outside of education, or directly from graduate school—many of whom continuing their careers at the same institution where they earned their degrees (Scott, 1980).
The mid-level administrators that Scott interviewed were generally “oriented to the service of faculty and students, committed to a career in the institution…[but were] extremely frustrated that they [were] not taken seriously on their home campuses, by the lack of recognition for their accomplishments, by low pay and poor chances for advancement, by the lack of authority that accompanies their responsibility, and by the lack of direction given to them” (Scott, 1980, p. 390). Other issues that he discovered included limited career mobility, salary compression, and lack of institutional resources to support professional training (Scott, 1978). Professional organizations provided a source of information, a place for training, and a sense of belonging. Scott noted that mid-level professionals found their reference groups in these organizations rather than on campus (1980).

Most recently, Johnsrud and Rosser have sought to describe demographic characteristics, identify work-life issues, and understand the factors behind morale and turnover (Johnsrud, Heck, & Rosser, 2000; Johnsrud & Rosser, 1999; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2000; Rosser, 2000, 2004). In 2000, Johnsrud and Rosser edited a volume of *New Directions for Higher Education* to raise awareness of this important group that is “virtually ignored in the higher education literature” (p. 1), primarily to improve recruitment and hiring. The editors defined mid-level administrators as:

…either academic or nonacademic support personnel within the structure of higher education organizations. Usually, they are not classified as faculty but rather as a nonexempt, noncontract group of administrative staff. As a result, they rarely have the protection of tenure and are vulnerable to budget cuts. Midlevel administrators typically report to a top-level officer, administrator, or dean. They may be classified as administrators, professionals, technicians, or specialists, and their positions tend to be differentiated by functional specialization, skills, training, and experience (Rosser, 2000, p. 5).
Mid-level administrators are the university’s “unsung professionals” (Rosser, 2000) because they are often unrecognized for their contributions to the functioning of the campus, and are rarely involved in institutional decision-making. They must carry out and enforce policy decisions, but typically do not participate in university governance or policy-making. Mid-level administrators work in student services, including academic advising, housing, and student life; business and administrative services, such as accounting, grants management, and the bursar’s office; and in external affairs, in communications, development and fundraising, and public relations. More than 60% of these professionals are women, and about 20% are racial and ethnic minorities (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2010; Rosser, 2000). Rosser noted that the racial diversity of this group often mirrors that of the students and local community more closely than other professional employment categories on campus. The scope of Johnsrud and Rosser’s (2000) special journal issue was to provide information and professional advice for would-be mid-level administrators, and provided no analysis of mid-level careers. Still, it offered some evidence of shared commitment and frustrations about lack of recognition and opportunities for career advancement that seem to have changed little in the 22 years since Scott’s study. Further research about this group focused on morale, job satisfaction, and turnover (Rosser, 2004).

Managerial Professionals?

Perhaps the most critical observations about the growth of professional staff on campus have come from Gary Rhoades, who termed the group “managerial professionals” in 1998. Rhoades has characterized these individuals as professionals who “lack many of the essential features of the professional autonomy enjoyed by tenure-track faculty members” (2007, p. 129), and are more connected to management than faculty. Managerial professionals are becoming key actors in the production of higher education. They serve students in myriad campus roles from admissions to financial aid, housing, advising, cultural centers, etc.; they are engaged in institutional research and assessment as quality assurance agents; and participate in
entrepreneurial activities as development and advancement professionals (Rhoades, 2007; Rhoades & Sporn, 2002). Rhoades has attributed the growth of these professionals on campus mainly to the increasing emphasis on revenue-seeking activities, the expansion of the student population needing diverse services, advancements in instructional and research technologies, and outside demands for accountability. In a time of fiscal exigency, managerial professionals are problematic for university budgets because they are typically permanent, full-time staff, and thus are not a flexible employment category (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Rhoades (2007) has argued that learning about the work of managerial professionals is crucial to furthering our understanding of academic organizations. “The rise of these other professionals also needs to be understood in the context of the changing balance between faculty autonomy and managerial discretion” (p. 124). As universities in the US and Europe move to a more managerial model, managerial professionals are taking on more diverse roles. Some contend that the growth of managerial professionals erodes the power of traditional professions (Hwang & Powell, 2009), and thus professional staff in universities may erode the influence of the faculty as they increasingly oversee the work of faculty. Rhoades and Sporn (2002) argued that universities enlist these professionals to facilitate the “unbundling” of the faculty role; that is, faculty responsibilities are being broken up into discrete activities in order to increase efficiency, and managerial professionals are performing many of these roles. This strategy furthers the academic capitalist agenda by increasing infrastructure to support activities to move closer to markets for research, students, educational materials, etc. But while these managerial professionals do work that increases capacity for entrepreneurial activity, faculty jobs are increasingly restructured and managed (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The work of managerial professionals progressively comes to manage professional labor (teaching and research faculty) through control of time, work activities, and intellectual property (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1991, 1997). Managerial professionals
are arguably contributing to the deskilling and marginalization of faculty (Rhoades, 1998; Rhoades & Sporn, 2002).

There is wide concern about increasing divides between the faculty and administration, which may or may not reflect the work that professional staff members are engaged in. Whether or not mid-level professionals are presumed to be part of the administration, it is reasonable to be concerned about the increasing “fault lines” between academic and managerial activities (Whitchurch, 2004). Hwang and Powell (2009) considered the rise of managerial professionals in the nonprofit sector, and proposed that an increase in managerial professionals leads to new organizational practices. “These new managerial professionals link organizations and their environments, facilitating information flow, colonizing new domains of work, and erecting new status hierarchies based on the prestige of their training and employment” (p. 267). Szekeres (2004) argued that administrative staff in Australian universities are being used to further a neoliberal^9 agenda; these “invisible workers” are expected to utilize private-sector management practices on the front lines with students, governments, funders, and other “consumers” of the university “products.” Szekeres concluded that an increasingly managed, corporatized, and marketized university that is being “constantly audited” needs a more professional administration to communicate and respond to stakeholders. Universities are facing new problems that require a managerial response (Dearlove, 1998; Whitchurch, 2004).

Women and Universities

The history of women’s education in America is one of struggle: struggle for access, acceptance, and opportunities. Though women have made significant gains in these areas in the last 175 years, their achievements have not been linear; women have experienced both successes

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^9 Neoliberalism marks the current political-economic discourse that promotes free trade, privatization, minimal government intervention in business, and reduced public expenditure on social services and education. A neoliberal discourse has transformed the idea of higher education from a public good to a private investment in human capital.
and setbacks in their quest for inclusion (Solomon, 1985). As the structure and significance of higher education have changed, so have the meanings of women’s successes and challenges. The construction of femininity and masculinity intersect with religious doctrine, scientific discovery and innovation, and economic necessity, all of which have shaped women’s paths throughout history. However social norms, attitudes, and laws have kept women in their prescribed (and circumscribed) roles, some women have found ways to resist. Path breaking women and their male supporters have created places for women in higher education, even when no one else wanted them there. Since the 1970s, women have made great strides in higher education, but continue to “lack full access and equality of opportunity” (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001, p. 5).

Recent academic labor force statistics show that women are more likely to be in untenured and part-time faculty positions (60%), and are less likely to be full professors (32%) or associate professors (44%), although this is an improvement from 2000 (25% and 39%, respectively) (Clery, 2011). There are more women in faculty positions across rank and fields, and growth is especially strong at research institutions in the health sciences, biology, engineering, and physics (Allen, 2010). Even though there are more women in the sciences, they are still generally underrepresented on the faculty. Female faculty earn less than male faculty at every rank (Clery, 2011), though this gap is slowly decreasing. Women earn an average of 84% of men’s salary on university campuses, and have recently reached parity at (typically unionized) community colleges (Allen, 2010; Metcalfe & Slaughter, 2010).

As now only one player in the knowledge production market, universities are not passive participants; they are also “architect(s) of the technological and research expertise” (Eveline, 2004, p. 14). As university missions expand to encompass market-focused activity, internal hierarchies are created or exacerbated. Those whose research is closely affiliated with the market have greater access to resources and prestige than those who are more responsible for teaching and service. As elites sing the praises of globalization, the neglect of ethics and thoughtful
planning around consequences of this philosophical and economic shift can allow existing inequalities to become further entrenched. In her ethnographic study in an elite Australian university, Eveline (2004) found that support for gender equity is very much dependent upon the department or the supervisor, and that workers have uneven experiences across campus. For example, when asked why women from his department did not participate in a popular women’s leadership training program, a male executive dean said, “I don’t believe the best women here want to be targeted like that, particularly the younger women. No need…we’re all equal here” (p. 92). Eveline considered these specific instances to be a strategies used by men to maintain their privilege, thus reproducing the gendered university.

Universities in the new economy are complex organizations with multiple and sometimes competing goals and activities, including the education of diverse student bodies, commercial and strategic partnerships with industry and governments, and research that is targeted toward the market and subsidized by the government in the form of grants and contracts (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). The pattern of these developments contributes to the stratification of institutions and academic fields based on relation to the market, increased uncertainty in the form of threatened tenure and the replacement of full-time faculty positions with part-time instructors, and high levels of resource inequity among units. The effects of academic capitalism exacerbate the existing inequality regimes in universities, causing further disparities along lines of gender and race. While some women have been highly successful in negotiating the new university, they represent a small proportion of the top.

Women Administrators

An area that has received more attention in the past decade is women’s participation in administration. Early presidents of female academies did much of the same work as male college presidents, including raising money, garnering political support, marketing, admissions, supervising faculty, and working with the community (Nidiffer, 2003). New women’s colleges in
the mid-1800s opened opportunities for women’s leadership as deans and presidents, and these numbers grew at the end of the century with the establishment of women’s Catholic colleges (Introcaso, 2001). Early women administrators faced the difficult challenge of balancing the competing expectations of women with their public roles as leaders; they had to “reconcile notions of the ‘old woman’ with the ‘new woman’ in ways that placated conservative members of the community while pushing their vision of the college forward” (Nidiffer, 2003, p. 21). Women such as M. Carey Thomas of Bryn Mawr College and Alice Freeman of Wellesley College concentrated on developing faculty, attracting students, and getting publicity to build high quality collegiate institutions for the “new woman” of their day (Nidiffer, 2003, p. 21).

A wonderfully rich literature on deans of women showcases the important contribution that these women made to women’s education on coeducational campuses in the 1890s to 1930s. Although the majority of female students during this time enrolled in coeducational institutions, these campuses were difficult and often hostile places for them (Nidiffer, 2001a). Belying the stereotypes of the dour busy-body or pious matron, deans of women advocated for women students and faculty alike, negotiating resources and spaces for women, creating opportunities for female faculty, and looking after women’s physical well-being (Nidiffer, 2001b). These pioneering women also started professional organizations, produced research on their work, and oversaw graduate training of new deans (Nidiffer, 2003; Schwartz, 1997). Often the highest-ranking woman on campus, a dean of women had the opportunity to shape policies for women students, and build programs to support women’s academic and personal development. Their contributions to women’s education, health, and social well being helped to make these campuses more hospitable for their charges (Bashaw, 1999; Nidiffer, 2001a). Deans of men came on the scene later than deans of women, and acted as disciplinarians rather than advocates and caretakers. In her chapter on the subject, Jana Nidiffer remarked, “It was interesting that the administration’s response to excesses in student behavior…was a dean of women when it was
generally acknowledged that it was male students who exhibited the most troubling behavior” (Nidiffer, 2001b, p. 138). Robert Schwartz’s analysis of the circumstances surrounding the demise of the deans of women in the middle twentieth century links the “swarm” of men on campus after World War II with the student personnel movement, ultimately subordinating and then eliminating a separate position for women.\(^\text{10}\)

During the 1960s and 1970s, more women were earning doctoral degrees and being prepared for faculty positions, but were marginalized in second-class and part-time positions in the academy. Prejudice against women was well entrenched in institutions of higher education; affirmative action plans were slow to be formulated, myths and stereotypes about women persisted, and institutional resistance to hiring women was profound (Hornig, 1978). While women’s enrollments once again gained parity in the 1970s, they had few role models on their own campuses; women were difficult to find on university faculties, and few women held top administrative posts. Though women held the presidency at many women’s colleges and denominational institutions, no major coeducational university had a women president in 1970 (Haring-Hidore, 1988).

Since the 1970s, women have made significant advancement as professionals in higher education, but the gains have been uneven across institutional types and departments (Metcalfe & Slaughter, 2008; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). The increased numbers of women have been primarily in mid-level administrative positions with short career ladders; in feminized fields such as nursing, home economics, liberal arts, and continuing education; and in the community college sector (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Haring-Hidore, 1988; Metcalfe & Slaughter, 2008; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). A 1981 study of higher education administrators found that the majority of

\(^{10}\) Schwartz has an interesting discussion of the differences in philosophy between Deans of Women and Deans of Men, including the denigration by Deans of Men of professional training for their field. Regardless of their dismissal of the importance of the job, once the men were in charge, the prestige of the position was raised.
female administrators held the positions of head librarian, registrar, and director of financial aid, while the top three positions for men were president or chancellor, chief business officer, and registrar (cited in Moore, 1984). This pattern is similar for minority women and men in administrative positions, and has changed little over time (Glazer-Raymo, 1999). England (2010) noted that while women have integrated many formerly male-dominated professional fields, there are still profound gender boundaries that have not changed much since the 1970s. And while the number of women in the presidency has grown beginning in the late 1980s, 77 percent of college presidencies, and almost all of those at research institutions, are still held by men (Tiao & Tack, 2007).

Why should this be so? Scholars who study the gap cite issues such as lack of women senior leaders to be role models for women, socialized gender roles and domestic responsibilities that interfere with women’s ability to devote time and energy to career advancement, lack of exposure to and experience with administrative functions such as strategic planning and budgeting, sex-segregated workplaces and overcrowding of women in the lower ranks, discrimination in hiring and promotion, and lack of appropriate education or training (Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Secor, 1984; Tiao & Tack, 2007; Warner & DeFleur, 1993). Scholars believe that there are multiple challenges to women’s legitimacy as leaders, including discriminatory practices in hiring and promotion, women’s position in low-prestige “female” academic fields, responsibility for caretaking of children and family, lack of visibility, and essentialist notions about women that affect how we conceptualize effective leaders (Bornstein, 2008; England, 2010). In her study of academic women, Glazer-Raymo (1999) found that male and female leaders were portrayed along gender lines, regardless of the strength of their record of research or administrative accomplishments. And in qualitative interviews with faculty and administrators at a large research university, Monroe et al. (2008) found support for a sense of devaluation of administrative power when these positions were held by women. These attitudes, in conjunction
with the tendency of organizational leaders to fill senior positions with others who are like them have created the proverbial “glass ceiling” for women seeking success at the top.

**The Significance of Studying Gender**

Even though much has improved, scholars still struggle with the question of why some groups are not full, equal participants in universities. Many argue that gender is no longer a relevant focus of study, that because so much improvement has happened, equality as a goal is outdated. There has even been backlash against affirmative action programs and policies that support gender equality (Glazer-Raymo, 2008). But there are still profound disparities in higher education that deserve continued attention. Women are on more faculties, but are also more likely to be located in part-time, contingent positions, and in lower status institutions (Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Metcalfe & Slaughter, 2008). And while more college presidencies and senior administrative ranks are occupied by women (Kiley, 2011), research institutions are still run primarily by men. Women fill about 60% of professional staff positions on campus (Rosser, 2000), but with the exception of Toutkoushian’s (2000) study of gender inequality in non-faculty salaries, the significance of this fact has not been explored (Wallace & Marchant, 2011). Finch (2003) proposed that we cannot address inequities in part of the university if we do not understand what is happening in the whole university. So by focusing on the underrepresentation of female faculty while ignoring the overrepresentation of women in support and mid-managerial areas, progress toward equity will be stunted.

It is not just a question of demographic inequalities that drives the need for a focus on women and gender issues in higher education research; it is the nature of women’s work and experiences that offer a perspective that is underrepresented and often misunderstood or rejected as legitimate. When knowledge production is controlled by the professional group and that group is predominately male, issues and concerns that are important to women may be ridiculed, marginalized, or rendered invisible. Scholarly journals are the seats of academic power, and
reviewers and editors are the gatekeepers of disciplinary legitimacy (Moore & Sagaria, 1991). While there has been an extraordinary amount of scholarship on gender as an analytical topic, it is still often relegated to small pockets of other academic fields and has not transformed disciplinary paradigms (Stacey & Thorne, 1985). And despite the fact that higher education bills itself as a field committed to equity (among other things), gender has surprisingly not been a popular topic in the literature; Hart (2006) found that scholarship about women appeared in less than 10 percent of the higher education journal articles just a few years ago, and feminist topics were featured less than one percent of the time. Sex is more often included as a variable in research studies, but regression tables can explain little if the assumptions guiding the work remain unquestioned. If universities are centers for knowledge production and professional reproduction, it is profoundly unethical to ignore women’s experiences or to behave as if the meaning that men ascribe to phenomena represents all of humanity.

**Conceptual Framework**

This study seeks to understand the work roles and experiences of mid-level professional staff in context of the managerial-entrepreneurial university informed by two conceptual frameworks. First, emerging research on changing professional roles and identities offers a framework for re-constructing and re-imagining the labor of university professional staff. While Whitchurch defines her framework in terms of individual identities and professional development, her concepts can be applied to an exploration of the changing nature of professional labor in entrepreneurial universities. Second, Joan Acker’s work provides valuable insights into the reproduction of gender, race, and class in organizations, and can be extended to analyze universities as organizations that reproduce inequality through systematic disparities in resources, power, and work processes.
Professional Spaces

Celia Whitchurch’s 2007-08 research on general staff in UK and Australian research universities, and mid-level administrative staff in US public research universities resulted in findings that have made an important contribution to understanding the changing nature of non-faculty professional labor on campus. Through interview research in these three countries, Whitchurch sought to understand how managerial staff define their identities in the context of their work in public universities, in what she perceived as increasing specialization and professionalization among these staff. From her findings, she created four categories of professional identity that not only reflect diversifying forms of professional labor, but the relationship of individuals to the organizational boundaries that they encounter in their institutions. Whitchurch (2008b) explained that boundaries reflect the “rules and resources” of the organization, and can be structural, functional, or perceptual. Professional identities can change over time, according to how staff experience these boundaries. Staff who are actively interpreting their roles and engaging in less bounded work are placed in what Whitchurch identified as the “third space,” a dynamic new territory where knowledge is produced in creative new ways. This section describes these concepts and provides direction for the current study of mid-level university professional staff.

As the university has changed, there have been shifts in work roles to meet new demands. While individuals may occupy the same places on an organizational chart, the nature of their work has changed. They are increasingly working on institutional initiatives that require specialized knowledge, spending time developing partnerships in the community or overseas, and are being expected to have a portfolio of skills to address diverse and dynamic problems. Whitchurch’s interviews with non-faculty university staff promoted the creation of four categories of professional identity and activity: bounded, cross-boundary, unbounded, and blended professionals (2008a, 2008b). In the construct, bounded professionals work in traditional
positions with clear structural boundaries, uphold technical or regulatory knowledge, and believe in formal, hierarchical roles and relationships. These individuals feel most comfortable in formal roles and structures, and in undertaking standardized production tasks. Cross-boundary professionals work in traditional roles, but use boundaries to the institution’s advantage to construct political and strategic alliances. They employ their significant negotiating skills to extend their roles beyond the boundaries to improve the institution. Unbounded professionals disregard boundaries and hierarchies, creating new knowledge from outside networks, and are comfortable with uncertainty. These individuals tend to be more project-oriented and flexible in their approach to knowledge and relationships. Finally, blended professionals constitute an emerging group who are hired by administrators to bring in external experience and work across many domains of the university. These individuals tend to be comfortable with ambiguity, build knowledge through integration of professional and academic activity, and facilitate new networks. They typically begin their work in the university in mainstream roles before moving into blended positions, and often feel a “sense of strain” because they do not feel that they belong to either academic or professional groups (Whitchurch, 2008b, p. 24).

Whitchurch situated her study in terms of a renegotiation of the space between the traditional binaries of faculty and administration (2008a, 2008b). As universities have responded to changes in external environments by increasing their market-seeking activity, there has arisen a need for new forms of professional labor that both span the binaries between faculty and administration, and between internal and external constituencies. Whitchurch posited that these new forms of activity are happening in an emerging field that she called the “third space.” The “third space” is mapped between traditional faculty roles of teaching, research, and service or enterprise, and conventional conceptions of administrative functions such as registry, facility management, finance, human resources, and quality assurance (Whitchurch, 2008b, 2008c). Activities in the “third space” include student services such as counseling and career education,
regional and community development projects, and professional and leadership development. Professional staff actively expand this intermediate space, pushing institutional boundaries and forming new networks and relationships. Whitchurch considered blended and unbounded professionals to be the primary actors in the “third space,” but owing to the nature of shifting boundaries, bounded and cross-boundary professionals sometimes also participate there.

At this point, it is important to register my dispute with Whitchurch’s use of the term “third space.” Attributed to Homi Bhabha, the “third space of enunciation”\footnote{From Bhabha, H. K. (1990). The third space: Interview with Homi K. Bhabha. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), \textit{Identity: Community, culture, difference} (pp. 207-221). London: Lawrence & Wishart.} is a response to distinct and unequal cultural binaries, and provides a space where dominant and oppressed groups can construct a common, or hybrid identity and language for dialogue. It is used in post-colonial theory to destabilize rigid identity categories, promoting a space for resistance to hegemony. The concept is used in third world feminist discourse, as well as in literacy theories for multicultural education. Whitchurch uses the term to denote the space between the academic and administrative, in which identity is shaped by contributions from both sides. The third space concept is not meant to simply be an in-between or merged place, but a shared space in which identity is constantly renegotiated and contested. Because the terminology has not been used previously in the context of professional roles and identities, the re-appropriation requires explication of its original usage and the path the scholar took to use it in the new context. Not only does Whitchurch not make the transition, she does not even cite previous scholarship. Instead, she introduces the “third space” as her own concept (Whitchurch, 2008a). So, while I find her concept to be useful to investigate growth in university administrative-professional roles and identities, I reject the term. In this study, I will use the term \textit{shared space} to replace Whitchurch’s “third space” concept. I will also use the term \textit{professional spaces} to refer to the set of constructs that make up the framework, and avoid the use of “third space” whenever possible.
The professional categories that Whitchurch identified are newly developed, and there are some problems with using the concepts in the context of this research. Her study focused on professional staff across higher education systems in three countries including the United States, but because it was situated in different institutional and labor contexts, the experiences of professionals differed in some important ways that Whitchurch (2008b) glossed over a bit too easily. For instance, she identified student affairs as an emerging project that spans academic and professional areas; while these may be new ideas to universities in the UK, student affairs professionals have been entrenched in American universities in some form for 100 years. Although the comparisons are rough, an argument can be made that the university general staff Whitchurch interviewed are analogous to the professional staff that I identify in this study. Higher education in the US, UK, and Australia is moving in similar directions and faces many of the same problems, including declining public investment, increasing market activity, and growing competition for the best students and faculty. Whitchurch’s framework offers insight into the changing nature of non-faculty professional labor in American universities, and it is the only model that currently attempts to conceptualize their labor. I hope to discover how Whitchurch’s concepts play out with the study population, and determine whether it is a useful framework for understanding the roles and activities of administrative and professional staff in American universities.

Whitchurch’s concept of professional spaces shaped the development of the first research question and subset relating to how professional staff define their labor, and how they conceptualize career mobility (see Appendix D for questions mapped to the framework). Interviews were analyzed first by theme, and then in relation to the professional spaces framework. I apply the concepts somewhat loosely, identifying strong and weak connections, as well as alternative explanations. Although Whitchurch conceptualized the model in terms of identity development, and I am more interested in work, we both asked participants similar
questions: how they define their labor, contributions to the institution, involvement in decision-making, key networks and relationships, peer groups, career plans, and orientation to their profession versus the university. Whitchurch (2008b) acknowledged that identity and role are closely connected, but that the meanings individuals attribute to their roles can differ between people in the same roles, and for individuals over time. Changes in the boundaries of their roles interplay with how they see themselves and their labor. Whereas Whitchurch focuses on the identity of the individual, this study interprets participants’ responses in the context of understanding the university as an organization, and the policy implications of using non-faculty professional labor in universities. This discussion primarily occurs in Chapters 5 and 6.

**Gendered Organizations**

In the last 20-25 years, there has been significant scholarly work on incorporating gender into organizational analysis. This work criticizes conventional organizational theories as unsuitably gender neutral; they do not question male dominance, nor do they analyze the reproduction of status inequality in terms of gender (Acker, 1990; Calás & Smircich, 1996). For instance, Glazer (1997) noted that policy creation and termination are not gender neutral; when organizational leaders make decisions about such domains as resource management and cost effectiveness without consideration of how these decisions may differentially affect female and male constituencies, these leaders are acting out of assumptions of gender neutrality. Slaughter’s (1993) study of retrenchment of AAUP faculty revealed that the largest cuts in university programs in the 1980s were made in academic areas that were predominately occupied by women (liberal arts, social sciences, and education), but were paradoxically experiencing the greatest rates of growth. Institutional arguments about aligning with the market rationalized the cuts, though the evidence to support these arguments was spurious; the market demand for teachers, for instance, belied the institutions’ decisions to cut back education programs while retaining
faculty in computer and information sciences (a male-dominated field), which had shown a
significant market drop during that time (Slaughter, 1993).

This study uses Acker’s (1990) theory of gendered organizations to consider such issues
as sex segregation, income and status inequality, and how organizations reproduce gender
identity. Acker used Joan Scott’s interpretation of gender as “‘a constitutive element of social
relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes’ and ‘a primary way of signifying
relationships of power’ (quotation in Acker, 1990, p. 145).”12 Gender is inextricable from
analyses of “the labor market, relations in the workplace, the control of the work process, and the
underlying wage relation” (p. 145). Work organizations are particularly important to analyze
because these are privileged above all other types organizations, and are powerful constituencies
in capitalist societies (Acker, 1998). These are also the least likely of all organizations to take into
sets the organization as a unit of analysis, and explains that to say organizations are gendered
means that “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning
and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female,
masculine and feminine” (Acker, 1990, p. 146). Inequality is reproduced through systematic
power and resource disparities in the organization, as well as through normative social
interactions.

Acker’s theory conceives of gendering as interactive processes, occurring in five distinct

1. Gender is constructed along divisions that create hierarchies that typically favor men.

   These divisions include segregation of labor, acceptable behaviors, physical space,

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and positions of power and control. In 1998, Acker updated this construct to include hierarchies based on race.

2. Gender is constructed through symbols, images, and ideologies that justify and legitimate these divisions. The sources include language, dress, popular culture, and the media. Images of male managers as tough, unemotional, and unyielding deny most women an option for filling this role.

3. Gender is constructed through social structures that create patterns of interaction between individuals. Gender differences in communication and decision-making, for example, re-create gender inequality through normalized interactions. This can also be thought of as “doing gender,” or creating differences between men and women that are not essential or natural (West & Zimmerman, 1991).

4. Gendered interactions contribute to the formation of individual identity, which manifests in individual’s choice of language, work, and how that person presents herself or himself. This construct also has clear implications for race and class.

5. Gender is a fundamental component of social structure that plays out in work organizations, and underlies the organizational logic that affects daily work activities. Workers are seen as abstract, disembodied, and gender-neutral, rather than human individuals with emotions, sexuality, and responsibilities outside the work organization. Acker contends that the logic of the disembodied worker “both obscures and helps to reproduce the underlying gender relations” (Acker, 1990, p. 151). Arguments about women’s sexuality, reproduction, and so-called emotionality are often used to maintain the gender hierarchy.

A substantial and comprehensive theory that addresses many levels on which gender distinctions are made, gendered organizations is a complex and undoubtedly appropriate model for investigating the university as an organization. The gendered organization is based on the
premise that gender is a constitutive element of all social relations, and universities are social institutions that operate with the same social constructions as the society at large. Inside the organization, gender is reproduced through interactive processes, practices, and policies that result in unequal hierarchies that typically favor male standards and norms. These formal and informal processes remain unquestioned, and are legitimated through increased managerial control and manufactured consent to the organizational regime. Managerial decisions made in the name of “efficiency,” “effectiveness,” “excellence,” or restructuring may contribute to further disparities in resources, power, decision-making, opportunities for advancement, pay, and security in employment for certain groups of people (Acker, 2006a).

Acker’s theory has been criticized as being difficult to operationalize (Britton, 2000); however, there have been some scholars who have effectively used the concepts. A good example of a study in higher education is Joan Eveline’s *Ivory Basement Leadership* (2004). Eveline used Acker’s theory of gendered organizations to explore the interactions among power, leadership, and organizational culture during a time of restructuring in a large research university. She explored themes of gender inequality in the workplace, micropolitics and relational work, and forms of leadership that women use for organizational change. Eveline focused on the crucial, yet invisible labor of people who work in what she termed the “ivory basement”: tutors, front-line administrative staff, research assistants, and part-time workers, as well as the primarily female, nonacademic general staff. The basement is a symbol for the hidden work that is done primarily by women in a masculinist institution; understanding how the basement operates can illuminate the processes by which organizational change actually takes place. Eveline builds on Acker to suggest that culture is something that we do, that we can change through our own agency and organizing of others. Eveline argued that as political and economic forces transform the university, alternative forms of leadership are needed to successfully manage the new organizational form. This not only includes positional leadership, but “everyday leadership,” or
how people do things that make a difference for the organization. Eveline understood women’s leadership as a process that relies on relational work, exercising power through how women interact with others—in both overt and subtle ways. Eveline found that the relational “glue work” that women do in the basement—the continuous work on relationships, networking to solve problems, and the management of others’ conflicts and emotions—helped women to negotiate changes at the micro level, but women generally did not often claim their experiences as leadership. Eveline’s primary message is that this relational work is an alternate form of leadership that is essential to organizational life, but is generally undervalued and invisible.

This study uses the theory of gendered organizations as proposed by Acker (1990) and operationalized by Eveline (2004) to understand the extent to which mid-level administrative-professional positions are gendered in the university. I explore where women are located in the institutional administrative structure compared to men, given the available data (see Chapter 4 for data). I am also interested in how administrative-professional staff think about gender in the research university, as well as in their own positions (see Chapter 7). Finally, what are women and men’s perceptions of their access to professional development opportunities, or adoption of these opportunities in their career paths (Chapter 6)? Institutional data and participant interviews will be used to address the questions in relation to the theory.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

There are many directions that this study might have taken. Because the literature on mid-level administrative-professional staff is limited, the opportunities for new research are broad. Higher education researchers adore quantitative data, but in this case, existing data could not provide the description and detail that are necessary to understand the experiences of the study population. Taking direction from Barley and Kunda (2001), who stressed that research about work practices and relationships be grounded in “concrete, situational accounts” (p. 81), this study employs qualitative fieldwork methods to explore the changing patterns of work for mid-level administrative-professional staff in American universities. The study relies primarily on interviews with a purposeful sample at a representative public research university, and uses other forms of data for context as well as triangulation with the interview data. Institutional data, research reports, observation, and archival records fill in the gaps left by the interviews.

Research Questions

Using the existing literature and conceptual framework as guides, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What are the primary roles and activities of administrative-professional staff in the present-day American university?
   a. What do they do, and how do they define their labor in the context of the university?
   b. How do administrative-professional staff define their careers in the context of the research university?
   c. Who comprises their main professional networks?
d. What kinds of relationships are formed between administrative-professional staff and faculty in terms of the co-production of knowledge? Is their work central to the academic and scholarly functioning of today’s university?

2. To what extent are administrative-professional positions gendered?
   
a. Where are women located in the institutional administrative structure compared to men?

b. How do administrative-professional staff think about gender in the research university?

c. What are women and men’s perceptions of their access to professional development opportunities, or adoption of these opportunities in their career paths?

Definitions and Confidentiality

Throughout this document, the word “university” is used as shorthand to refer to public research universities, as defined by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, unless otherwise defined.

For the purposes of this study, the term “professional staff” is used to denote the population of interest. This includes individuals who have roles that are primarily administrative, support, or managerial, and not classified as research or teaching faculty by the institution. They include generalists, specialists, assistant directors, and directors in academic units, and in functional units such as academic affairs, business and administrative affairs, human resources, information technology, athletics, student affairs, and external affairs. I exclude senior and executive positions of dean, provost, vice president, and president.

13 http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/
The term “support staff” is used to denote positions such as administrative assistant, technician, and program assistant. At Carver State, support staff belong to a statewide collective bargaining unit, and their classification is designated by title and rank. Support staff are not the focus of this study, but they are important to understanding the position of mid-level professional staff.

Confidentiality of the research site and participants is maintained throughout the study. The institution and research participants are assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities. Because the institution is a land-grant university known for its innovations in agricultural technology, it will be referred to as “Carver State University,” to honor the American scientist, educator, and agricultural innovator George Washington Carver. With the exception of faculty, institutional employment categories were renamed. For purposes of citations, reports and data obtained from the institution were listed with the institutional pseudonym. Names of programs within the institution, and other identifying details are obscured.

**Methodology**

This study employs a primarily qualitative methodology. Although I draw upon documents and reports that were produced using quantitative data, these data are not the focus of analysis; rather, they provide context to better understand the experiences of the study’s participants. Although quantitative data can be useful to address certain questions, it is context-dependent information that will facilitate a complex understanding of the issues that are raised in this research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Qualitative methodology is appropriate to study social questions about which little is known, and seeks to understand how people make sense of the world. It is emergent, flexible, and open to change as the study proceeds (Merriam, 2009). There exists a possibility to extend or build theory using qualitative methods; the vast amount of data that can be gathered lends itself to multiple issues and interpretations (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004).
Qualitative research allows for detailed explanations, and both micro- and macro-analysis of social life. Although quantitative research holds a privileged position in higher education research, qualitative methods are increasingly accepted and common in the field. Interviews, document analysis, and case studies are becoming more popular in studying student development, policy outcomes, and other issues of concern to higher education researchers (Jones et al., 2006). By employing a qualitative methodology, this study aims to make an important contribution to our collective knowledge about university administration, gender, and labor issues.

This study uses a feminist paradigm to approach the research. Feminist researchers “seek insight into the social world in order to help people change oppressive conditions” for women, people of color, or other marginalized groups (Esterberg, 2002, p. 17). Feminist research interrogates social relations to uncover the underlying mechanisms that produce gender and other forms of inequality; unequal conditions are not seen as natural, but as social constructions shaped by power (Esterberg, 2002). Conventional social science is based on an objectivity that is tied to a professionalized, hierarchical, detached, and impersonal masculinity that defines and shapes cultural epistemology. Feminist research is not only about studying women, but also about placing women’s experiences at the center, and providing a critique of the broader culture (Bell, 1993; Harding, 1987). Acker (1992) and other feminist organizational theorists who have critiqued both feminist theory and organizational theory for their lack of integration typically come from a critical perspective. Critical theory disputes the rationalist claim that the organization is understood the same way by everyone in the organization; “critical theorists think of the organization as a social construction of society and the participants within the organization” (Tierney, 1991, p. 42).

Feminist researchers struggle with both the content and the process of their work, desiring to both improve the lives of women and minimize the creation of “Others” (Wolf, 1992). Two important ways that feminist scholars work to accomplish this are to establish their
Positionality, and to conduct research with reflexivity. Positionality is about the researcher acknowledging her own values, beliefs, assumptions, and orientations. Positionality creates accountability by “unmasking the contradictions inherent in positivist social science” and makes space for alternative knowledge claims (McCorkel & Myers, 2003, p. 201). When the researcher situates herself in social context, she acknowledges that knowledge is partial, subjective, and non-neutral. Hahn (2006) defines reflexive research as, “a product that acknowledges the identity of the researcher and the effect of her presence on the resulting work” (p. 89). Essentially, reflexivity is the researcher’s awareness of herself in the project, and her understanding of her own contribution to the construction of meanings in the process of research. Reflexivity is an attempt to shorten the social distance between the experiences of the researcher and the subject, to “write the self into the text” (Weis & Fine, 2000). Reflexivity is not merely a reference to the self, but a critical theoretical perspective that can reveal the researcher’s vulnerabilities and positions her interpretations (Hahn, 2006). Positionality and reflexivity bring the researcher closer to her subjects, and encourages a joint production of knowledge (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Prasad, 2005). Feminist qualitative methods such as interviews, document analysis, and observations are appropriate to examine the relational practices of gender in organizations and the gendered nature of policy creation.

These days there are many excellent guides on conducting qualitative research. Because the research questions for this study are driven by scholarship from different perspectives, the research design has taken a somewhat hybrid form. Thus, I have approached the methodology and methods similarly. I drew on many of the stalwart sources in qualitative study, and classics of feminist research, but mainly, I took direction from Esterberg (2002), Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006), Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), Merriam (2009), and Miles and Huberman (1994). While each author references multiple experts in their scholarship, they share complementary orientations and strategies that inform my work.
Methods

This study employed on-site field research to learn about mid-level professionals at one public research university. The method might best be described as a case study, although case study is a broad term that encompasses a range of methods, including both qualitative and quantitative data collection (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Merriam, 2009). Case studies allow for a variety of data collection procedures over a period of time, and encounter people in natural settings, where the researcher can observe participants’ social interactions and behaviors (Jones et al., 2006; Merriam, 2001). Focus on a particular case supports an in-depth, intensive exploration of issues and relationships. A researcher’s “understandings and insights” can “lead to new meaning and rethinking” about the questions at hand (Jones et al., 2006, p. 55). A case study is suited for the research questions in this study because it is difficult, if not impossible to separate the observations from their contexts (Merriam, 2001); that is, given that we know so little about the development of mid-level professional staff, it would be impossible to learn much without spending time with people in the institution. It is important to note that the unit of analysis in this study is the group of mid-level professional staff who work at the university where the research was conducted. The people are the case, and the organization is the context in which they create their work and social relations. This focus addresses the research questions, but precludes a level of analysis about the university as an organization.

Because the university as a field is known and my past experiences with mid-level administrators informed the research questions, I defined my questions and chose methods that closely matched the conceptual framework. This “tighter” design is well suited to test or further explicate “well-delineated concepts” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The primary mode of data collection was interviews with a sample of the population of interest. Semi-structured, focused interviews were conducted with 39 professional staff in three areas of activity. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, and three were conducted by phone. Interviews provide
an open space for participants to express their knowledge, opinions, and concerns in their own
words (Esterberg, 2002). Interviews can be meaningful for the individuals who share their stories,
as well as for the interviewer. “[I]nterviews are especially useful for understanding how people
make sense of their work and the issues they believe are important” (Barley & Kunda, 2001, p.
84). Following Esterberg (2002), an interview is a relationship, a conversation in which the
researcher and participant create meaning. We may enter people’s lives in an artificial way, but
we can accomplish something important through our interactions.

Focus and Definition of Case

A public research university (very high research activity) was used as the context for the
study. The research site was selected from the 147 public Doctorate-granting Research
Universities defined by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Public
research universities employed 49% percent of all public postsecondary staff in 2010, and the
highest number of professional staff per student FTE of all public sectors (Zaback, 2011). The
research site is a public land-grant university in the United States, chosen because it is a large
institution with academic colleges and programs that are common to public research universities.
It does not have a medical school. As a choice of location for the study, this university serves as a
representative or typical site (Yin, 2009).

Population. Because there are no standard categories for higher education administrators,
identification of the population to be studied required a process of information gathering and
decision-making. Gumport and Pusser (1995) noted 15 years ago that “there is no uniform
definition in higher education research of what constitutes administration or administrative
functions” (p. 496), and this continues to be a problem for research about these groups in the
United States, the United Kingdom (Whitchurch, 2008a, 2008b), and Australia (Szekeres, 2004)
as well. IPEDS, a common data reference for higher education researchers, categorizes all
management professionals whose “principal activity is administrative and not primarily
instruction, research or public service” as “executive, administrative, and managerial,” a category that is too broad for the purposes of this study (Knapp et al., 2010). The IPEDS category “other professionals” captures much of the target population, but is not well defined. The categories overlap for the population of interest, and that is one reason that IPEDS data pose challenges for defining the category.

The human resources organization CUPA-HR provides more useful information by dividing its data on administrators into 1. Administrative (executive, chief functional officers, deans; senior staff and administrators); and 2. Mid-Level Administrative and Professional (coordinator, specialist, librarian, counselor; supervisor, director, manager, coach). While these data are more specific than IPEDS, the categories still do not capture the complexities across institutions. For instance, a director of academic advising could be considered a senior position on one campus but a mid-level position on another. CUPA includes director of academic advising in its administrative category only, thus making the two example institutions difficult to compare (CUPA-HR, 2010). CUPA attempts to minimize these discrepancies by asking institutional data managers to match their positions with CUPA position descriptions rather than by title, but this still may obscure the levels of responsibility and complexity in actual jobs. CUPA asks for the low, average, and high salaries for each position, but does not collect data on the demographic characteristics (such as gender, age, or race) of incumbents. CUPA-HR position descriptions assisted in the identification of mid-level positions, and facilitated researcher decisions about which positions to include and exclude from recruitment.

Timeline. Data were collected during the 2010-11 academic year. Initial contact was made with university administrators in September 2010, and I was assigned a liaison to sponsor my application to the institutional review board (IRB) and gain access to data. The liaison submitted the IRB application in December 2010, and was notified in January 2011 that previously granted approval from the University of Georgia’s IRB was sufficient to proceed with
the study. I contacted potential participants via email in January 2011, and began arranging
appointments to meet. I traveled to the research site and conducted interviews during February
2011. A few participants were not available in February, and agreed to be interviewed via phone
in March and April 2011. I transcribed all interviews between March and September 2011, and
emailed transcripts to participants in September. Participants responded with updates, corrections,
and transcript approvals by the beginning of November 2011.

Data

Multiple forms of data were collected to address the research questions. Descriptive
quantitative data were used to create a context and history for the development of administrative-
professional units and staff positions, while participant interviews provided rich detail and
information. Existing quantitative data about the population were used to direct selection of units
and areas within the research site. Descriptive information about the institution and its staffing
patterns create a big picture of each institution, and attempt to identify major institutional issues.

National and institutional data. Aggregate national data on mid-level positions as
identified by CUPA-HR were used to illustrate the national trends. Institutional employment data
and salary reports were used to describe the institutional context.

Interviews. Focused interviews targeted to the research questions were conducted with
39 mid-level female and male professional staff and four other informants for a total of 43 to
provide insight into their work experiences and professional orientations.

Documents and archival records. Climate surveys, reports, and formal policies were
retrieved from the institution to analyze issues and strategies about professional staff and gender
parity. Local and campus news archives were used to verify claims by individuals about layoffs
or budget cuts in past years. These documents were all public materials, providing an unobtrusive
source of detailed information (Esterberg, 2002; Yin, 2009).
Recruitment of Participants

At Carver State University, professional staff are grouped into a single category for human resources purposes. The category includes senior administrators, deans, and all professional staff such as specialists, managers, directors, and assistant directors (but not support staff). At the time of the study, there were 1084 full-time and 96 part-time professional staff located in central administrative units, academic colleges, state extension offices, and other units across campus. Women comprised 56% of all professional staff positions. I was interested in learning about professional roles and activities that might not fit conventional perceptions, so I recruited participants from both central units as well as those located in various programs, departments, and colleges across campus. Because I wanted to be able to make meaningful interpretations, I decided to interview people who did similar kinds of work, even if it was not in the same unit. I delimited the population using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling, or criterion-based selection, is used in qualitative research as a means of gaining insight and expertise from those who can best provide it (Jones et al., 2006; Merriam, 2009). I chose three groups on the main campus intended to represent professional staff in distinctive institutional roles, and those potentially spanning Whitchurch’s typology. Staff in these areas serve several public research university mission areas, including teaching and research support, and public service (Morphew & Hartley, 2006), as well as business administrative support. The three areas are as follows:

1. **Professional staff positioned near faculty and students** (Academic Affairs). These included individuals who are located in academic departments and have responsibility for student services, research support, grant writing, or special programs.

2. **Professional staff positioned between the institution and outside constituents** (External Affairs). Offices of government affairs, community relations, and
communications were chosen for their connection to outside individuals, community
groups, government agencies, media, and commerce. These offices serve a wide
range of constituents, and engage in non-business activities, inter-governmental and
community initiatives, and legislative advocacy efforts.

3. Professional staff positioned near the business administrative core (Business
Affairs). These included professional staff working in central offices and college
units such as campus operations, human resources, institutional research, and budget
and finance. Staff included analysts, researchers, coordinators, and professional
counselors.

As another method of narrowing the samples, I selected five academic colleges and three
central units from which to select participants. The units were chosen based on three criteria: first,
the academic and functional units could reasonably be found on most public university campuses;
second, the units employed large numbers of professional staff in various roles; and third, there
was adequate representation of male and female professional staff across the units. Essentially, I
wanted a “typical sample” of professional staff at Carver State (Merriam, 2009, p. 78). Using
these criteria, I identified female and male staff members from the university’s public online
directory, which listed unit/program affiliation, title, and contact information. Titles indicated
whether the individuals were classified as support staff or professional staff. Many of the titles
were familiar, such as academic advisor, analyst, assistant director, director, and manager. In
some cases, I researched work information about individuals using the units’ websites. In the
process of learning about campus programs from their websites, I identified more staff who fit the
selection criteria. Once a recruitment list was completed, I sent a personalized email to each
participant explaining the study, expectations for participation, the timeline, and a request to meet
for an interview. The email was accompanied by a one-page project description and IRB contact
information (see Appendix A). I requested one hour for the interview, with the expectation that I
might contact them for a second interview or phone call to clarify points made in the first interview, or to get more information. After about three weeks from the first contact email, I sent second emails to individuals who had not responded. More individuals agreed to participate and made appointments at that time.

During the course of the study, the sampling evolved (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Participants suggested other individuals who they thought might be interested in being interviewed; I followed up on those leads and contacted them if they fit the criteria. Most of the additional individuals agreed to participate. As the study proceeded, I encountered more staff members who were interested in being interviewed, and we made appointments to meet at that time. Interviews were scheduled with 39 participants. Additionally, four individuals were targeted for interviews because of their expertise on two issues that could help me understand the experiences of professional staff: professional development, and campus gender equity studies and initiatives. All four had worked on campus for more than 10 years, and had been involved in research and policy projects regarding professional and academic staff. I was interested in their work with professional staff, and their perspectives on campus-wide issues affecting this group. As a check on the selection process, I reviewed the participant list daily to make sure that there was a fair representation of participants from each of the three groups, as well as across campus, and even numbers of women and men.

**Informed consent.** At the beginning of each interview, I summarized the subject, purposes, and methods of the study. I stressed that participation was voluntary and confidential, and involvement in the study posed no risk. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions or express concerns, and then were asked to sign an informed consent form as approved by the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (see Appendix B). Several participants requested clarification about why and how they were chosen, and what they could offer to the study. A few participants expressed concern that their involvement and responses be kept
confidential, as they were unsure of how sensitive the interview items would be. After I responded to their questions and concerns, I asked each participant if they felt comfortable proceeding, and all agreed that they were comfortable. All individuals who agreed to be interviewed signed the consent form.

**Participants.** After interviews were completed, the participant sample consisted of 43 professional staff members: 25 women and 18 men, between the estimated ages of 30 and 65, which is consistent with the university average of 46.5 years for professional staff. Almost all of the participants were white (see the Limitations section of this chapter for a discussion of racial/ethnic analysis). Participants represented the three professional areas: Academic Affairs, 11 participants; External Affairs, 17 participants; and Business Affairs, 11 participants; and other informants, 4. All but three of the participants were employed full-time; one had a .5 FTE appointment but wanted more, one had a .75 FTE appointment, and one had chosen a 0.9 FTE appointment. At the beginning of each interview, I asked a series of questions about their backgrounds. In terms of the highest level of postsecondary education attained, one participant had an associate’s degree, 13 had bachelor’s degrees, 21 had master’s degrees, and 4 had PhDs. Four participants had not earned a postsecondary degree. At the time of the study, participants had been employed at the university from one to 29 years, with an average of 12.6 years and a median of 10.5 years. Although I did not specifically ask whether they had children, the subject came up with most of the participants. Of the 39 professional staff participants, 22 reported that they had children, 10 did not, and 7 did not mention the subject. This subject became important in discussions about work-life balance in Chapter 7. See Appendix C for a table of participants.

**Interview Procedures**

Participants were asked to determine location for the interviews. Many arranged to meet me in their offices, while some chose to meet at a coffee house, either on- or off-campus. A contact at the university provided a private office for my use, and a few participants chose to meet
me there. Typically, the participant and I engaged in small talk to build trust and comfort with one another. To begin each interview, I shared a summary of the study and my expectations of how the interview would proceed. I told participants that because it was a semi-structured design, they should discuss issues and topics that were most important to them. I asked each participant for their permission to make an audio recording of the interview, and all agreed. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, and were recorded with a digital voice recorder. At the completion of each interview, I explained that the recordings would be transcribed and they would have the opportunity to make corrections or additions as they desired. I also said that I would make the dissertation available to them after final committee approval.

**Interview guide.** Interviews were based on a focused, semi-structured design that gathered some common information from participants and allowed the conversation to be more or less led by the participants (Merriam, 2009). An interview guide was developed based on key concepts from the conceptual framework (see Appendices D and E). All participants were asked about their academic and professional backgrounds, the FTE status of their current positions, and how long they had worked at the university. Participants who had been employed at Carver State in more than one position were asked to discuss the history of their employment on campus. The next questions focused on the participant’s current roles and activities, key networks and working relationships, and involvement in professional organizations. Participants were asked to situate their work in relation to the mission and goals of the university, and to the institution’s strategic plan. They were also asked about their areas of influence, decision areas, opportunities and barriers to success, and perceived opportunities for advancement. Participants were questioned about perceived differences in experiences for men and women in professional staff positions on campus, and to give examples when possible. The interviews began in more or less the same way, but proceeded according to cues from the participants. If participants did not understand a question, the questions were restated using different language or examples. Responses were
followed up with requests for examples or further information. “Why” questions were used where appropriate to gain better information about the participant’s opinions and beliefs (Merriam, 2009).

**Transcription.** All interviews with the 39 main participants were recorded with a digital voice recorder and transcribed using transcription software as well as manual transcription by the researcher. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) noted that researchers should use the form of transcription that is most useful for their purposes; in this case, I was most interested in the content of the responses and not necessarily the ways in which participants responded. Participants were each sent an electronic transcript for review, a practice known as member checking (Miles & Huberman, 1994). They were invited to reflect on the conversation and make corrections or additions as they desired. Interviews with other informants were not recorded; field notes were used instead. Of the 39 participants who received transcripts, 24 sent replies either including updates and minor corrections, or simply approving the transcript. In the instance of transcription errors, I corrected the original transcripts. In the few instances in which a participant wanted to change the content of the transcript, a second document was saved with the original and the original transcript was kept intact. No participant requested significant changes.

**Coding and analysis.** Analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing process involving continual reflection. To make sense of the data, the researcher must constantly analyze the data for themes and issues, make interpretations, and draw conclusions about their meaning (Merriam, 2009). From the beginning of data collection, I used an electronic system to organize and document the interviews, materials, and other communications. I kept field notes on my impressions and interpretations, and reviewed the running notes between interviews and at the end of each day. I incorporated new insights and information into the next interviews as appropriate (Merriam, 2009). This proved to be quite useful, as I was able to ask participants to
discuss their perceptions about campus plans and restructuring about which I might not have otherwise known.

An initial process of open coding was used with the interview data to track themes and issues that emerged from the conversations (Esterberg, 2002). After each meeting, and as I transcribed the interviews, I documented the main themes that came from the conversations, adding to previous notes and making comparisons among participants. Because the interview guide was created from the research questions and conceptual framework, the main themes were guided by those concepts. Analytic themes were based on participant responses to the interview items. As the research progressed, I identified common threads, and new information was checked for patterns that were either consistent or discrepant with the themes. I kept a form of analytic memos to track my interpretations (Esterberg, 2002). In the next level of coding, I focused on responses that addressed my research questions and grouped the codes into a second level of themes. As I proceeded with the analysis and writing, it became clear that different subjects required different kinds of data analysis. For subjects that emphasized descriptive information, I identified themes and patterns, or counted responses. In several cases, if something did not make sense, I sought other accounts and documents to check plausibility (Miles & Huberman, 1994); that is, I looked for university reports, policies, and news reports to either verify or find alternative explanations for participants’ claims. A few times, when a participant made a particularly strong claim that did not seem to be shared, I went back to the original transcripts to understand the context of that claim and made comparisons with others who discussed similar ideas (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I used this information to either include the account as an analytical point or reject the claim for inclusion.

The interviews were analyzed according to Kvale and Brinkmann’s model of theoretical reading (2009). A theoretical reading does not follow a specific analytical model for data interpretation; rather analysis is based on a theoretical understanding of the subject matter. The
method requires a close familiarity with the data that are classified into themes that create “a
dialogue between different theories and the data, in a quest not to validate any presumed
perspective, but simply to understand the problems in their social context” (Hargreaves, cited in
Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 237). Theoretical reading is especially useful for use with critical
theories because it brings in new contexts and perspectives for every day observations. This
method is critiqued as tending toward bias of the chosen theoretical lenses, as well as creating a
barrier to new understanding. By trying to understand the findings in terms of predetermined
theories rather than the inductive process used by a grounded theory approach, the concern is that
findings will also be predetermined. These critiques demonstrate even more keenly the need for
researcher reflexivity, to be in constant contact with my own assumptions and sensitivities, to
look for conflicting interpretations, and be open to data that do not fit with the frameworks
(Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004).

Validity in qualitative research is based on different methodological constructs from
quantitative methodology. The measure of quality in qualitative studies pertains to the process of
data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation of the data (Maxwell, 1992; Wolcott,
1994). “Validity has in the social sciences pertained to whether a method investigates what it
purports to investigate” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 246). One of the first measures of validity
is the saturation in data collection, which concerns the extent to which new ideas and data that
support alternative explanations are uncovered (Merriam, 2009). Using daily field notes, I kept
track of the major themes that were emerging. As the interviews progressed, new information
either contributed to those themes or provided new ways of thinking about them. When
participants made claims about certain events that they believed to have happened at the
institution, I looked for documentation of those events. And when appropriate, I would ask
subsequent participants about how they experienced the events. In terms of descriptive validity,
my study attends to what has been said and what has not been said; I have been conscious of the
data I expected, as well as those I did not. As a measure of the validity of the interpretation of the data, I engaged in triangulation practices that involved checking with participants to determine the accuracy of the findings, and using documents (such as university reports and newspaper articles) and other data as comparisons (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Merriam, 2009). In the course of analysis, these practices either confirmed or conflicted the participant accounts, and the results were discussed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The interpretation of accounts are grounded in the language of the participants; the interpretation respects the accounts of the participants, but owing to the nature of theoretical analysis, does not necessarily center on those accounts (Maxwell, 1992).

**Note on feminist methodological issues in interpretation and analysis.** Feminist methodology stresses the social power relations between the researcher and participants (Deutsch, 2004; Wolf, 1992). From the point of contact through the transcription review process, I have been mindful of my relationship with the participants. Because I shared many characteristics with participants, and in some cases, a similar knowledge base, the interactions were eased. I have worked in mid-level positions in public research universities, and so even though I did not work at the research site, I was something of an insider (Zavella, 1993). By “studying up,” I focused on participants who are in similar or more powerful positions than I, thereby limiting considerations of power imbalance (McCorkel & Myers, 2003). As experienced professionals working in a university, the process of research was familiar to them, even if they had never themselves been research participants. Most of the participants anticipated and understood the informed consent process, and declined my offer of full explanation of their human subjects rights before signing the consent form. A few expressed concern about the confidentiality of their participation and responses. Generally, participants seemed to understand that they had control over which questions to answer and how much to reveal. As I reflect on the research process, I recognize that if there is a power imbalance in this project, it lies mainly in interpretation. As a feminist
researcher, I wanted to ask participants to work with me to make meaning of the phenomena they discussed, and several times, I did. But I also understand that as a researcher, it is my role to make interpretations of the data based on my expertise (Wolf, 1992). Although this category of professionals has not been paid much attention in the literature, I do not assume that I am acting as a voice; rather, I am acting as interpreter of their labor in a larger context. The burden of interpretation, then lies both with responsibility to scholarship and accountability to the community; it is a careful balance in the co-production of knowledge (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; McCorkel & Myers, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Zavella, 1993).

**Limitations of the Study**

I was fortunate to choose a campus that was relatively open in regard to information and was welcoming to outsiders. Individuals who agreed to participate were cooperative and responsive. The limits of this study are the typical limits of a case study design, in that the relatively small and bounded sample does not lend itself to generalizability. However, it must be noted that generalizability is not the intention of qualitative research, and so this expectation drawn from quantitative research in unwarranted. In fact, scholars question the extent to which large-scale quantitative studies can actually capture the complexity of social life (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Merriam, 2009). The force of a single example can be underestimated, and thus a qualitative case study can be incredibly instructive in understanding social phenomena (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The two biggest limitations that I faced in the research process were time on campus and the inability to obtain certain data that would have allowed me to go deeper with the analysis. Because I traveled to the research site, I saved time by making arrangements before the trip and communicating by email. These days, university professionals are conversant with information technology, so this was not an obstacle. I would have liked to meet with most of the participants a second time, but time constraints did not allow
for a second meeting. On the other hand, I question whether most would have had more time to
give, as their schedules were quite full. The university’s orientation toward transparency as well
as state open records laws allowed me to access a great deal of institutional data and documents;
however, some data were simply not available in disaggregated form.

Finally, the study was limited by the possible samples in terms of race and ethnicity.
While organizational theorists have been criticized for disregarding gender, and feminist theorists
have been criticized for ignoring organizations, both have been criticized for not taking into
account the experiences of multiple social identities. The intersection of race, gender, and class
has been theorized in recent years as an important site of analysis (Holvin, 2010). Although I
agree that intersectionality in the study of work in higher education organizations is imperative,
this study was not well positioned to contribute to scholarship in this area. At the time of the
study, Carver State University’s employee population was at least 86.5% white, 8.4% minority,
and 4.8% unknown. It is interesting to note that the faculty and professional staff combined had a
bit of a different profile from the rest of the university: 80% were white, 10% minority, 6% international, and 4% unknown. Only 116 professional staff members identified as minority (and
45 unknown), which is less than 10% of all professional staff. These numbers suggest that Carver
State faculty may in fact be the most racially and ethnically diverse group on campus. The state in
which the university is located has a population that is 84% white, so the university’s staff
generally reflects the statewide demographics. Because it was impossible to ascertain race or
ethnicity using the available recruitment methods, a diverse enough sample could not be created.
Certainly, I could have explored issues of invisibility and representation (Thornton Dill, 2009),
but it simply did not make sense to track down the few professional staff members of color on
campus to pursue this line of analysis. This is perhaps an idea for another kind of study across
multiple research sites.
Positionality and Assumptions

I became interested in non-faculty professionals during my graduate work at the University of Arizona in the early 2000s, where I occupied a professional position in an academic department. I taught and advised undergraduate students, wrote grants to support my work, and facilitated partnerships with outside organizations. I contributed to the curriculum and had extensive contact with undergraduates, but I was not included in faculty meetings, and my advice was not sought for decisions about the undergraduate program. There were many of us at the institution who were employed as “academic professionals” on annual contracts, but we had no representation in governance, no opportunities for advancement, and no clear reward structure. I began to look for my peers in the literature, but found little to help me understand my position. Following job postings sustained my interest, as these positions proliferated across the nation. In my master’s program, I did a small research project about mentoring university women, for which I interviewed 11 mid-level female academic professionals, and found that many shared my frustrations. My interest in the topic continued to my PhD program, in which I have been regularly drawn to the study of work in higher education.

As I complete the writing of this research, I am employed as an assistant director in the central assessment office at a public research university (high research activity). As a woman who has spent many yeas studying gender issues, I have an informed insider’s perspective on gendered experiences in the university. I have conducted my research with the assumption that professional staff in universities do valuable work; however, I have remained open to other perspectives about the use of their labor. I do not assume the worst that has been written about this group, nor am I an unmitigated champion. I have been sensitive to different perspectives, but ultimately have chosen to take most seriously those accounts that are based on good research. I expect that there is indeed administrative bloat on campus, as well as essential programs that, if they were not starved for funds, could make a profound impact. I also believe that there are professionals on
campus whose specialized labor has become invaluable to the functioning of the university, while there are others whose purpose and effectiveness I question. This study has both confirmed previous experiences and illuminated new insights.
CHAPTER 4

THE UNIVERSITY

Carver State University\(^{14}\) is a public land-grant research institution, designated as a doctorate-granting research university (very high research activity) by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. It is a member of the state’s system of public colleges and universities, led by a state higher education governing board. It maintains specialized accreditations and affiliations for its many academic and professional programs. The campus is traditional brick and mortar, with well-manicured lawns lined by mature trees. The central square hosts a beautiful library that was expanded about a decade ago, a stately student union, and several historic buildings. Banners screen-printed with the faces of award-winning faculty and staff line major campus walkways. Carver State prides itself on its research accomplishments and extension outreach, and its publications boast of the impact the university makes on the state’s economic development and residents’ quality of life. There are agricultural extension offices in every county that partner with local communities to provide expertise and resources, as well as field research sites for faculty and graduate students. At almost $266 million last year, the university brings in the highest dollar amounts in external research support for the state system, as well as the largest grants from the state (State system report, 2011). Science and technology are king.

Carver State University enrolled more than 20,000 students in undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in 2010-11, and is considered to be selective by Carnegie standards. The university offers the typical range of undergraduate and graduate academic majors, with

\(^{14}\) Although the data used in this study are subject to the state’s Open Records Law and are available to the public, the name and identifying details about the institution will remain confidential. Carver State University is a pseudonym (see Chapter 3). Unless otherwise identified, all institutional data and reports were obtained from the research site.
almost half (48%) of all students enrolled in physical and biological sciences, mathematics, agricultural sciences, computer science, and engineering. Eavesdropping on students’ conversations in the hallways and campus walkways, it is clear that they take their academics seriously; study groups work out programming languages and algorithms, project plans, and theories over lattes and sandwiches in the library coffee shop. Student activists can be overheard planning the next protest campaign. Of course, there is also the usual chatter about late night parties and football games, and the campus colors adorn sweatshirts, hats, mugs, and umbrellas.

Carver State’s student population was 52% male and 48% female in 2010, reflecting a lower percentage of women than the system average of 53% (State system data, 2010). The majority of undergraduates (83%) are in-state residents, and 87% are under age 25. More than 7% are international students, accounting for 27% of the system’s international enrollment.

Approximately 70% of the student population is white, and Asian and Pacific Islanders make up the second largest racial/ethnic group (about 9%). The university awards a quarter of all degrees in the state system, and almost half the doctoral degrees.

**Employment Structure**

The university comprises 11 academic colleges and several administrative units. Central administrative units are led by vice presidents in the following areas: Finance and Administration, Research, and University Advancement (see Figure 6 at end of chapter). Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, University Outreach, and Information Services are led by vice provosts, and the graduate school, honors college, and the academic colleges are headed by deans, all reporting to the provost/executive vice president. The colleges and administrative units are grouped into administrative divisions, and each division has its own business affairs staff to handle the day-to-day work of these units. Each administrative unit employs directors for their respective programs, and each director may or may not supervise a team comprised of professional and/or support staff.
members. The academic colleges are each headed by a dean, and leadership is further organized according to the schema of the respective college. Most colleges have academic department heads or chairs, school heads or directors, and many have at least one associate dean to attend to faculty, academic, or research affairs. University employees are categorized as teaching/research faculty (from here forward, “faculty”), administrative and professional staff, and support staff. Faculty are located in academic colleges, centers and institutes, and in the field at county and state extension sites. Professional and support staff are located in academic and administrative units across campus. The university also employs part-time graduate assistants, undergraduate students, and temporary staff.

To understand where professional staff fit into the university, it is important to have a big picture of the university employment structure. Employment data were obtained in the form of aggregated reports from the university’s institutional research website, and from the state system website. Unfortunately, data were not available in a comprehensive form for the most recent year; aggregated data by employment category were available by month from 2004 to 2011, but disaggregated employment data by college, faculty tenure and rank, and gender, age, and race/ethnicity were only available for 2008-09. Additionally, the aggregated employment dataset groups faculty and professional staff into a single category, making it impossible to see how these groups have changed over time. Because of this inconsistency, 2008-09 institutional data are used to create the overall picture of employment at Carver State and make appropriate comparisons with other universities in the system. It must be cautioned that these data represent a snapshot in time, and the lack of detailed data over time precludes a trend analysis. Salary data will be discussed in the next section, University Budget and Salaries.

Using aggregated employment data from 2004 to 2011, an overall positive trend emerges regarding headcount employment, with the most growth in faculty and student employment (see

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15 Except for faculty, employment categories were renamed to protect confidentiality of the research site.
Figure 1). Again, it is important to note that these data do not allow us to see which categories of professional labor grew and what rates. In 2008-09, Carver State employed a total of 9,630 full-time and part-time staff in all employment categories (see Table 1). It is interesting to note that students—undergraduates and graduate assistants—constituted the largest employment categories, accounting for 50% of the total headcount in 2008-09. Undergraduate students (3,342) and graduate assistants (1,425) were a large part-time group. There is little information about student employment beyond these data, so we do not know how students are used or how they are compensated at Carver State. Although students are not a focus of analysis for this study, their sheer numbers inspire questions for future research.

![Graph showing overall employment trends at Carver State University, 2004-2011](image)

**Headcount, aggregated full- and part-time, snapshot in June of each year**
*Faculty category includes teaching/research faculty and professional staff*

**Figure 1. Overall Employment Trends at Carver State University, 2004-2011**

**Table 1**

*All University Staff by Headcount and Employment Status, 2008-09*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>1,614</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>1,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support staff</td>
<td>1,110</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>1,286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When student labor is removed from analysis, it is clear that there was little growth in faculty, professional staff, and support staff categories from 2004 to 2011 (see Figure 2). And while overall student enrollment has increased, faculty and staff employment does not appear to have kept up. This may be some evidence for participants’ sense that they are “doing more with less” (see Chapter 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional staff</td>
<td>1,084</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Assistants</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Staff</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,808</strong></td>
<td><strong>622</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,808</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,822</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Total Non-Student Staff Compared to Enrollment Growth, 2004-2011

Excluding student and temporary groups, there were 4,430 full- and part-time faculty, professional staff, and support staff in 2008-09 (see Table 1). Full-time is defined as 0.75 FTE or more for 9-month faculty, and 0.9 FTE for all 12-month appointments. When permanent, non-
student employees are isolated, a different picture emerges (see Figure 3). Teaching and research faculty constituted 44%, support staff 29%, and professional staff 27% of this group. Part-time employment among permanent, non-student employees averaged 14% in 2008-09. Part-time faculty made up almost 22% of all faculty; part-time support staff were 16% of all support staff; and only 9% of professional staff were part-time, making professional staff the least likely of all to be part-time.

Source: University data

Figure 3. Percentages of Non-Student Staff by Headcount, 2008-09
Faculty

Carver State faculty, like university faculty across the US, are teachers, researchers, and scholars. Faculty are employed as tenured, tenure-track, and fixed-term (non-tenure track). Ranked faculty (tenured and tenure-track) are professor, associate, and assistant, and accounted for 49% of all faculty in 2008-09 (see Table 2). Of that group, 577 (60%) were tenured and 252 (26%) were on the tenure track but not yet tenured. The remainder (14%) were on fixed-term contracts. Fixed-term contracts are one-year renewable contracts, dependent upon institutional need and funding. Non-ranked faculty, as defined by the institution’s faculty handbook, are research and instructional positions that support their respective areas. They include research associates, who are doctoral-level researchers and postdoctoral trainees; research assistants, who support teaching and research faculty, and do not require a doctorate; and instructors, who have primary responsibilities for instruction. Non-ranked faculty made up 51% of all faculty, and 22% of all non-student employees.

Table 2

*Faculty by Rank and FTE, 2008-09*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Ranked Faculty</strong></td>
<td><strong>922</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td><strong>969</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Associate</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Research Assistant</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Non-Ranked Faculty</strong></td>
<td><strong>692</strong></td>
<td><strong>303</strong></td>
<td><strong>995</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Faculty</strong></td>
<td><strong>1614</strong></td>
<td><strong>350</strong></td>
<td><strong>1964</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking at faculty by rank, FTE, and gender, an interesting picture emerges (see Figure 4). Men were much more likely to occupy the ranked positions of professor (79%), associate professor (57%), and assistant professor (60%), as well as research associate (57%). Women were more likely to be part-time in all categories except for professor, although numbers in the ranked positions are low and interpretation should be treated with caution. Most striking were the faculty research assistants, for which women made up 50% of the group but 79% of the part-timers. Ranked faculty were less likely to be women at Carver State (43%) than in universities system-wide (46.5%).

![Faculty by Rank, FTE, and Gender, 2008-09](source: University data)

Figure 4. Faculty by Rank, FTE, and Gender, 2008-09

**Support Staff**

Generally speaking, support staff are the university’s technicians. They are office specialists, program assistants, contracts and purchasing agents, laboratory assistants, cashiers, food service workers, custodians, mechanics, facilities and grounds crews, telecommunications
technicians, and ship’s mates. They are also nurses, library staff (excluding professional librarians), public safety officers, day care workers, paralegals, and research analysts. Support staff may be in skilled craft, service/maintenance, professional, technical/paraprofessional, or secretarial/clerical categories. The “professional” subcategory was defined by one study participant as a “blue collar manager,” someone who is a supervisor of other support staff.

Support staff represented 29% of all non-student staff in 2008-09. They were 64% female, with women being grossly overrepresented in the secretarial/clerical category (410 women vs. 29 men), and also a majority of the professional category (85 women vs. 32 men) (see Figure 5). Men were more likely to be in the technical/paraprofessional (162), skilled craft (103), and service/maintenance (77) categories.

![Figure 5. Job Category and Gender Distribution of Support Staff, 2008-09](source: University data)

All support staff in the state university system belong to a collective bargaining unit. Although faculty at other universities in the system may belong to a teacher’s union, neither
faculty nor professional staff on the Carver State campus are unionized. Graduate students also share a collective bargaining agreement with one of the state’s other large universities, although they are represented by a different union than the support staff. The two-year term collective bargaining agreement for support staff is a lengthy document that covers everything from the posting of positions, workload, job classification and compensation, grievance procedures, personnel records, leave policies, promotion and advancement, performance evaluations, salary and benefits increases, overtime and schedule changes, and layoffs, among other policies and procedures. The agreement provides for stepwise career advancement with accompanying salary increases for positions in each classification.

**Professional Staff**

Professional staff were 27% of all non-student employees in 2008-09, totaling 1,180. Most (1,084) were full-time. Women represented 56% of professional staff, and 81% of the part-time staff in this category, although the part-time numbers were small (78 part-time women and 18 part-time men). On average, women were 64% of the professional staff in academic colleges (more on this subject in Chapter 7). As previously stated, this employment category has been difficult to define. At Carver State, professional staff include all non-faculty administrators, and administrative, academic support, and student affairs staff. Professional staff are employed through one-year, renewable fixed-term contracts and are generally not eligible for tenure; however, if the staff member had already earned tenure as a faculty member, tenure may be retained. Professional staff may be assistant or associate deans, deans, or department heads, as well as directors, managers, or advisors. A brief general position description from the university defines the responsibilities of both directors and managers as: “provides leadership in the management/direction of [name of business unit/function/department]; plans, organizes, directs and is accountable for all aspects of assigned [unit/program]’s internal and external service, resources and financial operations. May develop or have input to policies and procedures.”
Although this study focuses directors, managers, and advisors rather than deans and department heads, the available employment data does not allow this level of analysis for numbers and salaries. Because this group cannot be disaggregated by standard classification or title, it is difficult to make within group comparisons.

**University Budget and Salaries**

**Budget**

During 2009-10, higher education institutions experienced an almost 11% drop in state allocations, which was greater than the national average of -0.8% (Chronicle Almanac 2010-11). The system’s fact book shows that the university system has received a consistently smaller share of the state’s general fund appropriations in every budget cycle for the last 22 years, dropping from a high of 16.9% in 1987 to a low of 5.8% in 2009. Although dollar amounts have increased during this period, the Consumer Price Index (CPI)-adjusted appropriation has generally declined from $627.3 million in 1987 to $407.8 million in 2009. A system analysis of revenue per student from 1989 to 2009 shows that while the state appropriation has fluctuated, tuition and fees have increased dramatically, from a system average of $1,990 per student in 1989 to $8,059 in 2009. CPI-adjusted data show that revenue per student has remained consistent at around $7,000 in those 20 years, but there is no doubt that students are paying for a bigger share of their education than ever before.

At the close of fiscal year 2011, the state system budget report showed that Carver State University’s primary sources of operating revenues were student tuition and fees (36%), federal grants and contracts (32%), and auxiliary enterprises (20%).\(^ {16}\) It was the highest earner in the state for federal contracts and grants ($163 million), state and local contracts and grants ($5 million), and nongovernmental contracts and grants ($20 million), and the second highest earner

\(^ {16}\) Figures are rounded up to the nearest hundred thousand.
for tuition and fees ($180 million) and auxiliary enterprises ($102 million net). The university’s chief operating expenses were instruction (23%), research (23%), auxiliary programs (15%), and public service (11%). The value of the university’s endowment dropped by about 23% in 2008-09, but has since rebounded; data from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* documented a 17% increase in 2010-11. These data and the following salary data are presented as a general picture of the major components of the university budget. It is beyond the scope of this study to analyze budgetary data or salaries in-depth. In their study of “administrative intensity” at Iowa State University, Stanley and Adams (1994) expressed how difficult it is to determine administrative spending in an institution. Generally speaking, data to understand administrative expenditures are limited; administrative spending can occur in academic, administrative, and auxiliary departments across campus, and are confounded with other items that include support services, programs for students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Even departments within a single university calculate these expenditures differently.

**Salaries**

Salary data were pulled from three sources: the state’s online database for public employees that included salaries by name and department but not by title or employment category; a data set provided by the state university system that included salaries and benefits expenditures by employment category, full-time or part-time status but not FTE; and reports from the university’s institutional research website that reported aggregated, average data by employment category, college, and common demographics. Unfortunately, the data sets have different information and could not be effectively combined for comprehensive analysis. Given the limitations of the data, salaries will be viewed in three main ways:

1. Descriptive salary data for professional staff
   a. Full-time, non-executive professional staff salaries across the university
   b. Salaries of study participants
2. Within-institution comparisons
   
a. Salaries of professional staff located in academic colleges, converted to
   9-month equivalents and compared to salaries of ranked faculty and
   instructors

b. Salaries of professional staff compared to support staff

3. National comparisons

Descriptive salary data. Full-time, non-executive professional staff earned a wide range
of salaries in 2008-09, from the lowest at $14,832 for a research associate to the highest at
$475,008 for the director of athletics. The university average for non-executive professional
staff was $55,629 and the median was $48,942. Although this analysis does not consider total
compensation, it is interesting to note that for the lowest-paid quartile, the dollar amount received
in benefits accounted for as much as 112% of an employee’s gross salary! Of course, salaries
vary by many factors that were not included in the data, including position, location in the
university, incumbent experience and education, and length of service. Examining salaries by
quartile, it is clear that while there were some very high salaries in this group, salaries in the 6-
figure range were not typical (see Table 3). Two-thirds of professional staff earned less than
$56,000 in 2008-09, and 75% earned less than $63,132. Because the salary category for
professional staff also included college deans and associate deans, it is possible that many of the
53 individuals who earned more than $100,000 were in these positions.

17 Athletic coaches, the university president, vice-presidents, and provost-level staff are listed as executive
professional staff in one data set, allowing them to be treated separately for salary analysis.
Table 3

*Carver State University Professional Staff Salaries by Quartiles, 2008-09*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartile Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quartile 1</td>
<td>$39,348</td>
<td>$32,134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quartile 2</td>
<td>$48,960</td>
<td>$43,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quartile 3</td>
<td>$63,132</td>
<td>$55,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quartile 4</td>
<td>$475,008</td>
<td>$91,799</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=898

The participants for this study were selected on the basis of other criteria, and were not necessarily representative of professional staff in terms of salary. Table 4 shows the average and median salaries for participants, grouped by CUPA-defined professional area: academic, external, and business affairs. The salary range was $15,625 for a participant working in an academic college to $125,459 for a director in External Affairs. Average salary for the entire participant group was $65,663, which was higher than the university average. Median salary was somewhat lower at $61,662, indicating that a few high salaries pulled up the group mean. Although there were not enough participants to know whether the differences between groups were significant, it should be noted that participants in External Affairs made the highest salaries overall, with the median of $68,684, and the lowest were in academic affairs with a median of $49,842.

Table 4

*Participant Salaries by Professional Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$68,977</td>
<td>$68,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>$70,186</td>
<td>$65,703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$57,101</td>
<td>$49,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
<td><strong>$65,663</strong></td>
<td><strong>$61,662</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures represent full-time salaries of study participants. For the three participants who reported less than full-time (0.5, 0.75, and 0.9 FTE, respectively), salaries were converted to 1.0 FTE.
Within-institution comparisons. Because part-time salary data were not available by FTE, and in order to make effective comparisons, only full-time salary data were used. There were 445 professional staff members located in the 11 academic colleges in 2008-9. (See Table 5 at the end of the chapter for data.) Average salaries\(^ {18}\) of professional staff varied by college, with the highest average salaries in Pharmacy ($76,742), Engineering ($69,836), and Oceanic and Atmospheric Sciences ($64,276). The lowest average salaries were in Education ($47,799) and Health and Human Sciences ($53,954). The average for all colleges was $60,629, and the median $58,280. Generally speaking, professional staff earned the equivalent of assistant professors, with variations in Business, Engineering, and Veterinary Medicine, where assistant professors earned considerably more, on average (see Figure 7). Disaggregated data for professional staff who are employed by a central administrative unit were not available.

In comparison to support staff, professional staff, on average, earned considerably more. In 2008-09, support staff earned a median $33,936, while professional staff earned a median $48,942. When charted by median salaries for each quartile, salaries between the groups consistently diverge, with the greatest divergence occurring in the highest quartile (see Figure 6).

\(^{18}\) Salaries in this university report were converted to 9-month equivalents to be able to make effective comparisons with faculty.
National comparisons. Using CUPA-HR data to make national salary comparisons with this institution turned out to be complicated and problematic. While it is the only survey that attempts to standardize positions and employment categories for the purpose of salary comparisons, it cannot keep pace with the rapidly changing university workforce. In an attempt to categorize the 43 participants for this study, about half only partially matched the CUPA position descriptions, and about 20 percent found no match at all. For instance, Carver State has a central marketing and communications department with a staff headed by a director. Individual colleges also employ marketing and communications directors and managers, but CUPA does not have a category for a college-level professional in this area. And while one institution employs a single library archivist, others may employ a team, or perhaps there are archivists or curators in the academic colleges or programs. Respondents to the CUPA-HR survey are asked to fit their staff into the existing categories using CUPA position descriptions, and certainly this is certainly a challenge for them as well. Although institutional representatives who conduct the data reporting
for CUPA take great care to match titles to CUPA categories, there are some positions that do not fit, and may not be reported (conversation with Denise Gardner, Associate Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment at University of Tennessee Knoxville, February 25, 2012).

Regardless of the limitations of the CUPA position and salary data, it can be illustrative for making observations about how the institution fares with the rest of the nation. As a demonstration, 40 Carver State position titles that were highly congruent with CUPA categories were selected (see Table 6). Purposeful sampling was used to select titles that were most likely to occur in the majority of public universities, as well as those having incumbents with available salary information at Carver State. Data were pulled from the 2008-09 CUPA-HR salary survey Data on Demand on February 20, 2011, and reflect 139 public research universities (high and very high research activity). When matching selected Carver State salaries with CUPA median salaries for each respective title, a range of outcomes emerges. The director of the library, for instance, earns 61% of the national median salary for this position in comparable institutions, while at the other extreme, the athletics director earns 206% of the national median salary. It should be noted that the primary purpose for CUPA data is to assist human resource departments in determining salary ranges for hiring or salary adjustment, so surveys are created for practitioners. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, it would be interesting to learn which university positions are in high enough demand to command competitive wages. Also, considering the relatively long tenure of Carver State staff, the potential for salary compression is present.

**Strategic Plan and Organizational Restructuring**

Like most universities, Carver State has a multi-year strategic plan that defines its broad areas of expertise and aspirations for growth and improvement. The strategic plan capitalizes on its strengths as a land-grant university, and emphasizes its three mission areas of teaching,
research, and outreach and engagement. Its scope of research activity encompasses the already established programs of research and partnerships of the campus, with a spin on sustaining and improving quality of life for society and the natural environment. The plan seeks to further its mission by focusing on three institutional goals: promoting excellence in academic programs; improving student access, persistence, and graduation rates; and increasing revenues from private fundraising, research grants, and technology transfer agreements. Specific areas of institutional concern were identified as needing particular attention, including: increasing retention and graduation rates; improving diversity; increasing the university’s visibility in the state; renovating classrooms and attending to deferred maintenance; and developing an integrated marketing plan.

A 2005 presidential address to the Faculty Senate foretold the new entrepreneurial push: streamline grant seeking and grant management; increase information about research funding opportunities to the faculty; encourage faculty to participate in business start-ups and technology transfer; and promote university-industry partnerships. The president announced the new research magazine, citing the “need to do a much better job of broadcasting and celebrating the extraordinary accomplishments of our faculty.” These goals and activities are situated in a context of declining state resources for higher education, fewer in-state youth aspiring to a college education, and demands from the state for an expanded role for higher education. The university also acknowledges increasing competition for federal resources, global competition for students and faculty, and increasing complexity in global social and economic relations. The aims of the institution’s strategic plan are reflected in the strategic plans of academic colleges on campus, with specific targets for private fundraising, student recruitment, and building programs of interdisciplinary research. Administrative units state their goals in alignment with the strategic plan, especially those units that most closely serve the president and senior administration (more discussion on this in Chapter 5).
In 2009, the university began a series of restructuring efforts across its administrative and academic units. Academic colleges were organized into larger divisions to cut costs, improve capacity for fundraising, and streamline research initiatives such as centers and institutes. The divisions were also directed to target academic programs for creation, modification, or elimination. In a campus news story about the restructuring, Carver State’s president said that the new divisions would encourage “deeper collaboration” among faculty and facilitate cross-disciplinary research. Meeting minutes obtained from one college website documented the merging of a few departments, but as of this writing (about 18 months after the target start date), there is little publicly available documentation regarding academic program restructuring. As part of the administrative restructuring, the university created seven division hubs to manage human resources, financial, and other administrative services for their respective divisions. The division hubs began in 2009 and were phased in over the subsequent three years. Division hubs pulled existing support staff from colleges and the central business affairs offices, and retrained them to meet the changed workloads. The decentralization of much of the business services was hailed as an effort to “achieve economies of scale” and promote an improved quality of service, in addition to cost savings, more timely reimbursements, better management of grant spending, and fewer accounting errors. Of the organizational changes over the past few years, the division hub model was cited as the biggest change for many of the business administrative staff in this study, as their work was most directly affected by the restructuring of business services (more discussion on this in Chapter 6).

**Conclusion**

Although Carver State University is a traditional university in many respects, it is experiencing a great deal of change coming from different directions. Its sources of funding have changed, and like many universities, leaders are looking to the federal government, private donors, and the public to keep it going. It is facing an increasingly challenging local student
population, and is trying to figure out how to attract more students without compromising its academic integrity. University staff are expected to serve a bigger student body, engage in more grant- and industry-funded research, and become more nimble in their business affairs, and are doing so with approximately the same number of staff as before the growth began. In the next two chapters, university professional staff will speak to these issues and how they are managing in the changing environment.

This study focuses on a sample of professional staff who work in administrative and academic units across the Carver State campus. Positions are diverse, and represent long-standing positions as well as positions that have been created or reorganized to meet new needs for the university. The next chapter examines how they define their labor in the context of the research university, and how they fit into the institutional hierarchy. Issues particular to professional staff at Carver State are explored. Chapter 6 focuses on how they are managing the changes related to the strategic plan and declining resources that were discussed in this chapter, and their experiences in the university as a workplace. Chapter 7 attempts to understand in more depth what is happening behind the numbers in regard to gender relations in the university, as well as investigates how Carver State has tried to address known issues.
Figure 7. University Organization Chart

Key: Rectangular boxes represent male incumbents; oval boxes represent female incumbents.
Table 5

Average Salaries for Full-Time Faculty and Professional Staff in Academic Colleges, 2008-09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Professor</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Associate</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Assistant</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Professional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>$82,728</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>$62,790</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>$55,333</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>$48,014</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>$57,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$107,543</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$97,370</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$100,845</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>$27,765</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>$57,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$64,711</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>$54,525</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>$47,623</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>$37,954</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>$47,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>$109,931</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>$85,852</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>$78,560</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$62,058</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>$69,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>$80,857</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>$64,039</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>$68,058</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>$42,587</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>$61,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Human Sci</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>$98,802</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>$65,177</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>$55,019</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>$42,359</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$53,954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$80,537</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>$60,160</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>$51,963</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>$42,050</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>$57,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceanic &amp; Atm Sci</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>$90,363</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>$70,439</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>$59,516</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>$64,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$114,660</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>$83,321</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>$66,728</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$74,196</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>$76,742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>$92,702</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>$68,563</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>$58,245</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>$46,636</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>$58,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VetMed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$102,725</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$79,579</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>$75,628</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$27,104</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>$61,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sum N</strong></td>
<td>287</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>445</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>$93,233</td>
<td>$71,983</td>
<td></td>
<td>$65,229</td>
<td></td>
<td>$45,072</td>
<td></td>
<td>$60,629</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>$92,702</td>
<td>$68,563</td>
<td></td>
<td>$59,516</td>
<td></td>
<td>$42,473</td>
<td></td>
<td>$58,280</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: University Office of Institutional Research

Salaries were converted to 9-month equivalents by the University
Salaries were converted to 9-month equivalents by the University.

Figure 8. Average Salaries for Faculty and Professional Staff in Academic Colleges, 2008-09
Table 6

Professional Staff Salary Comparison, Carver State University to CUPA-HR National Salaries, 2008-09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Code/Title</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Carver State</th>
<th>%CUPA Average</th>
<th>%CUPA Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs</td>
<td>[2004] Dir, Institutional Research</td>
<td>$115,316</td>
<td>$114,288</td>
<td>$62,489</td>
<td>$188,306</td>
<td>$73,005</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs</td>
<td>[2009] Dir, Sponsored Research &amp; Programs</td>
<td>$123,942</td>
<td>$121,352</td>
<td>$72,650</td>
<td>$227,115</td>
<td>$106,181</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs</td>
<td>[2010] Dir, Continuing Education</td>
<td>$105,961</td>
<td>$99,113</td>
<td>$61,770</td>
<td>$235,956</td>
<td>$96,056</td>
<td>91%</td>
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Sources: College and University Personnel Association-Human Resources (CUPA-HR) Data on Demand, 2008-09. Data for Carver State University from state public employee salary online database. Data reflect 139 public research universities (high and very high research activity).
CHAPTER 5
THE WORKERS AND THEIR WORK

What do managers do? Henry Mintzberg asked this question in the 1973 opener to his classic series on management policy. Mintzberg was looking for discrete activities to create a functional definition of what a manager does, to “develop a job description that will have meaning to those who believe that management can be approached as a science” (p. 4). Through his observations and interviews with company executives he concluded that managerial work is “enormously complex,” and yet he collapsed the work that he observed into 10 roles that he claimed all managers perform. This study asks a similar question, but takes a more critical view. While Mintzberg sought to abstract managerial work into concrete roles, the findings in this study support Barley and Kunda’s (2001) assertion that work roles are “dynamic and behavioral,” and cannot be abstracted from the work context. Managerial work has become specialized and differentiated, and managers’ jobs are not “remarkably alike” as Mintzberg concluded. Work is too contextualized for individuals to fully articulate their lived experience, but they can tell us how they “make sense of their work” and what they think is important (Barley & Kunda, 2001, p. 81). Mintzberg also disregarded the social, relational nature of managerial labor, which is a key finding from my interviews of university professional staff. The individuals in this study constructed their work to make it their own.

This chapter will present interview findings regarding the roles and activities of professional staff, their networks, and relationships. The first section will explore how professional staff define their work and how they situate their labor in the context of the university. Findings in this section will be organized by theme, and patterns identified by professional category, as appropriate. The second section will focus on how professional staff see
themselves in relation to faculty, support staff, and other professionals on campus, with particular
attention to the opportunities and tensions that they identified in the interviews. The chapter ends
with an analysis of the findings in terms of Whitchurch’s professional spaces framework.
Findings are guided by the research questions and focuses on dominant as well as alternative
conceptions.

Professional staff titles are not standardized on the campus, and so for purposes of clarity,
participant titles have been organized into four categories: generalist, referring to work that does
not necessarily require specific credentials; specialist, including work that requires specialized
education and skills, and may include managers who supervise support staff and report to
assistant directors; assistant director, a position that oversees a subunit or multiple programs; and
director, a position that reports to a vice president or dean and has responsibility for a unit or
multiple programs. These positions may be located in colleges or central administration. All
participants work in one of three areas, categorized for the purposes of this study: Academic
Affairs staff work primarily with students and/or faculty; Business Affairs staff work in financial,
grants and contracts, and business services areas; and External Affairs staff work in
communications, marketing, outreach, advocacy, and public relations positions (see Chapter 4 for
an explanation of why these categories were selected). For a complete participant list with
category, location, gender, education, years at the university, and position, refer to Appendix C.

Defining Their Labor

When asked to talk about their jobs, it was common for participants to sigh, laugh, or
give an extended pause. It was hard to know where to start. Jim, a specialist in Business Affairs,
laughed and said, “I wish I could tell you! People ask me that all the time, and when my kids
were growing up, I could never tell them.” For Alex, an assistant director who works on IT
projects for the campus, it was “complicated” and hard to define. Madeline, whose
responsibilities for institutional marketing involve relationships across campus, responded, “Oh
that’s such a loaded question.” Participants spoke about their main projects and responsibilities, and most focused on what they were working on at the time or something they had just accomplished. Many shared brochures, posters, books, magazines, and other materials that illustrated the scope of their respective programs. Unlike middle managers in the private sector, professional staff morale is high, and they are both committed to their work and loyal to the university (Osterman, 2008; Thomas & Linstead, 2002). Lucy summed up what many said, perhaps the most enthusiastically: “I have THE best job on campus, on or off campus. And I love it. I love what I do. I love coming to work.” They find their work to be “meaningful” because of the “experimental atmosphere” of a university setting (Tom). As professionals who are responsible to others in the university community, and who are part of that community every day, they feel that they are held to high standards of accountability because of their relationship to and service to others. Many of the professional staff I interviewed believe strongly in the land-grant mission, and their work reflects that ethos. The extension mission was cited by several participants, like Sophia: “As the land-grant university, we work with people throughout the state to improve everyone's lives. And we don’t want to be the ivory tower institution where we just do research and then we tell everybody else what they need to do.” Beyond serving “the kid and the cow,” Henry, a director in extension, believes that the experiment stations serve as an important economic development function for the state, and the university plays “an important role” in rural communities.

Responses from all participants were analyzed for themes; when a pattern for a particular group surfaced, it was identified and the significance is explored in this chapter. Six broad themes emerged across the interviews: managing relationships; branding the campus; “telling the story”; keeping the lights on; outreach and advocacy; and supporting students.
Managing Relationships

Regardless of where they were located on campus, the majority of participants defined their work in terms of relationships. While all of the participants work with people in some capacity, 30 of the 39 specifically discussed elements of their work that involved communicating with and managing relationships with other people, be they students, faculty or other staff, donors, advisory boards, or members of the local community. The nature of these relationships is linked to the participants’ respective areas of responsibility, and their roles within these relationships differ accordingly. Participants in Business Affairs described their relationships in terms of managing communications, answering questions, and solving problems. Oliver, a director in Business Affairs, summed it up best: “What do I do? I say, well about 90 percent of my job is professional meeting attender and professional emailer.” Jim described his experience in more detail:

Well you know, check your emails, respond to whatever the immediate crisis is. And it’s not usually a crisis, it’s usually somebody’s got a question and you gotta get them the answer. Support the staff, my staff in whatever their needs are…How do I want this done?…Sometimes it’s just letting them vent, because as they get frustrated with something, they gotta have someplace to go. (Jim)

Although new information technology and the creation of the division hubs were meant to improve efficiency for business services, the changes seem to have intensified their work in terms of managing relationships. Managers in this area reported spending more time communicating with both central staff and support staff in the division hubs, as well as with faculty and administrators across campus to maintain proper procedures, negotiate individual issues, and fix errors in accounting, payroll, and human resource activities. Problems with technological processes are now handled by a team of professional and support staff, who are managing increasingly complex problems as academic colleges engage in more grant writing and grants
management, as well as IT heavy marketing and fundraising. IT systems at Carver State have also not kept pace with the growing complexity of student tuition and financial accounting, and the many services that students now purchase on campus. Private vendors on campus, statewide extension programs that are now required to charge fees for services, and entrepreneurial outreach and education programs all require specialized financial processes that cannot be handled entirely by IT solutions. As the university increases its market activities, specialists must attend to managing the operational details, and according to professional staff, it is very much a human-dependent process.

Participants in the Academic area tend to work with people in a different way. They are less likely to supervise staff who need problem solving, and rather think of themselves as building collegial and collaborative relationships to accomplish the goals for larger projects and programs. Nora, a generalist who works in what could be considered a blended role (Whitchurch, 2009) for the dean of an academic college, characterized her job as:

A lot of systems work, looking at where things get stuck, making sure that people know what the environment is like, building a lot of relationships internally and externally—externally with funders, externally with other areas of the university, and just kind of smooth systems out. (Nora)

Nora spends a lot of time deliberately making connections and building relationships with faculty through strategies like dropping by where faculty tend to have lunch, attending brownbag lectures where faculty are speaking, following them on social networking sites like Facebook, and participating on campus committees. Emma, who was transitioning from being a full-time tenured faculty member to an administrator during the study, had spent the previous few years on a campus-wide project that brought together a diverse group to develop a global learning initiative. When asked about how she had been successful at facilitating such a challenging project, she spoke eloquently about the skills it takes to build consensus and community.
So I think that it requires a lot of patience. It requires a lot of conversational skills, communication skills…empathy so that you can actually see other people's points of view without being threatened by them…listening skills…also the ability to see the broader picture, because the other thing, too is that not everybody is in a position to see the big university picture…So really it’s more about community building, it’s about consensus building, it’s about knowing when a common point is found, and then having the right timing to move ahead. (Emma)

Fletcher (1999) referred to the behind-the-scenes work of managing relationships as *relational work*. Relational work is often time-consuming and requires highly developed skills, but is largely unrecognized and unrewarded. There are no tangible products of this work, although the ultimate success of a project or an organization often depends on it. Eveline (2004) documented the extent to which women in support roles perform this work in universities. She extended Fletcher’s concept, referring to the work that these women do to keep everyone happy as *glue work*, a building of alliances and reciprocity among staff that support the institution’s daily functioning. Lucy’s work as a college-level communications director strongly supports the concept of relational glue work. When I arrived for the interview, she was not sure that she would be able to give me the full hour I had requested because she might have to “put out a fire.” Because Lucy’s work included so much glue work, she had trouble describing her job: “I don’t know, explaining it to you, it doesn’t sound like I do that much, but boy it’s busy.” Lucy ultimately defined her work in terms of relationships: “What my specialty really is, is developing relationships, working with alumni, and working with and developing volunteers.”

Like Lucy, participants from External Affairs tended to emphasize how much work they put into building and maintaining relationships with alumni and donors. Audrey, who runs university events for alumni, believes the most important part of her job is to “maximize

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relationship building” and provide a “personal touch” to big events: “I spend a lot of time
massaging those little details…and in the end, how do you make the people feel just really
special, no matter what the situation is.” Caroline, a generalist who does communications and
fundraising work for one of the colleges, also believes in the personal touch.

Any gift over $100, the donor gets a thank you note that is customized to them. And at
this point, I know a lot of those people, so I can customize it even more. You know,

*How’s your daughter? Hope the surgery went well. That kind of thing.* (Caroline)

Lucy also spends several hours a week on the college’s correspondence to alumni on personal
matters, such as sympathy cards, congratulatory notes, and other acknowledgements. This glue
work activity is considered by feminist scholars to be an invisible form of labor that women do to
maintain relationships on behalf of others. In the case of the women in External Affairs who work
with donors and alumni, the glue work is done to keep the channel open for future fundraising.
The importance of this work is undeniable, but it is not always acknowledged. When I asked her
whether she thought that her work was invisible, Lucy replied, “It becomes visible when you
don’t do it.”

Responsibility for managing relationships and engaging in some form of glue work was
common amongst the professional staff who were interviewed for the study. Most of the
participants who talked about the relational work of their jobs spoke in positive terms, but some
considered managing relationships with others to be somewhat burdensome. Evelyn left a
different unit in the university that faced more entrepreneurial pressures to work in academic
advising because of “the challenges that arise with managing different personalities.” Although
her current work with students is based on relationships, she sees it as more educational, and less
to manage. Alex and Anne prefer the technical aspects of their work to the relational, desiring to
get it done well and quickly, which is difficult to do and also “[deal] with people’s feelings”
(Alex). Anne said that working collaboratively with others makes her “anxious, because I like to
do it myself and know it’s done.” Julie, who took on a new role running an entrepreneurial outreach program, acknowledged that she was “naïve” about the amount of effort she would need to put into managing relationships in her position.

I kind of thought, well you build a board; the hard part is getting people to say they’ll serve on your board, right? Well, no. I thought you’d get them, you get them to sign up, and then they’d go do their good things. No. They need to be directed and managed.

(Julie)

Universities serve people, so it is not surprising that so many professional staff define their work in this way. However, there may be aspects of their relationships that are particular to mid-level administrators, and responsibilities in managing these relationships that may be emphasized in different ways than for other campus groups. It may also be indicative of what Eveline (2004) called “everyday leadership,” or the often invisible work that people do to make a difference in the organization. Eveline considered the relational “glue work” of (typically female) general staff to be a form of leadership, even though the women in her study did not generally claim their experiences as such. The extent to which this work is invisible or undervalued by faculty and administrators, as Eveline asserted, is not evident in this study. However, it is clear that the intensification of work for professional staff involves much more than the technical, and the relationship management activities should be considered a major component of mid-level work in universities.

**Branding the Campus**

One of the biggest changes to come to Carver State in the last few years came straight from the top. Stated as part of the university’s goal to increase revenues from apparently all possible markets, the strategic plan specifically identified the task of developing an “Integrated Marketing Plan” to improve the institution’s visibility. Like Tuchman’s (2009) Wannabe U, Carver State hired the national marketing firm Lipman Hearne to create what industry experts
identify as, “the process by which institutions coordinate all their outreach activities to try to enhance their particular image or ‘brand’ in the educational marketplace” (Moore, 2004, p. 56).

As a means of ensuring the success of this undoubtedly expensive investment, the university pulled staff from several small existing offices to create a central communications office to house university marketing, events, web communications, and news and feature publications. Some of these staff, as well as professionals doing similar kinds of work in the colleges, make up most of the External Affairs group interviewed for this study. Their work supporting the university’s marketing efforts emerged as a main theme that I call “branding the campus.”

The language of branding the campus was used exclusively by participants in External Affairs, who seem genuinely committed to putting a “professional polish” (Audrey) on their projects. While many faculty and staff across campus may not even be aware of the university’s strategic plan, External Affairs professionals “take that very, very seriously…we use the strategic plan initiatives as our guiding point” (Madeline). Tom, a director in External Affairs agreed: “…everything we do on the web communications side supports those goals.” Caroline and Emily, both generalists who are responsible for communications and alumni/donor events in their respective colleges, spoke positively of the university’s efforts to “kick it up a notch” (Caroline), and keep their colleges in “lockstep with [university marketing] in terms of the look and feel and taste of our information that we have out there for the public” (Emily).

The integrated marketing plan that these professionals support is a multi-dimensional “messaging and branding system”20 that focuses on three university strategic priorities: attract high achieving and diverse students, build and increase university-industry partnerships, and advance the fundraising campaign. The plan uses a set of metrics to test the effectiveness of its efforts, with various campus units being held accountable for success. The marketing director, or the “keeper of the brand,” is responsible for making sure that the materials and communications

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20 From the university’s Integrated Marketing Plan website.
that emanate from anywhere in the university are consistent with the brand. The “brand promise” serves as the “foundation” from which all university communications are supposed to build. The brand is used to create paid advertising campaigns, recruiting, and “institution level messaging” (Madeline). The university’s website is an important part of the “visual identity” for the brand. The web communications office is responsible for not only the main university webpage, but for all of the professional communications that go to students and alumni. Tom thinks of his work as using new media to do the “story telling” to the outside world:

We do the top tier social media, social networks, university level social networks…We do a lot more video production that gets distributed via the web…And then we work very much directly with the marketing office here on campus…we do all the digital components of the marketing campaigns, too. (Tom)

The concept of the university “brand” is seeping into university cultures. King and Slaughter (in Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) touched on the concept in their study of university athletic trademarks as “branded intellectual property aimed at generating external revenues” (p. 256). In the early days, branding was focused on selling an image of the college or university through logo licensing for clothing and other products, but has now come to permeate all aspects of the institution. Tuchman (2009) interpreted this phenomenon as another management fad that higher education is so prone to adopt, a set of “best practices” transferred from the private sector that highlights how higher education has become a business (Wæraas & Solbakk, 2008). It is a form of competition—for students, for resources, and for prestige. The existence of a brand demonstrates that the university can be, or has become commodified.

I suspect, though because of the dearth of empirical work on the subject I cannot be certain, that the ubiquitous nature of the marketing firm Lipman Hearne has more than a little to do with the growth of the branding practice. Since I have been aware of the firm, I have seen it pop up everywhere—even at the university where I currently work—shepherding colleges and
universities to find their “unique identities” through a conforming branding process. R. M. Moore, a managing partner at Lipman Hearne has written for the higher education press (two of his articles are cited in this chapter), and the firm has sponsored studies that are frequently cited by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. The firm’s promise is that once they help institutions find their “archetypal narrative…then, all your goals—fundraising, audience building, policy shaping, visibility raising, enrollment building—will be well within your grasp.”

They market themselves to trustees, promoting the idea that the “best practices always originate at the administrative level” (Moore, 2010, p. 33). This must be why in Carver State’s marketing metrics, it is primarily administrative units that are identified as the responsible parties; while the Faculty Senate crops up a few times, faculty themselves are not listed as being held accountable for success in meeting institutional strategic goals. It is the campus’ professional staff who are responsible for marketing the university, the core of which is the growing marketing, publicity, and fundraising professionals who have been hired to turn the university’s activities into products (Szekeres, 2004).

While brand managers believe that everyone must “live the brand” (Wæraas & Solbakk, 2008, p. 450), and the brand “becomes part of individuals’ identities” (Moore, 2004, p. 57), it is not clear how far outside External Affairs the identity transformation goes. The External Affairs professionals that I interviewed were the most likely of all participants to identify with the brand. They were also the most likely to use “the language of corporatisation” (Szekeres, 2006); in the interviews, I heard terms such as portfolio, brand, branding, message control, strategic plan, shop, customers, portfolio, workflow process, and CRM (Customer Relationship Management). And while most participants were not particularly critical about the university’s marketing efforts, not everyone seemed to consider the brand part of their personal identities. In fact, there were some who were frustrated with the inflexibility of the brand rules for the campus. A subgroup within

21 From the Lipman Hearne website: http://www.lipmanhearn.com/home/expertise/services/brandingandConsulting.aspx
External Affairs comprises individuals who are responsible for self-supporting, entrepreneurial outreach programs that are housed on campus. I interviewed four people who run these programs, and all of them voiced their frustration with the brand efforts. While not the only one to mention the problem, Julie articulated it the most clearly:

When CSU did its marketing and came out with new marketing guidelines, which was useful and essential for the university as a whole, somebody forgot to invite all these little fringe programs to the table. And the marketing guidelines don’t fit our needs at all. And now we’re frustrated. It’s like, our audience is not the university as a whole; we have a different audience…We need to talk across state boundaries. Our stakeholders are not just Carver alums…It’s more about the program, and yet we’re not allowed to feature the program above the university necessarily, or any quality. We’re not allowed to have our own identity as an entrepreneur. (Julie)

It seems that the university’s efforts to compete in certain markets are at odds with some of its entrepreneurial efforts. The marketing plan is a heavy hand that may not make room for the vast complexity of what happens at the institution. It may be evidence of what Tuchman (2009) termed “competing logics,” in which the university takes actions that contradict itself but nevertheless moves forward with all its plans. Although many of these outreach programs not only thrive without institutional funds but contribute to the university through indirect costs, their needs are neglected. This finding raises the questions of how well the university is being served by the branding strategy, and to what degree does it sabotage or stifle the independent entrepreneurial efforts on campus, even while it may be wildly successful at meeting university’s primary strategic goals.

“Telling the Story”

While some of the professional staff in External Affairs are focused on messaging and visual identity to enhance the prestige and market status of the university, other members of the
group are engaged in “telling the story” about the institution’s accomplishments, “letting the world know that we’re solving the problems of the world” (Natalie). These External Affairs professionals are located both in central units as well as sprinkled throughout colleges around campus, and are responsible for writing about the research and publishing activities of the faculty. Largely, their work is guided by the priorities of the strategic plan. Daniel, who is in charge of an important campus research publication, spoke about how he chooses which stories to cover:

The university’s strategic plan is my guiding star…So everything we do fits into one of the thematic areas. The integrated marketing communications plan has identified and created…everything from vocabulary to photography, to typography that we want to capture the personality of this place. So that's an important guiding star for me. (Daniel)

Having read many of these publications while doing research for this study, I can attest to the high quality of the stories, and the excitement they create about the research that is happening at Carver State. Tuchman (2009) interpreted the positive news reports that the university produces as a “form of audit” that holds administrators accountable to the public and promotes good publicity. The university story is compelling; the CSU homepage highlights research accomplishments, graduate employment, and how the university is bolstering the economy and making an impact on global issues, using words and phrases like “transforming,” “best in the world,” “making a difference,” “worldwide popularity,” and “solve problems.” In talking with the participants, there is no question that there is a purpose behind every story topic and researcher profile. While participants are unquestionably proud of their institution, it is ultimately money that drives the stories.

In the context of the first comprehensive capital campaign…the administration wanted to have a publication that covered the breadth and depth of all the disciplines on campus…So that’s basically [our] mission…to tell the stories of how CSU’s research has
made a difference in the world, and how it’s interacting, how our researchers and our
students interact with people all over the state and in the world. (Daniel)

It is definitely the most compelling, sexiest research that gets covered. As an External
Affairs specialist, Sophia has covered such topics as research in nuclear energy, large predators,
organic farming, childhood obesity, and whale migration. And while some faculty members are
featured, others do not make the cut, and it is the deans who filter them out. Caroline, who works
for the dean of one of the colleges, made it clear who gets selected: “The faculty members who
are bringing in research grants will get more attention from us.” Nora agreed, recounting a time
when her dean told her not to approach a particular faculty member because the person was about
to be denied tenure.

The professional staff in these roles are aware of the university’s intention behind their
work, and do not seem to find it especially problematic. Nevertheless, they choose to define their
labor in terms of “telling the story” of innovative research and discovery rather than identify with
their indirect role in raising funds for the university. The work that these professionals do to
translate knowledge could be interpreted as cross-boundary work in Whitchurch’s framework, a
shared territory between the administration and the faculty. They are using their expansive
knowledge of faculty research to build institutional capacity; by telling their stories, professional
staff teach, explain, and illustrate the often esoteric products of science to the outside world.
These professionals do not seem to be interested in constructing political and strategic alliances,
as Whitchurch proposed, but they do understand the needs of different constituencies and
audiences and how to present the university to them, and that is a form of political knowledge that
benefits the university. Furthermore, the addition of young professionals to the staff is intended to
increase the university’s capital in student markets through their expertise with the Internet and
social media. Their efforts are a strategic way to “tell the story,” contributing to the
intensification of marketing to new (student) audiences.
**Keeping the Lights On**

One of the major work themes that emerged from the interviews was responsibilities associated with keeping the university operating. The responses in this area came exclusively from the professional staff that I categorized as Business Affairs. I call this theme “keeping the lights on” because this is essentially how they define themselves. These managers are responsible for a wide range of duties in the financial and operations sectors both in central administrative offices and in units across campus; they are the traditional administrative services core of the university. In the process of perusing and coding the interviews, I was struck by the scope of their work. Just the small number of people that I spoke with were responsible for budgeting, financial reporting, and accounting in areas such as student accounts for tuition, meals, and housing; faculty research grants and contracts; purchasing and payroll; tax accounting and compliance; and the contracts and transactions for outside merchants and vendors such as the campus coffee shops and vendors. They are the auditors and compliance officers for the business operations core of the university, reporting to state and federal offices and funders. They are in charge of the physical buildings and facilities, including maintenance, planning, new building, and renovations.

The 11 Business Affairs participants in this study are the managers and supervisors of their units that are filled with largely support staff. All but two of the 11 began their careers at Carver State in similar positions that they now supervise, and the three highest ranking participants were hired at a managerial level and have received additional promotions to their current positions. Six (the one director, three assistant directors, and two specialists) supervise other staff, four (all specialists) supervise none, and one (Clara) supervises only student workers in her small office. Supervising people can be challenging when the work is highly technical and precision is paramount. Most of the participants engage in a significant amount of communication, education, and training to keep things running smoothly. Several talked about spending a lot of time responding to questions and problems, and dealing with the occasional
“upset” (Jim). The biggest influences on the work of these professionals are rapidly changing technology that requires constant management, training, and troubleshooting; and ever-changing government regulations. Lillian is responsible for the accounting for the hundreds of millions of dollars in research grants and contracts that come to campus, and has to stay current on laws and regulations to keep the institution in compliance.

And the whole industry has changed. The regulations have changed a lot, you know the federal regulations...They’ve gotten more stringent. Audits have gotten more difficult; you know they dig deeper when they do an audit now, looking at things. One of the things I’m pretty proud of is we haven’t had any findings for our compliance audits in the past 13 years. So we have a pretty good track record. (Lillian)

Lillian, who seemed surprisingly calm and easygoing for the amount of responsibility she carries, spends a lot of time training her own support staff as well as campus accountants so that they are in compliance. She sees herself as a support for them, to “make sure that they’re able to get their jobs done.” Sam, a specialist whose responsibilities include the IT unit in his college, worries that he does not do enough: “I’d like to give more time to training my IT staff. They could probably use more hands-on experience. I’m kind of removed from them physically, so it’s tough to get down there.”

The shift to the division hubs has been a source of stress for managers in the central business services area (see Chapter 4 for a description of the division hubs). They have had to do a lot of training and retraining, as the hub staff do not always get it right the first time. Jim said, “We do a whole lot more education with the division hubs than we had ever done with departments, out of necessity because they don’t, I mean, it’s a lot like herding cats”—a popular metaphor in higher education management. Anne and Michael, both specialists, agreed that the shift to the division hubs has been frustrating at times, as staff in the divisions are not as closely supervised, and thus there have been more mistakes.
So I want to show you the tools, I will assist you along the way, but at some point…I want you to be on your own…I try to be there for people, I try to be responsive…and to answer people’s questions. Because if not, then they get misguided and they do things wrong and we have to get them back on course. (Michael)

Lillian’s job has also changed with the division hubs, and she finds communication to be the biggest challenge. And she faces resistance, which can be difficult:

And so they may not come to the training, they may come to the training, but you know, they just didn’t get what they needed to out of that training, so they make mistakes and don’t do things right. And we can’t, this office provides oversight function for what’s being done out in the departments and we don’t have the staff to check 100% of what’s being done. We do it on a sample basis, and it’s a risk that we take that they may not have done it right, and we didn’t catch it. (Lillian)

For the most part, Business Affairs staff like their work and feel well suited to their jobs, but there were three main, interrelated complaints that cropped up in the interviews. The first complaint is that supervisors and senior administration do not understand their work, and thus make policies that do not make sense to the staff who must implement them. Lauren, a specialist who works on IT solutions for her unit, often feels like she is “managing up” to get her supervisor to understand her work. Because many of these staff are not at the decision-making table, they must implement and enforce policies that they had no part in creating. This came up a few times in discussing the creation of the division hubs, which not everyone thinks is a more efficient way of doing business. Jim said, “It’s a challenge to be supportive of some of the stuff that comes from the top level when I don’t buy into it” (more about this in Chapter 6). Finally, the people who spend their time getting people paid, managing classroom space, and making sure the contracts are in place so that the campus can get their morning coffee or chemicals for lab experiments sometimes feel that they are not respected for their labor. The work that they do
could be quite easily overlooked or taken for granted when they do it well, and they often hear from people only when there is a complaint. Anne thinks she must be the only person on campus who dreads payday, because she has to deal with people who have mistakes in their paychecks. Anne and Jim both used the term “pushback” to describe the difficulty they sometimes face in getting support staff to do what they are supposed to do: “We occasionally will get some pushback when we give them information or direction. And so I have to sort of deal with that. If my staff tell somebody to do something and they refuse, then I have to get involved with their management and work on whatever that issue might be” (Jim).

Because of the technical and regulatory nature of their work, it would seem logical to place Business Affairs professionals into Whitchurch’s bounded category. Bounded professionals locate themselves firmly within the organizational boundaries, are information-oriented, maintain order and control, and feel most comfortable in formal roles and structures. In my estimation, this was true for six of the 11 individuals I interviewed. These six are committed to maintaining order and control of their respective areas, and see themselves as providing important services and information for the campus. The other five seem to more closely fit Whitchurch’s cross-boundary category. Cross-boundary professionals are clear about their roles, but take a creative approach to them, extending their roles beyond the given boundaries with the intent to improve the institution. Some of the participants seem well suited to their roles, while others expressed frustration or boredom in the parameters of their work. The extent to which individuals are circumscribed by the institution is unclear; some participants either have more freedom in their roles or take initiative to act upon the boundaries of their roles. For instance, Matthew, an assistant director in an auxiliary unit, takes an innovative approach to managing resources. He has negotiated with the administration to get approval for projects that both improve efficiency and put feathers in his cap. According to Whitchurch, people can feel stretched when they are pushed out of the category in which they are comfortable, and can also feel frustrated when they want to move but cannot.
Oliver is a good example of the former position, when he said that managing the transition to the division hubs was one of the most difficult projects of his career (see Chapter 6), and Michael demonstrates the latter position through his desire to reach out to faculty to create professional networks (see Strangers, Friends, and Tensions in this chapter). While some professional staff may feel comfortable stretching the boundaries and taking initiative (like Matthew), others may be pushed to do so by the institution (like Oliver). Whether this push encourages professional or personal development would be a useful direction to extend the professional spaces concept.

**Outreach and Advocacy**

Because Carver State is a land-grant university, many professional staff define their work in terms of outreach and advocacy. Their work supports the traditional extension function—“programs that help the kid and the cow” (Henry)—as well as providing outreach to communities for student recruitment. Although extension faculty and staff were not interviewed for this study, a few participants defined their work as supporting the extension mission. Daniel, for example, sees his work publishing a magazine about faculty research as educating the state—public agencies, businesses, government bodies, and youth—about the discoveries of research and extension faculty. Abigail, who curates art exhibits for the university, sees her work in terms of a different kind of outreach to the state, providing shows that are “spectacular” and “interesting” to the general population. Luke and Emma, both in the Academic area, work on increasing the diversity of the student body through their outreach activities in communities across the state, and a few of the External Affairs staff also see their work with marketing and websites as contributing to outreach in the form of student recruitment. Participants’ dedication to the outreach aims of the land-grant university suggests a commitment to democracy, access to higher education, workforce training, and applied research (Gumport, 1997). A few even chose to work at Carver State specifically for its land-grant mission (see Chapter 6 for more on this).
Another area of outreach is what I call self-supporting entrepreneurial programs. There is a short list of these service programs on campus, most of which support themselves through endowments, fundraising, or user fees. I interviewed professional staff from four different programs located in two academic colleges. These programs were all started by faculty who had a research or outreach interest in the program focus, but the programs may no longer be connected with faculty. Their missions involve education for specific audiences, both within the state and across the nation. Joshua’s program provides real-life experience and training for IT student-consultants to design business applications to meet the needs of other state agencies. The contracts his program generates fund the students’ internships and staff to run the program, while the state gets a relatively inexpensive IT service. Ryan’s safety education and certification program has become a large enterprise employing support staff at the university and instructors across the state, serving 10,000 fee-paying participants every year. And Julie had been hired about 18 months before our interview to run a nascent legal education program out of the business school. In the context of extension/outreach, Julie defines her work as education and advocacy for families and land ownership, though it is not a stretch of the imagination to understand why the business school would be interested in a model that promotes selling the product to other states.

Finally, there are three participants whose work can be defined, in whole or in part, as legislative advocacy. Gumport (1997) contended that the increasing tension between the university and the state in terms of funding and coordinating efforts has led to a power struggle for institutional autonomy. Public universities feel vulnerable to the uncertainties of state funding, and have hired lobbyists to maintain the university’s interests. The work of these professional staff with legislators at the state and federal levels focuses on advancing the university’s strategic initiatives and “making sure that needs of the university are heard…and that they can be reflective of our priorities, when they make their votes or when they push policy” (Molly).
Molly’s work at the federal level advances the university’s interests for research funding, student aid, and policy advocacy on “federal bills and legislation that will have an effect on the university, both proactive and reactive.” Isaac’s work with the state focuses primarily on funding, but he also acts as a representative and translator of political issues between the campus and the legislature and governor’s office. He sees himself as a “sounding board” and educator, especially in times of state budget reductions. This legislative work is also filtering down to the colleges. Lucy was tasked by her college dean to build a grassroots coalition to advocate for the agricultural experiment stations and the extension program generally. She is training and “mobilizing” this group of “stakeholders” to testify at hearings of the state legislature on behalf of the college’s activities. Caroline, who was looking forward to imminent retirement when we met, had a sense that the person who would be hired to replace her would be “involved more at a federal level, at a legislative level” to advance the interests of her academic college.

**Supporting Students**

In selecting the participant sample for this study, I consciously chose not to include student affairs professionals. I reasoned that student affairs is well understood because it has its own professional organizations and body of knowledge. But I was interested in learning about how professional staff who work in academic colleges interact with students, and what roles they play in students’ lives. Those who emerged from this investigation were primarily academic advisors, and staff who administer college-based scholarship programs. Although CUPA lists non-faculty academic advisors in the student affairs category, most advisors would disagree with that categorization. Professional advisors see advising as a process of developmental education that serves an academic function (Tuttle, 2000). A scan of the extant research on academic advising shows that most studies are not about the advisors themselves, but on professional development, advising issues, student development, and quality assurance. Although historically academic advising has been done by faculty, in the last 20 years campuses have been developing
professional advising programs staffed with full-time professional staff to improve retention and
deal with increasingly diverse and challenging student populations (Tuttle, 2000). Advisors work
with students on degree planning, academic probation and suspension, and what Evelyn calls
“coaching” to prepare students for graduate and professional school applications. Over the last
eight years, the advisors at Carver State have been active in building professional advising
programs in colleges across campus. Support from senior administration and a collegial
relationship with other advisors have allowed them to realize a campus-wide advising structure, a
much needed degree audit system, and the expansion of professional advisors in all of the
academic colleges that serve undergraduate students.

Aside from the intensive role that advisors take with students, professional staff that I
interviewed had little involvement with undergraduates, even while they may define their labor as
working on behalf of undergraduate education. Those who supervise student workers reported
positive experiences, and believe that they contribute in important ways to undergraduate
education. Caroline, whose staff has always been just one or two student assistants, said that she
“couldn’t live without student workers…they are worth their weight in gold.” She enjoys
contributing to the development of their work skills and has been amazed at how much they have
accomplished for her program. Nora also considers her supervision of student workers to be
important mentoring for their professional development. Joshua sees his work with the student-
consultants to be an important part of their education, and “one of the major components of both
the university’s mission and the college’s mission.”

Whitchurch’s model places non-faculty academic advisors and like professionals in the
space between administrative and academic realms. While Whitchurch (2008c) views this as
activity that spans the binaries (and it may be so in UK universities), I see it differently.
Responsibilities for undergraduate advising and scholarships have been moved out of faculty job
descriptions in many public universities for two main reasons. First, the student body has become
more diverse and their issues more complex, requiring specialists who can effectively respond to their needs. The range of personal, social, and academic concerns students now bring with them to campus has been well documented, and has driven the expansion of many student services.

Second, faculty are becoming more specialized, their time and efforts increasingly focused on winning external grants and publishing their research. If full-time, tenured and tenure-track faculty in research universities are spending time with students, it is more likely to be graduate students who receive their attention, as graduate students more directly support faculty research. So, it is not that academic advising and related activities are a shared project, as Whitchurch attests; rather, the work has been removed from the faculty realm and expanded by professional advisors. And as will be discussed later in this chapter (see Strangers, Friends, and Tensions), professional staff who work with students in academic colleges rarely even interact with faculty, and few have the opportunity to collaborate on student academic issues.

**Conclusion: Defining Their Labor**

What do managers do in the context of the changing public research university? The interviews suggest that their labor is becoming increasingly central to the institution’s strategic activities, as Rhoades and Sporn (2002) contended. Mid-level administrators and professionals are taking on roles that formerly belonged to faculty (such as advising), but are increasingly engaged in professional activity that previously did not exist (or existed on a smaller scale) on university campuses. The expansion of External Affairs professionals, especially in legislative advocacy as well as marketing and communications roles is notable in terms of the university’s entrepreneurial aims, but the work of professional staff in other areas support these goals as well.

Business Affairs staff attend to ever-changing regulatory environments in regard to students, grants and industry relations, and federal laws, among others. They also manage the increasing complexity of the university’s market activity in relation to faculty, students, and administrative units. Academic Affairs staff manage student issues surrounding enrollment growth and the
increasing complexity of student needs. Most professional staff are involved in some level of interpretation and translation of federal, state, or institutional policies. The extent to which they are involved in the management of various relationships points to how integral they have become in the daily operation of the university.

It should be noted that while it was not common, the interviews also revealed some ambiguity in defining their work, a finding that was more pronounced in studies of middle managers in other kinds of organizations (Thomas & Linstead, 2002). Some wondered if they were the de facto “dumping ground” (Luke) for work that others in more powerful positions do not want to do. When asked about how he sees himself in relation to other professional staff, Ethan, an assistant director in External Affairs, said, “Well you’ve probably heard this before, but professional staff is kind of this amalgamation, if that’s the right word, this melting pot of people that don't fit into another category.” But while some said that their work is “not well-defined” (Lucy), this may not be a problem, as they may feel more comfortable with the ambiguous “other duties as assigned” (Lucy) than others. The sometimes uncertain nature of their work may be a reflection of how the work of middle managers is changing to meet the strategic needs of more entrepreneurial, less hierarchical organizations (Thomas & Linstead, 2002). They are expected to be more like professionals: independent, creative, and flexible. On the other hand, while they are becoming more professional, in many ways they still feel “stuck in the middle” (Ethan) of the university hierarchy, where they encounter challenges to their expertise, limitations to achieving their visions, and tensions in their working relationships. These will be explored in the next section.

“Stuck in the Middle”: Working in the Hierarchy

Universities are hierarchical organizations that house many kinds of professional and technical labor, and professional staff feel their position profoundly. Because they are categorized as administrators, it might be assumed that they would compare themselves to the senior
administration, and even aspire to advance to that level; however, the participants in this study tended to place themselves between faculty and support staff, feeling “stuck in the middle” (Ethan) between the mythological tenured faculty and the restrictions of the union. The particular issues that professional staff face are indicative of the diverse and ill-defined nature of the positions they occupy. This middle space where they may be recognized as professionals by some, but not necessarily by the traditional professional group—faculty—in the university can create tensions and barriers where there might otherwise be opportunities for the co-production of knowledge. In 1976, Scott noted that “tensions between faculty and administration are not aberrations, but are built into this kind of organization (hierarchy),” and things seem to have not changed. But work in the knowledge economy “has become primarily a relationship between persons” (Bills, 2004, p. 107), and a structure that supports these professional hierarchies may be an outdated, ineffective way of organizing a university (Barley, 1996). If universities encouraged collaboration based on expertise rather than role status, there may be as yet undiscovered potential for knowledge creation. This section explores the structural issues that professional staff report as particular barriers to full participation in the university community, and their relationships with faculty and support staff that may be more or less collaborative but also fraught with tensions.

Problems Particular to Professional Staff

Sense of job insecurity: Contracts and furloughs. When asked about the biggest concerns facing professional staff, participants seem to agree that working on a year-to-year contract causes many people to feel insecure about their jobs. Placing themselves in the hierarchy between the tenure system and the union, many professional staff feel that they are the “easiest to cut” (Miriam). This is consistent with Rosser’s (2010) finding that 44% of educational support professionals are concerned about job security. Michael, a specialist in Business Affairs, used to
be represented by the union as support staff, but has felt less secure since he took a professional
staff position.

And the way that contracts are structured here, I think it instills fear. I mean, at any one
given time, you’re on a one-year contract. Right? So it’s always, if I don’t like the color
of your eyes, next year it’s, I don’t have a reason, we only have a one-year contract. And
I know that that’s a discomfort I felt when I crossed over. It’s like, all of a sudden I’m a
temporary employee. Although, temporary employees stay here 30 years. You don’t
know. But others have been just let go. And it’s not even let go, you just didn’t get
renewed. (Michael)

Fear was a common sentiment on this issue. Participants used words like “scary,” “nerve-
racking” (Luke), “unnerving” (Sophia), and “uncertainty” (Michael) to describe the period before
contracts are renewed each year. It doesn’t help some people’s anxiety that contracts often “come
very late” (Eleanor). But while most of the participants acknowledged that working on a contract
can create uncertainty about their continued employment, few actually worry that their contracts
will be terminated; they believe that if they do good work, there will be no reason for the
university to let them go. Madeline was one of a few staff whose private sector experiences have
influenced her perspective on this issue: “Until I got into higher ed, I never worked at a place that
had a union or had tenure or something like that.” A survey conducted with Carver State
professional faculty in 2002 found that 61% of professional staff were at least “somewhat
satisfied” with the contracts, although 53% were dissatisfied with the length of notice for
nonrenewal. A policy has since been implemented that gives staff one to four months’ notice
before contract nonrenewal, depending on their length of service. Whether professional staff
know about this policy is unclear.

In 2009-10 support staff, as state employees, were subject to six unpaid furlough days
due to budget shortfalls. In fall 2011, the union agreed to the university system’s request for
seven to 11 unpaid furlough days for the next budget cycle, the university citing the need to offset recent cost of living raises and increased health insurance premiums. The Faculty Senate voted to join the support staff by taking two to six unpaid furlough days during the same period. When Carver State’s financial position rebounded, the furloughs ended, but not for support staff, who are subject to the state’s 2-year budget cycle. Rosser (2011) noted that support staff are often the first on campus to suffer during difficult economic times, being forced to “do more with less.” Additionally, faculty and professional staff who were paid entirely by grant funding during this period were not required to take the unpaid days, creating some animosity on campus. Some participants felt that this may be contributing to the tensions that they experience with support staff, while those like Joshua and Julie, who work in revenue-generating units, contended that the furloughs cost the university money that their programs could have been making on those days.

The university’s economic situation, coupled with the restructuring of university Business Affairs created a buzz of uncertainty on campus, leaving people wondering if layoffs were next. Lucy, who had been at the university for six years, said, “We all feel like our jobs are somewhat tenuous; I think that is a pretty common thread. If the budget cuts get bad, we’re the first to go. And everybody lives under that threat.” But these fears may be driven more by perception and rumor than fact. Several participants mentioned past layoffs as reasons for their fears, but when asked for information about those layoffs, they were unable to pinpoint a time when any had occurred. Jim, a 23-year university employee, thought that there had been a “purge” of professional staff in the 1990s, but was unsure of the details. The only evidence that I could find in 20 years of campus news reports was a 2002 layoff of 27 support staff (mainly in facilities services) and seven professional staff due to budget cuts. In 2009, news reports about the restructuring of university Business Affairs and the creation of division hubs warned of possible resulting layoffs. As a leader in Business Affairs, Oliver reported that although there have been some difficulties in the transition, they have retrained staff to take on new roles, and no
one has lost their job. And in 2010, the university president addressed the Faculty Senate regarding the improved financial situation, assuring the campus that no layoffs had been needed.

In their study on corporate rumors, DiFonzo & Bordia (2002) found that uncertainty, lack of control, and poor organizational communication about big events create anxiety and ensuing rumors about the events. Luke believed that rumors about campus restructuring plans that would have eliminated professional staff across the board caused a great deal of anxiety and mistrust, and “even though that’s disappeared from the plans now, you know it’s still kind of in the back of their mind of, oh we’re that one group that they could eliminate without any reason to save the budget.” But what purpose do these rumors serve? Since there is no factual basis for the fears that people might lose their jobs, where do they come from? I suspect that this is a phenomenon that is particular to Carver State University, and the state in which it is located. Not all states have a union for support staff, and not all universities employ professional staff on annual contracts. I have worked on an annual contract and experienced similar fears of losing funding for my position each year; however, my current university does not have contracts, and to-date, I have not heard anyone express fears of losing their jobs as I did in the interviews for this study. Carver State’s administration may or may not have anything to do with the propagation of job loss rumors, but the university could benefit from the interplay of these contractual arrangements; there may be a certain amount of control over staff productivity that the university enjoys when its staff feels some insecurity.

**Governance and representation.** One of the issues that has been cited as a concern for professional staff is the lack of participation in shared governance (Rosser, 2000), and because professional staff tend not to be represented by a union, they may not have representation at any policy-making table. Through his involvement with the Professional Staff Association, an informal campus group, Alex is familiar with the major issues for professional staff on campus. He believes that representation is “the biggest concern.”
The faculty have Faculty Senate, the support have the union, and so there is no representation for professional staff. And so the big concern from that is, when decisions are made, is our voice being heard?...As tough decisions get made and passed down, and we lose rights, then it obviously feels like we’re not being heard. (Alex)

In fact, professional staff do participate in the Faculty Senate at Carver State, and in large numbers. At the time of this study, professional staff comprised 35% of the 132-member body, but as representatives of their academic college or other apportionment unit and not on behalf of professional staff as a group. Like most universities with shared governance, the Faculty Senate at Carver State is responsible for the academic policy making of the university, and provides a forum for faculty to discuss issues “concerning the welfare of the Faculty” and the institution as a whole (Faculty Senate Handbook). For Carver State, governance is a “shared responsibility” for faculty and administration (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 8), and professional staff were included beginning in 1998. All faculty and professional staff could be called to serve on the senate, with the chance to opt out. Participants seemed to be well aware of this fact, and many have served at least one term. It is a popular opinion that academic senates have little power in universities, and merely serve symbolic purposes (Birnbaum, 1989; Minor, 2004). Whether or not this is true at Carver State, the professional staff who have participated in the Faculty Senate have taken their roles seriously. They see the senate as “a pretty vital organization” (Jessica), and as an academic advisor, Eleanor thinks it is a “really important” opportunity to be involved in decisions about the curriculum. They see the senate as a symbol of campus authority (Birnbaum, 1989), a chance to be involved in budget and finance discussions, “have a voice” in institutional decisions (Nora), and “really get thrown into that inner circle” (Naomi).

While professional staff are involved in the senate agenda as representatives of their units, there is disagreement among participants over whether professional staff concerns are addressed by the senate—or whether it is the appropriate place to do so. Miriam and Alex, both
active with the Professional Staff Association, believe that professional staff issues “are not well represented.” Natalie thinks that “it’s very awkward for us at Faculty Senate,” and maybe there should be a different forum for professional staff. In a 2002 survey, professional staff were asked whether there should be a separate organization to serve its interests, and 43% thought there should be, while 22% said “no,” and 25% answered “don’t know.” Emily agrees that professional staff issues are not represented, but thinks that it is not a problem because when “the represented faculty get these holidays or these pay raises or whatever, we’re gonna extend that to the administrative staff as well.” Jessica has been involved with the Faculty Senate, and has experienced times when professional staff issues have surfaced, recalling “a committee that worked on developing the performance evaluation for professional staff.”

In reviewing Faculty Senate documents, there is some evidence that professional staff concerns have cropped up on the agenda. In the early 2000s the provost formed a professional staff concerns committee with the charge “to determine if the opportunities for support, development, evaluation and rewards are proper.” The committee conducted a survey of professional staff and produced a report in 2002 that identified the major concerns for professional staff, including the need for policies governing the nonrenewal of employment contracts, salary increases, and grievance procedures. In 2004, a professional staff task force was created to make recommendations on the basis of the 2002 report, and it appears from university policy documents that most of the recommendations have been acted upon: a professional development fund was established, and the policy to reward “exemplary performance” with a 2-year contract was extended to professional staff (although this is typically reserved for senior administrators and few mid-level staff are expected to receive it). Aside from the report and resulting task force, and an annual professional staff excellence award, there is little to suggest that the Faculty Senate is the place for professional staff to air their concerns, leaving them with only informal venues.
Strangers, Friends, and Tensions: Working with Faculty

Rhoades (2010) proposed that “a central part of the rise of academic capitalism is the emergence and expansion of a wide range of non-academic professionals who, among other responsibilities, mediate between faculty and various constituencies…in the external world” (p. 41). There are many ways that professional staff can support faculty work without being directly involved with faculty. One of the questions that I posed in the beginning of this study was, what kinds of relationships are formed between professional staff and faculty in terms of the co-production of knowledge? I was interested in learning how closely professional staff and faculty work in the production of research and teaching, although I specifically chose not to interview staff who had direct responsibility in these areas. Of the 39 participants, 20 said that they do not work with faculty, and 19 reported that they do work with faculty in some capacity (see Table 7). Based on our discussions, I ascertained their general opinions toward the faculty. Of those who do not work with faculty, very few (17 of the 20) expressed any sentiments, positive or negative.

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The one person who said that he rarely interacts with faculty but thinks highly of them takes a great deal of pride in his work building and renovating classroom and laboratory spaces to faculty member’s specifications in his college. Nathan’s work supports research and instruction in a way that we often neglect; without classrooms and lab space, the show cannot go on! The two (a male assistant director and a female generalist) who reported negative opinions said that they
feel disrespected and underappreciated by faculty. Emily, a generalist who works in a college and who had worked in similar positions at two other universities, expressed her feelings this way:

The faculty sometimes seem to place a lot of emphasis on credentials, and if you don’t have those credentials, then you know, you’re just a support role or whatever…some of them just have these huge egos, and they are at times insulting to the professional and support staff, and I think that's a pretty common thread amongst professional staff everywhere that I’ve been. (Emily)

In his survey of general staff in Australian universities, McInnis (1998) found that these staff also felt unappreciated and unacknowledged for their expertise, and that this created daily conflict. Mid-level administrators in Johnsrud, Heck, and Rosser’s study (2000) also felt unrecognized for their contributions. Although these two participants do not interact with faculty in their regular work, their negative experiences are likely to shape their future interactions and perceptions. While they both believe in the mission of the university, they choose to distance themselves from faculty, who they experience as difficult and hostile to their work.

This section explores mid-level professional staff experiences with faculty. The themes indicate that they are strangers or friends, or that there are tensions between the groups that prevent them from working well together. It concludes with the question of whether professional staff contribute to the co-production of knowledge, and what form that might take.

**Strangers.** A little more than half of the participants said that they never interact with faculty, but some might like to. Michael, a specialist whose work in financial operations is always changing with the external business environment, would like to have a relationship with the business college faculty so that they could learn from each other, but he has had trouble getting the conversation started. He said it is like “two people who would get along great if they met, but they’re always in different rooms.” These different rooms are not only metaphorical, but physical; it seems that faculty and professional staff occupy different spaces. Faculty typically keep
different hours and occupy different spaces than the usual 8-5 workday and conference rooms of administrators. Birnbaum (1988) noted that the nature of the work that administrators do keeps them separated from faculty, communicating only with themselves. This reality is evident in how professional staff perceive faculty: as full-time, tenure track, ranked professors who teach and do research. Although so many faculty in this university are off the tenure track and work on the same annual contracts as the professional staff, not a single participant talked about this. It leads me to wonder if the fixed-term faculty are invisible to professional staff, or whether the participants do not understand the labor system or demographics of their own campus. It must also be noted that there are not many faculty to actually meet. At Carver State, there were only 922 full-time ranked faculty of the 3,808 full-time employees on campus. One could imagine that part-timers and fixed-term faculty would have fewer motivations for such collaborations, especially since their work primarily involves classroom instruction.

**Friends.** For the 19 professional staff who work with faculty regularly, relationships were generally good. Twelve exhibited positive attitudes, even considering it a “privilege” (Daniel) to spend time with researchers talking about their research. Caroline’s position in an academic college supports faculty in a public relations role. She produces press releases, brochures, and posters for speakers’ series, and creates and supports websites for individual faculty. If a faculty researcher publishes a book, Caroline helps the author with marketing and making connections with relevant outsiders. Staff who work in similar roles in the central administration also promote faculty research through online and print publications (see “Telling the Story” in this chapter). Professional staff who interview faculty in this role context all spoke highly of their interactions with faculty, even considering their work to be “special.”

You know, we’ve got people who have developed better cancer drugs, people who are working on infectious diseases from AIDS to Crohn's disease and tuberculosis, antimalarial drugs. There’s an awful lot of problem solving that goes on here. So in the
course of all that, of all that work we get to talk with them about the milestones and the challenges, and the personal perspectives on that kind of work. (Daniel)

For a few professional staff, being a professor holds a romanticized status of shipboard adventures and eureka style discoveries. Sophia is one who sees faculty this way:

So, I mean, I love the work. And I absolutely love being a part of this university. I think this is an amazing university, and I am constantly blown away by the brilliance of our faculty, our research faculty, the stunning level of discovery that’s going on here, you know. And so that’s the part that keeps me going. (Sophia)

Lillian, an assistant director in Business Affairs, is constantly impressed and even awed by the faculty. She shares her enthusiasm with her grants and accounting support staff by helping them to understand the work that researchers do. She believes that because the staff process paperwork in abstract of the actual project, conflicts can occur and staff can become inflexible. So Lillian occasionally takes her staff on field trips to the research sites.

We've got about 4000 research projects going here, and there’s so much interesting research...That’s really neat when we get to go out and do stuff like that...when they start getting too removed from it, then I know that’s time to go out and look at one again and see how the lab works...So it puts things in perspective and how it’s really done. (Lillian)

Tensions. That there are tensions between faculty and administrators is almost an axiom. How often have we heard of faculty who move into administrative positions as “going to the dark side”? Emma, who at the time of the interview was transitioning from faculty member to academic administrator, said that she was learning “to navigate both worlds.” But the professional staff I interviewed for this study are not senior administrators—the policy makers and check signers. Do professional staff represent “the dark side”? How do they experience these tensions? I found three themes in the interviews, two of which were summed up by Birnbaum (1988): “Faculty in turn come to be seen by the administration as self-interested, unconcerned with
controlling costs, or unwilling to respond to legitimate requests for accountability” (p. 7).

Professional staff are loath to interact with faculty when they are: enforcing regulations (“Oh, I gotta explain this to Professor. They’re not gonna like this.” Anne); working around faculty idiosyncrasies (“if they like having their yoga class in the morning, or they've always had the winter term off for their research…they won’t change” Leah); and most commonly, dealing with faculty assertion of professional status (“But to me it was sort of that aha example moment of, I definitely have a role, and it’s not sitting around the table right now with these faculty” Naomi). Julie, who has a recent PhD and could easily be on the research faculty if she had chosen that route, feels a sense of inferiority for her place in the university hierarchy.

I’m considered professional staff, right, because I’m not tenure track. And there is definitely a difference in terms of, how do I want to say this? I’m not quite sure how to put it, but the differences in the weight that’s given when you do speak up on an issue, the weight that’s given to the information you’re imparting. It’s probably overstating it to say that “real” faculty are taken much more seriously, but they are. They carry more weight, I guess that’s the way to put it. Professional staff just don’t carry the weight that tenured faculty do here. (Julie)

Professional staff and faculty not only occupy different spaces, but also have different beliefs and values that may create divisions between the groups. Scott (1980) considered the division to be caused by differences in values and orientation to the university, and believed that it is this different set of values that “places a renewed strain on faculty-administrative relations” (p. 395). McInnis (1998) proposed that these tensions could be a result of managerial orientations that do not value the traditions of scholars and scholarship, as well as professional staff staking claims for professional recognition. Gumport (1997) stated this tension in terms of contested terrain, as non-academic administrators are increasingly involved in the “intermingling of budgetary and academic matters” (p. 121). I did find support for the assertion that professional
staff have different orientations than faculty, but I disagree that it represents a conscious disregard for academic values. Tensions do not seem to be caused by professional staff devaluing scholarship; on the contrary, many said that they choose to work at a university in part because they hold research and teaching in high regard (more on this in Chapter 6). Nevertheless, many professional staff do hold different orientations to the university, and these different worldviews may produce a certain invisibility, what Eveline (2004) called, “the iron curtain” (p. 134) between faculty and staff. In this study, there was little evidence of Gumport’s contested terrain between faculty and professional staff; they occupy different territories and have little interaction. But if the university encourages the creation of shared administrative-academic activity in the future, then tensions between faculty and professional staff may grow.

**Co-producing knowledge?** Are professional staff involved in the co-production of knowledge? Because the sample was relatively small and targeted, the answer to this question is partial. In this study, staff were not directly involved in the co-production of knowledge. However, the evidence does support something of the “matrix mode of production” suggested by Rhoades and Sporn (2002), in which professional staff contribute to knowledge production through specific support activities. Some professional staff write about faculty work in a research translation capacity. This work is used for education, fundraising, policy making at the state and federal level, and in promotion of the researcher themselves. The news and research communications offices provide extensive media training for faculty whose work will be featured in national and international news broadcasts, and programs for media such as the Discovery Channel. Media training coaches the researchers on how to appear on camera and speak to nonacademic audiences for their own benefit as much as for the success of the project. Professional staff in these areas take their audience “by the hand...to show them what it’s like, what it feels like, what it smells like, what it looks like (Sophia)” to be a part of the research.
Rather than being directly involved in the co-production of knowledge, the work that professional staff do in relation to faculty is more of a supportive, rather than a collaborative nature. Gornitzka and Larsen (2004) found a similar pattern in their research. Their nonacademic staff saw themselves as “serving academic staff” regardless of their relation to the faculty (p. 464). As with the nonacademic staff in Gornitzka and Larsen’s (2004) interviews, Carver State professional staff see themselves as serving the teaching and research activities of faculty, rather than actively managing their activities. Gornitzka and Larsen’s term “complementary competence” (p. 464) is a fitting description for how this group conceives of their relationship; their work complements rather than competes with the work of faculty. Instead of encroaching on faculty, the work of these professionals arguably extends faculty labor by increasing institutional capacity for research and teaching. But there is great potential for invisibility. Like Barley’s (1996) technicians who did the messy work of the physical world so that the professionals could concern themselves with loftier things, in many ways, professional staff act as a buffer between faculty and the business side of the university. But unlike the professionals who relied on the technicians’ data and interpretations, faculty may not understand or appreciate how the labor of professional staff supports their own work. Some professional staff appear to be more like Barley’s “brokers,” who had to understand the professionals’ world as well as their own in order to provide the needed service.

**Relationships with Support Staff**

In talking about their position in the hierarchy, professional staff were mainly referring to their position in regard to tenured and tenure-track faculty. But support staff also figure in the picture. For the most part, professional staff had little to say about their relationships with support staff. Those who supervise groups of support staff are mainly in Business Affairs, and they were largely complimentary of their staffs, citing constant communication, training, and problem solving as their primary areas of interaction. Oliver thinks of himself as a “relationship manager”
because of his leadership position in a large unit that includes both professional and support staff. However, when I asked him about how he managed relationships during the transition to the division hubs, he admitted that he might have been better at handling the emotions of his mostly female support staff in what they experienced as a tumultuous time. Some professional staff expressed frustration with support staff because of perceived poor work ethic on the part of support staff. Alex believes that support staff do not “apply themselves as much as they could,” and Nathan thinks that “some people don’t have the same drive.” Support staff can create “roadblocks,” “headaches,” and “drive me nuts” (Nathan), while Lucy and Caroline both interpret support staff complaints as “whining,” and refuse to deal with their grumbling. Some blame these problems on the union, for protecting support staff and giving them an excuse for not doing certain kinds of work. Lucy had a great deal to say about her negative experiences with support staff, citing resistance and friction.

But there’s a couple support staff, I mean, I would rather pull my own teeth out with pliers than deal with them. Because it is going to be ornery, it is going to be confrontational, it’s gonna be half done, and they’re gonna complain about what you’re asking them to do…I can’t just take something to them and say, here is, this is what we do every week. There is no “every week” in my job, so I understand that I pose a challenge for them, but there’s a real inflexibility with them resisting back…They make my job harder; they don’t assist me in getting it done better. (Lucy)

Some work has been done on support staff. Rosser (2009, 2011) identified this group as “educational support professionals” (ESPs), a group that includes the IPEDS categories clerical/secretarial, service/maintenance, support/service, skilled crafts, and technical/paraprofessional. Depending on the state, this group may or may not be represented by a union. As discussed in Chapter 4, support staff at Carver State are represented by a collective bargaining unit, and their work is defined by an agreement with the state. The most important
issue the support staff in Rosser’s research noted for job satisfaction was relationships with supervisors, administrators, and faculty members. They noted a sense of “second-class citizenship” and little respect as major blows to morale. They were allowed little input into policy decision-making that would affect their work, and cited lack of leadership training for supervisors as a problem that can lead to bullying and poor treatment. Because I did not interview support staff at Carver State, I do not know how they would define their place in the hierarchy. But their predominance in clerical/office and professional roles (see Chapter 4 for definitions and data) puts them in spaces with professional staff, and conflicts can occur. As between professional staff and faculty, professional staff and support staff may also have different orientations to their work in the university, and they may not agree on priorities.

It is important to note that the vast majority of office support staff are women, and their experience can be interpreted through a gender analysis. Eveline’s (2004) ethnographic study of “basement” workers revealed that it is female staff who do most of the invisible, relational “glue work” of the institution. In her university, staff were both the nonacademic professional staff as well as the office support staff. It was alliances among these staff that allowed the smooth functioning of offices, but their work was typically unrecognized and devalued by faculty and the administration. Contributing to this were poor leadership and lack of encouragement for staff development, few career opportunities, and the degrading of responsibilities. As Lucy’s comments suggest, support staff members’ position in the hierarchy may cause them to engage in forms of resistance, making life harder particularly for people who are hard on them. Irni’s (2009) study of older women wage workers suggested that what others see as individual personality problems of crankiness and irritation can also be interpreted as resistance behaviors to oppressive working conditions and a lifetime of gendered drudgery. On the other hand, when managers are patient and supportive of support staff, they can get positive results. Specialists and directors in Business Affairs, the professional staff who manage the biggest numbers of support staff,
recognize that there are challenges in managing a mostly female staff. In our conversations, I sensed that male managers more than female managers were challenged by working with a primarily female staff. However, the men found some issues easier to handle, such as pregnancies, maternity leaves, and sick children—these were tactical problems—while relationship conflicts between women were much more challenging. Female managers did not report feeling particularly challenged by these issues.

**Conclusion: Working in the Hierarchy**

Professional staff may be “stuck in the middle” of the university hierarchy, but as a group, they are ambivalent about it. They do not necessarily place themselves in an administrative chain of command up through the senior administration, but rather between the faculty tenure system and the support staff union. This has a lot to do with a general sense of job insecurity related to an annual employment contract and a recent period of economic strain that has caused many to feel uncertain about their future with the university. But while most professional staff acknowledge that the annual contracts are problematic, not everyone feels uncertain about their jobs. The sense of insecurity is mediated by the university’s shifting budget priorities to marketing and information technology, leaving those who are in these priority positions to feel that their jobs are safe while those in other kinds of positions are unsure. Of course, the university contributes to their fears by allowing rumors and misinformation to spread, signaling to workers “what can happen if one should refuse or limit one’s efforts” (Smith, 1997, p. 333). Without a designated advocate, professional staff as a group feel powerless to contend with the university decision makers. As Naomi observed about the administration, “They’re really good listeners, but do I feel like it’s a total partnership? No. I still feel like they’re making business decisions.”

For professional staff, the hierarchy also plays out in their relationships with members of other groups. Those who work closely with support staff are intensely involved in maintaining their knowledge and skills to keep the university operating. Managers of support staff devote a
great amount of effort to managing relationships with and between support staff, a project that
can become tedious and sometimes produce tensions. Relationships with faculty are more elusive,
and unless their work involves regular interaction with the faculty, the two groups may be quite
invisible to each other. If managing support staff in the division hubs is like “herding cats,”
managing faculty might be more like herding invisible cats (Deem, 2010). More invisible are
unranked, fixed-term, and contingent faculty; there were almost 1,000 of these individuals on
campus, making up about 51% of the faculty in 2009 (see Chapter 4), but not a single
participant talked about them. These faculty work on the same annual contracts as professional
staff, and yet professional staff who complained about the contracts implied that they alone faced
the future uncertainty that the contracts symbolize. Also, professional staff spoke very little about
relationships with senior administrators, although several shared their perspectives—positive and
negative—on how well the leadership is doing.

If Barley (1996) was right that the hierarchy is an outdated, ineffective way of organizing
a university, then Whitchurch’s professional spaces concept could offer some solutions. The first
section of this chapter identified the activity of professional staff, some of which was viewed in
terms of Whitchurch’s framework, but the last section will serve as a deeper exploration of the
concepts as well as a chapter conclusion.

**Professional Spaces**

Even though this study represents a targeted sample rather than the full scope of work, it
is clear that mid-level professional staff are engaged in a wide range of activities that support the
daily operations of the university. Their work furthers the institution’s strategic goals, both
directly through programs and services, and indirectly through the expansion of their existing
roles to accommodate new demands. There is evidence in the interviews that their work has

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22 To be fair, about 20% of this group are postdocs, who are more likely to be seen as temporary or
analogous to graduate students.
changed over time, either through their own initiative or through changes imposed by the university or the external environment. While some professional staff have been able to act upon the boundaries of their positions and placement in the hierarchy to make the jobs they want, others have felt constrained by their positions and have sought new opportunities within the institution to meet their needs. A small group has felt challenged by externally imposed changes to their work, and struggle to some extent to maintain control over the rules and boundaries where they are comfortable. These findings reflect the constructs in Whitchurch’s framework in terms of how professional staff navigate their work in the university; they respond to the boundaries of their positions and re-construct their work and their relationships according to their individual circumstances and personalities. While Whitchurch built her framework around identity concepts, I am more interested in how the university shapes its staffing patterns to meet its needs, and how these professionals define their labor in this context. Like Whitchurch (2008c), I think that mid-level university professionals act upon their positions and the organization to create new areas of professional activity, but I am more cautious about making claims regarding the sharing of space between faculty and administrators. Rather than shared spaces (Whitchurch’s “third space”), I propose that there are new professional spaces being created that previously did not exist in the university. And while Whitchurch’s efforts to document what is happening with this group are useful, her framework lacks a critical analysis of the role the university plays; effectively, the framework places an inordinate amount of agency in the hands of the professional staff that belies the power and agenda of the university.

Whitchurch (2008c) conceptualized the shared space as an “emergent territory” between academic and administrative domains, wherein new forms of professional activity are taking place. In the shared space, professional staff act upon or actively disregard traditional boundaries in their creation of projects that require different kinds of expertise. They work in mixed teams of faculty and administrators, creating partnerships of people with diverse worldviews. Whitchurch
considered these projects to be a kind of co-production of knowledge, a “blurring of boundaries” between the academic and administrative realms. These collaborative projects are shaped by the needs of universities facing external pressures and demands, such as those discussed in Chapter 1. There are some examples of professional activity at Carver State that could be happening in the shared space. For instance, Emma is facilitating an academic-administrative collaborative to establish a center for Latino/Latina studies and engagement, and Charlotte is expanding the boundaries of her position as a library archivist by using social media to connect the university and community users to archival resources. Professional staff are also crossing external boundaries through lobbying and legislative advocacy not only to protect the university’s interests, but those of individual colleges as well. There is also evidence that the institution is actively trying to create room in the shared space to further its strategic goals. Nora’s college dean hired her to assist researchers with writing grants and managing relationships with funders, a role that was meant to help position the college to be more competitive for research dollars. This position could arguably extend faculty work and assist the goals of academic capitalism to increase institutional capacity for grants and contracts, technology transfer, and patenting (Deem, 2010). Nora’s position falls into the shared space because it requires “academic cultural, economic and symbolic capital” to successfully work with researchers, but also forms of capital that researchers may lack, such as experience writing grant proposals, expertise in intellectual property issues, or commercial contacts (Deem, 2010, p. 38).

While there is some activity that could be considered to happen in the shared space, it is unclear how big the space might be. For the most part, professional staff in this study have few collaborations with academic faculty, and it is difficult to make a strong argument in support of their participation in the co-production of knowledge. Deem (2010) saw a great deal of potential to advance research through collaborations in the shared space, but admitted that relationships of this kind between research faculty and professional administrators would be “very tricky” at best.
The shared space also creates the potential for contested terrain, in which faculty feel intruded upon, and professional staff hired for this purpose refuse to accept a role as “handmaiden” to faculty (Eveline, 2004, p. 134). It is also possible that universities are attempting to break down boundaries to promote shared space activity; Carver State seems to be moving in this direction through the recent reorganization of academic colleges into divisions, meant to foster “deeper collaboration” and interdisciplinary research among faculty (see Chapter 4). By placing professional staff in the matrix, the university intends to profit from the new collaborations.

Like Whitchurch, I also observed new forms of professional labor, but I do not conceptualize it as shared academic-administrative activity; rather, it fits a different model. From her US interviews, Whitchurch’s framework conceptualized student affairs (citing an increase in academic content and professionalization) and institutional research (for their data collection and policy analysis regarding students and budgets) as happening in the shared space. She conceived of these areas as being “integrated and codependent” (Whitchurch, 2009, p. 414) with academic activity. Although they draw upon scholarly bases of knowledge in their work, student affairs and institutional research are hardly collaborative academic enterprises. These activities and the work of professional staff in this study do not span the gap between the academic and administrative terrains, but rather occur in a separate space altogether. The new forms of activity that professional staff are actively involved in creating are in this new space, or occur in spaces that have been expanded and renegotiated to fit the current institutional goals. The boundaries that are being challenged are generally not those between academics and administrators, as Whitchurch claims, but between the university and the external environment. Professional staff in this study are involved in expanding institutional capacity for markets—markets for students, private donors, and consumers of the university brand. They are being used to further the university strategic goals, and manage institutional change. Professional staff act upon these boundaries and roles, but do not necessarily have the freedom to shape their work that Whitchurch imagined;
rather, they are constrained to varying degrees by the institution, and by their place in the hierarchy. In fact, the very nature of the separate space in which they operate could limit their opportunities as a group even while their labor becomes ever more indispensable to the university.

Chapter 6 explores how professional staff see their role in this space, and how they perceive their careers in the university.
CHAPTER 6

THE UNIVERSITY AS WORKPLACE

To this point, the work experiences of university professional staff have been explored in the context of the university, with little attention to the literature on middle managers in the private sector or public sector generally. Some comparisons can be made: both are responsible for the daily operation of their organizations but neither set the agendas; both mediate between their work teams and senior management but are unlikely to ever climb to the top levels; and both are experiencing an increasing amount of stress and uncertainty about their future because their organizations are changing (Balogun, 2003; Osterman, 2008). Middle managers in the literature are often maligned, viewed as reluctant, reactionary, and resistant to change (Balogun, 2003), or alternatively, as “the glue that holds organizations together” (Osterman, 2008, p. 7). University middle managers share some characteristics and work roles with other middle managers, but it is the context that is key. Corporate workplaces have been changing to promote flatter organizational structures and the elimination of management layers, the shift of managerial responsibilities to lower levels, and a more contingent workforce (Ehrenreich, 2005; Smith, 1997). Even as middle management jobs have been drying up in the corporate world (Osterman, 2008), now appears to be the age of the university middle manager. And while the heyday for the professoriate is arguably past, universities may still be the places of the “last good job in America” (Aronowitz, 1998); mid-level managers can work a reasonable 40-hour week in a beautiful environment, have full benefits for their families, and opportunities for cultural enrichment without the real threat of downsizing and restructuring that others face in the private sector.

Many would argue that changes in the university that have made a good workplace for these middle managers have been at the expense of the faculty, whose growth has been in the
part-time, contingent, and full-time contract categories (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Tuchman, 2009). The proportion of faculty who have Aronowitz’ last good job—full-time, tenure-track—on campus has dwindled, but these positions have not disappeared; they are just now reserved for the elite. Gumport (1997) chronicled the struggle of public universities to manage the multiple demands of institution-building in a constantly changing external environment, and argued that “changes in mission, finance, and governance practices in turn had changed the organization of academic work and authority, leading primarily to the predominance of academic stratification and bureaucratic coordination” (p. 118). Gumport believes that public universities “have been pressured to become more like businesses” in which managers have become “the major reshapers of the academic workplace” (p. 127). As in the business sector, professional labor (the faculty) has become destabilized; professional careers in many industries have become less autonomous, more managed, and increasingly part-time and contingent (Smith, 1997). Although writing about the private sector, Smith’s (1997) words sound eerily familiar to higher education scholars:

Employers expect managers and professionals to think of themselves as entrepreneurs or as self-employed, to continually ask how they can add more value to their work organization, and to self-monitor, to deeply internalize the viewpoint that they ‘are likely to be retained by the organization only as long as their expertise serves the needs of the organization’ (p. 331).23

I argue that as a workplace, the public university has had differential effects on its workers. The institutional logics that have shaped the direction of the workforce are mixed, representing traditional scholarly as well as market logics, coexisting in “uneasy tension” (Tuchman, 2009, p. 192). Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) called the expansion of market activity around the knowledge products of universities the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime. This activity has led to the hiring of more managerial staff and the restructuring of faculty

work. While Slaughter and Rhoades, Tuchman, and many others decry the negative effects on faculty, few have considered that these changes have opened up professional career opportunities for another group, a group that is largely female. My argument is also fraught with tensions; while women gain a professional foothold in the university, the positions they occupy carry less prestige, have fewer opportunities for advancement, and may or may not be well compensated. At the same time, university professional staff in this study—female and male—report relatively happy work lives, positive relationships, and a healthy work-life balance. From their perspective, the university is a pretty good place to be.

This chapter focuses on two major findings from the interviews. First, I explore how professional staff react to and manage change and uncertainty, with attention to the discourse of declining resources. Second, this chapter focuses on professional development and career mobility within the university. I ask how mid-level professional staff conceptualize their careers in the university. Findings are guided by the research questions.

**Dealing with Change**

As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, Carver State has been engaged in institutional change. The restructuring of business services into decentralized division hubs, and a large jump in student enrollment have been the biggest institutional changes that have affected professional staff, as well as the most recent economic recession with attendant state budget cuts. Professional staff reported both positive and mixed reactions to the changes, depending on the extent that they have been directly involved. Some see the changes as “exciting” and look forward to seeing the results, or have taken it in stride. A few felt uncertain about the outcomes that have been promised, criticizing the senior administration for not being as “transparent” as they purport to be about what one participant derisively called “edicts” from the top. As managers on the ground, not having a voice in policy decisions can be frustrating, leaving some to feel that “it is change for change’s sake” (Jim), or that “it doesn’t make a whole lot of sense” (Sam). For the most part,
professional staff have accepted the changes and have been busy attending to implementation and management. They are the “change intermediaries” (Balogun, 2003) for the university, those who work through the details of implementing the strategy in their own departments, and help others through the change.

**Implementing and Managing Change**

The biggest change for the Business Affairs staff has been the shift to the division hubs. Managers in the central offices for purchasing, grants and contracts, human resources, and payroll have taken on different roles; in the past, they were primarily responsible for managing transactions and the central office staff, but now they are “focusing more on training, quality assurance, and policy” (Oliver) for the staff who do the work in the divisions. As discussed in Chapter 5, the creation of the division hubs was a tremendous change for the campus, and one that has been especially challenging for support staff. Oliver, a director in Business Affairs, said it was one of the biggest challenges of his career.

Well, any change you know…change is always difficult to manage. It’s very emotional for most people, because your work represents such a large part of your life that if you’ve gotten to a point where you’re comfortable…now somebody’s stepping in and saying we want to change all that? That was probably the most challenging aspect of making the transition, trying to make sure that the people were not only treated fairly, but they felt like they were treated fairly; you know, there’s a difference in perceptions there. (Oliver)

Business Affairs professional staff were involved in making some operational decisions, but their role has mainly been working with the line staff to implement the new arrangements. It has turned out to be more difficult than they had initially thought it would be, and there have been “some bumps in the road with the transition” (Lillian). For Jim, a specialist who manages a small group of support staff, it has been frustrating to no longer be directly in charge of the staff whose work products he is ultimately responsible for. He feels that the work has become “much harder to
control,” and mistakes have to be fixed without “being able to do anything about” managing the staff who made them. As discussed in Chapter 5, relationship management has become particularly important for these professional staff, who have found the transition to be difficult not only in regard to the technical and procedural aspects of the work, but the interpersonal aspects as well. Anne, a specialist who has been involved with training the division hub staff, talked about how the change was supposed to improve communication, but in fact has not worked out as planned. It seems that there are group rivalries between people who had previously belonged to different units, and now they work side by side.

Even when they are sitting next to each other, they don’t talk to each other…The left hand has to know what they right hand’s doing, and that really doesn’t happen a lot…And I wish I could say it was just these two that are having this issue and everyone else is doing great, but no, communication’s been a challenge with everyone; it’s always been an us versus them situation. (Anne)

While the Business Affairs staff have been busy with the restructuring, professional staff in other areas have been concerned about the rapid growth in student numbers. Carver State has experienced a 26% increase in enrollment since 2007, for a record enrollment of almost 25,000 students in fall 2011. Participants reported that the administration has predicted 10,000 more in the next few years. More students on campus have caused an immediate increase in workload for professional staff who work with or on behalf of students. Head advisors are responsible for managing this growth with their advising staffs, some of whom are “kind of in freak out mode” (Luke) because they are worried about handling the increased advising loads. Students are also presenting more complex problems for the student finance staff. Amelia said that her staff have had to become “knowledge workers;” instead of only handling transactions, they now have to “troubleshoot a wide variety of issues for the student at the window, right then.” Michael also noted that increasing enrollment is a management problem for Business Affairs, who must handle
more students and more complex financial issues without hiring more staff. Participants expressed ambivalence about enrollment growth; on one hand, they support access and education, but on the other hand, they are concerned about where to put the bodies. Several participants mentioned that there is not enough classroom space to accommodate the growing numbers, nor are there enough faculty to teach them.

So campus definitely feels full, and being able to provide our students the classes they need in a timely manner for them to graduate so they’re not spending a ton of money, and they can get on to their goals, that’s a huge concern. (Evelyn)

Additionally, some participants have considered how a further increase in numbers will affect quality of life in the small city where they live. College students are transient, and are unlikely to invest in a community where they will not stay. More students mean an increase in student rental properties, alcohol use and associated bad behavior, and automobile traffic (Gumprecht, 2003). Evelyn worries about “all the charming, idyllic things that have been our history, I don’t want that to fade away and change. ‘Cause that’s what makes us special.”

While middle managers in the business literature have been seen as barriers to change, there was little evidence of this with study participants. Rather, professional staff more closely resemble Balogun’s (2003) change intermediaries, managers who “connect the organization’s strategic and operational levels” (p. 72). They absorb and cope with the changes themselves, and then interpret and translate for their work teams (Balogun, 2003). And while they have little influence over strategic policy decisions, they have a great deal of responsibility for the daily operation of their units. They set the guidelines and policies at the micro-level, working out the details and making sense of the new structure or activities (Huy, 2001). They also help others through the change by mediating tensions and handling resistance, being role models, resolving immediate problems, and providing formal and informal communication for their staff (Balogun, 2003). They are emotion managers as well as translators of the changes (Huy, 2001). Balogun
(2003) asserted that sense making is perhaps the most important role that middle managers play during times of change, because it keeps the business operating when their work teams are in “freak out mode” (Luke). In this way, the work of middle managers contributes more to strategic change than they may be credited with.

Supervisors are important to professional staff. An effective supervisor allows the appropriate level of “autonomy” (Jim), “authority” (Michael), and “lets you be the expert that you are in your particular area” (Amelia). And when that is not the case, staff can feel frustrated, stressed, and “burned out” (Julie). Decisions from the “top down” that do not take into account the experience and expertise of the individuals who must implement them can cause resentment: “But I think there are a lot of decisions that happen where they really don’t care what it takes to get it done. They just want it done. And that’s frustrating, because they think that what we do is easy” (Anne). Eleanor echoed Anne’s frustration:

I guess you’re talking about sort of middle level people. You know, the problem with those jobs is if you don't have a voice and if you don't have the communication lines. You know, if you don’t have control over your situation at all, and you’re just having to respond to everything that other people do, that's very stressful. (Eleanor)

“Doing More with Less”

When asked about challenges in their work, almost all of the participants mentioned resources as a concern. Ten of the 39 participants used the phrase “doing more with less”—so many that it seemed like a university motto. Budget cuts in the last few years have led to reductions in program funds that have restricted activities, postponed plans, and resulted in grant writing to support new activity or equipment. For many, expectations have risen and workloads have increased, but resources have not. In some programs, staff vacancies have not been filled, leaving the remaining staff pick up the work. While everyone is coping with the changes in their own way, several participants noted that people seem to be experiencing more stress, and are
facing “burn out.” Andrew, who regularly works about 50 hours a week, worried that “grinding away at those long hours” is “wearing on people.” On running university events year-round with a small staff, Audrey said, “I don’t know how long I can keep it up!” Nora, who works with faculty on preparing research grant proposals, has noticed that faculty are “burning out” from teaching larger classes, serving on more campus committees, and writing more proposals without much of a trade-off to make their efforts seem worthwhile.

For some participants, expectations to upgrade and professionalize often come without upgrades in equipment, supplies, or appropriate training. While all feel affected by budget reductions, it seems that the publications staff are disproportionately affected. Their equipment is aging and there is no money in the budget to upgrade. They are expected to use more visuals and communicate using the newest social media, but according to Ethan, they only “have one good video camera and one smaller one where we should have…one for every writer to be able to take out if they go on the road someplace.” Andrew, who has been at the university for over 25 years, believes that the budget has not kept pace with the changing nature of the work.

They had funding, in the old days for paper and typewriter ribbons and stuff like that. And here I come on board where you need to have cameras and lights and video editing…And so now they [have] to spend a lot of money, where before they would buy a computer every five years or something. My camera’s five years old right now…and it’s technically by today’s standards obsolete…so I’ll have to write another grant, or tag along with another grant to do some outreach to get that kind of equipment. (Andrew)

The other big resource problem for this group is the lack of training for the new information technology that they are expected to use. Andrew and Sophia were both eager to learn new computer applications and video editing equipment and software for web-based publications and social media sites, but the technology is coming too fast and the training is too little. “They want to use the latest and the greatest this and that, and a lot of us learn by doing, or
by guess and by gosh, which is probably not the most effective way of using people’s time” (Andrew). Sophia takes great care in researching and preparing for her visits and interviews with faculty. She considers herself a master of her craft, and is clearly willing to go the extra mile to create a good product. But she is often frustrated that there is such little support for training.

It’s like the expectation is there that you need to get up to speed with all this, but you know, good luck!...So the problem is, as you know, as an adult learner, I really need to get training…instead of someone standing over me and saying, *Okay, you can click on that and click on that.* And I can learn any new technology if I have the training and the time to get it down. But the problem is, if you don’t receive the training and you don’t really know how to do it, you get left behind. (Sophia)

That public higher education is struggling with shifts in state resource allocation is well known. Regarded as discretionary spending in lean times, higher education funding fluctuates with state revenues and may not fully rebound when times improve (Zusman, 2005). Operating support for higher education decreased in about half the states in the recent recession, and most states used some of their federal stimulus funds to support higher education (Zumeta, 2010). Callan (2002) explained that during times of recession, higher education typically absorbs more cuts than other public sectors, and shifts shortfalls to students and families through tuition increases and sometimes reduced aid awards. In 2008-09, the state in which the university is located had one of the lowest levels of state appropriations per student FTE ratios in the nation, ranking near the bottom of the list. And though the state experienced a -1.7% reduction in appropriations between 2004 and 2009, revenue from tuition and fees were above the national average, suggesting that the system is relying on students to fill part of the gap (University System Factbook, 2010). Land-grant universities face cuts to state extension programs and are increasingly funding their programs with grants, contracts, and user fees (Fischer, 2009). Henry, a leader for agricultural extension programs at Carver State, has experienced this firsthand. State
budget cuts of about 10% last year, as well as changes in the way funding comes to the college
have put unprecedented pressures on extension faculty to write grants, engage in fundraising
partnerships, and charge fees for their programs. He worries that it is not sustainable: “I think
we’re on a sinking ship.”

While many participants expressed sentiments of frustration and fatigue in “doing more
with less,” there was a small group who took a different stance. These five professionals saw it as
either a fun challenge or solemn duty to manage resources as creatively as possible. Nathan, an
architect who designs and builds new research and lab spaces for an academic college, sees it as a
“big chess game” to create a high quality product from the least amount of money. He proudly
related the time when a dean told him that he is “the only guy that he knows of on this campus
that spends money as if it’s his own checkbook.” Matthew, an assistant director in an auxiliary
unit, not only considers his creative resource management as part of his success as a supervisor,
but also as a form of competition. His scrap metal recycling initiative was a difficult political
achievement that distinguished him amongst his peers and won him favors with his work team,
who get to use funds from the sales to purchase new tools of their choice. Audrey sees her
program to purchase university gift items in bulk as an effective way to “maximize the budget,”
and a particularly clever strategy to manage her resources. Szekeres (2006) observed that the
language of productivity and efficiency are the lexicon of Australian university general staff, and
“doing more with less” is a mantra focused on productivity in the corporatizing university.
Naomi, an astute academic advisor who has worked for the university for over 20 years, seems to
have figured out the deception: “You know the old “do more with less”? Our president says,
‘We’ve got to quit doing that, we’ve got to let go of things,’ but we don’t. It’s just speak.”

There is no question that the changes professional staff have been managing are being
driven by the university’s strategic activities. The reorganization of the business services serves
the goal of promoting entrepreneurial activity in the academic colleges, while pressure to increase
enrollment comes from the state university system goals to improve access and graduation rates, as well as provide revenue for the university. These institutional objectives are intended to position the university and the state for national and global economic competition, based on an imperative of human capital development. Carver State wants to “attract the best students,” while recruiting more international students, non-residents, and “students of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds” (CSU Presidential address, 2009). Anyone who understands the complexity of these student groups in terms of postsecondary education also understands that these are conflicting goals. Tuchman (2009) termed this phenomenon “organizational ambivalence,” wherein the university pursues contradictory goals based on competing institutional logics. Professional staff do not often question these logics, but strive to perform to the strategic goals. They may sometimes grumble about increased workloads and responsibility, but ultimately exert a great amount of effort to support the strategic aims of their leadership. Their relatively uncritical acceptance of the changes that are imposed on them represent the psychological contract (Newell & Dopson, 1996) that they make with the university to exchange their efforts for things they value: relative job security, pay and benefits, and a quality of life that they perceive as unavailable in other workplaces. Depending on where they are located in the university in relation to institutional priorities and resources, professional staff are teetering on the edge of maintaining this contract and considering the merits of renegotiating the agreement. The next section considers the extent to which the university honors that contract, and how professional staff manage their careers in that context.
Professional Development and Career Mobility

Existing scholarship on university mid-level administrators and professionals concurs that making a career in the university means limited advancement opportunities, salary compression, and lack of institutional support for professional development (Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Rosser, 2000; Scott, 1978). While these issues have been found to contribute to low morale and high turnover (Johnsrud, Heck, & Rosser, 2000; Rosser, 2004), institutional support for mid-level professionals to improve their skills and take on more challenging roles, recognition for their accomplishments, and positive relationships with campus professionals have been found to contribute to workplace satisfaction and intent to stay (Hermsen & Rosser, 2008; Rosser, 2004).

Scholars have called the implicit agreement between organizations and their employees a psychological contract (Newell & Dopson, 1996). This contract defines what workers promise to exchange for what they value from the organization, whether it is pay and benefits, job security, or intangible rewards (Murlis & Hartle, 1996; Newell & Dopson, 1996). When this contract is maintained, workers are likely to stay. This section examines how professional staff define their careers in the context of the research university. What constitutes the psychological contract with the university? Why do they choose the university as a place to make their careers, and how do they conceptualize mobility?

The University as a Choice of Workplace

For professional staff at Carver State, the university is a conscious choice of workplace. Of the 39 participants interviewed, 21 talked about how they chose the university over other options, or if it was not a conscious choice, why they decided to stay. Five themes emerged regarding the university as a choice of workplace. The most discussed was the general desire to work on a college campus, a place that offers a good quality of life and an atmosphere of education and freedom to experiment. For the 11 participants who mentioned this theme, working at the university is rewarding and meaningful. They enjoy working in a place where ideas are
valued, using words and phrases like “stimulating,” “infectious,” “fascinated,” “innovative, energetic minds,” and “intellectually challenging.” Michael credits the university’s cultural activities as a magnet pulling him back to campus after work hours, contributing to a sense of community that many participants mentioned. A second theme was the sense that the university supports family and community life, allowing people to have a rich experience beyond their jobs. As a young man without family responsibilities, Alex had thought that he would not stay in the quaint college town, but five years later, he is engaged in local politics and community development. He still thinks about pursuing a career in a big city, but also considers sticking around: “This place has its charm and keeps you here.” Andrew and Leah agreed that it is an ideal place to raise a family, and have taken advantage of the educational and cultural activities that the campus offers.

Choosing the university came about in different ways. Five participants had worked in private industry and wanted to get out. There was a sense that the corporate world lacked meaning and substance, something they wanted for their lives. Madeline and Amelia both think of education as a more ethical, meaningful product to sell, but there are some tradeoffs. Amelia finds the slow, decision-making by consensus process of the university to be frustrating, preferring the quicker, top-down corporate style. Tom likes to remind his coworkers who talk about how “crazy” the university can get that “they’re riding their bike to work, or they’re going to the student union to hear a concert on their lunch break. Or going to listen to a lecture on entomology.” And for the six participants who just “sort of ended up” at the university, there is no place else they would rather work. Caroline called it “serendipity,” and Audrey “can’t imagine being anywhere else now.” And finally, five participants said that working with students is what keeps them at the university. They appreciate the “fresh ideas,” “possibilities,” and “fun” that students bring.
For university professional staff, compensation is a unique clause in the psychological contract. Only a few felt that their salaries were adequate, and for the rest, there was a general sense that a lower salary was an acceptable concession for the intangible rewards of “working for the public good” (Daniel). Those who had worked in the private sector or whose skills could be easily transferred to an industry job, acknowledged that they could make more money elsewhere, but “at some point you have to make a choice to work in higher ed and you have to understand what that means” (Alex). For Joshua, the tradeoff is quality of life: “There’s advantages there that you can’t measure in dollars, that are non-tangibles, that the educational environment provides that you wouldn’t get going out in industry.” Alternatively, Daniel was “not convinced” that there are jobs in the private sector that match his skills, suggesting that the private sector requires something different than the public university. And while they might have a strong commitment to public service, not everyone was content to ignore the salary inequities. Naomi had been with the university for over 20 years—longer than any other head advisor—and had just learned that her salary was “in the middle of the pack” for her peers. Lillian was also frustrated with the salary compression, reporting that new employees often earn higher salaries, regardless of several equity adjustments that she had been given. Several participants noted that salary raises were hard to come by, especially with the pay freeze brought on by recession era budget cuts. A 2002 Carver State survey of professional staff revealed general dissatisfaction with the opportunity to receive merit raises, matching Luke’s assertion that once they are “locked into a salary range…there’s not a lot of avenue to change that.” Last fall, the university announced 4% raises for faculty in January 2012 and again in 2013, but it is unclear whether professional staff will also receive the increases. In the same announcement, the university declared that it has had a successful fundraising campaign, bringing in $750 million, just $100 million short of its 2013 goal. This kind of announcement may cause some to wonder if “doing more with less” is a fair mantra for whole university.
This study corroborates previous findings that an affective orientation to one’s job can retain professional staff, with little evidence from this group of the high turnover in Rosser’s (2004) research. Unlike corporate middle managers who are committed to their work but see no larger purpose and thus have lost loyalty to the firm (Osterman, 2008; Thomas & Linstead, 2002), professional staff choose to work at a university because they want to be a part of a larger purpose for education, community development, and the public good. The psychological contract for these workers is clearly more about working conditions, relationships with colleagues, and a balanced life rather than economic rewards (Murlis & Hartle, 1996). While some feel the strain of increased workloads, it has not yet caused most participants to question their choice to work at the university. Only Jim expressed changed feelings; whereas he used to love the university and feel like it was “a family,” he thinks that the transformation to a more business-like model has been bad for campus. He is no longer “proud” of the university, expressing profound disappointment in its leadership. For Jim, the university has broken the psychological contract by transforming the campus from a supportive community to an uncaring business, and now, rather than feeling a sense of belonging, he feels that “it’s just a job.” No other participants expressed the kind of disappointment that Jim did, suggesting that they feel pretty good about the direction that the university is going. Although they are “doing more with less,” the benefits still outweigh the negatives.

Professional Organizations and Networks

In his survey of mid-level administrators, Scott (1980) found that professional organizations provided a source of information, a place for training, professional modeling, and a sense of belonging and identity that was an important reference beyond campus. Scott believed that middle managers developed a degree of loyalty to professional organizations above their institutions. Although study participants were involved in professional organizations to varying degrees, they did not ascribe the same meaning to networking activities as participants in Scott’s
study. Most (76%) of the participants reported belonging to one or more national professional organizations that represented the position they were in (like the National Academic Advising Association and the National Association for College and University Business Officers), although few were able to attend conferences regularly because of a lack of funds for professional travel. Several of the professionals in External Affairs mentioned the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), which is a professional association for institutions that focuses on advancement issues such as marketing, development, and communications. Professional staff in related areas benefit from the institutional membership by having access to publications and peers on other campuses. Four participants said that they were heavily involved with state or regional organizations, holding office and presenting at conferences or professional training sessions. Nine participants were not involved with any outside professional organizations, citing either disinterest or the inability to find the “right fit.” SunGard, the company that provides the campus business and student management software, puts on conferences for institutions. Several participants reported having attended meetings sponsored by the company, but most said that they no longer attend because they have grown tired of the commercial nature of the events.

Scott (1980) also noted that specialization of roles would connect mid-level administrators to senior staff and off-campus professionals rather than to campus colleagues (1980). There is some evidence for this at Carver State. The professional staff who were interviewed for the study do not generally see themselves in relation to other professional staff as a peer group on campus; rather they choose to identify with their units and colleges. The individuals and groups they work with regularly are natural collaborators and constituents, and those with whom they share a project. Two groups of professional staff—academic advisors and communications professionals—have each formed campus-wide associations to share knowledge and discuss professional issues. Eleanor articulated the unexpected results of organizing the advisors: “It’s seemed to have given us some power that we didn't have before to work with some
of the other offices on campus like admissions, registrar, [and the] international office.” Finally, there are a few voluntary groups on campus who meet for social, civic, or professional reasons. The Professional Staff Association (PSA) is one such group, but membership is low (about 50 people) and according to the group’s president, it is composed of mainly women. The PSA discusses campus issues, and once a year they have an audience with the university president. These formal and informal campus networks are sources for information, support, and recognition for those who may not have these important resources in their own offices. The networks can be a place for friendship and camaraderie, and could be a source of power if enough people were to turn their attentions to strategic issues. Networking is an important strategy for professional support where women can learn from supportive colleagues while building their own sense of self-efficacy and resourcefulness. Peers can provide support and information, sharing knowledge and resources for particular problems (Ibarra, 1997; Haring & Paludi, 1992; Wright & Wright, 1987). They can connect each other to important people in the field, and provide visibility in the organization (Wright & Wright, 1987). Ibarra (1997) suggested that strong ties formed with other women can also provide an essential form of support for those in lower managerial ranks.

**Mobility and Advancement**

How do professional staff define their careers? This question turned out to be more difficult to answer than I had anticipated. How professional staff spend their days was a more engaging topic for most participants than the task of connecting their work to decisions and aspirations over time. Scott (1980) thought that mid-level administrators experienced a “lack of clarity” about their roles that could be attributed to ambiguity about their place in a career structure that does not really exist in the university. Without being able to see opportunities to move around or up in the organization, professional staff may have difficulty mapping where they have been and where they intend to go. Rosser’s (2009) survey of mid-level administrators found that opportunities for promotion contributed to higher job satisfaction, whereas limited options
for advancement may contribute to professional staff turnover (Jo, 2008; Johnsrud, Heck, & Rosser, 2000). Of the 39 participants, 16 are in the same position for which they were hired, and 23 have worked in two or more positions in the university. This suggests that there is some degree of movement; whether this movement has been lateral or promotional is both individualized and problematic to identify without a clear structure. As previously discussed, almost all of the participants expressed an intent to stay at the university, so how do they see their own mobility patterns and opportunities for advancement? A few themes emerged from the interviews.

The most common response from participants was that there is little or no opportunity for advancement beyond their current position. Professional staff acknowledged that they would have to move into their supervisor’s position or leave the university to advance, or could not advance because they work in one-of-a-kind positions for which they have no peers. Luke considers most of the opportunities for mobility to be in entry-level positions, in that people could easily move around to different offices at one level, but “once you get to that assistant director, head advisor realm, whatever it is, you kind of get locked there.” Evelyn had that experience, having moved from an assistant director in one unit to a specialist position in another unit without difficulty. Her only option now to move up is a position for which she may need to wait several years to become available. Lillian had worked her way up in Business Affairs from an entry-level position as a new college graduate 28 years ago to her current position as a manager of her unit. She has applied for promotional positions in other offices several times, but has not been successful, thus compounding her salary compression. I also detected that she may be bored in her position and feels unable to do anything about it. Molly, a specialist in External Affairs, is in a one-of-a-kind position for which there is currently no place for her to go if she was ready to move. She observed that others in her field typically advance by moving to another state or another kind of organization, but since she does not want to move, she expects that she will eventually change careers.
Several participants perceived leaving the campus as the only option for career advancement, either because there are no available positions at Carver State or because they want more responsible positions at a different kind of campus. Amelia expressed interest in becoming a chief financial officer or vice president of finance at a smaller college, because she would have a “broader focus” and not have the stress of handling the “complexity” of financial affairs at a large research university. Oliver wants to be a vice president one day, but he believes that he would have to leave Carver State because it is “pretty rare” for a university to promote to that level from within. But while they thought that leaving campus would be their only option for advancement, most did not express a desire to do so. In a work history survey of university administrators, Sagaria (1988) found that position changes were the primary means of career advancement for administrators, and that mobility patterns differed according to the administrative field. For instance, with Oliver’s training in accounting and experience as a Business Affairs director, he stands a better chance of reaching his goal of becoming a vice president in his area than Evelyn, an academic advisor who is highly unlikely to become a chief academic officer without first holding a tenured position on the faculty. Since there have been few, if any large scale studies of administrative mobility since Sagaria’s, and nothing of note regarding mid-level administrators, it is difficult to test whether this has changed. However, participant responses in this study seem to support the notion that they must leave to advance their careers.

For those who have stayed and worked in more than one position, mobility has happened in different ways. Several participants began their careers in entry-level positions and have moved up when there were vacancies. Joshua, Alex, Luke, and Lillian all started as student workers, and were subsequently hired in regular positions upon graduation. Evelyn started as an entry-level office specialist, and earned promotions after she completed a master’s degree. Lillian, Andrew, Madeline, and Ethan all worked their way up from specialist to director positions in their current areas. All have moved into their positions as vacancies allowed, or when rank advancement (e.g.
promotion from analyst to senior analyst) was available—typically in support staff roles (Rosenfeld, 1992). A small group, especially in Business Affairs, moved from the unionized support staff category to professional staff when they took a managerial position in their respective units.

For another group, a different kind of mobility has occurred; they have had jobs created for them. Miner & Estler (1985) called this phenomenon *accrual mobility*, wherein a worker’s knowledge and skills develop beyond their current position and a new position is formed around them. The position is usually considered a promotion for good performance, or at least a means of retention for a valued staff member. Positions are created that reflect an individual’s personal attributes, ability to influence the organization (“get things done”), or past experience (Miner & Estler, 1985). Organizational factors contributing to the creation of positions include the kinds of problems the organization is facing, and the amount of structural flexibility that is available, especially in terms of resources. Both Caroline and Nora’s positions were created this way by the same college dean, who met them in other roles and recognized their talents. The dean later matched their abilities to needs of the college, and hired them. The dean of Emma’s college created her director position because her diversity outreach interests had turned into projects that were “important to the college as a whole.” When I asked for updates accompanying review of the interview transcripts, Emma wrote that she had moved into a newly created assistant dean position.24 Luke had been in the same position for several years, but he was doing work that went beyond his position description at the time: “It was one of those title things, which is why we formalized it into what I’ve been doing. We formalized my title and position as well.” It is important to note Rosenfeld’s (1992) observation that mobility through accrual often does not mean that a vacancy created in this way will be available for someone else, becoming a problem for institutional policy making regarding an advancement structure for mid-level staff. However,

24 Emma is the only participant who had been a faculty member before taking the director position she was in at the time of the interviews.
Johnsrud (1991) considered the possibility that creation of a position with attendant title and salary effectively institutionalizes the change.

The third way that participants have made their careers is through role accretion, in which new tasks are added to existing positions (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004). Participants took on new responsibilities after receiving training in a new area, taking initiative to do something new, or because no one else was doing it and “it needed to get done” (Anne). Although she had little experience in the area, Amelia picked up a technology project “simply because [she] really had an interest in, and wanted to champion the effort.” Advancements in information technology have driven Lillian and Lauren’s work as well, creating opportunities to learn and apply new knowledge and skills. In the transition to the division hubs, Oliver used the strategy of role accretion to provide professional development for his business support staff, allowing them to develop “specialization” and make their work more “interesting.”

It must be acknowledged that not everyone is interested in advancing their careers. The term *career* implies a forward progress to the pattern of jobs that one holds (Rosenfeld, 1992). Whether and how a person changes jobs depends on the opportunity structure the individual experiences. Although participants have moved around in the past, some may either be content with where they are, or have accepted the circumstances of their opportunity structure. Oliver does not plan to move on until his child graduates from high school. Caroline and Leah both emphasized that their families come first, and their jobs must accommodate the needs of their children. Both said that they have had interesting work lives, but have never had specific strategies or plans for careers. Life cycle effects such as family responsibilities and aging contribute to mobility, but labor market research that uses life cycle effects to explain women’s mobility often misses the mark (Rosenfeld, 1992). The disparities in women’s mobility and salaries are often explained by women’s differential labor force participation, including fewer years in paid employment and discontinuous work experience due to the caretaking of children.
In this study, it was not only women who negotiated their work to fit their family life; Adam and Michael both said that they have stayed at the university because of some benefit that they perceive as important to their families. And Joshua, whose dream is to be a high school Spanish teacher, stays at the university because he needs the salary and benefits—much better than what he would earn in the public schools—to support his large family. None of the mothers in this study left the workforce after having kids, but several reported working part-time for brief periods or taking less demanding jobs when their children were young. At the same time, Natalie talked about how she had to work more than she wanted when her three children were young because her husband left her with no means of support. These women and men have had to balance the need to provide for their families financially with their desire to prioritize their family life. Some compromises have been necessary.

The strategies that individuals use to advance their careers, and that the university’s human resources office promulgates are based on assumptions of human capital, what Garavan and Coolahan (1996) referred to as the individualistic approach. Human capital theory is an extension of economic theory that explains the differences in individuals’ wages and career attainment through the return on individual investments made in education and skill development. Human capital is developed through any activity that enhances productivity, and is a lifelong process that includes not only formal education but also time on the job (Becker, 1985; England, 1982; Mincer and Polachek, 1974). Although human capital theory has a number of critics, it has become an implicit assumption, if not an explicitly delineated theory in the study of individual achievement and occupational outcomes (for instance, Wallace & Marchant, 2009). According to Slaughter (1991), human capital is part of the “official ideology” of universities, used to justify society’s (or an individual’s) investment in higher education. As educational institutions, this ideology applies ostensibly to students, but it also figures to some extent in how universities make

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25 Interestingly, in a study of faculty women, McElrath (1992) found that women were more likely to interrupt their careers to move with a spouse rather than to care for children.
investments in the human capital of their staff (Johnsrud, 1991). Career development programs do exist at Carver State, although even the administrator in charge of professional development in the human resources office believes that people are “on their own” in this regard. Units and colleges have differing levels of resources for professional development, resulting in some participants feeling well supported and others like “it’s by the seat of your pants” (Ethan).

On its face, human capital development makes sense for individuals trying to further their careers, and institutions wanting to develop their workforce or rectify gender inequities in managerial positions (Garavan & Coolahan, 1996; Wallace & Marchant, 2009). The idea that there are intelligent, competent professionals who could fill leadership positions if only they had the relevant training is the basis for many institutional and national administrative development programs such as the HERS Summer Institute for Women (Hornig, 1978; Secor, 1984). Human capital theory does not acknowledge structural barriers that exist in the organization, or that organizations only provide skill development that is in the organization’s best interest (Garavan & Coolahan, 1996; Johnsrud, 1991). An example from my own experience is a university policy that required employees to submit to an extensive approval process before using the employee tuition waiver benefit to take a university course. The employee had to prove that the course would contribute to improved performance in the current position, so a colleague’s request to take a German language class was denied because he could not prove it useful to his position. Thus, an individual’s career is not only a result of personal investments, but is shaped by the organization’s interests in developing that individual for its own needs.

Carver State is involved in a “performance coaching” program in which staff from across campus are trained to provide a form of counseling service for other staff who are experiencing difficulties in their work. Three of the interview participants have been acting in this capacity, and reported a great deal of satisfaction with their involvement. Charles, a professional development manager in human resources, and the coaches all referred to their work as helping
people when they are “stuck,” undoubtedly a term introduced by the professional trainer, who is a private consultant. From the description given by the coaches and the program’s website, performance coaching is predicated on a human capital development model wherein individual participants focus on “personal solutions to challenging issues or areas of performance,” ultimately improving their “well-being” and “confidence” in their work. Not one of the long list of potential coaching topics addresses cultural, structural, or organizational barriers, only what individuals can do to improve their own performance. This is reminiscent of Barbara Ehrenreich’s (2005) journalist-ethnographer experience of job searching in corporate America; she spent one year and a good sum of money on career coaches and networking events in what she called the “transition industry,” and found the activities utterly useless for actually getting a job. These services focus on individual development to such a degree that any discussion of broader impediments such as economic conditions or corporate power are effectively silenced. It is not that programs such as performance coaching are inherently bad or do not help individuals, it is that the focus on personal confidence, a positive attitude, and the things individuals can do to rise above their situations negates an analysis of the social and economic forces that contribute to the situations in which they find themselves.

Mobility for mid-level professional staff is a complex, perhaps even messy subject for research. This is perhaps one reason why it has been neglected. In 1986, Twombly called administrative career mobility “largely a mystery,” and not much has happened since to clear the field. So many individual, structural, and environmental variables come into play that it is difficult to separate the issues. It is also difficult to identify exactly when a promotion has taken place, given that there is no clear promotional structure for mid-level administrators. Professional staff may take on new responsibilities that make their work more interesting and thus maintain their commitment to the institution, but may not earn a title or salary to match the new responsibilities. They may also stay in their positions for many years, waiting out the few
incumbents for a promotion. Whitchurch (2008b) suggested that professionals in her construct that fit the blended and unbounded categories define career mobility differently, focusing on new experiences and projects rather than hierarchical advancement. It seems like some people would like this, but it may not be available to them, leaving them frustrated and “stuck” as the performance coaches say. For the most part, it seems that professional staff at Carver State have negotiated their psychological contract with the university to gain in some ways and lose in others. Whereas they are able to work in jobs and in a workplace they generally enjoy, many have had to compromise their aspirations for better salaries and resources to achieve their visions. The extent to which this is a problem for individuals varies depending on how they weigh the tradeoffs and what they consider to be their options.

Conclusion

This chapter began with the proposition that for middle managers, the university as a workplace is preferable to the corporate sector, especially as full-time salaried positions have grown in (public and private) universities, providing more opportunities for non-faculty professionals. Compared to similar positions in the corporate sector, university middle managers seem to have better working conditions, more job security, and the confidence of their supervisors and coworkers. At the same time, universities have become less friendly for faculty, whose workloads have intensified (for full-timers) or for whom part-time teaching has become their only option. Of course, neither faculty nor support staff were interviewed for this study, but it is not unreasonable to assert that the university is a different workplace depending on what position one occupies in the structure. The university employs both scholarly and market logics that result in stratified employment patterns between and within groups; that is, some professional staff as well as some faculty are well-resourced, while others are not. It would be a mistake to assume that because the professional staff category has grown more than the faculty, that faculty work is not highly valued; in fact, research and scholarship is so highly valued that large numbers of
professional staff are devoted to its development, dissemination, and celebration. It is clearly the commodifiable faculty work that receives these resources, and that is where the tension lies. The expansion of the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime has led to the significant (and strategic) growth of managerial staff as well as the restructuring of faculty labor (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

This chapter extended the discussion from Chapter 5 regarding the roles of professional staff, and how their labor is being used in the context of the changing university. It focused on professional staff as change intermediaries (Balogun, 2003), carrying out strategic directives through the daily implementation and management of change. Participants had various reactions to the changes, ranging from skepticism to enthusiasm, but for the most part, they have had little influence over what the changes would be. Some questioned or criticized the changes (such as the transition to division hubs), or felt anxious and unable to control them (such as the recent enrollment growth), but those who ask “why” receive few satisfactory answers. Ultimately, professional staff serve the administration by carrying out the strategic plan, not only by performing the necessary tasks but by mediating the change for faculty, other staff, and for students. They handle the tensions and resistance among others and solve daily operational problems. Mid-level professionals are increasingly involved in governance at Carver State, although it is unclear to what degree. In some cases, their work could be implicated in the administration’s strategy to bypass the faculty, whose power in governance has diminished over time. Lastly, the role of professional staff is to not only manage strategic activity, but to be efficient and conservative in the management of resources. The mantra of “doing more with less” serves the university by getting people to do things by consent rather than compensating them for their extra labor. And while many in this study have been asked to make sacrifices, who does and who does not have to do so is a more interesting question.
Finally, this chapter asked, how do administrative-professional staff define their careers in the context of the research university? Except for those nearing retirement, professional staff express desires for professional development and interesting careers. But to what end? Their mobility within the university is constrained by the realities of the current labor structure. The university creates new professional staff positions to serve its needs, but the individuals are “on their own” to build interesting and engaging careers. Although the university profits from their labor, there does not seem to be an institutional commitment to building the professional knowledge and skills of this group. While it is unfair to say that they have been completely ignored, the questions may actually be, who cares and why? The places where an organization puts its resources reflects its values. While a budget analysis is beyond the scope of this study, it does seem apparent that recent changes indicate an institution that is organizing itself towards markets—markets for students, grants and contracts, and private and corporate donors. The institution capitalizes on the labor of professionals, using their multiple talents and skills to further its interests. And while the university provides ideal conditions as a workplace in many respects, it offers only lip service to the professional development of its professional staff. This may also signify the university’s ambivalence regarding mid-level administrators; if the institution were to devote resources to understanding and addressing the work experiences and professional development needs of professional staff, it would have to acknowledge the group and legitimate its large presence on campus. Doing so could eventually lead to a broader recognition of how the university is being staffed, and the inequities amongst the faculty and between the faculty and administration. By employing the discourse of “doing more with less,” and effectively silencing this group (by not including them in climate studies, etc.), the administration appears to be doing all it can to keep the university running while avoiding a serious analysis of how it really acquires and deploys resources.
CHAPTER 7

GENENDER AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Jack Donaghy: “Lemon, I’m impressed. You’re beginning to think like a businessman.”

Liz Lemon: “Businesswoman.”

Jack Donaghy: “I don’t think that’s a word.”

The quote is, of course, a farce from a popular television show written by a feminist comedian, but the same joke could be told about university presidents, provosts, or deans.

Certainly female university leaders do exist, but their numbers are still relatively few in research universities. Feminist scholars see universities as entrenched institutions that are run by men and dominated by a male-oriented organizational culture that devalues women’s concerns and contributions. But with more women working and studying at universities, it is reasonable to question whether the culture is changing. As Scott predicted in 1978, women now constitute the majority of mid-level, non-faculty professional staff positions on college and university campuses (Rosser, 2000). Women represent 56% of the professional staff at Carver State, leading one female participant to remark, “Sometimes I feel like I’m surrounded by women.” Women are overrepresented to a larger degree in the support staff (64%), but underrepresented on the faculty (43%) (see Figure 8).

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Looking at women’s representation by the numbers is an important way to begin to understand women’s position in the university, and more detailed data would allow for a deeper understanding of gender stratification in the professional staff category (gender data for faculty and support staff are displayed in Chapter 4). But numbers only tell part of the story. What is more instructive—and more difficult to ascertain—is how the university manages the effects of a gendered culture that shapes social relations, and thus the organization (Ridgeway, 2009). As a multilevel process that is reinforced at macro and micro-interactional levels, gender forms and is formed by university culture. How organizational actors understand gender can play into the ways in which organizational logics play out. Tierney (1988) does not deal explicitly with gender, but if he is right that a university’s culture reflects the external world but is also shaped by strong internal forces, then we can expect that a university’s actions can mitigate or exacerbate inequities based on gender. Gender then becomes not something that just happens to us, but something we can thoughtfully act upon. The trouble is, as Acker (1990) observed, gender is so embedded in our assumptions and interactions that we may not be able to see how it shapes our
lives. Then, it is the numbers that are easiest to identify as the problem to be solved. The findings from this study are not surprisingly, mixed. Although there are a few who seemed quite aware of gender issues, most participants had little perspective on how the university might be experienced differently by women and men. Many professional staff understand that gender inequality is a university or cultural issue, but do not necessarily consider it a salient issue for themselves. Almost half do not believe that there are gender differences on campus. Is it possible that this is a group for whom gender is unproblematic, or is it simply unacknowledged? These explanations may not be mutually exclusive. This section explores how professional staff think about gender and the university’s efforts to support women and families. I suggest that mid-level positions are possibly becoming women’s professional place in the university.

**How Do Professional Staff Think About Gender?**

Participants were asked variations on the following questions about gender: What do you perceive as differences in experiences for men and women in professional staff positions on this campus; does gender matter; and have there been times when you felt conscious of being a [woman or man] here? It was interesting that these questions were universally interpreted as questions about discrimination or harassment, pointing to the culture’s litigious view of gender relations. Of course, difference does not imply inequality (Ridgeway, 2009), but participants interpreted the questions that way. Participants’ assumptions guided a fairly narrow range of responses, including the widely held belief among both female and male participants that there are no differences between women and men at Carver State. Because they had not witnessed an instance of discrimination or harassment, many believed that “everybody seems equal” (Andrew). The belief that gender plays out as either blatant institutional discrimination or as harassment on an interactional level extends Acker’s (1990, 1998, 2006b) construct that gender is constructed through patterns of individual interactions that become normalized and institutionalized; perhaps it is only the outrageous interactions that are recognized as problematic. It is more difficult to see
how the broader culture creates gendered arrangements within the university. For instance, none of the participants in Business Affairs could talk about how the change to the division hubs played out in terms of gender, even though the relevant support staff are almost entirely women. The sex segregation in the support roles was acknowledged by several participants, but it was accepted rather uncritically and not seen as a structural or cultural issue. It seemed that most participants saw women’s presence in any position as evidence of progress, and offered only acknowledgement that there were more women in the support staff positions and fewer women on the faculty and senior administration.

Some participants recognized that there are differences between women and men on campus, and that these differences could be problematic. More than a third of participants (8 women and 5 men) had a sense that there are inequalities based on gender and race in the university, but they had vague notions of the extent of the problem or what the consequences might be. While Ethan said that he had not seen “any overt discrimination,” he wondered whether there were more “subtle” forms, especially in hiring decisions. He spoke generally:

What happens is that when you start looking at candidates it may be possible that in certain instances some male candidates may have a longer or broader portfolio because the women may have taken time off for family purposes, or entered the workforce late. And so the end result is that more males get hired, or they’re at a higher pay level or something like that. I don’t see the discrimination as being that those people are hired on purpose. But the end result might be that women are disadvantaged on occasion because of things that are not their fault. So how do you change that? (Ethan)

Julie noted that she knew of salary inequities, but saw it as an institutional “blind spot” rather than a deliberate act of discrimination. She attributed the problem to women’s unwillingness to negotiate, letting the university “get away” with offering lower salaries to women. Madeline and Tom agreed that while there are problems, the university is “much more open and aware” about
all forms of social inequality than the private sector, where they have both worked. As a woman, Madeline said that there “is still stuff” that she encounters, and could think of only one time when she was “frustrated…that [she] wasn't a white male.” A little more than half of those who believe that there are inequities think that the problems are isolated in certain groups other than professional staff. Eleanor recognized that there are few female professors and even fewer senior faculty in the male dominated fields of science and engineering, citing women’s need for mentoring and “someone to talk to” in navigating faculty work while raising families. Adam agreed that female faculty face “pretty serious problems,” and thought it unfair for them to be held to the same tenure clock as men while also dealing with childbearing. Oliver acknowledged that most of the support staff in Business Affairs are women, but offered no interpretation of what that means, while Adam observed that most female support staff “feel very silent and muted” in their units, lacking a voice because of their position near the bottom of the hierarchy.

Although I did not ask specifically about the senior leadership, several participants brought it up in our discussion of gender. It was interesting that their perspectives on how many women were in senior leadership positions varied. Three participants spoke about how the leadership “is not 50-50” (Madeline), while several others talked about having “a lot of strong women” in leadership positions. Leah said, “A lot of women have moved up,” and Anne believed that the administration “is dominated” by women, though she noted that over time the number of women at the helm has fluctuated. What is interesting about this conversation is that the perspectives of those who believe that there is gender equity in senior positions reflect something other than numbers. Julie, a director in External Affairs, said, “I can name at least, right off the top of my head, three women deans.” In fact, only two of the 11 college deans are women (see Figure 6 in Chapter 4). The president and three of the four vice presidents are men, as is the provost and two of the four vice provosts. The dean of the graduate school is a woman, and two of the three associate and assistant provosts are women. Women are more likely to be represented
at the director levels in administrative units, leading Amelia, an assistant director, to remark that there “is a better mix” of women and men at her level (see “Gendered Profession?” in this section for more discussion of this).

The university has engaged in initiatives to study and advance gender equity. The President’s Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) was created in 1972 with the charge from the president to advocate for women, and seems to be consistently active in trying to focus the university’s attention on women. A women’s cultural center was established a year later to be a place for people to meet and learn about issues and resources for women, and in the last few years, a women’s equity office was established at the presidential level to increase visibility and advocacy for gender equity on campus (although at the time of this writing, it has been disbanded and absorbed into an office of diversity). Over the years, the PCSW, in collaboration with these groups has conducted several studies of gender equity on campus. Reports produced in the mid-90s and again ten years later found multiple issues for female faculty of all ranks, including poor institutional response to spouse/partner employment, salary inequities, and inattention to recruitment of women generally and women of color specifically. In the study, senior women administrators reported a feeling of isolation in a masculine atmosphere and little room for advancement, while support staff felt excluded from institutional goals. A 2005 campus climate study conducted by an outside consultant found that large numbers had experienced harassment, intimidation, or bullying based on gender, race, or sexual orientation.

It is undoubtedly due to these initiatives that the study participants tend to believe that the institution is committed to gender equity. However, it is not surprising that so many participants could speak about issues of gender equality for the institution as a whole, but not for professional staff specifically, as professional staff have been largely invisible in these initiatives. Campus equity studies included only ranked faculty and administrators at first, and then added fixed-term faculty and support staff in the mid-2000s. But despite the fact that professional staff were at least
one quarter of all non-student employees at the time of the last study, they were not included in
the surveys or focus groups. Only the campus climate study sampled professional staff, but
unfortunately, that study focused exclusively on experiences of harassment and violence—
possibly contributing to the way in which participants interpreted my questions about gender. It is
not clear why professional staff have been ignored, especially since it seems that many of the
staff who have worked on these workplace studies are both female and professional staff. Mara, a
professional staff member who has been on campus for 25 years and has worked on several of
these studies, agreed that “no one is watching” professional staff.

About 20 percent of participants—six women and one man—reported having had
negative experiences with men on campus who seem to hold anachronistic ideas about gender
roles—what more than one participant referred to as “old school” or “old boy” attitudes. For
instance, women have been asked to take notes at meetings, even though that was not their role.
Women are either ignored by men or receive too much attention, as Lucy explained: “But there
are a few men who stare at your chest the entire time they’re talking to you, and…I’m just like,
I’m up here.” Nora talked about having been compared by men to their wives, and how “odd” it
made her feel. She believed that “nothing is meant by it,” but at the same time, she now feels less
acknowledged as a professional among these men. I suspect that while it may not have been
intentional, there is an underlying message of sexual attraction in those men’s comments, or at
least the tacit understanding of the sexual relationship between women and men (Acker, 1990).
As in Wallace and Marchant’s (2011) study, most of these “old boy” experiences have been with
older male faculty, suggesting that professional women are treated poorly based on both gender
and professional status. Luke, a specialist in Academic Affairs, observed that some male faculty
do not recognize women in the college as professionals, considering them to be “the secretary, the
support staff person only, and not the fact that they’re the one leading our legislative efforts, or
whatever it may be.” These experiences have left them with the vague feeling of being unvalued
as women. Female professional staff have their own ways of resisting this interpersonal mistreatment. Amelia, an assistant director in Business Affairs, has been shut out of conversations with fellow male administrators so many times that her husband now tutors her on sporting events. He even bought her a book titled, *How to Succeed in Business without a Penis: Secrets and Strategies for the Working Woman*, which, according to Amazon.com, has been a bestseller. And Molly was initially “disappointed” and “disturbed” by the profound sexist behavior of men in her previous political work. She has not had such a bad experience at Carver State. Because she works primarily with faculty and administrators who bring in big research dollars, Molly is acutely aware of how few women are at the table; she said she is often the only woman in the room. Still, in her work with both campus and legislators, Molly finds that the “sexist” behavior of men and the “obnoxious” behavior of women based in gender performativity “gets old,” but ultimately doesn’t “see it as a real issue.”

As a manager of an auxiliary maintenance and facilities unit, Matthew offered a unique perspective on gendered work. He discussed the challenges of managing his all-male work crew through a transition with a new female member of the staff who was also an out lesbian. He was nervous about the men’s “initial curiosity” would play out in their actions, but realized that things “normalized over time” after the crew got to know each other. Matthew has also done a lot of work to prevent potential problems with the maintenance men who work in the student residence halls with women and families from non-western cultures.

[I have done a] tremendous amount of coaching…because the nature of what we do, our trades are gruff, you know. There’s a stereotype that goes with maintenance where people seem somewhat inhibited to approach us or talk to us. You know, we are the burly guys on campus, kind of thing. (Matthew)

Although I asked specifically about gender, three participants wanted to talk about other kinds of hostilities that they face. One participant feels that she is treated differently because of
her weight, and two others mentioned ageism as a concern. All three women feel that they are treated poorly by certain others because it is assumed by younger (or thinner) workers that they are less competent or resistant to change (in the case of older workers), and thus, easily discounted. They have come to feel unvalued, and it becomes more difficult for these participants to speak their minds. While these participants defined their experiences as gender neutral, gender is in fact, deeply implicated. The women who feel discounted because of their age or weight made these comments in relation to the university’s push toward new media, a push that for the most part is being led by young men. Aspects of identity, including age, race, ability, weight, and sexual orientation shape not only our own gender identities, but the ways in which others define and identify us as gendered people. The organization and actors within the organization privilege those who fit with the dominant conception of gender according to their attractiveness, youthfulness, and usefulness to its purposes (Acker, 1998). Gender is embedded in interpersonal and organizational power relations and modified through daily interpersonal interactions, and regardless of the importance of certain attributes or activities, individuals are held to normative standards of gender (Eveline, 2004).

**Work-Life**

Work-life balance is an issue that has been considered central to women’s advancement and economic equality. Women customarily have disproportionate responsibility for the care of children, elders, and other dependents, leading to an overload for employed women that Hochschild (1989) termed “the second shift.” Single- and dual-earner households with children are likely to experience high stress levels, as family and work demands conflict (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). Work-life practices are meant to increase worker flexibility and autonomy so that they are able to focus their attention in the workplace (Gregory & Milner, 2009). Organizational work-life initiatives typically include flex-time, care giving leaves, dependent care, and child care, and are most likely to be offered in organizations that are large, nonprofit, have more union
members, and have a lot of women and minorities in their workforce (Galinsky, Bond, & Sakai, 2009). Work-life policies are important to organizations, as workers are expected to demonstrate a greater commitment to their work and increased job satisfaction when they have more flexibility and resources to manage their family commitments (Gregory & Milner, 2009). Work-life policies have been linked to better mental health and well-being for both women and men, and reduced absenteeism as well as increased job satisfaction (Gregory & Milner, 2009; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). However, work-life policies seem to be underutilized, with managers in particular finding it difficult to take time away from their jobs (Gregory & Milner, 2009). The growing intensification of work and changing workplaces create a situation in which employee-friendly organizations are only friendly on paper but not in practice.

Participants were asked, to what extent does the institution support personal and family life? As a rule, I did not ask participants whether they had children, allowing them to define their non-work time and obligations as they chose. If they mentioned kids, or if I noticed children’s pictures or artwork, I asked about them and noted them. As a result, I do not know whether five of the women and two of the men have responsibilities for childrearing. In our conversations, I learned that more men (76%) than women (41%) reported having children at the time of the study (see Table 8). Although at least 12 participants talked about having school-age children, many have children that are of adult age, and two mentioned that they have grandchildren. No participants discussed needs for childbearing, although one participant was saving up her annual leave in anticipation of an infant adoption. That more men than women reported having children is consistent with findings that women in the workforce are less likely to have children under the age of 18, and women managers even less so (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010). I did not ask participants whether they were partnered, so an analysis using these facts is beyond the scope of this study.
Table 8

*Participants with Children, by Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9 (41%)</td>
<td>13 (76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8 (36%)</td>
<td>2 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5 (23%)</td>
<td>2 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional staff were overwhelmingly pleased with the support they have received from the institution and from their supervisors in terms of work-life balance. They mentioned supportive workplace practices for flexible leave and flextime, such as being able to work part of the day at home; family leave; child care facilities and lactation rooms; and partner hiring (although a 2010 PCSW report listed partner hiring as a benefit that CSU does not have). They also praised the personal and family benefits of working on the university campus, such as health and fitness centers, mental health services, personal and educational enrichment programs like lectures and workshops, tuition reduction for themselves and their children, and discounts for arts programming. Professional staff generally feel supported by their supervisor if they need to go home to take care of a sick child or take time off. As a theme that has surfaced many times in this study, Miriam observed that the attitude and support of supervisors is key. Both men and women spoke positively about the university’s workplace policies, but talked about how it has really been supervisor support and modeling that have most influenced their own ability to take advantage of those policies. One of Oliver’s staff spoke of Oliver as a role model; he works 7:00-4:30, goes home to be with his school-age kids, and then picks up with work emails after the kids go to bed until 10 or 11 o’clock (still a long workday). Charlotte’s supervisor has also modeled a flexible work schedule with her son, which has made it easier for Charlotte to bring in her 6-year-old daughter on days when the schools are closed. A few participants observed that there are some supervisors who are not supportive, but none mentioned their own. Jim said that his former
supervisor would not allow anyone to take certain days of the month or year off for any reason, and “didn’t care at all” about the personal needs of his staff. Jim’s current director has a young child of his own and has “sort of changed the culture in some respects” to allow more flexibility for his staff.

It is something of a paradox for about one-third of participants who felt that although they work in what they consider to be a uniquely supportive environment, they are not necessarily able to take advantage of it. This group, who represent all position levels and categories in the study, talked about how the demands of their work are such that they cannot achieve a satisfactory work-life balance. Miriam, the president of the Professional Staff Association, remarked that the university “talks the talk” but it is hard for people “to do more with less” and also have a balanced life. Although Julie had been on campus less than two years, she was savvy about the realities:

I think as a policy the university supports work-life balance…you know it’s written in the policy that this is important to us…The reality is, though the reward system does not support work-life balance. So as a matter of policy, the rewards in place don’t encourage you to take too much advantage of what is offered. (Julie)

Julie mentioned that she does not have children, and so she can use the weekends to get her work done. She remarked that the “bar is continually being raised as universities become more entrepreneurial and expect their faculty to bring in more and more of their own salary and grant funding. You could do it (take time off), but you’re sinking yourself.” As the director of a self-supporting outreach program that is funded entirely by donations and user fees, Julie is especially sensitive to the entrepreneurial pressures that keep her from taking advantage of work-life benefits.

This one-third group of participants agreed that it is difficult to take time away from work, but unlike Julie, who viewed the rewards of her career to be based on her individual
success (more like faculty), other professional staff talked about the profound sense of responsibility they feel to those who depend on their labor. Whether it is students and parents paying tuition and registering for classes, or other university workers expecting their paycheck to arrive on time, the “work needs to get done” (Anne). Amelia best articulated the conflict that professional staff face:

And you know, there’s the difference between saying…we’re really interested in that work-life balance or in you maintaining your sanity by having an acceptable workload. And then when the rubber hits the road, the work’s gotta get done. And the cliché of you gotta do more with less, and we expect it, and that sense of responsibility, and I don’t think it’s unique to my position; I think that it’s, or to our particular middle-management group, it’s that sense of, Well, it’s gotta get done. (Amelia)

Luke also mentioned how “doing more with less” also means that one person may be asked to do the work that had been previously done by two people because vacant positions are not always filled. He thinks that the university has good intentions, but “people don't feel confident enough” to let some things go when there is more to be done. Lauren joked that supervisors would not reject a leave request, but “you’re gonna get beat up before you go, and you’re gonna get beat up when you get back.”

Largely, the professional staff I interviewed feel that the university keeps the psychological contract with their employees in terms of its work-life policies and programs. It is interesting that this finding is contrary to the experience of the university’s female faculty, who reported inconsistent family leave policies, lack of space in the university’s childcare facilities, and lack of acknowledgement for parenting responsibilities as major work-life issues, possibly suggesting that faculty face different pressures. There was a contradiction in that while they believe the university promotes a healthy work-life balance, most professional staff seem to be

27 From a Carver State 2010 work-life summary report
relatively uncritical of the university’s ability to control the workload of its employees. If the “work’s gotta get done,” they have no choice but to keep working. Jessica, an 18-year university employee who has worked on campus equity studies, observed that “doing more with less” is a campus-wide point of pride that makes her “crazy,” because it keeps people from recognizing how the university deprives them of resources while increasing demands. As the director of a large student success initiative, she also finds that it is difficult to “put those boundaries around the job.” Professional staff do take pride in their work, and struggle with finding a balance for themselves regardless of the expectations from the university.

How might the constant overload, however slight, contribute to burn out and dissatisfaction? Unfortunately, the university does not seem interested in knowing that information. According to PCSW documents, the university has been studying its work-life policies, and even began a search to hire for a new position to coordinate institutional efforts (more professional staff!). Last fall, the administration announced that the university would participate in a national study of work-life policies, but once again, the study will not include professional staff.28 As a workplace policy issue, the exclusive focus on faculty in this regard is shortsighted. It is these kinds of strategies that make professional staff feel invisible, and affect their morale. Additionally, organizations should not assume that this is an issue that only affects women; it is clear from this study that men in this group take an active role in their families and have taken advantage of the flexibility that the university allows to support their families or to be more involved in the community. A recent study by the Families and Work Institute found that fathers under 35 are taking more responsibility for child care and other family work than previous generations, and are less likely to believe in traditional gender roles for work and family (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2009). The study indicated that men’s views are changing toward more acceptance of gender equality, and although participant numbers are small and thus

28 A fact that is acknowledged in the PCSW meeting notes
generalizations are difficult to make, the current study seems to support that finding for professional staff. Given that so many men and women in this study have chosen to work at the university because they believe it supports a balanced life, it leads me to consider whether mid-level university administration is a more egalitarian place in the university.

**Gendered Profession?**

Universities have been critiqued as gendered organizations by scholars around the globe so many times that it could be considered a feminist axiom. That the university is unequal is hardly in dispute (though the meaning of the inequality and what should be done about it is most certainly a contested subject), but are things changing? There are indications that some areas of higher education have reached or are reaching gender parity, such as in community colleges, where women were at least half of full-time and part-time faculty, and almost one-third of presidents in 2006 (Bornstein, 2008; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Public research universities have much further to go, but is it possible that mid-level administrators represent something of a shift in the gender regime in higher education? Although there are inequities in this group, this may be a professional place in which women have gained ground. However, it is arguably still a gendered category, in which roles and expectations fit gendered expectations, but because of the diversity of positions, it also appeals to many men.

Women make up 56% of the professional staff at Carver State overall, and there is some stratification by sex. Women are more likely than men to be located in the academic colleges than in central administrative units, occupying 64% of professional staff positions in the colleges (see Table 9). Women are also stratified by college: their numbers are highest in Pharmacy, where the average salary for professional staff is also highest ($76,742); but numbers are also high in the two lowest paying colleges, Education ($47,799) and Health and Human Sciences ($53,954), two colleges that also have the highest percentages of female students. The next two colleges with the highest pay for professional staff—Engineering ($69,836) and Oceanic and Atmospheric Science
($64,276)—also have fewer women in these positions (51% and 38%, respectively), and in the case of Engineering, the fewest female students. Interestingly, only Business and Agriculture have both fewer than average numbers of women and lower than average salaries ($57,009 and $57,847, respectively) for professional staff. (See Table 5 in Chapter 4 for salary data.) While Business has one of the lowest ratios of female students (36%), Oceanic and Atmospheric Science is more equally distributed; however, the overall enrollment numbers are quite small (99). Agriculture also employs the most professional staff by far (115), mainly owing to its statewide extension services. Additionally, 87% of all professional academic advisors are women, confirming advisor Evelyn’s perception that she is “surrounded by women.”

Table 9

Distribution of Female Professional Staff and Students in Academic Colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colleges</th>
<th>% Women</th>
<th>% Women Advisors</th>
<th>% Women Students*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oceanic &amp; Atmos Science</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vet Med</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Human Sciences</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentage of women students includes graduate and undergraduate students, and does not include enrolled students for the whole university; some units are not represented.

The ratios of female professional staff in the colleges generally reflect disciplinary stratification by gender found among the faculty (Bellas, 1997; England, 2010) and among students (Dickson, 2010; Glazer-Raymo, 2008), although not entirely. For all but two of the colleges (Oceanic and Atmospheric Science and Business), women comprise the majority of
professional staff, although aside from Pharmacy and Veterinary Medicine (both graduate colleges only), the ratios are highest in colleges that have more female students and faculty (Education, Health & Human Sciences, and Liberal Arts). It appears that professional staff in the academic colleges are more likely to be in professional roles such as marketing, communications, and public relations; development and fundraising; and in programs for students such as academic advising, study abroad, and scholarships. Most of the incumbents hold a bachelor’s or master’s degree, but not a doctorate, and their degrees are not necessarily in a discipline represented by the college in which they work. This means that mid-level professional positions that support the college in a non-research capacity could be largely independent of the discipline, and thus gendered in a different way. But they are still gendered. Women are more likely than men to occupy these professional support roles than the faculty or leadership positions in the colleges.

That there are more women in professional staff positions and that women are more likely to work with each other than with men is only part of the story. What about the leadership? Carver State organizes its operations into four areas, overseen by four vice presidents: Vice President for Finance and Administration; Vice President for Research; Vice President for University Advancement; and Provost and Executive Vice President, who oversees Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, University Outreach, Information Services, the Graduate School, Honors College, and the academic colleges (see Figure 6 in Chapter 4). All of these vice presidents are male, as is the president. The only woman currently at this rank is in charge of the distributed campus. By my account, five of the 12 senior staff (vice presidents and all leadership ranks in the provost office) are women. Underneath these leaders are the highest ranking mid-level professional staff, the directors of programs. Overall, women are 43% of directors, accounting for 21 of 49 director positions (see Table 10). The gender distribution across the areas is not representative, however. There is only one female director of eight in Finance and Administration and only one of five in Research. Women are more likely to be found in Student Affairs (7 of 18),
and Academic Affairs (7 of 10). The provost’s office employs the largest number of directors, and is also 50-50 for gender equity in overall numbers.

Table 10

*Administrative Directors, by Area and Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Female Directors</th>
<th>Male Directors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Administration</td>
<td>Vice President (Male)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Vice President (Male) Executive Associate Vice President (Male) Associate Vice President (Male)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Advancement</td>
<td>Vice President (Male) Executive Vice President and Provost (Male)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>Vice Provost (Male) Assistant Provost (Female) Dean of Student Life (Female)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>Senior Vice Provost (Female) Associate Provost (Female)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs</td>
<td>Vice Provost (Female)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Services</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong> 17 (43%)</td>
<td>16 (57%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data obtained from university organization charts and online public directory.

England (2010) proposed that changes in the workforce that have been considered “revolutionary” have been limited to women’s integration into some men’s fields as the result of affirmative action and other anti-discrimination programs. This appears to be happening to some extent with the senior leadership overall, reflecting a national trend toward the diminishing of the gender gap at the top (Glazer-Raymo, 2008). However, senior positions Carver State are still gendered, with men running the show in the high profile and prestigious areas of research and finance, while women are more likely to be found in the less profitable areas of student and academic affairs. While the numbers are more equal for professional staff as a group, mid-level
positions appear to follow a similar gendered pattern. However, since many mid-level university positions are new to campus, we cannot say that women have integrated the field; rather, it seems that the positions have belonged to women from the start. Women’s numbers have grown in management and in the professions, showing less segregation than in the past, possibly indicating that these are easier to break into than the recalcitrant faculty (England, 2010). But as women have taken these positions at Carver State, they have been more likely to stick to the female intensive subfields. Additionally, the support staff is still heavily female, and there is no sign that men are banging on the doors to get those positions. These findings support England’s (2010) observation that desegregation of jobs only goes one way; women have moved into formerly male-dominated occupations, but men have not entered occupations that have been dominated by women.

Of course, numbers are not necessarily indicative of culture. Osterman (2008) found that although more middle managers in corporations are women (40-43% by 2006), it is still a male environment. But to what extent is this the case with university middle managers? Although some professional staff noted negative interactional experiences based on gender, women and men largely reported high satisfaction with their jobs and few gender issues. But while it may not feel like a male environment, in many respects, the work may still be gendered. Jessica noted that “making quite a broad generalization of a very diverse group, I think the percentage of women who are involved in it speaks to quite often the nature of the work is more in service to something.” This was reflected in how professional staff defined their labor. No one labeled their work in terms of gender, but women and men both emphasized relationship management as a primary role (see Chapter 5). In contrast to Wallace and Marchant’s (2011) findings in an Australian university, mid-level administrative work at Carver State does not seem to be marked by a particularly masculine management style, focusing more on the service to others than the pursuit of personal power, competition, paternalism, or authoritarianism (Collinson & Hearn,
Jessica also observed that “it’s much more collective and collaborative out here in the professional staff ranks, again making a generalization…I think that's why you see that tendency for professional staff to volunteer and do the service work of the university. It’s sort of part of our culture in a general way.” There were some indications from the interviews that the culture may not be entirely egalitarian, including participants’ experiences with “old school” men, Amelia’s strategies to get along with a predominately male Business Affairs leadership, and one female participant’s admission that given the choice, she would prefer to work only with women.

Both female and male professional staff talked about having to perform a great deal of relational or emotional labor (more in Chapter 5). Work that is based on caring is common for occupations in which women are typically found. This kind of work may attract more women, but is also reinforced by the expectations of others, and may be difficult to change (Acker, 1999). Although teaching, counseling, and student affairs work are often seen as fitting this description in higher education, the interviews with managers in this study broaden the field to include middle management work in External and Business Affairs as well. Professionals in all areas defined their work largely in terms of communication and relationship management, raising the question of whether a primary role of the middle manager is to manage relationships. Universities are people-dependent places, and even the increased use of information technology does not reduce the need for interaction; in fact, it might even increase the need for communication between people. Women who are in positions to manage college and university events, and thus, potential donors, were the most likely to talk about going the extra mile to make everyone feel included and cared for. The special touches that these women put on their work could be considered extensions of women’s expected contribution to society (Acker, 1999), and may ultimately benefit the university, whether or not it is acknowledged (Carlson & Crawford, 2011). In contrast to Fletcher (1999), relational work is not something that professional staff at Carver State necessarily choose to do, but it is something they must do to insure the smooth operation of
the university. As a specifically gendered task, relational work in this study is difficult to disentangle from what seem to be the normal expectations of the managerial role.

Is mid-level administration a good place for women? It depends. Szekeres (2004) observed that women make up the majority of general staff in Australian universities, but this is a group that is invisible to both researchers and their own administration. This study seems to support her finding to some extent. Professional staff seem to be routinely ignored in campus workplace studies, are overlooked in negotiations for salary increases, and are often not included in strategic decision making while being expected to carry out the strategies. And although participants generally expressed satisfaction with their work, there still exists an invisible, underlying expectation of the ideal worker: always available to work or be on call although allowed a flexible schedule, always willing to “do more with less,” and not talk of organizing. Ideal workers also do not allow their private lives into the workplace, have health problems, or complain (Acker, 1990). It is also important to note that fewer women than men in the study reported having children. Looking closer at the data, of the 11 directors that I interviewed, none of the four women reported having children, whereas six of the seven men did (the seventh was unknown). Further down, of the six assistant directors interviewed, one of the two women had children, and two of the four men did (one was unknown). This is a finding that deserves further investigation. Is it more difficult for women with children to succeed in middle management, or do fewer women make it that far? We know that women are less likely to participate in the workforce if they have children under 18 (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010), suggesting that it is still women who are more likely to make the tradeoff for childrearing. Women with more education have higher rates of employment (80% for college graduates), suggesting that more educated women may not have the same opportunity costs for childrearing as women with less education (England, 2010). Even so, the findings from this study that female
professional staff are less likely to have children may indicate a greater gender effect than is immediately apparent.

**Conclusion**

Women and men both gave positive accounts of their experiences in the university, but that does not mean that the university does not trade on gender. There are positive signs that the institution has been moving toward gender equity in its administrative and professional staff, but it is not there yet. The professional staff category is not a bad place to be; participants expressed fewer problems with workplace harassment and discrimination than have similar employees in other workplaces, and may be better off than faculty in this regard—an issue that this study does not address. Finch (2003) noted that faculty are controlled through both organizational structures and disciplinary power through the sanctioning of research, thus reproducing gender inequalities that go beyond the university as an organization. Professional staff do not face the same kind of professional control, and are rather subject to the rules and culture of the university. This may be a good thing, depending on the university. Tierney (1988) wrote, “An organization’s culture is reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it” (p. 3). This suggests that universities could make significant progress toward gender equity in areas for which it has more control. Of course, as Acker (1990) observed, the organization cannot be held ultimately responsible for the ways in which the broader culture seeps in; however, it begs the question of how things might look depending who it is who is involved in creating the culture.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Mid-level administrators and professionals constitute a large and growing group on university campuses. Although universities have been hiring these professionals faster than any other employment group, they seem to be easy to ignore in institutional policy making as well as in the scholarly literature. Often assumed to be part of administrative bloat, professional staff have been implicated in the casualization of faculty labor and in rising tuition. As a diverse category that has not received much empirical attention, their actual contributions to the university have not been well understood. And as a major employment area for women, learning about this group is important to understanding the status of gender equity in universities. This study set out to learn about the roles mid-level professional staff play and how their work supports the university, as well as how these positions contribute to universities as gendered organizations. This study takes the approach that understanding workers and their work is imperative to understanding the university as an organization, and that it is important to learn about the work of mid-level professional staff from their own perspective rather than focusing solely on issues of administrative cost. This study has made visible a group that has been previously overlooked in the literature. The participants have made an important contribution to our collective knowledge about how universities are using professional labor to further strategic goals.
Summary of Major Findings

Mid-level Professionals in the University

What are the primary roles and activities of administrative-professional staff, and how do they define their labor in the context of the university? Mid-level professional staff perform a wide range of roles that support the educational and operational needs of the university. They support students directly through advising, mentoring, and recruiting, and indirectly by creating and maintaining financial systems as well as classroom, lab, and living facilities. Professional staff support faculty in a “matrix mode of production” (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002) through the management of grants and contracts, fundraising, and legislative advocacy on behalf of research and extension. They promote faculty research through feature publications and media training, which furthers the land-grant mission to educate the state as well as increases organizational capacity for fundraising. They are the operational backbone of the university, maintaining the physical, financial, and operational infrastructures that keep the university running. Professional staff define their labor in terms of supporting the university’s mission of teaching, research, and outreach and engagement, and many are particularly proud to work for a land-grant institution. Regardless of their particular role, professional staff spend a great amount of time and energy managing relationships with coworkers, support staff, faculty, alumni, donors, and external constituents. They perform the “glue work” that is essential to daily institutional functioning but is often invisible. And while many professional staff are in traditional jobs, their roles have changed as the university has changed. Their work has been shaped by new technologies, new laws and changing federal regulations, increased pressures for accountability from the state, reduced resources, and more students on campus. They are responsible for managing institutional change on the ground.

As the university pursues a market logic in terms of student enrollment, private donors, and the commodification of research into its revenue stream, professional staff are increasingly
being used to further the university’s strategic goals. A new kind of professional is being brought in to professionalize the campus. Marketing and communications staff are selling the university as a product, using corporate marketing strategies and accountability metrics to standardize university communications and public relations, with the ultimate intent to position the university to become more competitive in various markets. And not only are professionals brought in from outside the university, but the work of existing staff is being shaped to help the university reposition itself. Professional staff are expected to balance the managerial discourse of branding and best practices with their belief in the university as an agent of the public good. For the most part, professional staff do not see the conflict between these institutional logics (Tuchman, 2009), and manage the tensions through their own rationalizations. They see their work as supporting and extending the educational mission of the university, and even celebrating its vast accomplishments while at the same time being unaware of the ways in which the institution’s shift to a market model is fundamentally changing the university that that they love.

As in Szekeres’ (2006) study of administrative staff, participants in this study have all experienced increased expectations, reduced resources, and an increased workload. The university’s expectation that they “do more with less” has become a mantra that is wearing on professional staff. It is becoming increasingly stressful to do their jobs as budgets are cut and vacancies are not always filled. Professional staff are also often frustrated with the limited career options and opportunities for advancement, fewer salary increases, and a general sense of job insecurity. They are expected to carry out the strategies of the administration but have little influence over strategic decisions. While this sense of uncertainty hangs over their work, participants maintain a relatively positive attitude and are enthusiastic about the direction the university is going. They take pride in their work and mediate the institution’s messages of economic uncertainty and change through managing the emotions of support staff and students, reassuring them that all will be fine.
Managerial or Shared Space Professionals?

What kinds of relationships are formed between administrative-professional staff and faculty in terms of the co-production of knowledge? Is their work central to the academic and scholarly functioning of today’s university? Rhoades (2007) argued that learning about the work of managerial professionals is crucial to furthering our understanding of academic organizations. He was mainly concerned with how managerial professionals interact with faculty in the basic production processes of higher education, believing that they play an important role in the unbundling of faculty labor. McInnis (1998) also expressed concern that nonacademic staff are gaining power in university management, and that faculty are losing autonomy to the administration. This study’s response to these assertions is multi-layered. While few of the professional staff interviewed for this study have direct interaction with faculty or students, most participants defined their labor in terms of supporting the teaching, research, and outreach aims of the university. In this regard, I have argued that professional staff support faculty through a “matrix mode of production” (Rhoades & Sporn, 2002), in which their activities extend faculty work. The expertise that professional staff bring to the university has the potential to expand the boundaries of the university and promote faculty discoveries and innovations to the outside world. These staff are being hired for specialized knowledge and skills that faculty do not necessarily have to engage in activities and create products to compete in various markets. However, while it is not the agenda of professional staff to usurp the role of faculty, they may ultimately do so as their work serves the agenda of the senior administration, the governing board, and donors. Even as they see themselves contributing to the university mission, mid-level staff lack the autonomy that has typically defined professional labor. They may tell the stories about intriguing scientific discoveries, but it is the leadership who determines which stories they write.
An important result of this study is that it has begun to disaggregate and define “the administration.” Mid-level administrators and professionals are responsible for managing university operations and furthering the university’s goals, but with a few exceptions, they have little influence over the strategic direction of the university or its policies. Tensions emerge when professional staff are responsible for compelling faculty to comply with university rules or other regulations, and thus, professional staff may be implicated in the “dark side” administration; they must deal with faculty and staff resistance that is more appropriately directed at those who make the policy rather than those who must enforce it. It is important to note that while the study’s participants expressed varying levels of support or critique of the senior leadership, for the most part they were uncritical of their own position in relation to the administrative structure. Most identified with their college, administrative unit, or immediate peers. Their work supports a powerful administration, and while they, as individuals, may or may not identify with the leadership, they are essentially pillars in that structure.

Is work in the university moving towards shared spaces between the administration and the faculty? While I found little evidence that faculty and staff are sharing space between the academic and administrative realms, it does appear that new forms of professional activity are taking place. Professional staff are taking on roles that support the university’s strategic initiatives and are responding to the changing needs of the campus. This shared space is not positioned between the administration and the faculty, as Whitchurch proposed, but appears to be a new space altogether in which professional staff are actively expanding the boundaries of the university. The extent to which the university is engineering this space or the professionals are acting upon existing boundaries to create this space is unclear. So to understand the roles that this expanding group of professional staff are taking, it is important to understand what goals universities are actually pursuing. While the activities that professional staff are engaged in may be exciting for those who are involved, it is important to recognize that the university’s efforts to
restructure its staff are part of a bigger picture that is changing the nature of the university in ways that may not align with the reasons that professional staff came to work at the university.

Why So Many Women in Mid-Level Positions?

To what extent are administrative-professional positions gendered? Nationally, women make up over 60 percent of these positions, and the situation is similar at the university where this study was done. Although women are almost half of the campus directors, there is some stratification. Women are disproportionately located in the academic colleges, being more likely to perform student-oriented roles such advising and student affairs, as well as taking on college roles in communications and public relations. Women are also more likely to be in communications and event planning roles in the central administration rather than in Business Affairs. Overall, they reported fewer negative experiences than they understood to be true for female faculty and senior administration, and with the exception of a couple men, they were generally supportive of institutional gender equity initiatives and policies. While this group may seem to be less segregated by gender than other groups on campus, there are indications that it is not independent of the gendered university. A category in which workers have little professional autonomy, are expected to serve the agenda of others, and are responsible for managing the relational aspects of that agenda seems to support the notion that it is a feminized area of the university. And even as women take on leadership roles within this area, their careers in the university are limited. Women are making important and valuable contributions to the university, but these positions typically do not lead to the senior leadership. This may be acceptable to individuals, but it still does not solve systematic gender inequality across the university.

Policy Implications

The work of universities is changing, and so are the staffing patterns. In the introduction, I stated that university staffing is a policy issue. I asked, how should we meet the changing needs and demands of the constituencies we serve while managing the institutional contexts in which
we work? How should we think about these changes and the effects on professional and managerial structures and their labor? Universities are changing, and the directions they are taking have changed the nature of both academic and administrative labor. There is no indication that universities will return to a faculty dominant model; universities are employing more specialized professional staff to further their strategic goals as well as to handle the increasing requirements from the state and federal governments, student financial aid, grants and contracts, and many other administrative areas (Birnbaum, 1988; Gumport, 1997). To quote Terry W. Hartle, senior vice president for government and public affairs at the American Council on Education: “You can't run a first-class or even second-class university without librarians, academic support staff, and IT-support staff. Administrators aren't just people pushing papers and cutting the grass” (Brainard et al., 2009). The major policy question for higher education is, do we need mid-level administrators? The answer depends on what we determine to be the purposes of the university, and what kind of university we want to have.

On an institutional policy level, it is imperative that universities attend to the needs of their professional staff. Professional staff need opportunities for professional development and career advancement opportunities to progress in their careers, fill gaps in their knowledge or skills, and to improve their ability to deal with specific problems. They also need support to be able to take on new responsibilities and use new technologies that the institution expects them to use. Management training could prepare interested professional staff for leadership positions that do exist. This may be especially important for women, who often do not have access to opportunities to learn about budgeting and supervision in the positions they are typically located. Universities should attend to issues that affect morale and turnover. Institutions that employ staff on annual contracts should consider the meaning of those contracts and how they affect their staff morale. Longer contracts and salary increases would contribute to positive morale by letting the employee know she/he feels valued by the institution. This study indicated that supervisors of
professional staff are extremely important to workplace happiness. Supportive supervisors with
effective management skills can make a great deal of difference; therefore, it is essential for
supervisors to be well chosen and well trained, and have access to some discretionary resources to
be able to encourage the professional development of their staff.

Finally, universities need to include their mid-level administrative-professional staff in
climate studies and initiatives to promote gender equity. It is not only the senior administrative
ranks and the faculty that are important to understanding the gendered organization, but the lower
ranks as well. If workloads are intensifying, how does it affect women and men differently? Are
flextime policies working, and for whom? Restructuring efforts also need to be investigated for
disproportionate effects on women and men. In what ways can these events be turned into
opportunities for professional growth and reorganization to promote gender equity? If universities
are indeed creating new professional spaces, we must consider the ways in which these spaces are
shaped by gender, and how positions are rewarded in different ways; i.e. what kinds of activity
are recognized and rewarded and what activities are essential but invisible? Collaborative efforts
are the hallmark of the shared space, but as Eveline (2004) noted, “collaboration does not
privilege the individual, and thus, it is invisible.

**Positionality, Methodology, and Directions for Future Research**

Learning to do field-based research in the social sciences is part calculated method, part
intuition, and part luck. From conception to conclusion, this study has been a continuous process
of making decisions: who to study, which data to use, how to focus the interpretation, and what to
leave out. These decisions ultimately determined which part of the larger picture was revealed.
No researcher has access to all perspectives, so recognizing the opportunities and limitations of
the research is imperative to be able to make meaning of the findings. Because I have worked at
several public research universities and have been a student of higher education for many years, I
felt comfortable in the environment of the university; however, I tried to be vigilant about how
my own assumptions and experiences were shaping the research process. The questions I asked were based largely on the literature and conceptual frameworks, but also reflected issues and concerns that I have experienced—specifically, the issues about governance, career advancement, and stratification by gender. Above all, I have been sensitive to the ways in which mid-level administrators and professionals are portrayed in the literature and in the industry press: as needless administrative bloat, as self-aggrandizing pseudo-professionals, and as agents of corporatization. In a dozen years of working in universities, this was not my experience, and I wanted to make a space in which these workers could represent themselves.

The recognition of my positionality from the outset was essential to the methodology, and it also allowed me to recognize my own ambivalence in the process of making sense of the findings. As a feminist researcher, I struggled with how to honor the participants as individuals while making interpretations about the contributions of mid-level university professionals, and about public universities more broadly. I needed to understand the participants in their micro-contexts as well as step back to understand their labor on a macro level. It was awkward to make the transition from interviewer/insider to researcher/writer, a position of power that challenged my comfort level. (See Note on feminist methodological issues in interpretation and analysis in Chapter 3 regarding power and interpretation.) While feminist research is driven by a desire for equality and improvement, this study begged the question, *Equality for whom?* As a mid-level administrator and a woman, I am driven by a desire to improve the professional opportunities and gender equity for this group of workers. I want to support the growth of professional opportunities for women, as well as paths to professional employment that also make room for healthy personal and family lives. On the other hand, I recognize that universities are increasing the numbers of non-faculty professional positions to pursue strategic goals that ultimately may be at the expense of a vibrant full-time faculty as well as students, whose increasing tuition dollars pay for more than the direct expense of their education. My ambivalence results from seeing the
importance of the work to the workers and to the institution, while also asking what universities should be doing and who should be doing it. While some may view this ambivalence as a limit to objectivity, I see it as a heightened awareness of the partial nature of research, in which we can never be fully objective or possess the full truth.

This study makes an important contribution to our collective understanding about mid-level administrators and professionals in public research universities, but there is much that still needs to be learned. It is important to acknowledge that the participant sample targeted certain areas of the university: mid-level professionals in academic colleges, business services and operations, and external affairs. I did not interview supervisors, senior administrators, faculty, or support staff, and thus was not able to contribute their perspectives to the analysis. An ethnographic approach that includes these individuals as well as participant observation would have allowed me to create a fuller picture of what is happening. Participant observation also would have supported a further investigation into the institution’s culture in regard to gender.

Another limitation was the availability of data. Although the research was done at a public institution and much of the data were publicly available, there were limits to the kinds of information I could get and how easily. For instance, there were multiple barriers to obtaining data about gender and salaries. The pursuit was a veritable maze with many dead ends.

Future scholarship should focus on more targeted groups in the university. For instance, how are marketing professionals being used to support and create the institution’s strategic goals? How does the branding strategy play out for the institution and within the structure; does it open doors for the university or limit creativity and entrepreneurialism? To what extent does this activity bring in funds to support research and instruction, and is it a lucrative investment for the university? Additionally, the study could be extended to areas such as athletics, alumni affairs, development, non-faculty research or extension staff, or technology transfer. Focusing on these areas could reveal different levels of resources and different orientations to external markets. As a
large scale policy question, how do we learn whether university spending on mid-level professionals is an investment or a liability? Given that institutional data on administrative budgets are difficult to parse, and outcomes are generally not measured, tools and strategies to answer this question need to be developed.
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Appendix A

Recruitment Materials

Dear «First» «Last»:

My name is Stephanie Hazel, and I am a doctoral student in Higher Education at the University of Georgia. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study entitled, “Administrative Professionals in an American Research University.” The purpose of this study is to learn about the roles and activities of administrative and professional staff in today’s universities. I am interested in the work that you do, how your work supports the university, and the professional relationships and networks that you have formed.

Your participation will involve being interviewed about your work and professional experiences. Your participation is voluntary, and there are no expected risks to your involvement. I will ask your permission to record the interview. You may choose not to be recorded and still participate.

I will be on campus until the end of February, and I would like to schedule an hour to meet with you during that time. I understand that your responsibilities can keep you busy, so I want you to know how much I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me.

If you agree to participate, please respond to this email or call me at (720) 206-5497, to set up a time and place to meet. You can also go straight to the online scheduling system to make an appointment: www.professionalfaculty.clickbook.net. Select one of the meeting options to see available times, and under “Comments and Special Requirements,” please enter the place where you would like to meet.

I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Hazel
PhD Candidate
Institute of Higher Education
The University of Georgia
Athens, GA  30602
Cell Phone: (720) 206-5497
Email: hazels@uga.edu

The University of Georgia Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved this study.
Administrative Professionals in an American Research University: 
Gender, Expertise, and Changing Patterns of Professional Labor

Purpose of the Study
Administrative and non-faculty professionals comprise the largest and fastest growing employee group on today’s university campuses, accounting for as many as half of all university employees. Administrative and professional staff are more highly educated, and are doing more project-based and boundary-spanning work than ever before, thus upsetting former assumptions about the bureaucratic and functional nature of their work. The rapid growth of these professionals and the changing nature of their work necessitate a better understanding of their place in the institution, and how their contributions are meeting the needs of the university. This study proposes to identify areas of administrative growth and activity in an American research university, to understand reward systems and stratification in the institutional administrative structure, and to explore how these systems are reproducing or subverting existing patterns of gender inequality.

Research Questions
1. What are the primary roles and activities of administrative/professional staff in the present-day American university?
2. To what extent have administrative/professional offices and positions developed in gendered ways?

Methods and Data
This study employs a case study design using one research university as a bounded site. Multiple forms of data will be collected to address the research questions. Descriptive data about the institution and its staffing patterns since 1998 will provide context and history for the development of administrative/professional units and staff positions. Documents such as position descriptions, salary reports, climate surveys, CUPA-HR data, and employment policies will provide valuable information.

Administrative and professional staff in three areas within the institution will be targeted for interviews. These areas are chosen to represent administrative/professional staff in distinctive institutional roles and mission areas. Face-to-face interviews will be conducted with 12-15 Administrative/Professional Staff in each of the selected areas. Senior administrative staff may be asked to participate in brief interviews about the activities of their offices and staff. Questions will focus on the participants’ current roles and activities, knowledge and skill bases, key networks, areas of influence, crossover areas, decision areas, opportunities and barriers to success, and perceived opportunities for advancement.

When Will the Study Take Place?
I will be on the campus from February 7 through March 15 to conduct interviews and meet with university administrators. Follow-up interviews will be conducted as needed throughout the remainder of the quarter.

Approvals
The approval for this research study has been granted by my faculty dissertation committee in the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia and the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board. This research is funded in part by a Zell and Shirley Miller Fellowship from the University of Georgia.
Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

I agree to take part in a research study titled, “Administrative Professionals in an American Research University,” which is being conducted by Stephanie Hazel from the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia (contact # 720.206.5497), under the direction of Dr. Sheila Slaughter from the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia (contact # 706.542.0571). My participation is voluntary; I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of this study is to learn about the roles and activities of administrative and professional staff in universities. I am interested in the work that you do, how your work supports the university, and the professional relationships and networks that you have formed. You will not benefit directly from your participation in this research. However, you may benefit from the research findings in terms of the institution’s informed managerial or policy decision-making.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will participate in a semi-structured interview for a one-hour session in a time and place that we agree upon. You will be asked a number of questions about your work and professional experiences. If we agree that we need to continue the conversation, we may choose to meet for one more session. You may also be contacted by phone for clarification or follow-up questions. I will ask your permission to record your interview. You may choose not to be recorded and still participate.

The findings from this project will provide information about a group of professionals on research university campuses whose work is not well understood in the scholarly literature, or by higher education decision makers. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. There are no expected risks to your involvement.

You will have the opportunity to see the transcription of the interview(s) before any written report is done. The recordings will be stored on the researcher’s personal computer with access only by the researcher and the supervising professor. The recordings are for researcher use only, and will be destroyed after the transcriptions are completed.

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or stop at any time. Your name, identifying information, and everything you say will be kept confidential; findings from the interviews will be presented in summary form. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will never be used. Your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published form.
The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at 720.206.5497.

My signature below indicates that the researcher has answered all of my questions to my satisfaction, and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Stephanie Hazel  
Name of Researcher  Signature  Date  
Telephone: (720) 206-5497  Email: hazels@uga.edu

Name of Participant  Signature  Date

Please sign both copies. Keep one and return one to the researcher.
## Appendix C

### Study Participants

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<td>M</td>
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<tr>
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Appendix D

Research Questions, Conceptual Frame, Data, and Interview Questions

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<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Conceptual Frame</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
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</table>
| 1. What are the primary roles and activities of administrative/professional staff in the present-day American university? | Professional Spaces | Interviews CUPA data | 1. Tell me about your job (what do you do in a typical week?).  
2. What kinds of challenges do you face in your work?  
3. How would you rate the resources, facilities, or personnel you need to support your work?  
4. How influential are you in helping to shape what happens: At the departmental or unit level? At the institutional level?  
5. How has the work changed since you’ve been in your position/in this unit? Do you feel comfortable with these changes, or have you faced challenges in this respect?  
6. In what directions would you like to see your work go? What is your vision for your work? |
| a. What do they do, and how do they define their labor in the context of the university? | Professional Spaces | Interviews | 1. Tell me about your job (what do you do in a typical week?).  
2. What kinds of challenges do you face in your work?  
3. How would you rate the resources, facilities, or personnel you need to support your work?  
4. How influential are you in helping to shape what happens: At the departmental or unit level? At the institutional level?  
5. How has the work changed since you’ve been in your position/in this unit? Do you feel comfortable with these changes, or have you faced challenges in this respect?  
6. In what directions would you like to see your work go? What is your vision for your work? |
| b. How do administrative/professional staff define their careers in the context of the research university? | Professional Spaces | Interviews | 1. How would you situate your work in relation to the mission and goals of the university?  
2. What do you see as common issues and concerns for professional staff?  
3. Given your experience and credentials, where would you go/what kind of work would you do if you did not work here? |
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<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Conceptual Frame</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| c. Who comprises their main professional networks?                                | Professional Spaces | Interviews | 1. Who do you work with on a daily basis?  
2. Are there common threads connecting professional staff on this campus, or are they distinct groups?  
3. What professional organizations do you belong to?  
4. Do you attend conferences or professional meetings? If yes, which ones? Who pays? |
| d. What kinds of relationships are formed between administrative/professional staff and faculty in terms of the co-production of knowledge? Is their work central to the academic and scholarly functioning of today’s university? | Professional Spaces | Interviews | 1. Do you or have you ever worked with faculty members in your daily work, or on any projects? (If so, discuss.) |
| 2. To what extent are administrative/professional positions gendered?              | Gendered Organizations | Interviews | Institutional data                                                                                                                                 |
| a. Where are women located in the institutional administrative structure compared to men? | Gendered Organizations | Institutional data |                                                                                                                                                     |
| b. How do administrative/professional staff think about gender in the research university? | Gendered Organizations | Interviews | 1. What do you perceive as differences in experiences for men and women in professional staff positions on this campus? Does gender matter? |
| c. What are women and men’s perceptions of their access to professional development opportunities, or adoption of these opportunities in their career paths? | Gendered Organizations | Interviews | 1. To what extent does the institution support personal and family life (work/life balance)?  
2. How likely is it that you will leave the university in the next five years? In thinking about leaving or staying at this institution, what are your main considerations? |
Appendix E

Interview Guide

Participant Interviews
Participants will meet with the interviewer for one 60-minute interview. Participants may be contacted for brief follow-up conversations to reflect on the meaning of the experience, clarify issues or questions, or add information.

Consent Process
The interviewer will explain the interview process and answer questions about the research study. The interviewer will request verbal permission to record the conversation. Participants will sign two copies of the consent form.

Common Questions
1. What academic degrees have you earned?
2. Are you currently working toward a degree or other form of certification?
3. How many years have you been employed in higher education?
4. How many years have you been employed in professional work outside of higher education?
5. Do you currently work full-time or part-time? Do you currently hold other paid positions outside this institution?
6. How many years have you been employed at this university?

Participant-Specific Questions
These questions are used as a guide to the interviews. Participants will be asked one or two main questions in each area, and the subsequent questions will be guided by their responses. Follow up responses with requests for specific examples and scenarios. How did it make them feel, how did they react?

Your Work
1. Tell me about your job (what do you do in a typical week/year?).
   a. How did you get involved in this work? What prepared you for this job?
2. Who do you work with on a daily basis? Talk about your working relationships.
   a. Who do you see as your peer group on campus?
3. How would you situate your work in relation to the mission and goals of the university?
4. What kinds of challenges do you face in your work?
5. What professional organizations do you belong to?
6. Where do you get information to inform your work: conferences, trainings, workshops, etc.?
7. How would you rate the resources, facilities, or personnel you need to support your work?
8. How influential are you in helping to shape decision-making: At the departmental or unit level? At the institutional level? (How much discretion/autonomy do you have?) Do you or
have you ever worked with faculty members in your daily work, or on any projects? (If so, discuss.)

a. Do you ever have conflicts (of interest or boundaries) with faculty or other staff? How do you build trust with other professionals on campus?

9. To what extent does the institution support family life (work/personal balance)?

10. How has the work changed since you’ve been in your position/in this unit? Do you feel comfortable with these changes, or have you faced challenges in this respect?

a. How do the initiatives from the institution’s Strategic Plan affect your work?

11. In what directions would you like to see your work go/What is your vision for your work?

12. What do you think you’ll need to do to move forward in your career at this institution?

13. Where would you go/what kind of work would you do if you did not work here?

14. Where do you expect to be in five years? In thinking about leaving or staying at this institution, what are your main considerations?

**Professional/Administrative Staff**

1. Are there common threads connecting Professional/Administrative Staff on this campus, or are they distinct groups?

   a. What connections do you have with other professionals who do the kind of work you do? Is it important for you to network with them? In what ways are you encouraged or discouraged from networking with other professionals?

2. What do you see as common issues and concerns for Administrative/Professional Staff?

3. What do you perceive as differences in experiences for men and women in Professional Staff positions on this campus? Does gender matter?