

Case Study Analysis of College Union Employment as a Source of Student Learning
and Self-Efficacy Development

by

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ABSTRACT

College union professionals seek to create environments which support community building and student engagement. College unions foster student engagement through the deliberate use of programs and services, which enhance the overall student experience. Student employment is an out-of-class experience that is a necessity for most college students. College union professionals use the student employment experience as a way to further develop student engagement, involvement, and community building.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how student engagement and student self-efficacy is impacted by student employment within the college union. An intrinsic case study research design, conducted through the lens of naturalistic inquiry, was used to address the four research questions that explored the experiences of six former student employees from the college union.

Data collection for the study was conducted through the semi-structured interviews, observations, researcher's journal and field notes, and document review. The constant comparative method of data analysis was used to analyze the data. In addition, a peer review with a college union colleague was conducted.

The results of data analysis produced the following emergent themes: 1) the college union is the community center of the university; 2) student employment in the college union is an out-of-class learning experience; 3) student employment in the college union encourages the development of the student; and 4) student employment in the college union supports self-efficacy development. Within these main themes, several sub-themes also emerged.

The findings of this study indicate that student employment at the *college union* made a difference in the lives of the participants. They felt engaged in their environment, learned a myriad of different skills and competencies, felt that they were an important part of the *college union* department, and believed in their abilities to set and achieve goals. Building a student employee program with a college union that connects the experience to the learning outcomes takes time. College union professionals need to make sure they are focusing attention on what is being learned and how the learning is occurring. The results of this study indicated that student employment in the college union is a source of student learning and self-efficacy development, evidenced through the experiences of the study participants.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1900's, college unions were the place on campus where those who were considered *outsiders* could begin to find their place in collegiate life (Thelin, 2004). At the time, college campuses were characterized by a culture of segregation between the working class commuter students and the elite upper middle class students who could afford to live in exclusive college housing and who were members of secret societies. During this time, the college union movement grew nationwide. The support of the college union came from both the university officials who hoped to lessen the influence of private residential cliques and the excluded students who found the union as a community center (Thelin, 2004). College unions provided access and equity to all students regardless of their socioeconomic standing or background (Thelin, 2004). Today in higher education, "College unions are in a position to be a central point where institutions can promote inclusion and be a welcoming place for numerous student populations" (Banks, Hammond, & Hernandez, 2014, p. 13).

Porter Butts, Director of the Wisconsin Union, in his 1929-1930 Wisconsin Union annual report, stated that college unions have four basic objectives: (1) to make the university a more human place (this is the beginning of referring to the union as the living room of the campus); (2) to give a common space where students and faculty could interact and develop relationships outside of the classroom; (3) to promote leisure activities and enrichment that would enhance the college experience; and (4) to give the students an opportunity to manage their own affairs and an opportunity to reduce the cost of living (Butts, 1971; Butts et al., 2012). Butt's

objectives are still considered the foundation of the college union and activities' profession today (Butts et al., 2012). College unions are still seen as a common ground, where students from all backgrounds are drawn together in a communal experience to interact and to learn from one another and the experience of the student union (Brattain, 1981; Butts et al., 2012). In addition, unions play a role in student learning and personal development (Kuh, 2009).

Cheng (2004) observed that a student's out-of class involvement can have a positive effect on his or her ability to develop community. The college union is a place where out-of-class educational activities, often referred to as the co-curricular, such as volunteerism, student government, and a campus job take place (Kuh, 2009). Butts et al. (2012) ties this altogether by asserting that the principles of student development, student learning, and community building are tenants of the college union. This belief is widely held by college union professionals who perceive that education is not confined to the classroom or laboratory (Butts et al., 2012).

Today, the college union strives to be a campus community builder (ACUI, 2014; Butts et al., 2012). The facilities come in many shapes, forms, and sizes. To some it is a grand facility, while to others it is an organization without walls (Butts et al., 2012). Oftentimes, the campus views the college union as a recruitment tool, which gives the prospective student and his or her parents a snapshot of campus life (Lewis, 2003). One of the reasons the college union is a good representation of campus life is that it is viewed as a *third place* on the university campus. Ray Oldenburg (1999) is an urban sociologist who first used the term *third place* to designate a special place where one would gather outside the familiar confines of

home and work, one's first and second place, respectively. The college union, as a community builder, follows along the same lines as Oldenburg's (1999) *third place* concept, which puts a premium on deliberate and purposeful use of the college union facility as it creates a sense of involvement, belonging, and connection.

When discussing the importance of co-curricular activities in higher education such as leadership positions and student employment, Collins and Roberts (2012) state that, "Research demonstrates that students who have involvement experience can improve skills such as interpersonal communication, leadership abilities, oral communication, teamwork, data analysis, problem solving, and cognitive development" (p. 56). Astin (1999) defines student involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518). Involvement of the student, on his or her college campus, is important in helping the student in establishing a connection with, and the subsequent engagement to, the higher education setting (Perozzi, 2009).

Student engagement has been associated with student success. Kuh (2009) defines student engagement as the students' willingness to devote time and energy to activities that directly relate to the learning process. On-campus employment and volunteer leadership positions are activities that can enhance student engagement (Astin, 1999; Perozzi, 2009). The activities and opportunities, which students are afforded through the college union employment program are meant to help the student transition from a dependence on parents, to his or her own self-reliance. While college union programs vary from one to the next, it is widely understood that it is important to provide students informal and formal activities, student employment,

exposure to diverse populations, and interactions with administrators, faculty, and staff (Butts et al., 2012; Kuh, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The college union relies extensively on a part-time student workforce to carry out the tasks of operating the facility, providing services, and developing programs (Brattain, 1981; Butts et al., 2012; Perozzi, 2009). The union is a place where student leadership is cultivated through student employment and volunteer opportunities (Butts et al., 2012). The most successful college union programs have a commitment to holistic student development through *real world* work experiences, which benefit both the student employee's learning and college union operational productivity (Perozzi, 2009). College unions utilize student employees as both a way to manage the need for additional human resource workforce and to better manage fiscal resources (Butts et al., 2012). College unions seek to engage student employees in a learning environment that allows them to develop skills and experiences, which will assist them after college (Butts et al., 2012; CAS 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Perozzi, 2009). It is not uncommon for the college union personnel to create orientations and training specific to the student positions, as well as develop a system for ongoing policy and procedural updates. In many cases, the student staff is given an opportunity to assume leadership or supervisory roles within the college union, as well as the responsibilities of representing the college union in patron interactions and service delivery (Brattain, 1981; CAS 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Perozzi, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Student employment in the college union can be an important part of a student's out-of-class learning experiences (Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971; Butts et al.,

2012; Kuh, 1995; Perozzi, 2009). Kuh (2008) perceives that it is important to provide evidence linking desired learning outcomes with out-of-class experiences such as student employment. The college union is an educational environment where student employees experience intentional learning through their work experiences (Lane & Perozzi, 2014).

The primary problem this study sought to address was that the university does not necessarily recognize that the college union supports the university's educational mission. The researcher perceives that college union accomplishes this by being a learning community where students gain valuable skills, competencies and achieve learning outcomes through their student employment experience. More often than not the college union is viewed as a facility to be used for recruitment, campus tours, meetings and a place to grab lunch. This study strove to add credence to the researcher's conviction that the college union supports learning through out-of-class experiences such as student employment. The underlining concern is that higher education administrators do not always recognize, understand or are even aware of the student learning and self-efficacy development work being done in the college union. This lack of awareness can have a negative effect on funding and resource distribution for the college union (Yakaboski & De Sawal, 2014). Since the college union building is often used for recruitment purposes and to host campus events, there is a tendency to view the college union as just an impressive facility without fully understanding how the college union can affect the out-of-class learning environment for students, as well as support the university's mission (Lewis, 2003; Rouzer, De Sawal, & Yakabowski, 2014). A secondary concern is that there is a lack of available

research pertaining to the role of student employment in the college union. This study will add to the available higher education literature on the college union.

College unions often serve the college campus community seven days a week and 16 hours a day (Butts et al., 2012). While there is not a specific standard nationally or internationally for college unions, it is generally understood that they play a role in the out-of-class experience time of students at an institution (Butts et al., 2012). Kuh, Douglas, Lund, and Ramin-Gyurnek (1994) point out that certain aspects of an institution's out-of-class environment can influence the attainment of educational goals, either directly or indirectly. Kuh et al. (1994) identify that, "The largest discretionary block of time for undergraduate students is outside of the classroom, an area that receives little systematic attention but which has considerable potential for increasing learning" (p. iii). There is a common theme in higher education literature, which addresses the importance of the out-of-class experience on the development of students (e.g., Astin 1993; Chickering & Reisser 1993; Kuh 1993; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates 1991; & Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In order to foster student learning outside the classroom faculty, staff, and administrators must be willing to challenge students and each other to view learning as something that transcends the biology lab, library, academic advisors' office, residence hall lounge, place of employment, student union, community service, and playing fields (Kuh, 1993). Student employment is one such out-of-class experience, which can be valuable while working towards a collegiate degree (Kincaid, 1996).

Astin's (1999) student development theory is based on how student involvement can have a positive effect on a student's engagement with a college or

university. Astin's research has shown that co-curricular activities have a positive relationship on student persistence. When the student has a chance to be involved in a more deliberate way with the campus community and becomes engaged with that community, student success can be seen in the form of retention (Astin, 1999). Astin (1999) goes on to make the point that, "one of the most interesting environmental factors that affect retention was holding a part time job on campus" (p. 523), and makes the favorable comparison of on-campus employment with that of on-campus residency. There is literature that supports the positive effects of on-campus living with student engagement (e.g., Boyer, 1987; Cheng, 2004; Komives, Woodard & Associates, 1996; Kuh et al., 1991). College unions are places where student engagement can be enhanced through student employment opportunities (Butts et al., 2012; Kincaid, 1996; Kuh, 1993; Perozzi, 2009; Yakaboski & De Sawal, 2014).

According to the American College Personnel Association's (ACPA), *The Student Learning Imperative* (1996), the college union provides numerous educationally-purposeful activities outside the classroom, which enhance learning and personal development. "The union contributes to the education of the student body at large through its cultural, educational, social, and recreational programs; the union also educates students involved in its governance and program boards and those it employs" (Council for the Advancement of Standards [CAS], 2012, p. 176). The CAS Standard for College Unions (2012c) asserts that in order to promote student learning and development, persistence, and success, professionals should identify relevant and desirable student learning and development outcomes as part of the employment experience at the college union (CAS, 2012c).

“As our institutions and external constituencies increasingly scrutinize what students are learning in college, college union professionals should continually be looking for ways to effectively demonstrate how our programs and facilities contribute to student learning” (Lane, 2014, p. 9). Kincaid (1996) points out that “Student employment is more than financial aid -- it provides students with social benefits, the opportunity for involvement, and with inherent pressure to better manage their time” (p. 34). The college union offers several skill-based experiences, which can be taught through student employment and involvement opportunities, and which may positively impact student retention. In 2005, the Board of Trustees for the Association of College Unions International (ACUI) approved the *College Union & Activities Core Competencies*, which were developed by the ACUI’s Education Councils. The core competencies were meant to serve as a foundation for education, hiring, and training of college union and student activities professionals, graduate students, and student employees. College unions use the core competencies as a guide to develop job descriptions, create training outlines, and in conjunction with learning outcomes, to assure that the student employment opportunities in the college union are out-of-class learning experiences (“ACUI Core Competencies,” 2014; CAS, 2012c). Regardless of one’s job responsibilities or position level, these 11 core competencies permeate all college union and activities work. The core competencies include: (a) communication; (b) facilities management; (c) fiscal management; (d) human resource development; (e) intercultural proficiency; (f) leadership; (g) management; (h) marketing; (i) planning; (j) student learning; and (k) technology (“ACUI Core Competencies,” 2014). All levels of colleges and universities can appreciate that

student employment is at the heart of college student development (Butts et al., 2012; Perozzi, 2009). Not only does student employment provide social and learning opportunities, but it is also linked to student retention in higher education, which is a very important issue at colleges and universities today (Kincaid, 1996).

Engagement and community building have broad implications for higher education enrollment, funding, and overall success of the academy (Boyer, 1987). Boyer (1987) posits that college students cannot be passive participants when it comes to developing and realizing campus community. Students need to be directly involved in the process of defining and developing community in order to develop ownership of the concept (Boyer, 1987). If a sense of community is not found at an institution, the student will transfer to another institution which meets his or her needs, or a student may leave higher education altogether (Boyer, 1987). Much of what is known about student engagement and community building relates to student involvement (Astin, 1999; Boyer 1987; Chickering, 1987; Kuh, 2008). There is limited research that exists about how student employment in college unions (e.g., Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971; Butts et al. 2012) impacts student development, learning, and self-efficacy. This study sought to further expand the knowledge base in higher education about how student employment in the college union supports student learning and self-efficacy development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how student employment in the college union affects student learning, and self-efficacy development. Of specific interest was how being a student employee in a college or university union impacts

their engagement with and at their institution; their successful degree persistence in college; their acquisition of life skills and competencies; and their increased assurance in their overall self-efficacy beliefs related to their development and learning. The results of this study will be used to expand the limited knowledge base on student employment in college and university unions and its impact on student engagement, development, learning, and self-efficacy. Research pertaining to the role student employment in the college union plays as a source of the student learning and self-efficacy development is not readily available. The lack of research can have an effect on the funding and resource distribution the university dedicates to the college union (Lane & Perozzi, 2014; Milani & Johnston, 1992). Since the college union facility is often used for recruitment purposes and to host campus events, there is a tendency to view the college union as just an impressive facility without fully understanding how the college union can affect the out-of-class learning environment for students and how it supports the university's mission (Lewis, 2003, Rouzer, De Sawal, & Yakabowski, 2014). It is increasingly vital that higher education professionals in the college union profession provide evidence that there is learning going on outside-of-the classroom. College union professionals need to better articulate the unique roles and expertise those in the profession provide with student learning and development (Collins & Roberts, 2012).

Research Questions

This study was guided by four research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their engagement as a student with the college/university campus community?
2. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their development of life skills and competencies?
3. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their overall college success?
4. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their self-efficacy?

Significance of the Study

Perozzi (2009) posits that, “All members of the academic community share the desire for students to acquire broad-based learning outcomes such as becoming servant-leaders, skilled problem-solvers, and clear communicators, etc.” (p. ix)

College unions have been supporting student success initiatives and complementing academic learning through intentional, co-curricular, and educational experiences such as student employment (Lane, 2014). Perozzi (2009) also identifies that, “Employment of students particularly on-campus employment, is relevant and germane to the student experience, yet the academy rarely embraces employment as a means to education and student development” (p. vii). Butts et al. (2012) further supports the importance of student employment in college unions by stating, “College unions provide a laboratory for students to acquire skills and interact with others from diverse backgrounds, enabling them to develop responsibility and citizenship to

become future leaders” (p. 233). Bandura (1994) believes that one’s personal self-efficacy is affected by one’s ability to function within opportunities presented. In order to grow one’s self-efficacy, one needs to be able to exercise some control over one’s life such as student employment and leadership experiences in the college union.

The significance of this study is that it advances the knowledge base in higher education of how student employment in the college union affects student learning and self-efficacy development, an area that is not addressed in the existing literature. The role of the college union in the out-of-class learning, skill and competency development, and as a continued focus on educational goals of the student employees was explored. The findings of this study can be used to help higher education administrators better define the role that student employment in the college union has in community building and fostering enduring loyalty to the university.

Summary of Theoretical Framework

This study used Astin's (1993, 1999) theory of student involvement, Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and self-efficacy development and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) identity development through the seven vectors of development as its theoretical basis. Student engagement theory and the need to find community (e.g., Astin, 1999; Boyer, 1987; Kuh, 2009; Miles, 2010; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009) was addressed throughout the study as well.

Astin's (1993, 1999) theory of student involvement explores how a student will benefit from actively taking part in collegiate activities outside of the classroom, such as social events, clubs and organizations, and on-campus student employment. The three core elements of the theory are the student's background coming into the

collegiate experience, the environment of the campus, and the changes that occur because of the student's involvement once the experience has ended (Astin, 1999). Astin (1993) believes that involvement requires an investment of psychosocial and physical energy; that it is both a continuous qualitative and quantitative experience; that the gain is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of the experience; and that academic performance can be positively affected by student involvement. Additional research has shown a positive correlation between student involvement in co-curricular activities (e.g., student organizations, leadership positions, residential life) and retention and academics (Kuh & Pike, 2005). Because of the positive aspects of co-curricular involvement, colleges and universities should encourage students to become involved.

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory which centers on self-efficacy development was focused on in this study. Social cognitive theory is rooted in a view of human agency, in which individuals are agents proactively engaged in their own development and can make things happen by their actions (Pajares, 2002). Key to this sense of agency is the fact that, among other personal factors, individuals possess self-beliefs that enable them to exercise a measure of control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. What people think, believe, and feel will affect their behavior (Bandura, 1986).

Bandura (1995) suggests that in order to achieve the kind of future one wants while avoiding the future one does not want, one needs to develop his or her self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) believes it is important to develop one's self-efficacy in order to obtain designated goals. In order to be capable of organizing and executing a

plan of action to attain one's goals, one must believe in oneself but more importantly, one must believe that one has the ability to achieve one's goals. There are four sources of self-efficacy development: 1) one's mastery of experiences; 2) seeing one's peers manage tasks successfully; 3) the effects of social persuasion on one's self; and 4) and reducing one's stress and anxiety as it relates to self-doubt (Bandura, 1994).

One's self-efficacy goes through many changes over the course of a lifespan. Bandura asserts that, "People must, therefore, have a robust sense of efficacy to sustain the perseverant effort needed to succeed" (p. 14). Bandura (1995) defines perceived self-efficacy as one's "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 2). Bandura's social cognitive theory supports that individuals are proactively engaged in their own development. This was the underlying framework that was used to frame this study that seeks to understand how student experiences as employees in the college union affect their development and self-efficacy development.

Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors of development which focuses on traditional aged college students as they transition to adulthood was also used as a theoretical basis. The seven vectors are a series of developmental stages of student development which include developing competence; managing emotions; moving through autonomy toward interdependence; developing mature interpersonal relationships; establishing identity; developing purpose; and developing integrity.

Summary of Methodology

This qualitative intrinsic case study was conducted through the lens of naturalistic inquiry. "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how

people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system, anchored in real life situations, which provide a rich and holistic account of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). This type of research is valued for its ability to capture complex action, perception and interpretation (Merriam, 2009).

The six participants of this study were former student employees of a college union located at a large, research university residing in the Southwestern region of the U.S. The participants all worked in the college union for a minimum of two years. Data collection for this study was conducted through the researcher as the instrument, semi-structured interviews, observations, field notes, reflexive journaling, and the review of documents. All of the interviews were transcribed and member checked (Merriam, 2009). A peer review was conducted. All data was analyzed using the constant comparative method to identify patterns and themes, which were used to address the research questions posed for this study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993).

Assumptions of Study

The assumptions of this study were as follows:

1. Student employment in a college union positively affects the student experience in relation to persistence.
2. College unions commonly employ students in a variety of positions, which support their daily operations.
3. Participants responded to the interview questions honestly.

4. Participant bias and/or prejudice, if present, were acknowledged.

Limitations to the Study

The limitations to this study included:

1. All participants were former student employees from one particular college union in a large, research university located in the Southwestern region of the U.S.
2. Participants were employed in the college union for a minimum of two years. The parameters set on the length of employment may limit participation in the study.
3. College union facilities and programs differ from one institution to the next as to sizes and scopes of operation. The college union site chosen for this study represented a larger, more comprehensive facility and program, and the results of this study may not be transferable to other colleges, or students. Transferability of the results of this study is up to the determination of the reader.

Definition of Terms

The following terminology was used throughout the study and provides the reader with a clearer understanding of the terms used when discussing student employment in the college union and self-efficacy:

Association of College Unions International (ACUI) Core competencies

refer to a set of composite skills, knowledge, and behaviors that provides the basis and forms the foundation for successful professional practice in college union and student activities work. There are 11 core competencies:

1. Communication: Ability to successfully exchange information through verbal and nonverbal symbols and behaviors.
2. Facilities Management: Ability to successfully maintain attractive, safe, fully operable built environments.
3. Fiscal Management: Ability to develop and manage financial systems through responsible stewardship of fiscal resources.
4. Human Resource Development: Ability to interact with staff members and to manage staff resources in a consistent and equitable manner.
5. Intercultural Proficiency: Ability to successfully communicate, understand, and interact among persons with differing assumptions that exist because of ethnic and cultural orientations.
6. Leadership: Ability to develop and communicate a vision so that others commit to fulfilling the mission and goals of an organization.
7. Management: Ability to coordinate, oversee, administer, and evaluate the daily operations of our facilities, programs, services, and activities.
8. Marketing: Ability to identify primary markets and to develop and use effective promotions, communications, and informational pieces in a variety of media and formats.
9. Planning: Ability to identify organizational needs and initiate strategies aligned with the institutional mission, strategic directions, and values.
10. Student Learning: Ability to create educational environments and experiences that intentionally provide students with opportunities for acquiring intellectual and interpersonal skills, beyond the traditional place and time boundaries.

11. Technology: Ability to understand the overall intent and to choose from appropriate tools, equipment, and procedures for service delivery and problem-solving. (ACUI, Core Competencies, 2014)

Co-curricular refers to activities such as volunteerism, student government or a campus job which are outside of but usually complementing the regular curriculum (Kuh, 2009).

Cognitive processes are thinking processes that involve the acquisition, organization and use of information (Bandura, 1992).

Community is a locality, (campus, neighborhood, town, or city) and as relational which refers to qualities of human interaction and social ties that draw people together (Heller, 1989).

Community building offers a sense of belonging, security, and engagement and is seen as a powerful element of educational environments (Cheng, 2004).

Integration is the extent the student comes to share the attitudes, beliefs and values of their community in relation to the institutional culture (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009).

Learning outcome is a knowledge, skill, or attitude that a student will gain from a learning experience (Suskie, 2009).

Learning and development outcomes (CAS) are statements of what students are intended to learn through their co-curricular experiences. The goal is to prepare students for satisfying and productive lifestyles, work, and civic participation. The student learning and development outcome domains and their related dimensions are:

1. Knowledge acquisition, integration, construction, and application:
understanding knowledge from a range of disciplines; connecting knowledge to other knowledge, ideas, and experiences; constructing knowledge; and relating knowledge to daily life.
2. Cognitive complexity: critical thinking; reflective thinking; effective reasoning; and creativity.
3. Intrapersonal development: realistic self-appraisal, self-understanding, and self-respect; identity development; commitment to ethics and integrity; and spiritual awareness.
4. Interpersonal competence: building meaningful relationships; interdependence; collaboration; and effective leadership.
5. Humanitarianism and civic engagement: cultivating an understanding and appreciation of cultural and human differences; social responsibility; global perspective; and sense of civic responsibility.
6. Practical competence: pursuing goals; communicating effectively; technical competence; managing personal affairs; managing career development; demonstrating professionalism; maintaining health and wellness; and living a purposeful and satisfying life (Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) 2012a, 2012b & 2012c).

Life skills are those skills that enable one to succeed in the environments in which one lives (Danish & Nellen, 1997).

Self-efficacy is one's belief in his or her capability to produce effects. One's efficacy beliefs can impact how one behaves, feels, thinks, and motivates oneself.

Self-efficacy influences affective, cognitive, motivational and selection processes (Bandura, 1992).

Student employment is part-time, hourly, on-campus based jobs held by college students while enrolled in academic course work. Student employment is a bridge between work and school and ultimately a link between school and fulltime work. Student employment processes elements of financial aid, career development, academic learning, experiential education and personal development (Kincaid, 1996).

Student engagement is the time, effort, and energy a student puts towards educationally purposeful activities and the conditions present in the institution, which make such actions possible (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009).

Student involvement is the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to the academic experience (Astin, 1999).

Summary

College unions provide learning opportunities for students through employment, engagement and leadership positions. College union professionals support student learning and engagement yet there is little research that focuses on this topic (NASPA, 2010; Yakabowski & De Sawal, 2014). There is literature highlighting the importance of the learning that takes place outside of the classroom in higher education (Astin, 1993; Boyer, 1987; Cheng, 2004; Hu & Kuh, 2002; Kuh & Schuh, 1991).

Students who spend time studying, attending events on campus, actively participating in student organizations, holding an on-campus job, and interacting with faculty, staff, and students, are more engaged, and ultimately, more successful in

college (Astin, 1999). Students are attracted to campuses which engage them. Student engagement is believed to strengthen student success (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, Andreas, Lyons, Strange, & MacKay, 1991). Student success in turn affects student retention (Kuh et al., 1991). Student retention leads to higher graduation rates (Boyer, 1987). When students feel like they belong, they are more likely to be successful and persist in their environment (Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2007).

This study examined the effects of student employment in the college union and examined how being employed in the college union informed students' engagement with the university; their overall success in college; their acquisition of life skills and competencies; and their overall self-efficacy relative to their development and learning.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter II presents an overview of the relevant literature related to the college union; student involvement; student engagement and community building; student learning, and self-efficacy development. Chapter III presents the research methodology for this study, including the research design, data collection, and the data analysis procedures. Chapter IV presents the findings from the analysis of the data, and Chapter V presents a discussion of the findings of the study, along with implications and recommendations for higher education organizations, as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter II presents a review of literature which provides an overview of the history of the college union, student employment in the college union and the importance of student involvement, and student engagement and community building in the college union. The theoretical framework that was used to guide this study is also presented. The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to explore how student employment in the college union affects student learning and self-efficacy development.

The History of College Unions in Higher Education

Throughout the history of higher education, college unions have been viewed as common ground where students from various backgrounds are drawn together in a communal experience to interact with and learn from one another (Thelin, 2004). Education was no longer confined to the classroom or laboratory. Support for the union concept gave way to the construction of facilities, many of which still exist today (Butts et al., 2012).

The historical beginning of the college union movement has been attributed to the free discussion of the debating societies at Oxford and Cambridge, circa 1812 (Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971; Butts et al., 2012). These organizations played an early role in preparing the students of that time for life in society after graduation (Butts et al., 2012). Student leaders got their first exposure to the political process during their college union experience (Butts et al., 2012). In 1812, Augustus Hare founded the Attic Society, which was the precursor to the Oxford Union (Butts et al., 2012). The

goal of the society was free and open discussion (Butts et al., 2012). Hare perceived that discussion was both the road to truth and the only justification for a university education (Butts, 1971; Butts et al., 2012). Cambridge followed suit in 1815 with its own debating society, the Cambridge Union (Butts, 1971; Butts et al., 2012). These societies were seen as places where young men could engage in political conversation, hone their public speaking skills, and socialize with other students. These clubs did not get a lot of recognition or support from the university's administration, but they were lauded for being a valuable part of one's college education and preparation for professional life and public service (Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971; Butts et al., 2012).

In the U.S., the college union has been a staple of the university campus for over a century. Brattain (1981) noted that while Harvard claims the first American union (program) in 1832, they did not get an actual facility until 1900, shortly after the first union (building) in the U.S. Houston Hall at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) was built in 1896. Penn's Houston Hall opened during a time when higher education institutions were constructing specialized nonacademic buildings, such as gymnasiums, where students could go to socialize and participate in out-of-class activities (Lewis, 2003). Harvard rallied its students and alumni to construct a facility shortly thereafter (Brattain, 1981, p. 3). Butts (1971) makes the analogy that student leaders were using their collective voice through student unions to affect change on the university campuses. Butts saw this peaceable form of student activism as revolutionary. Thelin (2004) asserts that historically college unions were places where all students could come together as a community regardless of their socioeconomic standing. Students today continue to use the union as a platform for change. Students

have a sense of ownership of the college union, which is facilitated by involvement in student union governing and programming boards, leadership roles and student employment management positions (Butts et al., 2012; Perozzi, 2009). The role of the college union idea has grown significantly throughout the last century. In order to fully understand the history of higher education, one should be aware of the role the college union has played in the development of today's campuses (Butts, 1971).

In the Administration of College Unions and Activities, Brattain (1981) explains that:

The turn of the century brought change in the attitude among top-level administrators regarding students. There seemed to be more awareness that education could not be confined to the narrow limits of the classroom or laboratory and a number of very well regarded educators echoed this feeling.

(p. 4)

Brattain suggests that college unions developed programs to expose the students to the arts, recreation, and community service. Support for the college union concept gave way to the construction of facilities (Brattain, 1981) many of which still exist on university campuses today.

In 1914, during World War I, fundraising campaigns were started in order to construct memorial facilities such as football stadiums and unions, meant to honor those students who served and were lost in the war (Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971; Butts et al., 2012). In the 1930's, the focus of the college union was to be at harmony with academic education. With the onset of the great depression, college unions were seen as a substitute for home and the concept of community was tested (Berry & Looman,

1964; Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971). In the 1940's, once again, many young men went off to war. The college union's focus shifted to good citizenship (Butts et al., 2012).

Many of the college union facilities doubled as sites for the United Service Organizations (USO). The armed forces set up training sites on campus, and college unions became the home for thousands of service people during this time (Brattain, 1981; Butts et al., 2012).

The 1950's gave rise to the focus of the role of student governance within the college union and the college campuses. Administrative staff were needed to run the facilities and oversee the programs, which were increasing during this timeframe as well. In the period following World War II, the G.I. Bill brought thousands of non-traditional students back to college campuses (Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971; Butts et al., 2012; Simon, 2003; Thelin, 2004). A number of college union renovations and expansions took place to meet the growing needs of these men and women (Brattain, 1981; Butts et al., 2012). During this time period, the government expanded the eligibility criteria for construction loans from the college housing program to include college unions (Butts et al., 2012). This inclusion in the federal funding was important for college union development for two reasons. First, it solidified funding sources for the much needed college union expansion, and second, it was the first time that the federal government recognized the significance of college unions as part of campus life (Brattain, 1981).

The 1960's were a turbulent time on college campuses in the U.S. because of the political climate surrounding the Civil Rights Movement and the entry into the Vietnam War (Brattain, 1981). There was an increasing divide between the students

and the university administration (Butts et al., 2012). Political activism gave way to activities that created a great deal of physical damage to the college union facilities (Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971). The college union buildings were sometimes caught in the crossfire of students' acts of civil disobedience. College union professional staff often acted as a liaison between the administration and the politically active students (Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971). What little trust the students had seemed to favor student affairs professionals from the college union staff (Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971).

The Higher Education Act of 1965 marked an increase in funding for higher education (Thelin, 2004). Despite the availability of student aid, college enrollments declined during the period following the federal adoption of this legislation (Brattain, 1981). The vocationally-oriented student and the non-traditional student brought new needs to the college union and student affairs profession (Brattain, 1981). College union professionals worked to reframe the college union's purpose with the administration. While the college union does provide a leisure outlet for students, the heart of the programs and services college unions provide the university campus are developing an engaging community and student opportunities to learn through out-of-class experiences (Butts et al., 2012). Many college unions in the U.S. had been around for almost 50 years at this point (Berry & Looman, 1964; Brattain, 1981). The aging college union facilities were in dire need of repair or replacement within the collegiate campus infrastructure. Campus housing and recreation facilities were in direct competition with the college union facilities for renovation, repair, and replacement funding (Brattain, 1981).

The 1970's brought more protests and unrest to the college campus. A new emphasis on minority culture and bringing students of different backgrounds together in the union became commonplace (Brattain, 1981; Butts et al., 2012). Student programs expanded to address the increased need for a social outlet outside of the classroom. It was during this time that the administration began to question the educational role the college union played on a university campus (Butts et al., 2012). College union professionals began to develop the framework to show that the union and its programs had an educationally purposeful connection to the university (Butts et al., 2012).

In the 1980's, many college unions moved to a cost center model. The unions were required to self-support the programs and services and maintain the debt service (mortgage) payments on the facility. Student fee funding, self-generated revenue sources, and vendor contracts were all seen as a way to fund college unions and union programs. Many college unions were seen as auxiliary units (Butts et al., 2012). *In loco parentis* or in place of the parent was a topic being challenged and discussed in higher education. To that end, the role and responsibility of colleges and universities in the lives of the students was having an effect on union activities both on and off site (Butts, 2012). There was a heightened awareness of diversity, which included (though was not limited to) race, religion, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation (Butts et. al., 2012). College unions as community centers began to mirror the societal issues of the time.

Higher education in the 1990's saw the follow up to Boyer's (1987) Carnegie Foundation report, *Campus Life: In Search of Community*. In the report, the

Commission discussed a new framework for higher education governance. The themes of the college or university as an educationally purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring, and celebrative community were explored (Boyer, 1987). The Association of College Unions International (ACUI) had previously adopted *The Role of the College Union* in 1956, which emphasized the union as a campus community builder. In his inaugural address, Winston Shindell, President for ACUI from 1990-91 stated, “The parallels between the Carnegie Foundation’s Campus Life: In Search of Community and ACUI’s *the Role of the College Union* demonstrates the value of college unions and student activities on campus life” (Butts et al., 2012, p. 208). The congruence between the two documents further supported the college union as a community building entity and allowed for a connection to the overall university mission (Berry & Looman, 1964; Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971; Butts et al., 2012).

The college union of the 21st century continues to reinvent itself while not losing sight of its roots (Butts et al., 2012). The new millennium is characterized by even more facility growth and expansion, often in spite of the growing concerns for the funding of higher education (Kenney, Dumont, & Kenney, 2005). Universities are putting an even greater emphasis on new and expanded unions, recreation, leisure, and housing facilities as these are an important recruitment tool for the university to compete for new students (Lewis, 2003). Some university campuses address the challenge of expansion needs by developing hybrid facilities or satellite facilities rather than expand their existing union facilities. With the advent of new facilities comes the development of more ecofriendly facilities with attention being given to sustainable and renewable energy sources, recycled materials and ecofriendly

materials, and water conservation management (Butts et al., 2012). The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) movement allows for a better understanding of the sustainability issues and supports the university community's need to increase their environmental awareness (Butts et. al., 2012).

College Union professionals of the 21st century are faced with funding model changes, privatization, deferred maintenance on aging facilities, ever-changing technology innovations, and managing a workforce spanning three generations – the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and the Millennial/Gen Y (Butts et al., 2012). There is a continued emphasis on training, core competencies, development of learning outcomes, and telling the union story as a way of connecting the college union idea with that of the university's educational mission (Butts et al., 2012).

Understanding the College Union

In 1914, the president of the Illinois Student Union called a meeting of student leaders from several other Midwestern unions and union-like organizations to come together and share their ideas and experiences as student union organizations (Berry & Looman, 1964). The first official meeting was held in December of 1914 at the Ohio Union Building, which was one of the few actual facilities at that moment in time. The coming together of this group of undergraduate students who attended this first conference in 1914, would signify the start of what later would become the Association of College Unions International (ACUI) (Berry & Looman, 1964). As the college union movement expanded to campuses throughout the U.S., student representatives came together annually to learn from one another and to advance the

student union movement. ACUI has evolved into a knowledge-based association for campus community building (Butts et al., 2012).

Union as a Program and Facility

Perhaps one of the main questions that arises for those who are unfamiliar with Butts' (1971) *The College Union Idea*, is the use of the term union to both represent the physical facility, where applicable, as well as the conceptual organization of the programs and services it provides as a whole. The reality is, use of the terms college union, student union, university center or student center are interchangeable in most cases (Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971; Butts et al., 2012). Porter Butts (1971) explained that in the beginning, the college union or student union was a group of students who came together as a student organization seeking to create a debating society where students could interact and learn from one another. This original premise was to be the precursor to the idea that the union exists to develop community and engage students outside of the classroom. The development of the actual union facilities, in most cases, came several years later (Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971; Butts et al., 2012).

In present day, college unions support the university's mission of educating students by providing programs and services to enhance the student experience. College unions are learning labs for students to develop skills and competencies through volunteer leadership and student employment experiences (Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971; Butts et al., 2012). Still, many campuses also see the value of having an impressive union facility as well as other auxiliary units such as recreation centers, residential complexes, and performance arts spaces. Higher education is big business. It is common practice to use these facilities as a way to showcase the campus to

perspective students, dignitaries, and university guests (Lewis, 2003). Both the facility and the programs provided support the building of campus community and student engagement. The college union has played this dual role throughout the history of higher education (Brattain, 1981; Butts et al., 2012; Thelin, 2004).

Objectives of the College Union

Porter Butts is considered the pioneer and historian in the college union profession (Brattain, 1981; Butts et al., 2012). Butts started his career in unions as a student employee at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. After championing the fundraising campaign to build the Wisconsin Union, Butts held the position of Director of the Wisconsin Union from 1927 to 1968 (Butts et al., 2012). Butts also held several key positions within the ACUI throughout his career in the college union profession (Butts, 1971). In his 1929 annual report, Butts laid out four basic objectives for the college union: (1) to exist to make the university a more human place; (2) to provide a common space where students and faculty can interact and develop relationships outside of the classroom; (3) to promote leisure activities and enrichment that will enhance the college experience; and (4) to give students an opportunity to manage their own affairs and an opportunity to reduce the cost of living (Butts et al., 2012).

Butt's four basic objectives are still considered key elements within the college union profession today (Butts et al., 2012). The first objective, making the university a more *human* place, came about because college union professionals understood the importance of engaging students in the university community. Hu and Kuh (2002) see student engagement as the most important element of student learning and personal

development in college. By providing a shared space for student engagement, college unions serve community building destinations (Butts et. al., 2012). The union represents many different things to different people on the university campus, and thus serves multiple purposes for the campus community. Butts (1971) explains that the union is a microcosm of the campus society, evolving and striving to meet the ever-changing needs of the diverse community. It would be difficult for the union to focus on a singular purpose like most other collegiate departments. Whether the focus is on the program and services of the union or the brick and mortar facility, the union is by design, a community builder (Butts et. al., 2012).

The second objective of the union is to provide a common space where students and faculty can interact and develop relationships outside of the classroom. This interaction is critical to developing an educationally-purposeful student experience (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Reiser, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Here, union activities can support the academic mission of the university and strengthen learning opportunities for students (Butts et. al., 2012). McDonald et al. (2002) stated that, “If we are to build community among students, faculty and staff at a college and university, our efforts to build bridges must be focused, ongoing and comprehensive” (p. 175). Students and faculty are given the opportunity to interact informally outside of the classroom in the college union. The value of this kind of collegiate interaction is believed to enhance student engagement (McDonald et al., 2002).

Unions are by design community builders, which seek to enhance the out of class experience and support student engagement (Butts et al., 2012).

As President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Ernest L. Boyer led an exploration of the undergraduate education experience in the U.S. The purpose of the review was to get to the heart of what higher education was and should be (Boyer, 1987). The evaluation team visited 30 public and private baccalaureate institutions over the course of the three years. Boyer (1987) discussed the evaluation process and the subsequent recommendations in his book, *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America*. Most of the recommendations spoke to undergraduate research and academics as it related to the first year experience of students; however, the tenth recommendation centered on the concept of building an engaging community (Boyer, 1987). Boyer (1987) believed in the power of building a community and the value of the out-of-class experience as a way to holistically develop the student. The college union professional seeks to create an environment for learning and student engagement outside of the classroom through programs and services (Yakaboski & De Sawal, 2014). Student employment in the college union is one such out of class experience that is used to engage the student in the campus community and give the student an opportunity to learn (Yakaboski & De Sawal, 2014).

The third objective of the union, promoting leisure activities and enrichment that will enhance the college experience, speaks in part to Astin's (1993, 1999) theory of involvement. Astin's research has shown that the more students are involved in their environment, the more engaged they will become, and the more likely they will be academically successful and retained within higher education. College union professionals see the connection between providing programs and services and

educating the student. These educational programs provided by the union help make it possible for students to become involved in their environment (Butts et al., 2012).

Fourth, the college union gives students an opportunity to manage their own affairs through leadership roles, and an opportunity to reduce the cost of living through employment (Butts et al., 2012). Students obtain and hold leadership roles in the college union organization, both through volunteer and employment opportunities (Perozzi, 2009). The process of developing student led campaigns to design, raise financial support, and construct the facilities is often a common theme (Brattain, 1981). Moreover, the direct student involvement in the management of the union's facilities, programs, and governing boards gives student leaders a meaningful and deliberate educational experience (Butts et al., 2012). Student learning through leadership of and employment by the college union are at the center of the college union idea, and has always been interwoven throughout the history of the college union (Butts et al., 2012).

The Role of the College Union

The Role of the College Union was first adopted by ACUI in 1956. At the time, the members of the association worked to create a mission statement, which would explain the fundamental principles of a college union. This statement remained the standard from which college union professionals based the union's purpose and ideological structure (Brattain, 1981; Butts et al., 2012). *The Role of the College Union* was updated in 1996 by a committee of union professionals who were given the task to update the original statement to reflect the changes in the higher education landscape without losing any of the core values. The statement reads as follows:

The union is the community center of the college, serving students, faculty, staff, alumni, and guests. By whatever form or name, a college union is an organization offering a variety of programs, activities, services, and facilities that, when taken together, represent a well-considered plan for the community life of the college. The union is an integral part of the educational mission of the college. As the center of the college community life, the union complements the academic experience through an extensive variety of cultural, educational, social, and recreational programs. These programs provide the opportunity to balance course work and free time as cooperative factors in education. The union is a student-centered organization that values participatory decision-making. Through volunteerism, its boards, committees, and student employment, the union offers first-hand experience in citizenship and educates students in leadership, social responsibility, and values. In all its processes, the union encourages self-directed activity, giving maximum opportunity for self-realization and for growth in individual social competency and group effectiveness. The union's goal is the development of persons as well as intellects. Traditionally considered the *hearthstone* or *living room* of the campus, today's union is the gathering place of the college. The union provides services and conveniences that members of the college community need in their daily lives and creates an environment for getting to know and understand others through formal and informal associations. The union serves as a unifying force that honors each individual and values diversity. The union fosters a sense of community that cultivates enduring loyalty to the college.

(Association of College Unions International, 2014, “The Role of the College Union,” para. 1-6)

Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)

Successful college union programs are intentional by nature. The heart of the union is the development of programs that address the broad needs of the campus community, along with a focus on student learning and development while self-supporting the operational costs (Yarrish, Bielat, & Capriotti, 2009). The Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) has been developing and promoting professional standards for programs and services in higher education since 1979, to ensure excellence in educational practices and the support of student learning (Dean, 2012). CAS is made up of a consortium of over 42 professional organizations that work together to disseminate and advance standards and guidelines used to evaluate the effectiveness of student services areas. The organization take an active role in the process by providing timely and ongoing feedback to the professional organizations in higher education (Dean, 2012).

While there is not one consistent operations model for college unions within higher education, the CAS standards for auxiliary services functional areas (2012a), campus activities programs (2012b), and college unions (2012c) are considered the industry standard used by college union professionals when developing the college union’s program (CAS, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). The standards for each of the topic areas of auxiliary services functional areas, campus activities programs, and college unions are comprised of 12 overarching classifications. The categories include: Mission; Program; Organization & Leadership; Human Resources; Ethics; Law,

Policy & Governance; Diversity, Equity & Access; Institutional & External Relations; Financial Resources; Technology; Facilities & Equipment; and Assessment & Evaluation (CAS 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). The structure and make up of college unions vary from institution to institution. Comprehensive student union programs encompass elements and student learning outcomes from each of the CAS subject areas including auxiliary services functional areas, campus activities programs, and college unions. Application of the different subject area documents can be used simultaneously or compartmentally based on the specific union operation (CAS 2012a, 2012b, 2012c).

Core Competencies for the College Union and Student Activities Profession

In an on-going effort to support the profession and the needs of the membership, the ACUI Education Councils developed (11) core competencies for the college union and activities profession. These (11) core competencies represent skill sets, which provide a foundation for college union and student activities work, and can subsequently be used to complement the CAS standards when addressing the education and training of college union staff including student assistants (ACUI, 2014, “Core Competencies for the College Union and Student Activities Profession”). The ACUI Education Councils are made up of professionals from each of the ACUI regions. The ACUI regions are predominately from the U.S.; however, there are international members from Australia, Bermuda, the British Isles, Canada, Mexico, and the territories of Puerto Rico and Guam (ACUI, 2014 “Regional Structure”). This diverse cross section of professional representation brings with it a plethora of experience in the college union and activity field. The volunteer work that these

college union professionals do is at the heart of what ACUI is, a knowledge based organization.

Regardless of job responsibilities or position; whether the union operation is large or small, private or public; whether one is a full-time staff member or a student assistant; the (11) core competencies permeate what is at the heart of the college union and activity profession (Butts et al., 2012). In 2005, the ACUI approved 11 core competencies for the college union and student activities profession: Communication; Facilities Management; Fiscal Management; Human Resource Development; Intercultural Proficiency; Leadership; Management; Marketing; Planning; Student Learning; and Technology. Core competency refers to a set of composite skills, knowledge, and behaviors that provides the basis and forms the foundation for successful professional practice in college union and student activities work. As a knowledge-based organization, ACUI asserts that these 11 competencies infuse all work being done in the profession, regardless of size, scope, or nature of the particular operation (Butts et. al., 2012).

Community Building in Higher Education

In higher education, the concept of community is most often associated with the works and efforts of Ernest L. Boyer (Boyer, 1987; McDonald et al., 2002). Boyer (1987) examined undergraduate education to determine what role the experience of higher education was having on undergraduate students. Boyer (1987) understood the importance of developing community throughout the academy. Much of the focus of his work was on how the students viewed their campus and how actively engaged they were in that environment (Boyer, 1987). Boyer believed that higher education should

focus on creating community, and that institutions of higher education should be: (a) an educationally purposeful place where learning is the focus; (b) an open place where civility is affirmed; (c) a just place where persons are honored and diversity pursued; (d) a disciplined place where group obligations guide behavior; (e) a caring place where individuals are supported and service is encouraged; and (f) a celebrative place where traditions are shared (Boyer, 1987).

Many college students are not merely looking for the academic knowledge, but are looking for a collegiate community, which satisfies the student's need to belong (McDonald et al., 2002). According to McDonald et al. (2002), it is not unusual to see higher education institutions promote a strong campus community experience as part of their recruitment efforts. This can encompass academic scholarship; mission and purpose of an institution; rights and responsibilities of the membership; respect for members' differences; a sense of order; service to one another, and to those outside the community; and a sense of history and tradition (McDonald et al. , 2002).

The Union Facility as a Place for Community Building

The role of learning within the context of higher education is broadening. Institutions all over the country are realizing that learning on college campuses is not merely limited to the formal classroom (Kenney et al., 2005). Students learn from their campus environment through active experiences and social interactions. There are formal programs such as residential learning communities, as well as less structured forms of student engagement, such as student activities and informal socialization outside of class (Kenney et al., 2005). The structural ecology of higher education campuses matter because of what the structure and design say about the

campus and its inhabitants (Strange & Banning, 2001). Despite the belief that higher education institutions promote an ivory tower philosophy, campus design and the structure of the facilities express the intrinsic values of the campus community (Strange & Banning, 2001). In a time when so much focus is put on internet technology, having a connection to a physical place can positively influence student engagement (Chapman, 2006; Strange & Banning, 2001).

The concept of a *third place* puts a premium on deliberate and purposeful use of the facility as it creates a sense of belonging. Oldenburg (1999) makes the distinction that a person's first place is home, second place is work, and third place is that place where one goes to engage in restorative community (e.g., coffee shop, bar, community center). College unions follow this same concept as Oldenburg's (1999) idea about third places. College union professionals attempt to cultivate this sort of loyalty to the facility by paying attention to traffic patterns and addressing community wants and needs through programs and services (Brattain, 1981; Butts et al., 2012). Banning, Clemons, McKelfresh, and Waxman (2006) modified Oldenburg's concept by stating that for undergraduate students, the first place is one's residential home, the second place is one's academic setting, and the third place is where one goes to, outside of the other two places. College unions strive to be one such third place.

Banning, Clemons, McKelfresh, and Gibbs (2010) conducted a qualitative study focusing on students' perspectives of their third place and restorative place, the places where the students felt a sense of belonging and a place to rejuvenate. This particular study drew a favorable picture of off-campus venues being the preferred places for the participants. Despite the results, which seem to somewhat negate the

importance of on-campus venues such as the college union, it is important to consider how campus structure plays into student engagement. This study was a small, qualitative study conducted at one campus, and is not generalizable to other higher education institutions. Replication of this study could prove beneficial on a different campus, particularly if the campus study had an established college union program. Moreover, there is a great deal for colleges and universities to learn about what the campuses are lacking, how the students may be spending their time and money elsewhere, and how the students might be enticed back to campus (Banning et al., 2010).

Another important factor of the college union is its physical structure. In the race to grow enrollments and compete in higher education, universities spend enormous amounts of resources on the physical plan and campus design (Chapman, 2006; Kenney et al., 2005; Strange & Banning, 2001). College unions, campus recreation centers, libraries, university housing, and dining facilities are all very much part of the recruitment and retention of students. There are research studies that show a positive correlation between the tangible and physical facility assets of a campus and student recruitment and retention (e.g., Bennett & Benton, 2001; Huesman, Brown, Lee, Kellogg, & Radcliffe, 2009; Mallinckrodt & Sedlacek, 2009; Reynolds, 2007). Before a potential student has even had the chance to officially enroll, he or she has been exposed to the college union as a recruitment tool.

Working College Students

Perna (2010) states that, “working dependent undergraduates averaged 24 hours of employment per week while enrolled and working independent

undergraduates averaged 34.5 hours per week” (p. xiii). While the specific number of students who work during college varies from source to source (Kincaid, 1996; Kuh, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), it is apparent that well over half of the undergraduate students in higher education must work while attending college (Perna, 2010; Perozzi, 2009).

Need to Work

It can be said that student employment is the most common out-of-class experience among college students today with most students needing to work at least part-time (Kuh, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Perozzi (2009) cited a report from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) that indicated that in 2009, 79% of all undergraduate students worked at least part-time while in college. While the reasons for working were said to be numerous, the most common response was to be able to afford college-related expenses (Perozzi, 2009). Students on residential campuses tend to be active, focused, and deeply engaged in out-of-the-classroom activities including working to earn money needed to afford college (Light, 2001).

Campus-based employment addresses both the financial needs of the student, as well as exposure to a broad base of learning outcomes, which can enhance leadership qualities, maturation, problem solving, and communication styles (Perozzi, 2009). The concept of self-authorship suggests that as college students develop in leadership positions, the student leaders become more capable of looking at, critiquing and reshaping their belief system. This learning process can be part of the maturing process that can occur in purposeful collegiate experiences (Baxter-Magolda, & King, 2004; Collins & Roberts, 2012; Kegan, 1994). Collins and Roberts (2012) suggest

that those who work with students should make sure the student leaders are given the best possible environment for learning.

Light (2001) interviewed Harvard University students for his book, *Making the Most of College: Students Speak their Minds*. Light (2001) makes the point that even in academically rigorous curriculums such as those at Harvard University, students tend to gravitate towards student organizations and or campus employment opportunities that allow them the chance to cultivate leadership qualities and have some fun. Student employment in college unions engages students, helps them connect to the campus community, and teaches skills and competencies (Perozzi, 2009). Light (2001) explains that “Those students who make the connections between what goes on inside and outside the classroom report a more satisfying college experience” (p. 14). Students who integrate their academic class experience with that of their out of class experience reap the rewards of developing powerful connections and becoming engaged in the campus community (Light, 2001).

Learning Outcomes in Student Employment

Higher education must embrace student employment as a means to education and student development (Perozzi, 2009). “All members of the academic community share the desire for students to acquire broad-based learning outcomes such as becoming servant-leaders, skilled problem solvers, clear communicators, etc.” (Perozzi, 2009, p. ix). Student employment in the college union can be used to address this need to develop the student employee (Yakaboski & De Sawal, 2014).

Lewis and Contreras (2008) posit that student employment can best foster student development when there are learning outcomes associated with the experience.

In order to be effective, the student employment experience must include training, feedback, problem solving, experimentation, and reflection (Perozzi, 2009). Several student development theories address the stages of growth college students experience during their collegiate years: Astin's *Involvement Theory* (1984); Chickering and Reisser's *Seven Vectors of Development* (1993); Kolbs' *Theory of Experiential Learning* (1984); Tinto's *Interactionalist Theory* (1993); to name just a few (Perozzi, 2009). These theories suggest that many factors influence student engagement within the university including institutional objectives, institutional size, faculty-student interaction, curriculum, teaching practices, diverse student communities, and student programs and services (Perozzi, 2009). Each of these factors are supported through the integration of work and learning, recognition and respect for individual differences, and the recurrence of learning and development (Perozzi, 2009). Another important educational aspect of on-campus student employment is that a student employee is more likely to obtain a leadership position (Perozzi, 2009). The skills and experiences the student encounters on the campus-based job will enhance the student's exposure to life skills needed to be a good citizen (Perozzi, 2009).

Student Employment in the College Union

Komives et al. (2011) share that pedagogically, college union administrators take a unique approach in taking the employment experience beyond just job satisfaction. Concerted efforts are made to develop learning outcomes associated with student employee experiences, which support developing transferable leadership and vocational development skills (Komives et al., 2011).

College unions rely on a plethora of part-time students to fulfill the workforce needed for daily operations (Butts et al., 2012). College unions are traditionally open seven days a week, often for 16 hours a day or more (Brattain, 1981; Butts et al., 2012). Staffing and supervision for the unions is an important part of developing community centers on the university campus (Butts, 1971). The union is more than merely a place for meetings and recreation. Butts et al. (2012) assert that “the union plays a considerable role also as one of the teaching and laboratory resources of the university” (p. 69). While there is no consistent student employment model for the college union, the norm is for union operations to use student assistants in a variety of roles. The number of student employees needed varies from one operation to the next (Butts et al., 2012).

Students serve unions in roles such as office assistant, marketing assistant, information desk worker, ticket booth worker, set ups and maintenance crew, game room attendant, building manager and audio-visual theatre technician (Brattain, 1981; Butts, 1971; Butts et al., 2012; Perozzi, 2009). College unions may also employ graduate students in assistantships or internships as part of their master’s degree experience (Butts et al., 2012).

Butts et al. (2012) states that, “the union promotes experimental education through programs, employment, and the arts” (p. 203). Student unions are learning labs for these experiences. The college union and activities areas look to enhance the out of classroom student learning by developing and applying specific learning outcomes to the student experiences associated with the union (CAS 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Perozzi, 2009). When students feel like they belong, they are more likely to be

successful and persist in their environment (Cheng, 2004; Elkins, Forrester, & Noel-Elkins, 2011; Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Harper, & Quaye, 2007; Miles, 2010).

College union professionals see student employment as a way to further develop the student outside the classroom. A way to do this is to attach learning outcomes to the student employment program (Perozzi, 2009). The ACUI, in conjunction with the CAS, provides guidelines for student learning and development outcome domains and their related dimensions (CAS, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c):

- (1) Knowledge acquisition, integration, construction, and application:
understanding knowledge from a range of disciplines; connecting knowledge to other knowledge, ideas, and experiences; constructing knowledge; and relating knowledge to daily life.
- (2) Cognitive complexity: critical thinking; reflective thinking; effective reasoning; and creativity.
- (3) Intrapersonal development: realistic self-appraisal, self-understanding, and self-respect; identity development; commitment to ethics and integrity; and spiritual awareness.
- (4) Interpersonal competence: meaningful relationships; interdependence; collaboration; and effective leadership.
- (5) Humanitarianism and civic engagement: understanding and appreciation of cultural and human differences; social responsibility; global perspective; and sense of civic responsibility.
- (6) Practical competence: pursuing goals; communicating effectively; technical competence; managing personal affairs; managing career development; demonstrating professionalism; maintaining health and wellness; and living a purposeful and satisfying life. (pp. 4-5)

The college union is a place where student leadership is cultivated through employment and volunteer opportunities. The most successful union programs have a commitment to student development through real world experiences, and in turn, the union benefits from the student's leadership (Butts et al., 2012). College unions utilize student employment as both a way to manage the need for additional human and fiscal resources, as well as to engage students in a learning environment that allows them to develop skills and experiences, which will assist them after college (Butts et al., 2012; Perozzi, 2009). Additionally, Butts et al. (2012) assert that student leadership defines the direction of the organizations. As a result, students have a direct influence on what is going on in the union, the students' need to work is supported through unions, and the students have a voice in what the union stands for as an organization (Butts et al., 2012).

Much of the literature pertaining to college student employment focuses on whether the employment hinders the success of the student. The research suggests that a more engaged student is one who is more successful academically and more likely to be retained by the institution (e.g., Astin, 1993; Boyer 1987). According to Perozzi (2009), on-campus employment can be directly linked with having a favorable effect on academic success of undergraduate students. Astin (1993) established that there is a positive connection between on-campus employment and obtaining a bachelor's degree, self-reported cognitive growth and improvement on GPA. Astin (1993) believes that students who work on-campus are more likely to gravitate to roles that mirror their career interests; forge positive relationships with peers, faculty and administrators; and self-reported cognitive growth. The research tends to support

many positive attributes to on-campus employment (e.g., Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Conversely, off campus employment lessens one's connection to the campus community and has shown to affect the persistence in degree completion of the student working off campus (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Regardless of on or off campus, student employment is the norm during the college experience (Kincaid, 1996; Komives et al., 2011; Perozzi, 2009). There is a concern that working too many hours on or off campus while attending college will negatively affect the student (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). It is clear that student employment is a necessity for many students during their collegiate career. Higher education professionals have an opportunity and a responsibility to ensure that on-campus student employment is meaningful, intentional, promotes cognitive growth, and complements the students' academic pursuits (Perozzi, 2009). It is imperative that higher education professionals make student employment a valuable experience, one that complements the student's academic pursuits and encourages cognitive learning (Perozzi, 2009).

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Student development has been a part of the mission of college unions even before the discussion of student development theory was so prevalent in higher education (Metz, 1996). College union staff need to use student development theory to learn as much as they can about the students they are working with in the college union environment (Perozzi, 2009). Students must be given the opportunity to develop in the environment and motivated to actively participate (Metz, 1996). Professional staff in the college union guide their students in a democratic way that

helps students take responsibility for themselves, but still provide a way for students to gain a better understanding of the world through experiences and activities (Butts et al., 2012). The goal is to impact the student's growth outside of the classroom (Metz, 1996).

Higher education professionals need to make the connection between student employment, student development theories, and social cognitive theory. Astin's (1999) theory of involvement (1999), Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy, and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of identity development was used to frame this study. The process of connecting student employment in the college union with student development needs to take what is known about these theories and assess what effect the job training and employment experiences is having on the student employee, intern, or graduate assistant (Perozzi, 2009).

Astin's Theory of Student Involvement

Astin's (1993, 1999) theory of student involvement explores how a student will benefit from actively taking part in collegiate activities outside of the classroom, such as social events, clubs and organizations, and on-campus student employment. The three core elements of the theory are the student's background coming into the collegiate experience, the environment of the campus, and the changes that occur because of the student's involvement once the experience has ended (Astin, 1999). Astin (1993) believes that involvement requires an investment of psychosocial and physical energy; that it is both a continuous qualitative and quantitative experience; that the gain is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of the experience; and that academic performance can be positively affected by student involvement.

Additional research has shown a positive correlation between student involvement in co-curricular activities (e.g., student organizations, leadership positions, residential life) and retention and academics (Kuh & Pike, 2005). Because of the positive aspects of co-curricular involvement, colleges and universities should encourage students to become involved.

Student Engagement Theory

Kuh et al. (1991) assert that it is estimated that as much as two-thirds of a college student's waking hours are spent doing something other than taking classes or studying for class. Kuh et al. (1991) go on to say that when asked about what they learned in college, students will often make the connection between out of class activities and increased competence, confidence, and self-assurance. While the exact amount of hours varies depending upon which author is making the argument, college students do have a considerable amount of time outside of the classroom in which to learn and to grow. Kuh and Schuh (1991) believe that there are several opportunities for purposeful educational experiences outside-of-the-classroom. Living in a residence hall, participating in a leadership institute or maintaining a part-time on-campus job all have a tremendous potential to affect student development. Schuh (1991) perceives that student who get involved have a much more satisfying college experience than those who do not.

Student experiences outside the classroom have been characterized as a way to educate the whole person. Astin (1982), Boyer (1987), and Komives et al. (1996) each make the direct connection between the quality of higher education and the experience the college student has on campus, outside of the classroom. All see

campus involvement as a variable for student success. Schuh (1991) explains that potential employers prefer to hire involved students because, “involved students show more depth, are better managers of their time, and are stronger prospective employees than those not involved” (p. 37). Perhaps the most important reason student involvement should be cultivated is that it increases a student’s sense of belonging, and makes the student feel like a valued member of the campus community (Kuh et al., 1991).

Student engagement has been attributed to student success in college (Astin, 1999; Boyer, 1987; Miles, 2010; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). While there has been research showing a connection between student involvement, engagement, integration, and ultimately student success, there is some debate as to whether one can or should use the terms interchangeably (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). Student engagement is seen as a strong indicator of the amount of time and energy a student will put towards academics and extra-curricular activities (Astin, 1999). Student involvement is important in establishing a connection and the subsequent engagement to higher education. The quality of effort students put towards educationally-purposeful activities that contribute to student engagement is an important factor in student success (Hu & Kuh, 2002). Students become engaged with their institution when they increase their involvement in both the academic domain and the social domain (Hu & Kuh, 2002).

Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory and Perceptions of Self Efficacy

Social Cognitive Theory addresses how one can improve oneself by taking control of one’s life (Bandura, 1995). In social cognitive theory, Bandura (1986)

emphasizes the importance of one's cognitions. The mind must be able to positively envision the successful achievement of goals in order for the person to be successful. Bandura (1994) describes self-efficacy as a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation. Cultivating the college student's self-efficacy can be an important aspect of his or her development. Bandura asserts that the growth of self-efficacy does not end during youth, but continues to evolve throughout life as people acquire new skills, experiences, and understanding. In order to truly achieve success, one must have the confidence in his or her abilities. When describing the concept of self-efficacy, Bandura (1994) explains that one's belief in oneself has a profound effect on how one thinks, behaves, and feels. Self-efficacy can affect how goals, tasks, and challenges are approached throughout one's life (Bandura, 1994, 1995, 1997). Those who can develop a strong sense of self-efficacy are better prepared to face the challenges of adulthood. Conversely, those who do not develop a strong sense of self-efficacy may struggle, and even fail (Bandura, 1994). The psychological effect of one's self-efficacy is as important to career success as are the vocational and operational skills needed to be successful (Bandura, 1994).

According to Bandura (1994), there are four major sources of self-efficacy. The first source is mastery experiences. Bandura explains that 'mastering a task' by performing it successfully strengthens self-efficacy. Conversely, failing a task or challenge can undermine and weaken self-efficacy. The second source of self-efficacy is social modeling (Bandura, 1994). Seeing peers successfully complete a challenge supports one's belief that mastering of the task is an obtainable goal. The third source of self-efficacy is social persuasion (Bandura, 1994). According to Bandura, receiving

verbal encouragement can help one overcome self-doubt and instead focus on giving one's best effort to the task at hand. The fourth source of self-efficacy is psychological responses. Every person has his or her own emotional response to situations (Bandura, 1994). Moods, emotional states, physical reactions, and stress levels can all impact one's self-efficacy. Bandura (1994) explains that it is important to learn how to minimize stress and elevate mood when facing difficult or challenging tasks.

Chickering's Theory of Identity Development

The college union connects student involvement and student development theory. Students encounter real opportunities to test their abilities, to do things on their own, and to accomplish something observable by others when they assume responsibility for planning and carrying out activities in the college union (Chickering, 1981). When one develops a strong sense of competence and self-confidence, one is better prepared to take on responsibility, and will have an increased willingness to risk self-esteem in new ventures (Butts et al., 2012). Chickering is perhaps best known for the Seven Vectors of Development, which were first developed in 1969 and then later revised with Reisser in 1993 (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The seven vectors are a series of developmental stages of student development which include developing competence; managing emotions; moving through autonomy toward interdependence; developing mature interpersonal relationships; establishing identity; developing purpose; and developing integrity.

Summary

Chapter II provided a review of the literature on the history of the college union and the college union's role in the university community, an overview of student employment while in college, and how student engagement is supported through involvement, employment, and the college union program. This chapter provided a broad overview of the college union in the U.S. Despite there being a lack of literature specifically dedicated to the history of the union, the record of the college union has been well maintained through the efforts of the ACUI. Throughout the literature review, the role of the student leader and employee has been explored. This literature review further focused on role the college union plays in student development as a campus community builder. Engaged students are more successful because they feel a part of their environment. The role the union plays in developing student leadership through student employment is a vital part of the mission of the union. The college union is a place where diverse thought and expression is valued. This is a cornerstone of an effective college union program. It is an important part of the continued development of the students. In order to develop as good citizens of the world, students need to be exposed to diverse thoughts and ideas. At this stage, the researcher could not identify literature that directly connected the effects of student employment in the college union to the self-efficacy development of the student leader. The theories of Astin; Bandura and Chickering will be used as the theoretical basis for this study.

Chapter III will present the methodology and research design for this qualitative study. Included in this chapter will be the research questions to be

explored, the data collection methods which will be used, the participant and sampling selection process that will be employed, as well as data analysis procedures.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Chapter III will describe the methodology used to answer the research questions of the study, as well as the overall design of the study, including participant selection, data sources to be used, data collection methods, and data analysis. The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to explore how student employment in the college union affects student learning and self-efficacy development.

Research Questions

This study was guided by four research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their engagement as a student with the college/university campus community?
2. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their development of life skills and competencies?
3. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their overall college success?
4. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their self-efficacy?

Research Design

“Research design is the plan, structure, and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answers to research questions and to control variance” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 221). This study used a qualitative methodology and an intrinsic case

study research design. Merriam (2009) explains that “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and the meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). The researcher selected the qualitative case intrinsic study research design because the research questions investigated would be most appropriately answered through a better understanding of the participants’ lived experiences of their student employment experiences in the college union, and how they perceive their experiences affected their learning and self-efficacy development.

Establishing the Paradigm

The naturalistic paradigm assumes that there are multiple realities. Objectivity is a traditional goal, but Lincoln and Guba (1985) perceive it is largely an illusion. Naturalistic inquiry is dependent on context. Interpretation is both limited and enriched by context. It is imperative that qualitative researchers gather data (e.g., interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts), which represent the most complete picture and gives shape to emerging design (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Every situation is different, as is every human being. Qualitative studies do not exist to make direct comparisons, nor do they establish cause and effect relationships (Erlandson et al., 1993). Scholars and researchers can learn from the experiences of others. As a culture, humans learn by seeing, doing, and making decisions based on the inputs of data (Merriam, 2009).

Type of Study

Merriam (2009) states that “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds,

and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). A qualitative methodology and a case study research design were used to conduct this study. Merriam (2009) defines case study design as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40), which is a system where one can clearly define the boundaries around the object of the research (Merriam, 2009).

Yin (2008) further defines a case study as, “an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p. 40). Merriam (2009) goes on to explain that, “The single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in the delimitating the object of the study, the case” (p. 40).

This case study focused on a particular situation, program, event, or phenomenon. Case study is a good design for looking at practical problems (Merriam, 2009). There is intrinsic value in the thick description, which will be discovered from studying this situation (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) makes the observation that “Qualitative case study is valued for its ability to capture complex action, perception and interpretation” (p. 44). Guba and Lincoln (1981) conclude that:

Case study is the best reporting form for evaluations. For them, case study is best because it provides thick description, is grounded, is holistic and lifelike, simplifies data to be considered by the reader, illuminates meanings, and can communicate tacit knowledge. Above all else, though, this type of case study weighs information to produce judgment. Judging is the final and ultimate act of evaluation. (p. 375)

The researcher has identified the type of case study as an intrinsic case study. Stake (1995) uses the term intrinsic to describe a case study research where the

researcher has a genuine interest in the case and that the intent is to better understand the case. This type of qualitative case study is best taken upon when there is an intrinsic interested in a case and the researcher is not looking understand the abstract construct or generic phenomenon (Stake, 2005). Merriam (2009) speaks to the strength of a case study design by pointing out that case studies are anchored in real life situations, which provide a rich and holistic account of an observable experience. “These insights can be construed as a tentative hypothesis that helps structure future research: hence, case study plays an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base” (Merriam, 2009, p. 51). This type of case study design is appealing to higher education because the research is facilitated by the exploration of the case using several sources of data collection and ensures that the case will be well explored (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005)

Participants and Sampling

In this naturalistic, qualitative case study, purposive sampling was used to select a group of participants who will provide rich information for addressing the research questions. Patton (2002) reasons that “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (p.77). Purposeful sampling is critical for one to learn a great deal about the issues central to the research problem. Unlike quantitative research, which looks to develop generalizable results of a population, this qualitative intrinsic case study will need to pinpoint specific participants who can help answer the research questions posed (Erlandson et al., 1993).

After receiving approval from the Protection of Human Subjects Committee (see Appendix A), the data collection process for the study began. The researcher worked with the *college union* staff who were student employee supervisors to develop a list of possible participants for the study. A meeting was held to elicit recommendations of potential participants. A list of 26 names were generated from the supervisor's recommendations. The *college union* supervisors had maintained contact with the former student employees so the supervisors were asked to facilitate the initial contact. A recruitment email (see Appendix B) and description of the study (see Appendix C) were sent to the 26 potential participants by a third party staff member.

Those interested in voluntarily participating in the study were asked to contact the researcher directly by email. Initially, eight emails from former student employees were received by the researcher expressing an interest in being part of the study. There were seven more positive responses which arrived after the study participants had been selected. Purposive sampling was used to select six participants who would provide rich information about the topic of this study. The criterion used to purposefully select the six participants was their varied *college union* student employment experience. From the group of volunteer participants, the researcher purposefully selected six former student employees whose work experience at the college union was different than that of the other participants. This is not to say that there were not some commonalities between the participants; however, the researcher attempted to select a variety of job assignments and areas of different supervision in order to create a heterogeneous group from which to collect data. The researcher felt

that a heterogeneous group of former student employees of the *college union* would provide the best information to address the research questions. In selecting former student employees, the participants were more likely to be able to reflect on their past experiences and make observations of how the experiences with the *college union* affected their lives then and now.

Data Collection

There are multiple data sources that can be used for data collection purposes in qualitative research. Interviews are one of these sources. DeMarrais (2004) defines an interview as “a process which a researcher and a participant engage in conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (p. 55). Interviews are necessary particularly when direct observation of an event or situation is not available (Merriam, 2009). Interviews can be highly structured, semi-structured, or unstructured.

Qualitative investigations are more open-ended or unstructured by design. This allows for the participants to respond in unique ways (Merriam, 2009). Asking good questions is the key to getting meaningful data. A list of open ended questions is often used to elicit responses, but there is the opportunity to ask additional questions not predetermined when the situation calls for it. While there is a need for the participants to provide information on a specific situation or event, the semi-structured interview allows for the participant to provide rich description of the case study (Merriam, 2009).

Another source for data collection is documents analysis. Qualitative research utilizes documents as a major source of data to be collected. Merriam (2009) states that “document is an umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, digital

and physical material relevant to the study at hand” (p. 139). Public records, personal papers, popular culture documents, visual documents, physical materials and artifacts can all be considered as data for one’s case study (Merriam, 2009).

An additional source of data collection used in this study was reflexive journal. “Journaling is a popular data collection process in case studies and narrative research” (Creswell, 2007, p.141). Merriam (2009) refers to the researcher’s journal as “an introspective record of the anthropologist’s experience in the field” (p. 136). A reflexive journal was maintained by the researcher, in which important questions, observations, and thoughts regarding data collection and analysis will be recorded.

Data Analysis

Erlandson et al. (1993) explain that “the analysis of qualitative data is best described as a progression, not a stage; an ongoing process, not a one-time event” (p. 111). Some features of case study design affect the data analysis in one’s study. Merriam (2009) identifies that “A case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit” (p. 203). Having a full understanding of the case is critical in the analyzing of the data. The shear amount of data collected may make it difficult to make sense of the material (Merriam, 2009). Yin (2008) refers to this sort of organization as creating the case study database. Patton (2002) states:

The case record pulls together and organizes the voluminous case data into a comprehensive, primary resource package. The case record includes all the major in doing the case analysis and case study. Information is edited, redundancies are sorted out, parts are fitted together, and the case record is

organized for ready access either chronologically and or topically. The case record must be complete but manageable. (p. 449)

The data was systematically collected, analyzed, and coded. Analysis took place when the data was collected and continued throughout the research process. The researcher enlisted the process of prolonged engagement with the data. The researcher thoroughly immersed himself in the data analysis process. This manifested itself in the listening, observing, and member checking that occurred during the 12 semi-structured interviews; re-listening to the audio recordings of the interviews while the transcripts were being prepared; reviewing the transcripts for each of the interviews, and examining several documents and artifacts related to student employment in the *college union.*

The coding of data for this study followed a three-stage process. This started with the open coding of data (Merriam, 2009). Open coding began with reading through of the data several times and then creating tentative labels or codes for sections of data that summarized emerging themes from the data (Merriam, 2009). The researcher first attempted to open code the data electronically in groups in order refrain from using paper strips or note cards. This quickly proved to be ineffective so the researcher manually cut up the transcripts and made piles of strands of data that appeared related. The researcher used six different highlighter colors as identifiers during this process to further categorize. There were several piles of transcript and document data dispersed throughout the researcher's home office. These piles were shifted and refined several times different times. This was where the data was examined for distinctions that will be coded or named. Next the data was axial coded,

in which relationships between categories and themes presented in the data were identified (Orcher, 2005). This is where the researcher began the next phase of refining the categories of the emerging themes. Selective coding, the third stage of formal coding, was the identification of core variables within all of the data (Orcher, 2005). At this time, the researcher connected all of the emerging themes and broke them down into four main themes, each with several sub-themes. The researcher spent a great deal of time fine tuning and using trial and error to achieve the emergent themes in this process. In this stage, the data was again examined to determine the core categories, relate them to other categories, determine the relationships, and fill in categories that need refinement and development (Orcher, 2005).

Establishing Trustworthiness

The process of building trustworthiness into a naturalistic study is like developing a written language for a previously unknown language (Erlandson et al., 1993). Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that in order to demonstrate truth's value, one must provide the basis for applying truth and allow for external judgments to be made about consistency and neutrality of truth. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe trustworthiness as being established by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility is enhanced through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequate materials, peer debriefing, and member checks (Erlandson et al., 1993). Data triangulation involves using different sources of information in order to increase the authenticity of the study. In this study, the researcher intends to use triangulation of multiple data sources in order to compare

and cross check the data and to support the trustworthiness, authenticity, and treatment of the participants (Erlandson et al., 1993; Merriam, 2009).

Transferability is the extent to which the research findings can be applied to other contexts or with other respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To increase the potential for the transferability of these findings to other contexts, the researcher intends to use thick description and purposeful sampling which will enable observers to make tentative judgments of how the researcher's observations might be applicable in other contexts (Erlandson et al., 1993). In a naturalistic study, those on the receiving end of the context must determine the extent of the transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher explored the case of student employment in the college union at a large university in the southwestern U.S. While the findings of the study will not be generalizable to the greater context given the qualitative design, thick, rich descriptions of the phenomenon under study will allow for the potential of transferability by other viewers.

Dependability is supported through an audit, which is a detailed descriptor of the process and documentation supporting it (Erlandson et al., 1993). After coding and analyzing the data, the researcher intends to account for all pieces of data used to present the themes, which will be explained in the audit trail. The audit trail serves as written documentation that actions, such as interviews with the participants, did take place. Merriam (2009) explains that an audit trail in qualitative research consists of a thorough collection of documentation regarding all aspects of the research. "An audit trail in a qualitative study describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (p. 223).

Confirmability is communicated through an audit trail, which looks at the product of the study and can be logically connected back to the construct of the data (Erlandson et al., 1993). For this study the researcher developed an audit trail tracking system which assigned a number in brackets [#] to a corresponding piece of data collected and used as a citations throughout Chapters IV and V (see Appendix J). The reader can use the audit trail to construct a detailed explanation of the account of the researcher's triangulated data analysis. The researcher has authenticate how the research process led to the findings of the themes by the use of original interview quotes and notes, audio tapes, member check notes, reflexive journals and secondary interviewer notes (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

The primary purpose of gathering data in naturalistic inquiry is to gain the ability to construct reality in ways that are consistent and compatible with the constructions of the setting's inhabitants (Erlandson et al., 1993). Researchers do not look to develop emerging themes for every scenario; rather, they focus on the participants, and their realities (Erlandson et al., 1993). Data gathering is done in many (different) ways relying on the five senses and intuition (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Ethical Consideration and Safety Protocol

The researcher sought the permission of the Texas Tech University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) to conduct the study prior to starting the data collection. Since the participants were each over the age of 18 and no longer enrolled at *the university*, the subject matter of the student employment in the college union was most likely not a sensitive issue, and the recorded interviews were at the expressed permission of the participants, an expedited (HRPP) review criterion was

sought. Each of the participants was assigned a pseudonym in order to assure confidentiality. All data collected was kept in a locked in a filing cabinet that only the researcher had access to throughout the study. All research materials will be maintained for a period of seven years after collection at which time the researcher will destroy all data associated with the research (TTU Human Research Protection Program, 2014).

Context of the Study and the Researcher

Context of the Study

Astin (1999), the foremost expert on student involvement theory, believes that academic experience can be enhanced by involvement. To reiterate, Astin's student involvement theory is based on the concept that the more physical and psychological energy a student devotes to the academic experience the more that student will get out of the opportunity. If the student spends a great deal of effort studying, attending events on campus, actively participating in student organizations, having an on-campus job and interacting with faculty, staff and students, the more engaged, and ultimately, more successful the student will be (Astin, 1999). This qualitative intrinsic case study research centered around six former student employees of the college union. The college union and activities department is located at a large, public research university located in the Southwestern region of the U.S. These former student employees have since graduated from the study institution.

Context of the Researcher

I have worked in higher education for 28 years at five different state institutions. I think that I have an interesting perspective about working in a university environment because of my varied background. I started in the college union early on in my professional career at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. I was given an opportunity to learn the college union idea at the Illini Union, which happens to be one of the seven original founding members of the Association for College Unions International (ACUI).

Like many in the student affairs profession, it was my undergraduate leadership and student employment experiences what ultimately led me to pursue a career in this field and to further my education. I knew when I began the doctoral program in higher education four years ago that I wanted to focus my research on the college union. I quickly discovered that there was a gap in the literature that needed be filled. Throughout my course work I gravitated to topics and issues that I felt somehow connected me to what I was experiencing as a professional in the college union on a large university campus. I knew there were lessons to be learned through the college union and I wanted to use this platform to tell my college union story and to use my knowledge to further the profession.

The other reason I pursued college union research was that over time I developed a concern that universities do not fully recognize or understand the out-of-class learning going on in the college union, which supports the educational mission. When I was hired at my current university, I was fortunate to arrive at a time when the college union was being expanded and renovated. At the same time, I was given the opportunity to implement a new organizational structure for the department, which

included some rather large changes to the programming done by and for students, and the manner in which student employees were utilized. What I realized early on in my tenure at the university was that the college union was viewed mostly as an impressive facility that could be used as a recruitment tool. Supporting the recruitment efforts of the university is a good thing but it shouldn't be the only thing. I have jokingly said that the college union is not only pretty but it has a brain. All kidding aside, as a professional with a passion for student development and learning, I want the college union to be valued for being an out-of class learning environment for students. I addressed this in my research.

I am very passionate about the college union and believe that it plays an important role in the lives of the students, as well as other members of the university community. Having said this, I am acutely aware that my personal beliefs must be held in check throughout the research process. As the researcher, I made every effort to make the participants feel comfortable and free to share their experiences without fear of reprisal. I have conscientiously set aside preconceived theoretical notions in order to let the true case emerge. I took great care in selecting participants. There is an existing relationship between me as the researcher and the participants. Any questions or concerns about the existing relationship between me as the researcher and the participants was addressed early on in the process in order to allow for the participants to share their thoughts and observations freely.

In qualitative research, it is important to address one's personal assumptions and be self-aware. Out of respect for the research participants, I had to make a concerted effort to learn about their views while keeping my own assumptions out of

the emergent data. It was not necessary for me to agree with the participants but that I represented the participants' views and perceptions (Charmaz, 2006). Understanding and acceptance are two different things. The readers of this research study can value the participants' experiences by looking at the world through their eyes.

Summary

This qualitative intrinsic case study investigated student employment in the college union. This study is intended to inform university officials of the importance of providing educational experiences outside of the classroom, which are in line with the university's mission, to educate students. The study addressed the role the college union can and does play in student development on a university campus, as well as focus on how the college union's student employment experience can affect self-efficacy of the student employees and it will increase the research pertaining to the value of student employment in the college union. This study is intended to add credence to the researcher's assumption that the student employment experience provided by the college union is a valuable learning experience and supports the academic mission of the university. The study is intended to inform the university administration about the role the college union plays on a university campus in educating and engaging the students.

Chapter IV will present the findings of the data collected. In particular, themes derived from the data will be presented, and participant quotes will be included to further illustrate the themes, and to highlight their viewpoints.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Chapter IV presents the results of this study. The topics that will be discussed include a summary of the research design, overview of the study institution and participant profiles, and the study's findings. The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study, conducted through the lens of naturalistic inquiry, was to explore how student employment in the *college union* affected student learning and self-efficacy development. Of specific interest was how being student employees in a college union affected their engagement with and at their institution; their successful degree persistence in college; their acquisition of life skills and competencies; and their increased assurance in their overall self-efficacy perceptions related to their learning and development.

This study was guided by four research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their engagement as a student with the college/university campus community?
2. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their development of life skills and competencies?
3. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their overall college success?
4. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their self-efficacy?

Summary of Research Design

After Texas Tech University Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix A), the data collection process for the study began. The researcher worked with the *college union* staff who are student employee supervisors to develop a list of possible participants for the study. A meeting was held to elicit recommendations of potential participants. A list of 26 names were generated from the supervisors' recommendations. The *college union* supervisors had maintained contact with the former student employees so they were able to provide contact information to a selected college union supervisor who sent out a recruitment email and Description of the Study document to the potential 26 participants for the researcher (see Appendices B and C).

Those interested in participating in the study were asked to contact the researcher directly by email. Initially, eight emails from potential participants were received by the researcher expressing an interest in being part of the study, with an additional seven responses received after participant selection had occurred. Purposive sampling was used to select six participants from the potential eight who expressed interest in participating in the study. The criterion used to purposefully select the six participants was their varied *college union* student employment experience. The six were chosen based on the researcher's perception that they would be the best participants to provide rich information about the topic of this study. The researcher also perceived that a heterogeneous group of former student employees of the *college union* would provide the best information to address the research questions. In selecting former student employees, the participants were more likely to

be able to reflect on their past experiences and make observations of how the experiences with the *college union* affected their development, learning, and self-efficacy.

The researcher contacted each of the six purposely selected participants to set up the first of two 60 minute interviews and sent them a consent form to sign in order to participate in the study (see Appendix E). The researcher set up the first and second interviews in the same manner and confirmed with an email to the participants (see Appendices F and G).

The researcher conducted a total of 12 interviews over the course of several weeks. The semi-structured interviews had a group of predetermined questions to be used as a guide (see Appendix I); however, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for the researcher to explore the responses the participants provided and to ask additional question when necessary. Skype was used as the tool for communicating during the interviews. Due to the geographical distance between the participants and the researcher, webcams were used in the Skype interviews to establish as much of a face-to-face presence as possible. The audio portion of the interviews was recorded with the participants' consent.

Prior to beginning each interview, the researcher addressed the interview protocol with each of the participants, and explained that they were free not to answer any question they did not feel uncomfortable with and could stop the interview at any time. The participants also selected a pseudonym that was used throughout the data collection process and the reporting of study findings to assure protect the identity of the participants.

The first semi-structured interview was used to gather participants' perceptions of how their student employment positions affected their engagement with *the university* community; informed their overall success as students at *the university*; taught them life skills and competencies; and supported their development of self-efficacy. The first interviews lasted about an hour in length. The second semi-structured interviews were used to address questions that arose after the researcher had coded the data collected from the first interviews, and for the participants to add anything they felt was relevant, which may not have been addressed in the first interview. In addition, the second interview allowed for the participants to reflect on their experiences working in the *college union*. Second interviews lasted about a half of an hour in length.

The participants persistently started off the second interview with some recollection that they thought of after the conclusion of the first interview. It was helpful for them to have some time to reflect on their experience at student employees in the college union between interviews. During the interviews the researcher clarified his understanding of the participants' responses to the questions by member-checking throughout the interview process. This was accomplished by the researcher restating and or summarizing information and then questioning the participant to determine accuracy. This was to assure credibility of the research upholding rigor in a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

After the interviews were completed the researcher listened to each of the interview recordings again while the transcripts were being prepared. The interview transcripts were transcribed by a third party transcriptionist. The researcher read the

transcripts as they were completed and began the process of coding the data that emerged from the interviews. The researcher continually documented observational notes in his researcher's journal about emerging themes and or new questions, thoughts or information that arose during the data collection process. In addition, he reviewed relevant documents and records related to the student employment experience from the *college union* at the *university* (i.e., the *college union* student employment training outlines, job descriptions, orientation materials, the university's traditions book, the *college union* and *university* websites, the *college union* and *university* strategic plans, *the university*'s business plan, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) learning outcomes for the College Union, Campus Activities Program and the Auxiliary Services Functional Areas and the Association for College Unions International (ACUI) core competencies). The data collected was triangulated through the analysis of the interview transcripts, documents and records reviewed, and the researcher's reflexive journal to strengthen credibility (Erlandson et al., 1993) of the study's findings. In addition, an audit trail (see Appendix J) is provided to construct a trail showing how the data was collected, how the categories were derived and how decisions were made through the inquiry (Merriam, 2009). Throughout Chapters IV and V the researcher used a system of assigning a bracketed number [#] to the citations used to support the data analysis triangulation and emergent themes and sub-themes. The reader can use the Audit Trail key (see Appendix J) to connect the data sources to the emergent themes and to better understand how the researcher came about the data analysis. The researcher also enlisted a knowledgeable *college union* professional colleague as a

peer reviewer to assess whether the findings seemed plausible based on the raw data collected (Merriam, 2009). The peer reviewer provided verbal feedback to the researcher throughout the data analysis process. The researcher shared his thoughts with the peer reviewer regarding the ideas that were emerging from the data. The peer reviewer asked pointed questions, posed his own thoughts and affirmed the concepts that the researcher had identified from the data which were put into groups and then formed into categories. The categories were brought together into themes. This was a very helpful exercise for the researcher in working through all the data analysis.

Profile of Study Institution and College Union

The research site for this study was a student union and activities department located at a large, public research university located in the Southwestern region of the U.S. The study institution enrolled over 35,000 students in fall 2014. According to the institution's 2013 Strategic Plan, *the university* currently holds a *high research* designation with the Carnegie Foundation with the intent to reach *very high research* status during the university's next Carnegie Foundation review in 2016 (Strategic plan, 2013). The term *the university* will be used in reporting the results of this study to identify the study institution.

The student union and activities department is a comprehensive student union and activities program that consists of an accounting, payroll and budget office, meeting room reservations and event planning office, student organization support center and cubicle space, welcome information desks, a ticketing operation, a full service proscenium stage style theatre and audio-visual operations, game room operation, union activities and programming board, technical support and custodial,

set ups and maintenance operations. The department is housed in a state-of-the-art 246,000 square foot facility (Department website, 2014). The term *college union* will be used to reflect this department throughout the reporting of the findings of this study.

Profile of Study Participants

There were six purposefully selected participants in the study. Each of them had worked for the *college union* for a minimum of two years while students at *the university*. Each has since graduated from *the university* and has gone on to take positions in their chosen career fields.

Amber is a 25 year old married female who graduated from *the university* in 2011 with an undergraduate degree in Restaurant, Hotel and Institutional Management. She went on to obtain her master's degree in Education in College Student Affairs from a university located in the Southeast region of the U.S. Amber is currently employed as the Coordinator of Leadership & Programming at a university in the South Pacific region of the U.S. During Amber's four years as a student employee of the *college union*, she worked as a *college union* programming board coordinator, *college union* programming board executive member and a meeting room reservations assistant.

Benjamin is a 28 year old single male who graduated from *the university* in 2010 with a master's degree in Higher Education. Benjamin also holds an undergraduate degree in Music from *the university*. Benjamin is currently employed as a Residence Life Coordinator at a university on the West coast region of the U.S. During Benjamin's two years as a student employee of the *college union* department

he worked as *college union* programming board advisor, graduate assistant and a *college union* operation's supervisor graduate assistant overseeing building operations.

Dexter is a 26 year old married male who graduated from *the university* in 2011 with his master's degree in Business Administration. Dexter had previously obtained an undergraduate degree in Business Administration in Marketing and Management from *the university*. Dexter is currently employed as the Marketing Coordinator for a firm in the Southwest region of the U.S. During Dexter's four years as a student employee of the *college union* department he worked as a *college union* programming board coordinator, a maintenance crewmember and building manager. Before coming to work for the *college union*, Dexter had a job working in the food service operation that is housed in the *college union*.

Ellie is a 28 year old married female who graduated from *the university* in 2007 with an undergraduate degree in Personal Financial Planning. Ellie is currently employed as a financial planner doing contracted work for a private company in the Rocky Mountain region of the U.S. During Ellie's two years as a student employee of the college union, Ellie worked as student assistant in the college union' business office and budget preparation.

Nicole is a 23 year old single female who graduated from *the university* in 2013 with an undergraduate degree in English. She is planning to go back to school to pursue a graduate degree at a later date. Nicole is currently working as a high school English Teacher for a Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Charter School in the Rocky Mountain region of the U.S. During Nicole's four years as a student employee of the *college union* department she worked as a *college union*

programming board coordinator, *college union* programming board executive member, and as a building manager. Nicole also concurrently worked in the university bookstore café.

Sarah is a 29 year old married female who graduated from *the university* in 2010 with a master's degree in Higher Education. Sarah completed her undergraduate degree in Business Management with a Marketing concentration at a university in the Atlantic Coast region of the U.S. Sarah took a year off to work before heading to graduate school at *the university*. Sarah is currently employed as the Assistant Director of Student Activities & Special Events at a regional university in the Southwest region of the U.S. During Sarah's two years as a student employee of the *college union* department she worked as *college union* programming board advisor, graduate assistant.

Findings

The following section will provide the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of the data collected for this study. Through the analysis of the data, four main themes emerged. The themes were: 1) the *college union* as a community center for *the university*; 2) student employment in the *college union* is an out-of-class learning experience; 3) student employment in the *college union* encourages the development of the student; and 4) student employment in the *college union* supports self-efficacy development. There were sub-themes within each of the primary themes. These themes and sub-themes will be explored in greater detail in the discussions of the findings that follow.

The College Union is the Community Center of the University

Research question one explored how former student employees of the *college union* perceived that their student employment affected their engagement with the college/university campus community. Through the analysis of the data the theme of the *college union* as a community center for *the university* emerged. Within this theme the following subthemes emerged: campus traditions and enduring loyalty; informational community; inclusive community; diverse community; informal gathering place and educational and entertaining events.

The *college union* strives to provide students with a unifying force of community on *the university* campus. This is further supported by the documents of the *college union*'s mission and vision statements, which speak to providing the campus with programs, services and facilities that support *the university* educational mission [1], as well as the Association of College Unions International's (ACUI) identification of the role of the College Union which addresses how *college unions* support community and serve many different campus populations [2]. The participants professed an understanding of how they perceived their community at *the university* was supported through the facility, programs and services of the *college union* prior to becoming a student employee of the union [3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8]. The emergent sub-themes associated with how community building is accomplished by a *college union* included promoting campus traditions and loyalty; providing opportunities for informal gatherings; assisting campus visitors; helping students navigate the university systems; producing events that both educate and entertain, and being a community which supports campus diversity [9].

College unions are a place where different members of the campus community, faculty, staff, students, retirees, and guest of the university come together to interact as part of *the university* community [10]. There is a synergy of community, which takes place when the different populations intersect in the *college union*. It is as much by chance as it is deliberate in nature. The participants shared examples of both. Benjamin talked about how there were often times when different groups within *the university* community would come together for a common purpose in the *college union* such as an educational program, and how the common experience would allow for a common connection between groups who might not otherwise interact [11]. Sarah gave an example of the international student population gravitating to the *college union* because they somehow understood that the *college union* was where the members of the university community were [12]. When referring to the different members of *the university* community who frequented the *college union* Amber said, “You got to see every interaction [faculty, staff, students, guests] of the campus community at the *college union*” [13]. Dexter observed during his time as a student employee in the *college union*, that different social, cultural, or interest groups of students from *the university* came together at the *college union*, “bringing people into those events and things like that, ...having that centralized environment where everybody could go and everybody knew they had somewhere to study, somewhere to meet their friends, somewhere to eat, was another big [community building] thing” [14]. The deliberative nature of the *college union* as a community builder was further explored in supporting documents. The *college union*’s mission and vision statements spoke to how the *college union* seeks to enhance the university experience of students

by providing community through its programs, services, and use of facilities [15]. The ACUI Role of the College Union speaks about supporting the academic mission of the university outside of the classroom, being considered the living room of the campus, and helping campus community members cultivate an enduring loyalty to *the university* [16].

The community building aspect of the union was a consistent theme among the participants. They shared their views and experiences that designated the *college union* as the community center of university life on the campus. The participants shared their personal experiences of coming to the *college union at the university* during a campus visit as a potential student or early on at the beginning of their time at the university [17, 18, 19, 20 21, 22]. Nicole recalls:

I remember feeling, alone is not the right word, but, like, needing to be a part of something. Coming from a cheerleading team, from a high school where you know everyone. My best friend was joining a sorority, and I wasn't. I just felt like I needed a community. I think that's what it [*college union*] was. [23]

When discussing how his student employment in the *college union* cultivated his connection to *the university* community, Dexter proclaimed “I really loved the community aspect of the *college union*.” He went on to say that he really appreciated how he and his peers working at the *college union* played an active role in creating a sense of community at *the university*. He went on to say enthusiastically:

I really liked that it [building a community] was something that we [the student employees] were putting together to bring everybody together. It was one of

those locations where you brought everybody in, and helped foster their love for [*the University*] and things like that. [24]

An observation about Dexter was that he really does love *the university* as much as he says he does. During his interviews he chose to wear logo gear of *the university* [25]. It was actually *very* endearing and added to his enthusiasm about the topics being discussed.

Amber came to the *college union* looking for involvement. She recounted that one of her earliest recollections was attending a student organization fair as a new student [26]. Amber was used to being involved in high school and she felt that the *college union* would be her invitation to get involved with *the university* community. Prior to coming to work for the *college union* as a student assistant, she pursued becoming a member of a student organization. Amber stated:

It [*the college union*] had always been my home away from home, and I was finally ready to embrace that. I think coming into the *college union*, I knew that I wanted to be involved. I think very quickly, I jumped into that. I think, you know, looking back at who I was in that time period, I think, um, I think I had a pretty good sense of what I wanted to do. I didn't know yet how that was gonna add up to, to post college life, but I think I went in pretty headfirst in that time period of wanting to, to really make the most of my college experience very early on. [27]

Ellie recalled how the *college union* connected her to the university in an enduring way. She said, “Because the union is such an integral part of student life, I think in

general I felt a greater connection, not only to *the union*, but to *the university* as a whole” [28].

Further support for the role of the *college union* as a community builder was evidenced through the participants’ discussions of *the university* orientation and new student welcome events, which they perceived played an important role in building campus community and connection to the university [29]. Benjamin recalled how he would engage new students at the welcome events by sharing his involvement in the *college union* story. “I would talk about, how I absolutely loved the *college union* because there were always things that are happening there to connect you to the campus” [30]. Sarah further explained the role of the college union as a community builder by stating that *college union* staff were responsible for putting people at ease and making them feel like they were part of the university family [31].

Campus traditions and enduring loyalty. A sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of the *college union* as a community center for *the university* was the role the *college union* plays in connecting *the university* community through campus traditions and enduring loyalty to *the university*. The *college union* was identified by the participants as a place where students connect with campus life. At the center of campus life for *the university* are the customs, symbols, and activities that tie students, staff, faculty, retirees, and alumni to a common set of traditions [32]. A review of the *college union* and *the university* documents such as the *college union* website and social media pages, and *the university*’s guide to history and campus traditions support that campus traditions are important to building community [33].

This sub-theme of the role the *college union* plays in connecting *the university* community through campus traditions and enduring loyalty to *the university* emerged throughout the participants' reflections on the role the *college union* played in cultivating their loyalty to the university. The participants' perceived that the connection they felt to *the university* and being a part of the *college union* strengthened that connection [34]. All of the participants referenced *the university*'s welcome week activities, new student orientation, homecoming, Arbor day, athletics game day activities, finals weeks and pre-graduation events [35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40]. The participants also made references to public art, iconic symbols, mottos, and hand gestures that represented their university traditions and customs [41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46]. Benjamin further explained the connection of the *college union* to the traditions of *the university* when stating, "I would say that first and foremost, there's a lot of really big tradition-based events that happened on campus that kind of leads into involvement with the *college union*" [47]. When reflecting on how the college connected him to campus traditions, Dexter described the feeling he would get on game day in the *college union*. Dexter made reference to how his time at *the university* was built on school spirit and identifying with *the university*'s traditions. He went on to say:

I would say if anything, it, it increased it [his school spirit] exponentially. Um, you know, always being on campus, [at the *college union*] I knew things that were going on. Um, I was always there for sporting events. Um, you know, football was one of our big things, but, um, anytime I was on campus, you could tell when there was a basketball game or a volleyball game or anything

like, because there would always be lots of people on campus moving around and doing stuff, and you know, wearing [the University] jerseys and things.

So, the [college] union, you know, just kept me in touch with that. [48]

Visiting the *college union* during their first visit to *the university* campus was a tradition that resonated with the participants. Being a part of *the university* was a family tradition for Amber, Ellie, and Dexter, even before becoming students. The *college union* was a part of that experience as well although the facility had changed somewhat from what it was when their family members attended the university [49, 50, 51]. Nicole came to *the university* by chance and happened upon the *college union* while accompanying a friend who had scheduled a formal admissions visit. Nicole had fully intended to go to a different university but was so impressed by the feeling she got about *the university* and the *college union* that she applied and was admitted to *the university* [52]. Sarah and Benjamin came to *the university* specifically because it had the academic program each was seeking; however, each also discussed their first impressions of *the college union* facility and how it made deliberate connections to *the university* through symbols, artwork, and school colors [53, 54].

Whether the tradition originated in the *college union*, athletics, or was a part of the greater *university* community, the theme emerged over and over that the *college union* actively supported connecting, engaging and teaching the students *the university's* traditions. The *college union* is designed to engage the students in this way so that they may feel a part of the greater community and cultivate a love and loyalty for *the university*. The *college union* supported traditions and enduring admiration for the university in both direct and indirect ways. The campus traditions

and enduring loyalty sub-theme was supported throughout the review of the marketing and promotional materials of the *college union* as well as the display of artwork, flags, and other *university* symbols used throughout the *college union* [55].

Informational community. A sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of the *college union* as a community center for *the university* was the role the *college union* plays in being an informational community for *the university*. The *college union* offers assistance to those who come to *the university* needing a question answered or to be given directions to somewhere on campus or in the local community. The participants shared that this was more than just a reference to the *college union* information desk, it was bigger than that. The *college union* was seen as a base of operations for the campus community. The participants shared that students are often faced with challenges of adjusting to campus life and the *college union* aides in that adjustment by being a source of information [56].

When talking about the role of the *college union* as the source of information for the university community, Nicole recalled that as a student it is not always clear what needed to be done to be successful at *the university*. Nicole shared that because of the size and scope of *the university*, she perceived that it is the *college union's* role to guide those who needed direction. This creates a welcoming community. Nicole went on to say:

Navigating the bureaucracy, because *the university*, there are so many departments, it's sort of like a little microcosm, but being knowledgeable about the [university] systems was definitely helpful to students, and we [the college

union] knew more about the parking system, and I knew more about the bus system, and (laughs) university. [57]

Nicole subsequently addressed it as, “I think my time in the college union also made me more aware of services that I had available as a student. Like, resources at the library or, um, the editing center, at the writing center” [58].

Amber made the point that part of the reason *the college union* is at the center of community on *the university* campus is that the members of *the university* campus and the visitors gravitate to the college union for help navigating the campus. Amber summed it up this way:

The *college union* really is a hub for, for everybody, and so you get so many different folks that are in there for different reasons, and being able to figure out how to meet that variety of needs, um, I think was extremely impactful.

[59]

Ellie connected the needs the patrons of the *college union* have for information with her own experience of exposure to information as a student employee. Ellie shared this point:

I think just, it helped me see a lot more about what was going on, on campus, especially since *the union* plans most of the events and everything. So, I always kind of knew what was going on, and, um, I kind of became a resource to, like, my friends and, um, other classmates. [60]

Dexter’s recollection as a *college union* building manager was that his role was to interact with many different people who came through the facility while he was on shift. He needed to know what was going on so he could help the patrons. Dexter

valued this for two reasons. First, he felt more connected to *the university* community because his position at the *college union* gave him access to needed information and second, being put in the position to talk to strangers brought the self-described introvert out of his shell [61]. Dexter would go on to say that that experience would prove to serve him well later in his career [62].

The sub-theme of navigating the university as a way the *college union* engages new members or visitors of *the university* community was supported by Sarah. Sarah explained that it was more than just answering questions for her. She surmised that sometimes as a *college union* employee, one needs to go the extra distance and say, "Do I need to walk you to [some part] of campus to help you figure this out" [63]?

The *college union* is there to help students navigate and maneuver through the sometimes complex systems of *the university*. A common role the college union plays either formally or informally is that of campus information desk and or welcome center. The task of answering questions of students, staff, faculty, and campus visitors is at the center of what the staff at the union does and was continually supported throughout the findings of this study.

Inclusive community. A sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of the *college union* as a community center for *the university* was the role the *college union* plays in being an inclusive community for *the university*. This sub-theme was expressed in a couple different ways. The participants discussed that all of the different *university* designees (i.e., faculty, staff, students, retirees, alumni, and university guests) who make up the campus community are welcome in the *college union* and that the *college union* purposefully brings these differing groups together

[64]. The *college union's* facility and programs are truly open to all members of *the university* community and in most cases, to those who are guests of *the university*.

This concept is supported by the *college union's* policies and procedures [65].

Dexter observed how many different types of patrons (e.g., faculty, staff, students, retirees, and guests) frequented the *college union* during his time as a building manager. Dexter recalled that, “We had obviously tons of students, but even, even we have community members, and people that just, uh, wanted to come through, see the campus. You have students that are looking at [the University] to come through” [66].

When addressing the role the *college union* plays in being inclusive of all, Benjamin said:

I think that the fact that the college union is typically the place where most student organizations meet, it creates an opportunity for people to gather around similar interests and similar values and similar things that they want to be activists around. I would say that more than any other building on the college campus, it [the college union] is built to serve that function of the hub of community building. [67]

Diverse community. A sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of the *college union* as a community center for *the university* was the role the *college union* plays in being a diverse community for *the university*. This sub-theme was represented through the observations of the participants that many different types of communities find their niche in the *college union*. The participants each discussed

how there were many different sub-groups who made up the whole of *the university* who frequented the *college union* [68].

Benjamin made this point when talking about intercultural proficiency and the *college union* being inclusive:

I would say what a good campus community would look like is an environment where students can learn and learn across significant differences.

I think that providing an environment that is safe for students to engage in discourse with one another, and are able to share their thoughts and their ideas, and people can disagree with them, and still be respectful. [69]

Nicole supported the sub-themes of college union being inclusive and diverse by making this observation:

College is a time for exploration; I sat through Buddhist Society meetings, just because I was intrigued, and I remember there was, like, a, a Hindi celebration in the *college union* one time when I was [building] managing, and they were very welcoming and taught me a little bit about their cultural customs for that holiday. Um, so, yeah, I would say I was exposed to a whole array of perspectives and cultures. [70]

Dexter observed that:

You'd get the people that, you know, were just in between classes. You'd get, people that were there studying, lots of different cultures and, communities and different people that you wouldn't think would be together, were just together. That was one of the things that I loved about the *college union* in general, it

really shows how coming to this centralized location, [*college union*] the meeting, talking, and events, there were so diverse. [71]

When reflecting on her perceptions of how the *college union* is a diverse community, Nicole reflected that “It was cool the people it exposed you to, when you meet people, you are exposed to new ideas. That’s the biggest role that the *college union* played in expanding my community, and broadening my scope of the world” [72].

While the *college union* at *the university* is a student fee funded and auxiliary revenue generating operation as documented in the annual *college union* operating budget [73], the *college union* does not require payment or special membership in order to enter the facility and partake in any of the programs and services. It is inclusive by design and does serve a diverse population. This is a slightly different philosophy of operation than similar auxiliary units on *the university* campus such as the campus recreation center, leisure pool, university student housing, and athletic facilities, which all require membership in order to enter and or to use as noted in *the university’s* global fee document and website [74].

Informal gathering place. A sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of the *college union* as a community center for *the university* was the role the *college union* plays in being an informal gathering place for *the university*. The *college union* brings the campus community together often in informal ways based on the physical space the college union represents. This is supported through ACUI’s *Physical Place on Campus: A Report on the Summit on Building Community* [75].

The summit brought together a multi-disciplinary group from higher education who

looked at the hypothesis that there must be a better way to plan for, design, and manage campus space. The overarching concept was that physical space on campus has a transformative power on the campus and can support the educational goals of the university. What some may not realize is that sometimes the facility itself is the program. Often times the staff in the *college union* will exert just as much attention to lighting, furniture placement, Wi-Fi access, accessibility and egress, availability of food and the hours of operation as they do on events. *College unions* meet the needs of the campus community by providing a destination for students, faculty, and staff to meet, eat, study, and seek special services [76]. *College union* professionals pay a great of attention to traffic flow, lighting, furniture, wireless internet connectivity availability, building hours, and connections to *the university* culture all in the name of supporting the intentional informal gathering aspects of the college union [77].

Benjamin sums up how the *college union* is the informal meeting place for the students of *the university* this way:

I think that it's a really, it, it's a one-stop shop in terms of the social experience in college. It's the place where you can meet friends. It's the place where you can break bread with them. It's the place where you can rally behind a cause. It's a place where you can educate others. It's a place where you can have those difficult conversations. It's a place where you can go and have self-reflection and meditative experiences. It's a place where you can run into your instructors outside of the classroom. It's a place where you can get coffee every,

every day to prepare you for what's gonna be coming on in the future.

[78]

Educational and entertaining events. A sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of the *college union* as a community center for *the university* was the role the *college union* plays in providing educational and entertaining events for *the university*. There were several observations and references made about the *college union* being the place for educational and/or entertaining events in the data analyzed for this study [79]. The participants' experiences with community building in the *college union* were connected both to the physical structure of the *college union* as well as to the offerings of the *college union* program board as part of their overall *college union* experience [80].

College unions plan a variety of programs with the intention of engaging *the university* community. The participants each talked about the different programs put on by the *college union* while they were student employees. The document reviews of the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) for the College Union, and Campus Activities Programs supported the sub-theme that *college unions* put on many different programs to meet the educational and entertainment needs of the campus community [81]. This sub-theme further manifested itself during the analysis of the data with the notion that sometimes the programs have specific goals of supporting a campus tradition like Homecoming or Welcome Week, or that sometimes the programs take a provocative look at a current topic with the intent to make the community think. At other times, the programs are merely for fun, as a diversion from the rigors of university academics [82]. Benjamin makes the point that "Regardless of

the focus of the program, the desired outcome is to bring the campus population together in a way that encourages community building” [83]. Benjamin perceives that the educational and entertaining programs provided by the *college union* are an important part of the student experience. Having the opportunity to be a part of that as a student is a pretty great thing [84]. Being a part of the planning of the educational and social programming is valued by the students. The leadership roles students take on is part of the tradition. Benjamin put it this way, “Wow, like, we're working with this really special thing, that really is well known and notable on campus, and really, because students know about it, I would say that it's impacting what college looks like [for those students]” [85]. This sub-theme of community building in the college union through educational and entertaining programs was consistently supported by each of the participants [86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91].

Student Employment in the College Union is an Out-of-Class Learning Experience

Research question two explored how former student employees of the college union perceived that their employment in the college union impacted their development of life skills and competencies. Through the analysis of the data of the relevant document reviewed in this study such as the CAS Standards for the College Union, Campus Activities Program and Auxiliary Services Functional Areas, ACUI Core Competencies, and the data collected through participant interview transcripts and researcher’s journal, the theme that student employment in the *college union* is an out-of-class learning experience emerged and the affirmation that the *college union* is a learning community developed [92]. Within this theme of student employment in

the *college union* as an out-of-class learning experience, knowledge acquisition; cognitive complexity; intrapersonal development; interpersonal development; humanitarian and civic engagement; practical competence; and workplace skills presented as sub-themes.

Nicole made the point that, “Student employment in the *college union* is about giving students the experiences and the responsibility that comes with managing the daily programs and services provided by a college union” [93]. This statement is further supported by a review of the *college union* student employee training materials which address that the *college union* utilizes student assistants in many different ways to support the staffing needs of the facility and program. Hands on daily experiences coupled with intentional staff development allow the *union* to provide students a holistic learning experience [94].

Dexter sums up the importance of what he learned working in the *college union* this way, “You know, a lot of people have to wait four or five years down the line working in their jobs to get that kind of stuff, and I got all of that still in college” [95]. Benjamin supported Dexter’s points further when he said that, “I think that it's a really valid experience for really any kind of future job opportunity, because you develop a really impressive breadth of skills” [96].

Knowledge acquisition. Knowledge acquisition was a sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of student employment in the *college union* is an out-of-class learning experience. This materialized repeatedly throughout the data analysis as participants discussed the knowledge and skills they acquired as student employees by working in the college union [97]. Some examples of experiences the

participants underwent as student employees for the *college union* were: technology support [98], facility supervision [99], peer supervision [100], conflict management [101], problem solving [102], budgetary oversight [103], project management [104] and customer relations [105]. Since the participants were oftentimes given the opportunity to manage all aspects of their positions, they expressed that they were better prepared for their professional roles after leaving *the university* [106].

The emergent data surrounding the sub-theme of knowledge acquisition supported that the participants believed that they were learning outside-of-class by working in the *college union* and that the knowledge the participants had acquired could be applied to their academic education at *the university*. A common connection related to knowledge acquisition made by the participants was that they felt that there was a positive correlation between their out-of class learning and their in class learning [107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112].

Dexter explained it this way:

It was really a two-way street. They both [in and out of class learning] helped each other and made it actually a lot easier in classes when you have those [*college union*] experiences. Teachers always love when you're the one talking, so that made it a lot easier to get through, and, you know, get my projects done, write papers, all just things like that. [113]

Cognitive complexity. Cognitive complexity was a sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of student employment in the *college union* is an out-of-class learning experience. The sub-theme was supported by the participants' perceptions of their experiences of working in the college union and how that

supported the opportunities to think creatively, problem solve, reflect on experiences, and develop deductive reasoning [114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119].

In support of cognitive complexity through problem solving and crisis management, Amber shared this experience:

I think something that's interesting is that a lot of times as an employee, especially working with the *college union* where we did a lot of external events, I think even to some degree our faculty and staff forget that it is staffed by students. I think the expectation is that the *college union* is a well-functioning machine, and some of that, I think, sometimes that trial and error that staff gives us sometimes is not always reciprocated by the guests. I think that's a good thing, though, because then we are able to experience what it's like to have an upset customer or be working with somebody that you think maybe would cut you some slack because you're a student, but they don't, so then to be able to go back and reflect on that with someone who does respect that relationship and does remember that this is a learning environment and a very educational environment, I think that's a very helpful when we talk about confidences being able to, to manage different situations. [120]

Intrapersonal development. Intrapersonal development was a sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of student employment in the *college union* is an out-of-class learning experience. Working in the *college union* offers the student assistants the opportunity to be involved in many different tasks and decision making. Being in that sort of environment allows for the students to reflect on how they have

grown. The participants had an opportunity to further reflect on their intrapersonal development during the *college union* experience [121].

Amber talked about being in charge of a major program as a student employee that encompassed co-sponsorship from not only the *college union* but academic departments as well as several campus dignitaries. There were several teachable moments within the example Amber shared, but the successful execution of the event and the managing of a major crisis turned out to be a defining moment for Amber as she contemplated her life after *the university* [122].

Benjamin gave an example of intrapersonal development. He realized through his experience as an advisor to the *college union* program board that he could not shoulder the responsibility for his advisees. Benjamin had an epiphany while working with some student leaders at the *college union*. By his own admission, this allowed him to develop his professional identity through his *college union* experience [123].

Dexter openly admits that he had no idea what he wanted to do when he came to *the university*. He pursued a major in business because his father had done the same when he came to *the university* as a young man. Dexter recalled that he did not even understand what the *college union* was before he got involved in it. He was a self-proclaimed shy loner who opened himself up to several different experiences at the *college union* over his four years at *the university*. He found his passion was in communications and marketing. He parlayed this into a career in business and management and obtained his dual Bachelor of Arts and Master of Business Administration before leaving *the university* for a career in business [124].

Ellie came into her own working in the *college union* Accounting and Budget Office. She realized that not only did she have a propensity for numbers but she had a passion to pursue a career in financial planning. She made a joke that somewhere between coming to *the university* and graduating she realized that she could be so much more than just a trophy wife, which she alluded to was her go to plan in high school [125].

Nicole sought out the *college union* early on because she was very involved in high school as a cheerleader and as student body president. She was able to achieve a leadership role on the *college union* program board at a younger age than many of her peers. Because of this, Nicole was put in a position of authority over many of her peers who were older than she was, and who had been with the *college union* for longer. Through this experience Nicole developed a better understanding of who she was as a leader and coordinator. Nicole elaborated on a particular incident where she had to reprimand an [older] member of her committee who was a friend. Her peer was being completely irresponsible by not following through with what he had been assigned to do by the committee. Nicole found that being in a role to address the shortcoming was weirdly awkward and yet it helped her to develop her own responsibility and maintain her integrity. She could have avoided the confrontation and covered for the student but instead she addressed it and resolved the issue [126].

Sarah entered graduate school at *the university* after taking a year off to work. Prior to coming to *the university* she had a negative experience with the graduate school application process involving a different institution. Her experience as a program advisor for the *college union* program board solidified her confidence in

herself and reaffirmed that she was in the right profession in higher education. Sarah admits to having some trepidation early on in the experience with the *college union* but was able to realistically assess who she was as a professional and develop her abilities through the student employment experience with the *college union* [127].

Interpersonal development. Interpersonal development was a sub-theme that also emerged from within the main theme of student employment in the *college union* is an out-of-class learning experience. The analysis of the data collected provided countless examples of collaborative partnerships and the relationships the participants forged as student employees of the *college union*. Examples of this included relationships with peers, mentors, patrons, local community members, faculty staff, and business relationships such as agents, performers and dignitaries [128].

Nicole's reflected on her perceptions of her growth of interpersonal competence through her experience as a student employee:

Honestly, my experience with working in the *college union* made me better at talking to my professors. I was having to be in meetings two or three time a week with professionals, or even higher ups such as [the] chancellor and, or the provost. Several times, I found myself in meetings with very distinguished people from around the university, and then I was having to go to class and talk about a test that I didn't do so well on. So, I think being involved in the later conversations, and really feeling like a member of the [*university*] community, gave me the confidence to be able to approach a professor to talk, which had previously been difficult and is difficult for a lot of students. [129]

Ellie shared that because she worked in the finance side of the college union that she had to develop a skill to talk to different offices who did business with the college union such as the contracting and procurement areas [130]. Amber used the example of the having to respond to university officials who were using space in the *college union* and how sometimes she would walk into a room where the person was not happy for one reason or another and how she needed to turn that around through relationship building [131].

Humanitarianism and civic engagement. Humanitarian and civic engagement was a sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of student employment in the *college union* is an out-of-class learning experience. Developing a global perspective and world view emerged through the perceptions of the participants [132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137]. This sub-theme centered on how the *college union* is often the outlet in which the students connected to whatever is going on in the world while they are in school at *the university*. The participants recalled examples of a defining world event, which they associated in part with their experience at the *college union*. Amber recalled what it was like in the *college union* during the [first] presidential election of Barak Obama [138]. Benjamin talked about Hurricane Katrina and the relief efforts that were supported by the students at the *college union* [139]. Dexter made reference to the Virginia Tech shootings and how the students at the *college union* rallied by creating and signing banners with messages of support to send to their peers at Virginia Tech during that dark time [140]. Ellie made entertainment references about the Olympics, World Cup and the Academy Awards [141].

Sarah took a slightly different approach to the topic of civic engagement.

Sarah observed that oftentimes the *college union*'s frontline staff [students] are in the best positions to observe when there is a student community needed to formally or informally respond to a current event. A lot of times the response is born out of the students need to process or to grieve [142]. Sarah went back to the analogy of the facility is sometimes the program. Knowing world events are often catalyst for discussion, Sarah said that, "I also think that the opportunities are really endless for the role of the *college union*, just because we have those spaces, those gathering spaces for those, potential conversations to arise" [143].

Practical competence. Practical competence was a sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of student employment in the *college union* is an out-of-class learning experience. Time management; effective communication; task delegation; goal setting; professionalism in the work place; technical competence, educational advancement, and career pursuits were all skills that resonated from the participants' perceptions of their student employment experiences in the *college union* [144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149]. The participants shared advancements in these areas to their *college union* student employment experience [150].

Ellie recalls learning the importance of being detailed oriented from her supervisor in the *college union* accounting and budget office:

That was my first lesson in, like, okay, you tick and tie every single number, four times, make sure it's right, and so I think that's like a big thing that stayed with me is just be, like, learning how to have the patience to sit there and tick

and tie every number, and it's something that I, you know, still have to do every single day with what I do professionally. [151]

Nicole recalled fondly learning how to set up public address (PA) systems and run the espresso machine in the café during her time at the *college union*. Nicole shared that she was first exposed to using practical software applications like Microsoft PowerPoint, Adobe Photoshop, and Adobe InDesign to do posters for *union* activities. “Those are computer programs that I still use regularly as a teacher to make graphics and visuals for my students, although I don't have an espresso machine now which is really is a shame” [152].

Workplace skills. Workplace skills was a sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of student employment in the *college union* is an out-of-class learning experience. The participants often referred to these skills as life skills the student employees are taught during their *college union* student employment experience. Examples the participants shared were how to answer a phone, how to operate office equipment, email etiquette, how to request time off, and the importance of being on time for shifts [153]. Amber perceived the development of student employees in the workplace skills this way:

I feel like working in the *college union* is the ultimate learning experience for college students. It meets your needs on so many different levels. It's an opportunity to make lifelong friends. It's an opportunity to grow skills that you may not realize that you needed. It's okay to say, like, ‘I don't know how to transfer a call. I don't know-,’ those are things that you have the opportunity to learn in a safe environment working in the union. [154]

A review of the CAS Standards for the College Union, Campus Activities Programs, and Auxiliary Services Functional Areas supports the emergent theme that student employment in the college union is an out-of-class learning environment in which attention is given to learning outcomes through the student experiences. Additionally, ACUI's Core Competencies support the same kinds of learning outcomes. These documents along with the *college union's* job descriptions, training outlines, and orientation materials support what emerged from the participants' experiences [155].

Student Employment in the College Union Encourages the Development of the Student

Research question three explored how the former student employees of the *college union* perceived that their employment in the *college union* affected their overall college success. Through the analysis of the data, the theme of the student employment in the *college union* encourages the development of the student emerged. Within this theme of student employment in the *college union* encourages the development of the student, empowerment of students, supervisors as mentors, professional development training and in-services, and the college union is a family emerged as sub-themes.

When sharing her perceptions of her development through her student employment experience at the *college union*, Amber explained that:

I wasn't necessarily looking for a social organization. I felt like I had had that experience in high school, and I was looking for something that was gonna be

a bit more hand's on and something I felt like would be really applicable to whatever career it was that I was trying to go after at the time. [156]

When reflecting on how his involvement with the *college union* developed him, Benjamin said:

I think that an example I use a lot is that during a job interview they are not going to give you a math problem and ask you to solve it, as it's much more likely that they would ask for you to talk about an experience in which you were on a team where you maintained a budget, and those are a lot of the, the specific skills that I think that [we] student leaders learn in *college union* employment. [157]

Reflecting on his experience as a student employee at the *college union*, Dexter described his experiences as special. He went on to say that:

It has a special place in my heart because of that, so many good things have happened when I opened myself up and took on opportunities that I wouldn't normally put myself in or take on, so leaving myself open is, is one of the greatest things I ever got from the [*college union*] experience. [158]

In revealing what her perceptions were of her development through her experiences as a student employee at the *college union*, Ellie said , “I don't think I would have looked back at my college experience so fondly, but I felt like working at the *college union*, I kind of found myself in that community in college” [159].

Nicole disclosed that her development as a student employee at the *college union* was impactful. She said that “I learned to keep work professional, because we need to be cognizant of that, and that was something that was learned. I definitely

think that my student employment was way more than just, like, an afternoon shift” [160].

Empowerment of students. Empowerment of students was a sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of student employment in the *college union* encourages the development of the student. The *college union* operates with a student centered philosophy. This was supported through the review of the CAS Standards for the College Union, Campus Activities Programs and Auxiliary Services Functional Areas, the ACUI website, and the review of the *college union* student employment documents, the *college union* strategic plan, and the recollections from the participants [161].

Amber recalled what it was like working in the *college union* environment. She described it this way:

The amount of confidence that my supervisor had in me, really made a huge impact. I was a student assistant yet I was a partner in that office. I was really part of a team. It's hard to describe that feeling, that you have when something just really clicks and feels right, and that's, that's really the experience that I got on a daily basis from the reservations office and from working with direct supervisor and supervisors above that. [162]

Benjamin made this point:

I would say first and foremost, what's great about an employment opportunity on a college campus [in the *college union*], more than anything, is there is that recognition that you are a student first. I think that it provides the students avenues in order to expand their peer network and also it provides them

opportunities to run into their professors or their administrators and develop personal relationships with them in a way that they likely would not be able to do in other areas. [163]

Benjamin went on to say that, “I definitely think that just being in that place is something that really kind of builds an awareness and reaffirms that, like, this is something really big that you have the opportunity to be a part of” [164].

Dexter expressed that he felt empowered by his *college union* student employment experience. He described this empowerment as “It was not just work or not just life, it's everything that has been touched by the *college union*, and it's been wonderful, it's nice to think back now on all those experiences that I've had [165]. He later added, “I feel like I was put in those situations to develop me” [166].

While reflecting on how her experience with the *college union* has empowered her to grow, Amber made this analogy:

I feel like the *college union* has the opportunity to really reflect what is truly the mission, the vision, the values of an institution, and I think what they [the university] put in that space, the resources that are available, I think that says a lot about what, what an institution values, and to get to be really at the heart of that as a student employee, I think it builds a connection to your university like no other. [167]

Supervisors as mentors. Supervisors as mentors was a sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of student employment in the *college union* encourages the development of the student.

Ellie discussed per experiences with working with the staff in the Accounting and Budget office as a student employee in the *college union*:

I always felt very valued. I felt like they really enjoyed me as a person. I felt like they appreciated the work that I did, but I felt like even more than that, they really invested in my development as a person, and a professional, and I didn't feel like I was a student worker. I felt like it was, like, my full-time job, like they gave me that same kind of respect that they would have if I was a, you know, had a degree and was earning a salary. [168]

Sarah made the point that, “My supervisors and mentors at the *college union* were so transparent about why [x] decisions were made or why things happened the way that they did. They understood that I was constantly learning” [169]. Benjamin echoed the same sentiment by saying, “we were able to operate within a team.” He went on to say, “I could hear perspectives from three different professionals that were doing the same work that I was doing” [170].

Dexter worked with a variety of supervisors and spoke highly of each one. Dexter described one of his supervisor mentors this way:

He was very focused on getting the job done, but he was also really good at still maintaining like a friendship kind of role. We all knew he was the manager, and we respected that, and always did everything he said, but he had a really good way of, when the work needs [ed] to be done, do it, but, you know, when there's time to, you know, converse and, and if homework needed to be done, do it. It was a great— Uh, well I guess all the jobs I've had at the

college union, were really great about letting me focus on schoolwork, as well, knowing that school came first. [171]

Benjamin reflected on how he saw the mentor relationship that existed through his student employment in the *college union*:

There are opportunities for growth, and I think that supervisors that work in the *college union* are really developmental and will really sit down and ask you what you want from that experience, and if you would like to have exposure to budgeting or managing students or facilitating things, there will be opportunities to help you work on creating the schedule, or there'd be opportunities for you to get involved with other aspects. [172]

Professional development, training, and in-services. Professional development, training and in-services were a sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of student employment in the *college union* encourages the development of the student. A review of the *college union* departmental training and orientation materials supported this sub-theme [173]. Additionally through the *college union's* professional associations, ACUI and the National Association for Campus Activities (NACA), data support of additional professional development opportunities available to the student employees of the *college union* was found [174]. Amber [175], Benjamin [176], Dexter [177], Nicole [178], and Sarah [179] also reflected on opportunities during their tenure as student employees at the *college union* and how impactful it was for them to be able to attend leadership institutes with peers from other institutions [180], to attend regional and national conferences sponsored by

ACUI and NACA [181] and to get the opportunities to present education sessions and bring what they learned back to their peers at the college union [182].

College union is a family. The *college union* is a family was a sub-theme that emerged from within the main theme of student employment in the *college union* encourages the development of the student. Dexter made the point that, the “Union was more of a family” [183]. He went on to say that, “especially being eight hours away from my other family, it was nice having that connection” [184]. Ellie felt like she had four mothers in the *college union* taking care of her [185]. Nicole put it this way, “Honestly, the coolest thing about working in an on-campus job [at the *college union*] is the people” [186]. Sarah was so far from home during her time at *the university* that she felt like “My supervisors really kind of filled the role of family in the absence of being near my [actual] family, especially during holiday and breaks” [187].

Student Employment in the College Union Supports Self-efficacy Development

Research question four explored how the former student employees of the *college union* perceived that their employment in the *college union* affected their self-efficacy. Through the analysis of the data, the theme of the student employment in the *college union* supports self-efficacy development emerged.

The participants discussed how their self-efficacy development was supported through their involvement with and employment by the *college union* at *the university*. The theme of self-efficacy development through the student employment experience at the college union manifested itself as participant’s confidence in their capabilities to set and achieve goals past and present. The participants successfully graduated from

the university and have gone on to pursue career opportunities, community involvement, and a host of other opportunities, which they attributed in part to their experiences at the *college union* and *the university* [188]. They shared positive experiences of working with peers, being able to learn on the job and take risks, being mentored by staff and other student employees, and building the confidence to pursue their dreams after leaving *the university*. This self-efficacy development resonated through each of the participant's discussions [189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194].

Amber reflected on her perceptions of her self-efficacy then and now:

When I think about the impact it has had on me [working in the *college union*], I think a lot about how it helped me determine the right fit or the work culture that I want to be in. I think a standard was set for me when I worked at the *college union*. It was something that I sought out in grad school, and in another office [where she worked in graduate school] that would continue to allow me to grow those skills, to take those risks, to feel confident in decisions that I was making. [195]

Amber went on to say that she was questioning her self-efficacy in her latest role:

Currently, I am able to for the most part feel confident and feel like I have that continued growth of self-efficacy, but it's not as strong as I've had at other places. I've actually found myself recently really thinking about career-wise, what is the next step? And looking back at other positions that I've held and what is it about those that have really made me feel confident and excited about going into work and really proud of what I, the product that I'm producing, and I come back to my student assistant position [at the *college*

union] a lot as an example of what I feel like is a good work environment for me. I don't, I feel like my self-efficacy is as strong as it has been in the past but I think because the standard was set for as an undergrad, it's given me the ability to recognize where I need to go to get back to that place. [196]

Benjamin shared his perceptions of his self-efficacy development as it was affected by his experience with the *college union*:

I think that in terms of my self-efficacy, I have a better understanding of what I want in the work that I do and recognize that I deserve to work in a place that makes me happy, and I think that I recognize I worked in this place [*the college union*] that had a lot of really great things happening, and I did really great work, and I am a competent employee and I have a lot to contribute to my team, and I definitely learned the importance of being able to talk about your successes, especially in an environment in which you're being competitively recruited because that was something that I probably would have struggled with a lot without having. [197]

Benjamin further related his self-efficacy to a series of experiences which he has gone through including his time at the *college union*. He attributes much of his current success to the skills and experiences that shaped his development. He summed it up this way:

I just want to thank you for involving me in this process. I hope that I was able to contribute either a unique perspective, and if not that, I hope that I was able to validate some really strong points, and I want to reiterate that my experience [*in the college union*] that I had as a student employee was profound in my life,

and I really think that having this conversation was beneficial so I could kind of relive those experiences and kind of have that frame of mind again. [198]

Dexter's relayed his perceptions of his self-efficacy development through his time in the *college union*:

I'm making sure that I set those goals, and kept to those goals, and meet those deadlines, all those things [his experience working in the *college union*], made it to where I do it for myself now. I don't have to have a mentor or a coordinator telling me, to keep on the schedule. I'm keeping myself on a schedule and making sure I stay honest. I think that's helped tenfold that I notice my boss doesn't really watch over me as much, or, or at least I feel that way, as some of the other people at the office, and, and I think that's because of all these, things that have been instilled in me and I think a lot of that was slowly done over time with *college union*. [199]

Ellie's perception about her self-efficacy development was this:

So, that was really empowering to me to kind of feel like, okay, you know, I have talents, I have skills, I can work, and so I think it gave me a huge sense of confidence, and empowerment, and I think it helped tremendously in my interview process to not be sitting there thinking, okay, I don't really have anything related. I haven't really ever worked in an office. I don't know how to work a copy machine. You know, I've only ever waited tables. It was helpful to have professional office experience to show potential employers.

[200]

Ellie continued by saying:

I have been thinking about the conversation we had and reinforcing what I said last week which was just how beneficial it was for my development as a student and a future professional to have the experience at the *college union*.

[201]

Nicole's discussed her perceptions of her self-efficacy:

I draw on that experience [of working in the college union]a lot, and the fact that I've been put in this position, because other people trust me to do it, and I have the skills and I have the tools, and I am the person for the job. So, I've thought about that several times, and how I just have to have faith in that. I can do it and I will and I'll be successful at it, no matter what. [202]

Nicole went on to share that she has set goals based on her belief in her professional ability and self-efficacy:

[As an educator] I would love to help the American education system see success again. I am pretty confident. For now, I'm focused on teaching and being the best teacher that I can. I have a lot of room to improve, and so I'm just excited to do that, and honestly, I'm very proud of the position that I've just attained, because where I am and the people that I'm working with have very similar goals to my own as far as education reform goes, and, if I stay faithful and if I work hard and help promote their system and their schools, I think they'll help promote me in my own goals. They're very transparent as far as that goes. I'm confident. I'm at a good place. I'm at a good starting point, and I'm excited to see where my career goes from here. [203]

Sarah shared her perceptions of her self-efficacy development through her student employee role:

I think a lot of that goes back to the experiences that I had at *the University* and that I know academically just being able to understand that I potentially want to go the doctorate route, and then potentially teach in a higher education program in the future down the line, my aspirations to be a union director have definitely evolved and changed because of what I was exposed to both my [college union] assistantship, and to the [university] academically. [204]

Sarah reaffirmed that:

My growth and development was at the forefront of everybody's minds, and I think that that was something that I truly appreciated and valued and know that is something that I try to provide for my current students that I work with, because I know that it really helped to shape my experience and opportunity.

[205]

Summary

Chapter IV presented the findings from the data analyses of the data collected. In this chapter, the reader was first presented with the emergent themes which were derived from the data collected in the participant interviews, the interview observations, review of documents and the researcher's reflexive journal entries. The emergent themes were: 1) the *college union* is the community center of *the university*; 2) student employment in the *college union* is an out-of-class learning experience; 3) student employment in the *college union* encourages the development of the student;

and 4) student employment in the *college union* support self-efficacy development.

The use of sub-themes categories within the primary themes was also explored.

Chapter V will explore discussions of these findings, as well as implications and recommendations for higher education administrators and institutions. In addition, the study's own limitations are discussed, and areas for future research are suggested.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Chapter V provides an overview of the research study and discussion of the findings. In addition, the implications and recommendations for higher education institutions and suggestions for future research will be presented.

Overview of the Study

There is limited research that pertains to the affect student employment in the college union has on student learning and self-efficacy development. This is a concern for *college union* professionals because ultimately this could have a negative effect on the funding and resource distribution for the college union (Lane & Perozzi, 2014; Milani, & Johnston, 1992). Since the college union facility is often used for recruitment purposes and to host campus events, there is a tendency to view the college union as just an impressive facility without fully understanding how it can affect the out-of-class learning environment for students and how it supports the university's educational mission (Lewis, 2003). Collins and Roberts (2012) perceive that it is vital that professionals in the college union field provide evidence that there is learning going on outside-of the-classroom. They make the distinction that those in student affairs need to better articulate the unique roles and expertise those in the profession provide in the areas of student learning and development. This is one of the main reasons that this study was centered on student employment in the college union. The researcher focused on student employment in the *college union* as a learning community because he perceives that working in the *college union* as students can have an effect on their learning, development and self-efficacy.

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study conducted through the lens of naturalistic inquiry was to explore how former student employees perceived their student employment in the college union affected student learning and self-efficacy development. Of specific interest was how being student employees in a college union affected their engagement with and at their institution; their successful degree persistence in college; their acquisition of life skills and competencies; and their increased assurance in their overall self-efficacy related to their development and learning. This study was guided by four research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their engagement as a student with the college/university campus community?
2. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their development of life skills and competencies?
3. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their overall college success?
4. What are the perceptions of former student employees of how their employment in the college union affected their self-efficacy?

The setting for this study was a *college union* located within one large public research university located in the Southwestern region of the U.S. There were a total of six purposefully selected participants who were former student employees of the *college union* department at the study institution. Each participant was a student

employee of the *college union* for a minimum of two years during their time at *the university* and has since successfully graduated from the institution.

Discussion of the Findings

Student Employment in the College Union and Its Effects on Engagement

Research question one sought to explore what were the participants' perceptions of how student employment in the college union affected their student engagement with the college/university campus community. A main theme that emerged through the data analysis process was *the college union as a community center for the university*. Within this theme six (6) subthemes emerged: 1) campus traditions and enduring loyalty; 2) informational community; 3) inclusive community; 4) diverse community; 5) informal gathering place; and 6) educational and entertaining events.

“Professionals working in college unions contribute to student success through positive, meaningful, engagement of students in co-curriculum by providing leadership programs, student employment opportunities, college union governance, student organization leadership positions, community volunteering experiences and others” (Lane & Perozzi, 2014, p. 27). The data analysis of this study supports this finding. Student employment in the college union engages the student and supports their development

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) tell us, “Because individual effort and involvement are critical determinants of college impact, institutions should focus on ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and extra-curricular offerings to encourage student engagement” (p. 602). The findings of this study indicated that the

participants recognized that their student employment experience in the *college union* absolutely affected their engagement with and connection to *the university*. The participants appreciated what the *college union* provided to the campus community, but they also affirmed that their student employment connected them to this community, and engaged then with the university in a way greater than if they were just passive bystanders [206].

The college union is the community center of the university. Community building is at the heart of student engagement. The role the college union plays in creating community has the potential to address in part, the often elusive goal of finding campus community in higher education. Ernest Boyer's (1987) legacy centers around the work Boyer did with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching to better understand the undergraduate education system, and why students were not getting what they needed from higher education. In the Carnegie Foundation report, *Campus Life: In Search of Community*, Boyer (1990) makes the recommendation that there is a need for building community on college campuses. College unions as community builders, which is described in *the Role of the College Union* (1996), shares many parallels with the Carnegie Foundation's work (Butts et al., 2012). In this report, Boyer (1990) used six principles to guide his recommendation. The six principles were as follows:

- A purposeful community, where faculty and students share intellectual goals and values.
- An open community, where freedom of expression is protected but which has a civility that respects the dignity of all.

- A just community with a commitment to heterogeneity and diverse opportunities in the curriculum social activities, and an honoring of the individual person.
- A disciplined community in which the individuals are guided by standards of conduct academic and social behavior and governance procedures that work for the benefit of all.
- A caring community that supports individual well-being through positive relationships, sensitivity and service to others.
- A celebrative community, which unites the campus through rituals that affirm both tradition and change and instill a sense of belonging.

(Boyer, 1990)

The terms he used in the principles are purposeful, open, just, disciplined, caring and celebrative. These same terms are often associated with the work done in college unions (Rouzer, De Sawal, & Yakaboski, 2014).

The participants emphasized the role of the *college union* as the community center of *the university*. They each spoke about how their experiences with the *college union* made them feel like they were a part of the [physical] *university* community [207]. The participants also indicated that their engagement, as it related to being affiliated with *the university*, was strengthened by their experiences as student employees in the *college union*. There were a great many stories and discussion points that centered on a number of different ways in which the *college union* at *the university* supported and developed community. Amber talked about the feeling she got being in the *college union* and somehow knowing that it was where she needed to

be [208]. Benjamin expressed that what he found in the *college union* made him feel part of something great [209]. Dexter talked about how being part of the college union with all the different people and things going on made him love *the university* more than he already did at the time [210]. The literature supports the need for students to find and develop community (e.g., Boyer, 1987; Strange & Banning, 2001). What was learned from the participants' accounts was that the *college union* does a great deal to draw students in and give them a sense of community.

In discussing how they came to work in the college union, Nicole, Dexter, Ellie, and Amber each had a similar experience of coming to the *college union* looking for community and ending up being a part of the organization [211]. The student employees in the *college union* were then given the opportunity to build on that community as members of the *college union* organization. The different members of *the university* community (e.g., students, staff, faculty, and administrators) are encouraged to come together in the *college union* to interact in the *college union* environment.

The participants talked about coming to the *college union* as part of their orientation to the *university*, as well as their experiences as student employees and their thoughts of the value of these experiences now as alumni [212]. They also acknowledged that the program and facility of the *college union* affected their connection to the *university*. College unions are a combination of program and facility. What this means is that when one refers to the program of college union, one is referring to everything from the student support offices, student government, student organizations, events, retail vendors and services that make up the *college union*. The

facility is the physical structure, design, square footage, types of rooms, iconic symbols, colors and history, among others. Elements of the facility can in turn be part of the program (i.e., hours of operations, available Wi-Fi, seating areas for study, and special lounges). The literature supports that no two college unions are exactly alike (e.g., Butts et al., 2012); however, a common thread among college unions is that the staff develops their overall program based on the needs and wants of their particular university and campus community (Butts et al., 2012). The students play a big part in the decision making on what the program is and how the facility supports it. The college union as a community builder is part of the college union movement's history and is what ultimately ties college unions together as a profession (Butts et al., 2012).

Campus traditions and enduring loyalty. The participants' reflected on many campus traditions and about their enduring loyalty to the *university*. The college union engages faculty, staff, students, retirees, and guests to the university by intentionally incorporating university traditions, colors, symbols, history, and events into the fabric of the campus community within the *college union* facility. The *college union* site does this very deliberately to inspire an enduring love for *the university*.

College union staff members embrace the notion that their college union must encapsulate a visual representation of what the university is all about. This goes back to being the physical representation of the campus during campus visits. At the *college union* site for this study, the community members are encouraged to take part in the traditions of *the university*, for example: use of hand gestures; to sing the school fight song or alma mater; or to play a role participatory annual events. Some additional examples of the use of traditions in a *college union* the researcher has

experienced during his career would be a tradition in the college union where the community members are encouraged to rub a statue for luck [Ohio State University, University of Texas, Arlington] or not to step on the university seal for fear of generating bad luck [Central Florida University, University of South Florida]. These traditions appear to be more about bringing people together through a common act rather than perpetuating a superstition. The traditions are meant to connect all the members of the community.

Informational community. A subtheme that emerged in the findings of the study was the *college union* as an informational community. The *college union* acts as a source of information about the campus life, *the university*, and the greater community. Both the act of informing and being informed by the student employment experience in the *college union* were expressed by the participants [213]. The literature corroborates that supporting the entire institutional community means being able to inform the campus community (e.g., Butts et al., 2012). This creates an active learning opportunity for the student employees of the *college union*. It is not enough to merely be aware of what is going on in the college union, student employees are trained to actively seek out the information the patron is seeking regardless of what it pertains to, and in the process the student employees are better informed. There is an understanding that the *college union* staff perpetuate that if a patron has a question about anything, come to the *college union* and someone is available to help.

Inclusive community. The *college union* as an inclusive community was a subtheme that emerged in the findings of this study, and this is also supported in the literature. Banks, Hammond, and De Hernandez (2014) identify the college union as

being a central point in colleges and universities and can be used to “promote inclusion and be a welcoming place for numerous student populations” (p. 13). To the participants, inclusivity meant the *college union* was open to all. This is supported by the understanding that everyone is a member of the *college union*. This goes back to students looking for their own place to come together (Butts et al., 2012) and college unions being a haven for all students regardless of their socioeconomic standing (Thelin, 2004). All members of the university community are welcome in the *college union* as well as any visitors to the university. This is expressed in the *college union* mission statement at the study institution, it is the philosophy of how the *college union* operates under and carries out its policies, and is supported through the reflections of the participants [214]. At the heart of the *Role of the College Union* (ACUI, 1996) is the idea that the college union is a centralized program providing campus community building to students, faculty, staff, retirees, alumni, and visitors to the university. This is where the image of the college union as the *living room* of campus first came about (Butts et al., 2012).

Diverse community. The literature supports that student learning occurs best in communities that value diversity, promote social responsibility, encourage discussion and debate, recognize accomplishments, and foster a sense of belonging among their members (e.g., American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1997). Diversity was reflected in the different groups of students who made the *college union* their own during the participants’ periods of student employment. There were specific examples of ethnic and or cultural groups as well as self-identified populations of interest groups [215] discussed

by the participants. The community building facilitated by the *college union* was at the center of the participants' engagement with *the university*, as well as with their interactions with the diverse members of this community. Amber and Nicole spoke about the different religious, ethnic and cultural events (e.g., Buddhist, Indian, Hispanic) they were able to participate in as student employees [216]. Dexter and Ellie talked about the different social groups of students (e.g., Greek, spirit, academic) who would come together in the *college union* at an event, and how attending the event seemly brought the students together who otherwise would not have done so without the event [217]. Benjamin and Sarah spoke to how their roles in the *college union* were an opportunity to strengthen their intercultural proficiency by working with diverse student populations (e.g., International, students of color, multicultural groups), as well as special populations (e.g., active military and veterans, non-traditional students) who each saw the *college union* as their way to be a part of the greater campus community [218]. As noted by Kuh (2008), student engagement is an important element in student success. Students need to feel connected but also need to feel supported. The *college union* is an environment where different types of students find their niche by coming together to attend programs, share the facility resources, co-exist, and oftentimes learn from one another in the process.

Informal gathering place. An interesting finding of this study was the emergence of the *college union* being an informal community. The participants discussed the *college union* as a place where students would meet a friend or study before class, which supports the feeling of the overall connection to the community [219]. This goes back to why the college union is deliberate in program and facility.

There is a reason behind even the seemingly simplest detail of furniture placement, variety of food options, use of sound and lighting, and access to Wi-Fi. Desirable physical spaces are created in college unions to be enjoyed by a large cross section of a campus community. Much goes into the planning and execution of physical spaces in the college union, which can have an impact on the university's culture (Lane & Perozzi, 2014).

Educational and entertaining events. The participants' shared their experiences with the educational and entertaining programs put on for the campus community in the *college union*. Sarah and Benjamin advised the *college union* program board while Amber, Dexter, Nicole and Ellie each had been a part of the board and or the homecoming committee. Dexter and Nicole also spoke to the experience of working as the building manager during events going on in the college union [220]. The underlining theme of these programs were to engage the students, but there was almost always an educational take away from each program, and the participants understood that [221].

Life Skills and Competencies Development

Research question two sought to explore what were the participants' perceptions of how their employment in the college union affected their development of life skills and competencies. The main theme that emerged from the analysis of the data related to this question was *student employment in the college union is an out-of-class learning experience*. There were seven (7) subthemes that emerged from within the main theme: 1) knowledge acquisition; 2) cognitive complexity; 3) intrapersonal

development; 4) interpersonal development; 5) humanitarianism and civic engagement; 6) practical competence; and 7) workplace skills.

Part-time student employment is the most common out-of class experience among undergraduate college students today (Kuh, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). College unions are operations which rely on student employment. “On many campuses the college union is one of the largest employers of student workers” (Lane & Perozzi, 2014, p. 31). Lane (2012) posits that the student who works a moderate amount of hours at the on-campus job while in college will have greater educational success. As identified by Lane and Perozzi (2014), “These structured roles [student employment in the [college union] can be transformational experiences for students, especially when designed intentionally with the student’s learning in mind” (p.31). When student employees choose campus job which is related to their academic major or career path, has had a positive effect on career obtainment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The findings of this study indicate that the participants’ perceptions of their student employment experiences are that they were a learning environment that exposed them to many different learning opportunities, core competencies and skill development.

The theme of the student employment in the college union is an out-of class learning environment emerged throughout the data collection process [222]. The term *out-of-class learning* refers to the kinds of learning opportunities students are given through non-academic offerings at the university. Since the holistic student experience is made up of both in and out-of-class offerings, students learn best in environments where there is a blur between in-class and out-of-class experiences

(Bliming & Whitt, 1999). College union professionals see themselves as educators supporting the university's educational mission by informing students through employment opportunities and by providing programs and services meant to enhance students' collegiate experiences. College union professionals understand that skills and attitudes developed through the student employment experience enables a college student to think critically and exercise independent judgment (Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ryamin-Gyurnek, 1994).

There are a wealth of different life skills and competences that student employees in the *college union* have the opportunity to learn (ACUI Core Competencies, 2014; CAS, 2012a, 2012b, 20012c). The learning outcomes, competencies, and life skills, which were attained by the participants were similar regardless of which of the different *college union* experiences the participants took part in as student employees [223]. The *college union* incorporates learning outcomes in student positions, which support the mission of *the university*. Examples of these learning outcomes were presented throughout the analysis of the data and included things such as cognitive learning, knowledge acquisition, interpersonal skills, intrapersonal development, civic engagement, practical competence, and life skills. The participants were able to identify learning outcomes, core competencies, and life skills, which were cultivated through their roles as student employees. Student employment in the *college union* gave each of them practical experiences such as oversight of the facility, budgets, programs, their peers, and working with the public. There were even references to learning work place skills such as operating machinery and how to answer the telephone professionally. The combination of all of these

skills, big or small, are what the participants saw as the benefit of what they learned at the *college union* [224].

Dexter appreciated being able to contribute in his academic classes because his *college union* experience gave him practical experiences in communication, management, and supervision, which was what he was learning in the classroom [225]. Nicole and Amber felt an increase in confidence when interacting with people. This was directly associated with the *college union* environment and what was learned from the work experience, and what was learned about themselves in the process [226]. Ellie and Benjamin saw how they were better prepared to represent what they learned in the *college union* during an internship, graduate school or job interview [227]. The participants each supported the idea that what one learns in the classroom, although important, is not everything one needs to learn to be prepared for life after graduation [228].

Historically, the college union's role of space on campus has grown to include a variety of campus services, revenue generation, and a space for informal and formal learning (Rouzer et al., 2014). The participants spoke directly to the different types of learning that occurred during their student employment experiences at the *college union* [229].

Knowledge acquisition. The *college union* is an operation that is designed to be run by students. Much of the experience is centered on giving the students the information they need and exposing them to experiences they lack, all by allowing the student employee to have some autonomy. Dexter spoke about being trained by his supervisor on how to manage the facility, and then was left in charge of the *college*

union in the absence of any professional staff and how he was able to make decisions and then carry them out [230].

Cognitive complexity. Some of the ways students learn about cognitive complexity in the college union centers around problem solving and reflecting on what was learned through the experience. The researcher uses the term *teachable moments* a lot when working with student employees. Amber recalled the time when she was in charge of the major campus event, which the *college union* was co-sponsoring with several other campus departments. By no fault of her own the event was postponed due to a weather emergency. This opportunity allowed for her to problem solve, manage the chaos, and reflect on what she had learned [231].

Intrapersonal development. In student employment roles at the *college union* students are given an opportunity to learn more about who they are through the experience. Nicole was faced with supervising and even reprimanding her peers during her *college union* employment experience. This aspect of her position gave her an opportunity to learn about who she was as supervisor and to develop her identity as a professional. She saw this as a way to be more self-aware [232].

Interpersonal development. Student employment in the *college union* allows for relationship building and collaborative partnerships. Benjamin felt that his student employment in the *college union* empowered him to successfully work with others, to effectively take the lead and to be supported by his *college union* colleagues throughout the process. He remarked that these relational interactions influenced his success during his time at the *college union* and has given him a foundation for his professional life [233].

Humanitarian and civic engagement. The *college union* as a community is a microcosm of the larger community. The *college union* is a place where students can connect with opportunities and events that support their humanitarian and civic engagement. Sarah made the point that oftentimes the *college union* is where students will initiate their response to a world cause or national tragedy. The *college union* can be a place of protest or of praise. It is all part of the experience students are afforded through the *college union* [234].

Practical competence. Ellie recalls specifically how she learned to meticulously track the financials and recheck her work in the *college union* accounting and budget office. She felt like an equal member of the office, not just a student assistant. Through her work in this out-of-class learning experience she recognized her abilities and sees it as a foundation for her career in financial planning [235].

Workplace skills. The *college union* employs many students to run all aspects of the college union (Butts et al., 2012). A common workplace experience in the college union is to prepare the students to be professionals in their roles at *the university* and beyond (i.e., answer the phone properly, dress appropriately for the position, show up to work on time, how to safely work with equipment, how to ask for time off, and how to maintain professional relationships with colleagues). It is not uncommon for the college union position to be the first job of its kind for the student. This type of out-of-class learning is an important element in the development of the student employee as a future professional.

Experiential learning as a student employee in the *college union* allows for students to learn time management, conflict resolution, communication, problem

solving, and decision making (Collins & Roberts, 2012). The opportunity to learn these kinds of skills while they worked were commonly referred to by each of the participants [236]. The out-of-class experience has a lasting effect on the student's success (Collins & Roberts, 2012). When reflecting back on their student employment experience in the *college union*, each one of the participants stated that being a student employee in the *college union* had given them an opportunity to learn while they worked, and what they learned through the experience and about themselves has remained with them to this day [237].

Student Employment in the College Union Influences Overall College Success

Research question three sought to explore what were the participants' perceptions of how their employment in the *college union* impacted their overall college success. The main theme that emerged from the analysis of the data related to this question was that *student employment in the college union supports self-efficacy development*. There were four (4) subthemes that emerged related to this theme: 1) empowerment of students; 2) supervisors as mentors; 3) professional development, training, and in-services; and 4) college union is a family.

Student engagement and involvement has a positive effect on a student's ability to persist to graduation (Bliming & Whitt, 1999). The participants each had a level of academic success. Some of them went on to pursue graduate degrees. All of the participants are currently working in their field of study, and have expressed a certain level of success because of how the experience at the *university* and in the *college union* prepared them to pursue their goals. An observation of the researcher

about the participants is that not only have they achieved some professional success but they have also achieved some personal success [238].

Empowerment of students. The term *empowerment* was used consistently by all of the participants. On more than a few occasions the participants talked about being put in a position to make independent decisions and carry out tasks. The history of *college unions* describes them as learning labs which are run primarily by students (Butts et al., 2012). Derek, Amber, and Nicole each talked about being put in charge of the facility and having to actively make decisions [239, 240, 241]. Ellie shared that she was given the latitude to take on a telecommunications billing issue and reconfigure the way the department handles the process [242]. Benjamin and Sarah were both empowered to take on the role of advisor and worked alongside the professional staff instead of in a subordinate role [243, 244]. The *college union* empowers the student employees to act. The college union staff believe that students should have a voice in decision making processes. The processes include critical thinking, negotiating, teamwork skills, communication skills, and relationship building (Bliming & Whitt, 1999). The participants had strong feelings of connectedness associated with their *college union* experience in addition to having the formal learning that was going on as a student employee. Not only could the participants understand the vision of the *college union*, they saw themselves as part of the vision [245]. The perceptions and experiences of the participants are supported by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), who found that a student's total level of campus engagement, particularly when academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular involvements are mutually reinforcing, can be impactful.

Supervisors as mentors. The goal of the *college union* professional is to create environments with optimal levels of challenge and support for the student employees (Lane & Perozzi, 2014). Empowered to act, take risks, and share responsibility were all aspects described by the participants of their working relationships and their *college union* supervisors. Dexter shared that his maintenance supervisor was a big mentor in his time at the *college union*. This supervisor took the time to train him, explain to him why one way of doing things might be better than another, and then this supervisor would follow up after a task to close the circle [246]. Benjamin shared that he really valued the opportunity to process after an experience with his supervisor, and that it made him feel like he was valued and the supervisor was interested in Benjamin being successful [247]. Professionals in the college union play a critical role in the development of the students in their role in the college union (Lane & Perozzi, 2014).

Professional development, training and in-services. Student employment in the *college union* values providing opportunities for professional development, training, and in-services. This speaks to the fact that *college union* professionals see themselves as educators. Professional development among college union professionals most often takes the form of Association of College Union International (ACUI) or National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) conferences or ACUI's Institute for Leadership Education and Development (I-LEAD). Training was something that was included in the student employment experience of the participants at the *college union*, and in-services could happen at any time, but most often were used at the beginning of each term to start the academic semester off with either a current topic or a refresher [248].

The college union is a family. Family, home away from home, caring, looking out for, and being treated with respect were all things which came out from the participants' recollections of working with staff, advisors, and peer mentors [249]. The researcher observed that student employment experiences at the *college union* engage the heart as well as the head. The participants each described the connections they still feel with their former supervisors, what they learned from their supervisor, and how their supervisors made them feel in their roles as student employees at the *college union* [250]. The researcher sees this as important because the participants still value the connection they made during their student employment experience in the *college union* and see it as impactful to their development as students and now as professionals [251].

Student Employment in College Union Impacts Self-efficacy Development

Research question four sought to explore what were the participants' perceptions of how their employment in the college union affected their self-efficacy development. The theme that emerged from the data analysis process that related to this research question was that *student employment in the college union supports self-efficacy development*. According to Pajares and Urdan (2006), "Self-efficacy refers to the subjective judgments of one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action to attain designated goals" (p. 47). Based on the participants' personal accounts of their perceptions and experiences as student employees at the *college union at the university*, they not only perceive their self-confidence was raised through their experiential learning as a student employee in the *college union*, but they perceive that their self-efficacy was indeed positively influenced by the experience. The

participants understood that through the active learning process they encountered within their employment at the *college union*, and through the interaction and modeling of their mentors and their peers, they were able to set, pursue, and achieve goals. Dexter successfully pursued a graduate degree and a professional position in marketing. By his own account, he was an introverted guy who did not know what he wanted out of life, but through his *college union* experiences he was able to figure out what he wanted to do in life and how he needed to get there. Sarah saw that she could pursue a career path in college unions that she did not realize she wanted until she worked for the *college union*, and Benjamin was able to determine what he needed from a professional position and he set out a plan to meet his goals. The participants' perceptions of their self-efficacy development was that their experience in the *college union* made a difference in their lives then and now [252].

Student employees in the *college union* possess the knowledge of their positions, and have the abilities needed to carry them out, but it is their internal belief system that they can accomplish task that relates to their gains in self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Perceived self-efficacy allows for the person to exert some control over his or her goal achievement. Perceived self-efficacy is also positively correlated with students' selection of college majors, successful completion of coursework, and perseverance in their chosen field of study (Hackett & Betz, 1989; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984). The researcher observed that each of participants in this study did in fact have some success in identify a college major, being successful students, and pursuing a career in their chosen field [253].

Bandura (1997) explains that people's self-efficacy beliefs are strongly influenced by social comparisons. He suggests that the cultivation of efficacy also occurs through opportunities to observe and to model effective leadership by others. In the *college union* environment, this is done by working with coworkers as well as supervising or being supervised by peers. The participants discussed how they were able to model their abilities in their interactions with professional staff, peers, and different university personnel who they came in contact with during their time working for the college union [254]. It was often expressed that what they learned in and from these interactions was the basis for their belief that they could accomplish goals in their current lives [255]. The researcher observed that not only did each of the participants possess a sense of self-confidence but that they truly were confident in their abilities to achieve their career goals as well as personal goals [256]. The participants were able to reflect on their time at the *college union*, their education at *the university*, and where their lives have transitioned since their graduation from *the university*.

The participants each told a story about how their experience of being a member of the *college union* staff and a student at *the university* influenced their current achievements and as well as sharing future goals that believed they could accomplish because of who they are today. Amber went on to pursue higher education as a profession after completing graduate school. She developed this goal while working in the *college union*. Nicole is working in secondary education as a teacher and is planning to continue her education with the hopes of turning the U.S. education system around. She always wanted to be a teacher but her experience in the *college*

union gave her a foundation to go after what she wanted to do. After she left the *college union* Ellie worked for a financial firm in New York City, traveled the world, and is now a financial planner and starting a family. Dexter is working in his chosen career of marketing and is contemplating what his next career move will be. Sarah has set her sights on getting her PhD, and Benjamin used his experience to figure out what he wants out of life and has recently taken a professional opportunity which allows him to do so [257]. The perception is that the student employment experience in the *college union* has had a positive effect on the lives of the participants. The researcher recognizes that there were other factors at play with the participants. Family relationships, academic program of study, peer support, and who the participants were coming into *the university*, could all be seen as having a role in the participant's development; however, the participants' perceptions of their self-efficacy development was supported in a positive way by their experience working in the *college union*. The findings of this study support that student employment in the *college union* is a source of student learning, development, and self-efficacy.

Implications for Higher Education

There are several important implications for higher education that one can draw from this case study analysis of college union employment as a source of student learning and self-efficacy development. The implications are addressed below.

Perhaps one of the most prevalent implications which emerged from this study is that if higher education fails to recognize that the college union is a community builder on a university campus, the college union could cease to support community building. Community building is important on a university campus for a number of

reasons. These include to create campus traditions and enduring loyalty to the university; to be an informational community; to support an inclusive community; to celebrate a diverse community; to act as an informal gathering place; and to provide educational and entertaining events.

The importance of the perception the campus has about the role of the *college union* goes back to the discussion that the *college union* is sometimes seen as an impressive facility used for recruitment. While the recruitment function of the *college union* building is certainly a part of the role the *college union* can serve, it is not the only role, nor is it the most important. Students come to the *college union* for a myriad of reasons. For many students, the *college union* is their connection to the campus and the place where they go to meet friends and develop social groups. Its role in community building is supported by the work of Brazzell and Reisser (1999) who found that community building can be enhanced by being intentional about giving students the opportunity to interact; encouraging active involvement in groups; teaching interpersonal skills and relationship building; promoting traditions and customs; modeling ethical behavior; and reaching out to students to offer support and care.

Without the community building aspect, the college union may merely operate as an impressive facility without fully realizing and reaching the college union's goal of impacting the lives and education of the students and the campus community. Lack of community could ultimately affect student enrollment and retention. This all goes back to the point Boyer (1987) made about if a sense of community is not found at an

institution, the student will transfer to another institution which meets his or her needs, or a student may leave higher education altogether (Boyer, 1987).

The next implication which emerged from the findings of this study is that if higher education fails to recognize the importance of out-of-class learning going on in the *college union*, student employment in the *college union* could cease to support the educational mission of the university. Student employees may cease to have learning experiences which cultivate skills and competency development and their support self-efficacy development. Student employment in *college unions* would have a less positive effect on the student's success.

Participation in co-curricular activities are thought to positively affect student persistence. Part-time employment on campus, persistence, and degree attainment are positively correlated (Astin, 1982). It is thought that this happens because the students are connected psychologically and socially to a group that is achievement oriented, which reinforces the need to graduate, and students become involved in activities that allow them to acquire skills and competencies, which make it more likely that they will be successful in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Whether or not the university recognizes out-of-class learning experiences comes down to what does the university really value, and how can they support the student's out-of-class learning experience obtainment. The participants in this study indicated that their student employment experience taught them many skills and competencies that they were able to use while they were students and in their lives after graduation. The ability to evoke learning from real-life situations changes the dynamic of learning. Not only does it allow students to create meaning from

information, but is also allows students to reflect on their unique experiences in the context of their individual lives (Elkins, 2012).

Student employment is a necessity for most students and on-campus student employment has been shown to be more advantageous than off-campus employment. The higher education experience is a combination of academic curriculum and co-curriculum. Recognizing that the holistic co-curricular experience is of educational value needs to be the focus in higher education if the out-of-class learning in the *college union* will be supported.

The next implication for higher education that is indirectly connected to the findings of this study has to do with the funding of the union. The funding of the *college union* that is the focus of this study is directly tied to the value *the university* sees in the *college union* program. Funding models in higher education vary between institutions and states, but it has been the researcher's experience that in order to maintain financial support in higher education one must show that what the *college union* does for a university campus has educational value.

The *college union* site in this study is funded through student fees assessed through *the university* global fee document, revenue generation from meeting rooms, retail agreements with the university bookstore, and with the dining operations. There is no direct state funding in this model. While again there is not a standard funding model, *college unions* are most often a combination of fee funded and cost centered auxiliary units (Butts et al., 2012). This means they are responsible to ensure their own financial stability within *the university*. This funding model supports the facility operations, staffing, debt service, utilities, the programs and in the case of the *college*

union site, other campus-based programs like orientation and welcome week. Student employment is also supported.

The researcher believes that there is a risk of being viewed by the campus as solely an auxiliary unit and that it is vital that the campus decision makers understand that the college union brings added value to the student experience and in a learning environment. There is a movement within the state that *the university* is located in to consider out-sourcing all services as a way to cut the university's overhead. Much of what the college union provides to the campus are viewed as services. College unions need to make sure that all the information is available to the university administration before making funding decisions made solely on the bottom-line. What might save the university some money on paper might cost the university in the long run by eliminating student learning and development opportunities, which are found in the college union and provided by *college union* professionals who are educators and business people.

The final implication which emerged from the findings of this study is that though this study's findings will contribute to the limited knowledge based on college unions and their role in student learning and self-efficacy development, more empirical evidence is needed to help establish the importance of the college union to the university mission. College unions have been a part of the higher education landscape for the last 100 years yet their story is still relatively unknown. The early college unions in the U.S. were born out of the idea that students wanted a space to gather and debate the issues of the day. Out of this simple beginning grew the *college union idea* (Butts et al., 2012).

The college union as a community builder of present day has been developed over time. In order to make sure that the college union continues to be a forceful advocate for creating community and engagement for students higher education professionals will need to stay current with trends and issues facing college unions (Yakabowski & De Sawal, 2014). This empirical evidence is needed to prepare those in the college union profession, graduate students in higher education, and specifically university administrators who make funding decisions that impact the college union on the university campus.

Recommendations for Higher Education

There are several important recommendations for higher education that one can draw from this intrinsic case study analysis of college union employment as a source of student learning and self-efficacy development. The recommendations are addressed below.

The first recommendation based on the findings of this study is that college union professionals need to continue to develop the role of the college union as a community builder on *the university* campus. The benefits to the campus are many. There needs to be a better understanding among the different campus community members, faculty, staff, students, and administrators of how the college union supports community and why it is important to the campus community. The findings of this study identified that the college union supports campus traditions and enduring loyalty to the university; provides an informational community; encourages an inclusive community; celebrates a diverse community; acts as an informal gathering place; and provides educational and entertaining events.

Community building in the college union supports student engagement through the programs and services provided. College unions are student centered communities (Butts et al., 2012). Student communities are laboratories for learning. These environments should be both challenging and supportive. The greater the opportunity for students to participate in the community, the more likely the students will be productive contributors to the community (Brazzell & Reisser, 1999). Community building in the college union supports an inclusive community. This is done through the college union in many ways, including by providing welcoming events, which invite student involvement; generating a climate of pride, excitement and enjoyment; offering a variety of activities where diversity is visible and differences are respected; providing an opportunity for students connecting with peer groups; facilitating open discussion of controversial topics; and modeling socially responsible behavior (Brazzell & Reisser, 1999). Students who feel a part of the community are more likely to persist and complete their education.

Retention of students in higher education is seen as the key to student success. There is no set formula for retaining students but the literature supports that involvement (e.g., Astin, 1999), engagement (e.g., Kuh, 2009) and community building (e.g., Boyer, 1990) have all shown to have a positive effect on student persistence. The *college union* uses elements from all three – involvement, engagement, community building -- to encourage student success. Engagement improves the quality of life for the student (Elkins, 2012). Since student engagement activities have been linked positively to student success (Kuh, 2009), it really does behoove college union professionals to actively show the linkage between the college

union and student success, particularly when making a case for resource allocation. It will be important for college union professionals to continue to tell their story and to develop partnerships with key constituents on the university campus who can educate the decision makers on the role the college union plays in community building and supporting the students and the university.

The next recommendation for higher education professionals is that there needs to be a better understanding on the university campus of the role the college union plays in providing out-of-class learning experiences through student employment. The quality and quantity of student engagement in both the academic and co-curricular aspects of the college environment enhance learning and skill development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Working in the college union strengthens students' co-curricular experience. The emphasis on education outside-of-the-classroom that students can find working in the college union supports the role of the university to educate students. "The co-curriculum directly complements the academic curriculum by providing degree-appropriate and career related experiences for students and learning opportunities that are intentionally focused on outcomes mirroring those promoted for general education, for example, interpersonal communication and intercultural understanding" (*Global learning VALUE rubric*, 2013).

More attention needs to be focused on the intentional linking of on-campus student employment experiences such as those in the college union with the overall academic learning experience (Kuh, 2009, Perozzi, 2009). Student affairs staff need to partner with faculty to draw a better connection to educationally purposeful

activities outside-of-the classroom. Purposeful connections between the work in the college union and the academic side of the university is imperative. There needs to be more connection between the available literature and graduate higher education programs as well. There will be an increased need for young professionals to pursue work in the college union as the baby boomer generation retires and there is a shift in the professionals needed to assume these vacant roles (ACUI, Generations in the Workplace, 2014).

College unions serve as learning laboratories for students through employment, engagement, and leadership opportunities. These experiences tend to be overlooked when estimating the effects of college attendance and how to enhance student learning. More work needs to be done to show that college unions intentionally promote student learning. Forging a better understanding of how student employment in the college union is an educational experience is definitely needed moving forward if the college union profession is to persist.

The next recommendation for higher education is that funding for the college union needs to be supported, maintained, and even increased. With the costs of higher education increasing and state funding decreasing in many states, it is becoming harder for college unions to remain focused on a commitment to student development and engagement. College union professionals are faced with the task of generating revenue not only to support the college union operation but in some cases other student programs (Rouzer et al., 2014). The shift to a customer service business model focus is somewhat incongruent with the previously held learning outcome educational focus of the college union (Davis, 2011). The college union needs to have

a student centered focus; promote civility with constructive discourse; promote opportunities for formal and informal interactions with all members of the university community, and support the university's mission in terms of students and what students learn (Yakaboski & De Sawal, 2014). It is not unusual for college unions to be self-supporting and or fee generating auxiliary units, but if the college union cannot balance the ability to support learning through programs and services, with the expectation to generate revenue and support recruitment efforts of the university, the college union will become just another impressive building without a soul.

As funding sources become more challenging college unions will need to address how they will provide programs and services, and support student learning through student employment experiences. "The shift of college unions to an auxiliary service component of campus has also resulted in the recognition that student fees may be one of the only remaining paths for professionals to explore in regard to expanding financial support" (Rouzer et al., 2014, p. 9). As a result, professionals working in the college union will need to maintain high levels of engagement with the student body to promote support for fee increases. There is work to be done but the importance of the role the college union plays in support of the students and the university first needs to be recognized.

The next recommendation for higher education is that there needs to be more research conducted addressing the role of the college union in higher education. Throughout this study, the researcher has struggled to find a great deal of current literature supporting the college union. What was found is very good but is limited in scope. Current higher education literature does not address the unique work and

organizational design that is found in today's college union. The college union is most often described by its auxiliary service functions and its student programming components. There is limited literature, which adequately addresses the student learning elements of a college union such as student employment, leadership development, and governing boards (Yakaboski & De Sawal, 2014).

Professionals working in college unions can help create campus environments that foster learning and build community, yet there is limited research that focuses on how college unions influence student engagement and contribute to student outcomes (NASPA, 2010). College union professionals will need to continue to gather data that shows how programs and services provided by the college union affects students' engagement with the university, and to what extent students are learning from the college union experiences. Such data will come into play when justifying fund allocations with the university administration (Lane & Perozzi, 2014).

The added research could be used to educate the university community and in some cases help justify the college union program. What is interesting to the researcher and is perhaps very telling, too, is that even in higher education literature, the college union is not well represented. This supports the need that college union professionals, higher education professionals, and knowledge based organizations such as ACUI, CAS, and NASPA, continue to support and produce research which educates how the college union is a learning environment for students.

Recommendations for Future Research

"Student affairs claims to have an important role in retention, graduation and student learning but it is difficult to support claims without evidence (Bliming &

Whitt, 1999, pp. 181-182). In order to build on the necessary research available surrounding the college unions and the role student employment plays in the development of students, there needs to be a paradigm shift. There needs to be a better understanding that college union and activities programs have value as learning communities beyond just being *a pretty place* where students can get a sandwich or take a nap between classes. Now having said that, it is important for a university to invest resources in the development of impressive facilities which are often used as recruitment tools. Many campuses in higher education are spending millions of dollars in the support the renovation and expansion of campus facilities such as the college union. These facilities are necessary to support the increased enrollments. The researcher is making the point that college union programs are more complex and have many opportunities for increased research.

Some suggestions for topics for future research are: looking at the role college union facilities serve in campus recruitment; is there a connection between academic major and working in the college union; what role does working in the college union serve in the decision to pursue a career in student affairs; quantitative research focusing on the effects of student employment in the college union and the development of learning outcomes; looking at how the college union staff who supervise students are prepared for their roles; what role does student development theory play in the college union; college union as a learning community; and of course a replication of the intrinsic case study analysis of college union employment as a source of student learning and self-efficacy development conducted at a different institution and or with a different student population. Another suggestion for a future

study would be to use the same data collected from this study but look at it through the theoretical frame work of Baxter-Magolda's theory of self-authorship (Baxter-Magolda & King, 2004).

In order to best tell their stories, the professionals in the college union and activities field need to focus on building up the evidence that the college union is an important component of the educational experience. "Professionals working in college unions can help create campus environments that foster learning and build community, yet there is limited research focused on how college unions influence student engagement and contribute to student outcomes" (Yakaboski & De Sawal, 2014, p. 27).

The underlining recommendation for future research in higher education is that there is a need for more research centered on the college union and the role it plays in supporting student engagement and the academic mission of the university. The college union movement in the U.S. has been around for 100 years (Butts et al., 2012), yet the lack of evidence in the form of research to tell the college union story is extremely limited. In other words, there is a great deal of room to grow meaningful research which will explore the role of the college union and support higher education.

Conclusion

College union professionals need to be able to articulate the reasons why college union's student employment programs contribute to the overall educational experience of the students. "The history of college unions illustrates how the role of space on campus has evolved to showcase campus services, establish new sources of revenue, and dedicate space for informal and formal learning"(Rouzer, De Sawal, &

Yakaboski, 2014, p.4). As campuses have responded to Boyer's (1990) call to create campus community other campus spaces have been created to create social and intellectual engagement. While this is a good trend in support of Boyer's (1990) search for community in the undergraduate education experience, it can also could be a source of confusion for the campus with facilities 'imitating' college unions. As the researcher has previously discussed throughout this research the college union idea is a comprehensive program which addresses the needs of the community through programs services and attention to student engagement and student learning. Just because a campus building has a food kiosk or meeting rooms doesn't make it a college union. The college union must be able to tell the story of how it supports the university's academic mission, lest it will cease to matter in the scheme of things at the university. Funding and resource allocation is definitely tied to being valued by the university administration.

Rullman and Harrington, (2014) assert, "The literature is replete with evidence that a relationship exists between student learning and student involvement and that campus community, including physical design has an impact on student learning, academic persistence, and student retention". They go on to make the point that, "Community created in college unions can help individuals apply what they have learned beyond the classroom, while also experimenting with meaningful interaction and a deepening of understanding about self and others" (p. 43). The big question is how does the college union support the academic mission of the university, provide programs and services which engage the students and create a learning environment throughout while still playing the role of glamourous recruitment tool? College union

professionals need to stay focused on creating assessment data which demonstrates the continued value of the college union to the students and to the campus community.

The dual functions service delivery and student learning can be connected however college union professionals must continue to be intentional in creating the conditions for learning within the college union (Rouzer, De Sawal, & Yakaboski, 2014).

In this qualitative, case study analysis the researcher looked at the perceptions of six former student employees of a *college union* at a large *university* in the southwestern U.S. The researcher learned through this experience that student employment at the *college union* made a difference in the lives of the participants. They felt engaged in their environment, learned a myriad of different skills and competencies, felt that they were an important part of the *college union* department, and believed in their abilities to set and achieve goals. “A central element of college union work is designing and maintaining environments that foster student engagement in programs and activities that are positively associated with satisfaction, persistence and learning” (Lane & Perozzi, 2014, p. 35). Building a student employee program that connects the experience to the learning outcomes takes time. College union professionals need to make sure they are focusing attention on what is being learned and how the learning is occurring. Student employments in the college union should be a source of student learning and self-efficacy development.

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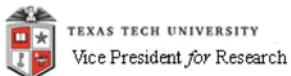
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community*. Washington, DC: The Advisory Board Company.

Appendix A
Protection of Human Subjects Approval Letter



July 24, 2014

Stephanie Jones
Ed Psychology & Leadership
Mail Stop: 1071

Regarding: 504599 A Case Study: Perceptions of the Role Student Employment in the College Union Plays on their Engagement, Success, Life Skills and Competencies Acquisition, and Self-Efficacy Development

Dr. Stephanie Jones:

The Texas Tech University Protection of Human Subjects Committee has approved your proposal referenced above. The approval is effective from July 24, 2014 to June 30, 2015. This expiration date must appear on all of your consent documents.

We will remind you of the pending expiration approximately eight weeks before June 30, 2015 and to update information about the project. If you request an extension, the proposal on file and the information you provide will be routed for continuing review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosemary Cogan".

Rosemary Cogan, Ph.D., ABPP
Protection of Human Subjects Committee

Appendix B **Participant Recruitment Email**

Dear {Insert Name},

Matthew Ducatt, a doctoral candidate researcher in the College of Education at Texas Tech University, is conducting a qualitative research case study entitled, “Perceptions of the Role Student Employment in the College Union Plays on Student Engagement, Student Success, Life Skills and Competencies Acquisition and Self-efficacy Development.” Mr. Ducatt is looking for voluntary participants for this study. You are receiving this email because you are a former student employee of the Texas Tech Student Union who has been identified as a possible candidate for participation in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

The researcher will be conducting this study under the supervision of the study supervisor, Dr. Stephanie J. Jones, Associate Professor of Higher Education at Texas Tech University. Dr. Jones can be reached via telephone at (806) 834-1380 or via email at stephanie.j.jones@ttu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns, would like to know more about the study, please contact Matthew Ducatt via telephone at 806-834-0953 or via email at matt.ducatt@ttu.edu.

Attached to this email is a Description of the Study for your information. This study has been approved by the Texas Tech University, Human Research Protection Program. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Texas Tech University Human Research Protection Program, Office of Research Services, Texas Tech University, via telephone at 806-742-2064, or email at hrpp@ttu.edu.

If you would like to participate in this study, please send an email to Matt Ducatt stating your willingness to participate (matt.ducatt@ttu.edu).

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these research efforts and consideration of participation.

Assistant Director for Operations, SU&A
Texas Tech University

Appendix C **Description of Study**

Title of Study:

Perceptions of the Role Student Employment in the College Union Plays on Student Engagement, Student Success, Life Skills and Competencies Acquisition and Self-efficacy Development

What is this project studying?

The perceptions of former student union employees of their experiences as a student employee. The study wants to understand how this employment affected their engagement as student. Also, how it affected their college success, life skills and competencies attainment, and self-efficacy development.

What would I do if I participate?

Participate in two (2) 60 minute interviews.

Can I quit if I become uncomfortable?

Yes. The researchers and the TTU Institutional Review Board have reviewed the interview questions. They feel that you can answer them comfortably. However, you can stop answering the questions and end the interview at any time.

How long will participation take?

There are two interviews of 60 minutes each, on two separate dates, for a total of two hours of your time.

How are you protecting privacy?

The interviews will be audio recorded and then transcribed following the session. The session will not be video recorded. You will not be identified individually on the transcripts. Recorded interviews will be permanently deleted once the study is complete. Confidentiality of all records will be assured by the following measures:

- Participants will be given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. All interview documentation and data will be seen by the PI and Co-PI only.
- All data, including audio recordings, notes and records, will be kept in locked file storage.
- Access to locked storage will be strictly limited to the researchers involved in the study.
- Any electronic files will be saved on a computer that is password protected with only the Co-PI having access to the password.

I have some questions about this study. Who can I ask?

Please contact Matt Ducatt at matt.ducatt@ttu.edu or call 806-834-0953. You can also contact the study supervisor, Dr. Stephanie J. Jones, who also will be glad to answer any questions you may have. You can contact her at (806) 834-1380 or via e-mail at

stephanie.j.jones@ttu.edu. You may also contact TTU's Board that protects the rights of people who participate in research. The contact information is Texas Tech University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP), Office of Research Services, Texas Tech University, via telephone at 806-742-2064. You can also mail your questions to HRPP, Office of the Vice President for Research, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas 79409, or email them at hrpp@ttu.edu.

How can I participate in the study?

To participate in this study, please send an email stating your willingness to Matt Ducatt at matt.ducatt@ttu.edu or contact him at (806) 834-0953.

How will I benefit from participating?

There is no compensation for participating in this study. Your input will be used to advance the knowledge in the field of higher education about the role of student employment in college unions in their self-efficacy development.

Appendix D
Follow Up Email to Selected Participants

Dear (insert name),

Thank you for your interest in my research case study regarding “Perceptions of the Role Student Employment in the College Union Plays on Student Engagement, Student Success, Life Skills and Competencies Acquisition and Self-efficacy Development.” I am excited to have the opportunity to speak with you regarding your past experience as a student employee of the Texas Tech Student Union.

In order to coordinate the two 45-60 minute interview process I am requesting that you please send me a phone number I can reach you to discuss the coordination of the interview. I will also need your available dates and times for July & August. My hope is to complete both interviews by the mid-August, but am asking for all August dates in case coordinating schedules becomes a challenge.

Please feel free to contact me at matt.ducatt@ttu.edu or 806-834-0953 with any questions or concerns regarding scheduling of interviews, or the research process.

Sincerely,

Matthew Ducatt
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Administration
Texas Tech University

Appendix E Consent Form

Please share your thoughts in our research project.

What is this project studying?

The study “Perceptions of the Role Student Employment in the College Union Plays on Self-Efficacy Development” will look at the potential benefits of on-campus employment in the college union as an environment for out of class learning. We hope to publish this study widely to make it as beneficial as possible.

What would I do if I participate?

In this study, you will be asked to participate in two 60 minute interviews. Some questions will be about you now. Some questions will be about your experiences as a student. Some will be about how you feel and what you do.

Can I quit if I become uncomfortable?

Yes, absolutely. Dr. Stephanie J. Jones and the Texas Tech University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) have reviewed the questions and think you can answer them comfortably. However, you can stop answering the questions at any time. You may end the interview at any time. Participation in this study is entirely your choice.

How long will participation take?

We are asking for a total of two hours of your time on two different occasions.

How are you protecting privacy?

The interviews will not request any personal information to protect your privacy.

Your identity will not be known to anyone but the researchers.

I have some questions about this study. Who can I ask?

- The study is being run by Dr. Stephanie J. Jones from the College of Education at Texas Tech University. If you have questions, you can call her at (806) 834-1380 or through e-mail at stephanie.j.jones@ttu.edu.
- TTU also has a Board that protects the rights of people who participate in research. You can ask them questions at 806-742-2064. You can also mail your questions to the Human Research Protection Program, Office of the Vice President for Research, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas 79409, or email them at hrpp@ttu.edu.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to help with our research project.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

This consent form is not valid after June, 30, 2015. **Please return a copy of this form to Matt Ducatt (matt.ducatt@ttu.edu) and keep a one for your records.**

Appendix F
Confirmation of First Interview Email to Participants via Researcher

Dear (insert name),

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research case study involving the “Perceptions of the Role Student Employment in the College Union Plays on Student Engagement, Student Success, Life Skills and Competencies Acquisition and Self-efficacy Development.”

The date and time for your first interview will be:

Interview #1 Date & Time

I have included a description of the study; a list of potential questions as well as a demographic questionnaire. I will call you 15 minutes prior to the interview to make sure you are prepared for the web based interview. Thank you again for your participation.

Sincerely,

Matthew Ducatt
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Administration
Texas Tech University

Appendix G
Confirmation of Second Interview Email to Participants via Researcher

Dear (insert name),

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research case study involving the “Perceptions of the Role Student Employment in the College Union Plays on Student Engagement, Student Success, Life Skills and Competencies Acquisition and Self-efficacy Development”.

The date and time for your second interview will be:

Interview #2 Date & Time

I have included a description of the study; a list of potential questions as well as a demographic questionnaire. I will call you 15 minutes prior to the interview to make sure you are prepared for the web based interview. Thank you again for your participation.

Sincerely,

Matthew Ducatt
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Administration
Texas Tech University

Appendix H

Interviewee Demographic Questionnaire

Location:

Participant Pseudonym:

Please select and/or complete answers for the following demographic questions. Participation to complete this questionnaire is voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. This questionnaire should not take more than 5 minutes to complete. Please return questionnaire to supervising researcher prior to the scheduled interview. Thank you for your participation in this study.

1. Gender

- a. Male
- b. Female

2. Age (write in)

- a. _____

3. Marital Status

- a. Married
- b. Widowed
- c. Divorced
- d. Separated
- e. Never Married

4. Position(s) held at the Student Union List all (write in)

(Write In) _____

(Write In) _____

(Write In) _____

5. Total Years worked in the Union

1 2 3 4 5 6 (circle)

Freshman, Sophomore, Junior Senior Graduate (circle all that apply)

6. Date of TTU Graduation

(Month, Year)

7. Current position

- a. (write In)

8. Length in current position (write in)

- a. _____

9. Highest Degree Obtained

- a. Bachelors
- b. Masters
- c. Doctorate
- d. Other: _____

10. Race

Please answer the following question by marking one or more boxes to indicate what you consider your race to be.

How would you describe yourself? (Choose one or more from the following racial groups)

a. American Indian or Alaska Native

(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America – including Central America – and who maintains a tribal affiliation or community attachment.)

b. Asian

(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.)

c. Black or African American

(A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa – includes Caribbean Islanders and others of African origin.)

d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.)

e. White

(A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.)

Appendix I
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Qualitative Research – Two Interview Process

Date:

Interview #:

Participant:

Case Study Analysis of College Union Employment as a Source of Student Learning and Self-Efficacy Development

Clarify ground rules

Answer any questions

Demographic Questionnaire

Interview One

- 1) Tell me about who you were prior to coming to the university. Tell me about any pre-college experiences that shaped who you were as a person entering the university.
- 2) Tell me about what brought you to the university?
- 3) What were your aspirations at this point in your life? Did you achieve what you set out to do? Please explain.
- 4) Did your aspirations change by the time you completed your education at the university? If yes, how so? What do you attribute the change(s) to?
- 5) Please tell me in detail about how you came to be involved with the college union? What do you remember most about working at the college union?
- 6) Tell me about your ‘freshman’ self? How would you describe that person?

- 7) Tell me about the most impactful experiences you had as an employee of the college union. How were you impacted, personally, professionally, or both? Please explain.
- 8) Who impacted in your experience with the college union? Can you give an example?
- 9) What role did your coworkers play?
- 10) Did you experience a mentorship while working at the college union? If yes, will you elaborate on this experience?
- 11) Define campus community. How has your understanding of and exposure to campus community been affected through your experience as a college union employee?
- 12) Were you exposed to diversity through your student employment experience at the college union? In what ways? Do you believe you have a better understanding of a diverse community?
- 13) How engaged did you feel within the university community while working in the college union? Please give some examples of how this engagement manifested? Did this engagement help or hinder your overall experience at the university?
- 14) What did you learn working for the college union? What affect did what you learned have on your current professional experience?
- 15) Did you learn anything in class that helped you when working at the college union?

- 16) Did you learn anything at the student union that helped in your classes as a student?
- 17) How have your position at the college union and your academic experience at the university complimented one another?
- 18) Talk to me about your communication style then and now? What role if any did your job at the college union play in developing your communication skills?
- 19) Talk to me about your critical thinking ability then and now? What role if any did your job at the college union play in developing your critical thinking skills?
- 20) Talk to me about your leadership ability then and now? What role if any did your job at the college union play in developing your leadership skills?
- 21) Talk to me about your problem solving ability then and now? What role if any did your job at the college union play in developing your problem solving skills?
- 22) Talk to me about your ability to take risks professionally or personally, then and now? What role if any did your job at the college union play in developing your ability to take risks?
- 23) What are your strengths? How have those strengths served you while working in the college union? How were those strengths affected by your work in the college union?
- 24) What do you think is the best thing about your experience working in the college union?

- 25) What role have the CAS Standards for the College Union played in your student employment experience at the college union?
- 26) What role have the ACUI Core Competencies played in your student employment experience at the college union?
- 27) If you were to describe your experience to a (new) student who was interested in getting involved in the college union what would you say to him or her?
- 28) Have you changed since being involved in the college union? How so?
- 29) Do you think your experience at the university would have been different had you not gotten involved with the college union, if yes, how so? If not, how come?
- 30) Knowing what you know now about yourself and what you have learned through your college union involvement, what do you hope to do in the future?
- 31) In what way(s) has your involvement with the college union prepared you for life after the university? Give me some examples.
- 32) Are there other things related to your student employment experience that you believe are important for me to know?
- 33) What questions do you have?

Interview Two

Clarify ground rules

Answer any questions

Case Study Analysis of College Union Employment as a Source of Student Learning and Self-Efficacy Development

* What the Researcher will do first is to follow up on the first interview and review and even sum up what has transpired up to this point. The researcher will reconfirm the ground rules and answer any questions the participant might have before we get started. The researcher believes that the primary interview will lead to questions for the second interview so there will be questions that will arise that one cannot predict.

- 1) Before we move onto today's discussion, were there any thoughts or comments you wanted to make regarding our first interview? Upon further reflection are there any things you would like to revisit?
- 2) Self-efficacy is the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability to complete tasks and reach goals. Taking into consideration what we have already discussed, do you believe your experiences as a student employee at the student union has had a positive or negative affect on your personal self-efficacy? Please explain why or why not?
- 3) Can give me a current example of how an experience you had as a student employee has positively or negatively affected your self-efficacy?
- 4) Are there examples in your daily work where you might make a connection to what you learned as a student employee at the student union? How have these experiences informed your professional life after the university?
- 5) What was it about your student union employee experience that has most impacted you as a professional in your current position
- 6) What skills/competencies did you learn as a student union employee that you rely on in your daily work?

- 7) What is your life like now? Tell about how you are doing. If you knew then what you know now would you do anything different? Why? Why not?
- 8) Where do you see yourself going in the future? How confident are you in obtaining that future?
- 9) How have your past experiences prepared you for the future?
- 10) Is there anything else you feel we haven't covered that you would like to share?
- 11) What questions do you have of me?

APPENDIX J
AUDIT TRAIL

Citation Reference [#] in Chapters IV & V	Type of or Subject of Data	Source of Data	Page/Line Number or Location Information
[1]	Document Review	<i>College Union</i> FY 14 Strategic Plan	Mission & Vision Statement
[2]	Document Review	ACUI website	<i>Role of the College Union</i> serving the campus community
[3]	Amber	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 94-97
[4]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 43-44
[5]	Dexter	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 106-112
[6]	Ellie	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 59-60
[7]	Nicole	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 135-141
[8]	Sarah	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 87-90
[9]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal data collection observations	Reflection on emergent themes from data collection
[10]	Document Review	ACUI <i>Role of the College Union</i>	YouTube ACUI Video: Role of the College Union
[11]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal Notes on Benjamin	Benjamin reflecting on the diverse <i>university</i> community
[12]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal Notes on Sarah	Sarah reflecting on the International Students in the <i>College Union</i>
[13]	Amber	Interview #1 Transcript	Line 286
[14]	Dexter	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 273-275
[15]	Document	<i>College Union</i> FY 14 Strategic Plan	Mission & Vision Statement
[16]	Document	ACUI Website	Role of the College Union Document

[17]	Amber	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 32-35
[18]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 19-22
[19]	Dexter	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 108-111
[20]	Ellie	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 83-85
[21]	Nicole	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 137-140
[22]	Sarah	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 61-65
[23]	Nicole	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 154-157
[24]	Dexter	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 276-281
[25]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Dexter wore university logo wear during the interviews
[26]	Amber	Interview #1 Transcript	Linen 97
[27]	Amber	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 31-37
[28]	Ellie	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 238-240
[29]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Participants' discussion of orientation, welcome week role in building community
[30]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 574-576
[31]	Sarah	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 339-342
[32]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	<i>College union</i> site filled with symbols, images, colors, representing traditions
[33]	Document Review	Reviewed University traditions materials	University's Traditions Book, websites, Social media

[34]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Participant's family histories and how generations connect
[35]	Amber	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 316-320
[36]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 408-409
[37]	Dexter	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 385-387
[38]	Ellie	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 238-239
[39]	Nicole	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 311-314
[40]	Sarah	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 200-205
[41]	Amber	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 329-331
[42]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 261-263
[43]	Dexter	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 190-191
[44]	Ellie	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 99-101
[45]	Nicole	Interview Transcript	Lines 407-409
[46]	Sarah	Interview Transcript	Lines 205-210
[47]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 403-404
[48]	Dexter	Interview #1 Transcript	Line 373-378
[49]	Amber	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 26-29
[50]	Ellie	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 18-22

[51]	Dexter	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 20-22
[52]	Nicole	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 77-82
[53]	Sarah	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 480-484
[54]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 421-424
[55]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Reflection on Symbols, colors, annual events, artwork and building materials
[56]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Observation that the <i>college union</i> is a source for all information, not just for the <i>university</i> .
[57]	Nicole	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 249-252
[58]	Nicole	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 390-392
[59]	Amber	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 191-193
[60]	Ellie	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 229-232
[61]	Dexter	Interview Transcript	Lines 635-637
[62]	Dexter	Interview Transcript	Lines 637-641
[63]	Sarah	Interview #1 Transcript	Line 338
[64]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Participants' discussed different members of the campus and different groups
[65]	Document	College Union Website	Building Policies, Calendar
[66]	Dexter	Interview Transcript	Lines 298-301

[67]	Benjamin	Interview Transcript	Lines 278-282
[68]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Participants' shared recollections of a diverse group of visitors to the <i>college union</i>
[69]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 254-258
[70]	Nicole	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 234-238
[71]	Dexter	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 305-310
[72]	Nicole	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 405-407
[73]	Document	<i>College union</i> Fee Advisory materials	Education code, SUFAB docs
[74]	Document	<i>University</i> Website	<i>University</i> 's Global Fee Document
[75]	Document	ACUI Website	Physical Place on Campus Report on Summit on Building Community
[76]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Notes relating to how the <i>college union</i> facility meets the needs of the patrons
[77]	Document	ACUI Website	Physical Place on Campus Report on Summit on Building Community
[78]	Benjamin	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 285-292
[79]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	The college union is a place where events take place
[80]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	The role of the college union program board was referenced on several occasions
[81]	Document	CAS Standards	College Union and Campus Activities Programs
[82]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	There were several references to how programs were meant to entertain but educate as well

[83]	Benjamin	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 270-272
[84]	Benjamin	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 281-283
[85]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 105-107
[86]	Amber	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 371-375
[87]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 58-61
[88]	Dexter	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 349-351
[89]	Ellie	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 99-101
[90]	Nicole	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 303-307
[91]	Sarah	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 246-250
[92]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	<i>College Union</i> is a learning community
[93]	Nicole	Interview Transcript	Lines 313-315
[94]	Document	<i>College Union</i> Employment Document	Student Employment Training Outline
[95]	Dexter	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 241-244
[96]	Benjamin	Interview #1	Lines 610-613
[97]	Document Review	<i>College Union</i> Job Descriptions	Learning outcomes
[98]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Nicole and Amber Notes
[99]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Nicole and Dexter Notes

[100]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Amber, Dexter, and Nicole Notes
[101]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Benjamin and Sarah Notes
[102]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Amber and Ellie Notes
[103]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Sarah, Benjamin, Dexter, Nicole Ellie and Amber Notes
[104]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Ellie, Benjamin, Amber, and Sarah Notes
[105]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Ellie, Dexter and Amber Notes
[106]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Amber, Benjamin, Dexter, Ellie, Nicole and Sarah Notes
[107]	Amber	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 120-124
[108]	Benjamin	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 20-22
[109]	Dexter	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 12-17
[110]	Ellie	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 25-28
[111]	Nicole	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 195-200
[112]	Sarah	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 138-144
[113]	Dexter	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 438-441
[114]	Amber	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 129-133
[115]	Benjamin	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 74-77
[116]	Dexter	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 164-167

[117]	Ellie	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 138-140
[118]	Nicole	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 129-132
[119]	Sarah	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 150-154
[120]	Amber	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 19-30
[121]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Self-appraisal, self-understanding, ethical behavior
[122]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Amber notes: crisis management
[123]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Benjamin notes: Epiphany, Aha moment in advising
[124]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Dexter notes: Defining who he was and wanted to be
[125]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Ellie notes: More than just a trophy wife
[126]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Nicole notes: Being assertive with her older peers
[127]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Sarah notes: Refocusing her drive to pursue her HE career
[128]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Developing campus relationships with peers, faculty and administrators
[129]	Nicole	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 384-390
[130]	Ellie	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 340-342
[131]	Amber	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 19-22
[132]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Amber, Presidential Election Night, community response
[133]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Benjamin Holiday response and Intercultural proficiency

[134]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Dexter note: Virginia Tech Shootings
[135]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Ellie notes: college union connection to world events
[136]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Nicole notes: Occupy Wall street, we are the 99%
[137]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Sarah notes: college union a place where students come to make sense of issue
[138]	Amber	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 154-156
[139]	Benjamin	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 160-167
[140]	Dexter	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 155-159
[141]	Ellie	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 354-358
[142]	Sarah	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 784-788
[143]	Sarah	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 790-796
[144]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Amber notes: Proper communication etiquette
[145]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Benjamin notes: Delegation
[146]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Dexter notes: Patron relations
[147]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Ellie notes: Working with campus auxiliary departments
[148]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Nicole notes: Responding to room set-up changes
[149]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Sarah notes: Working with RSOs
[150]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Time management, communication, assertiveness

[151]	Ellie	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 181-185
[152]	Nicole	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 248-258
[153]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Life after graduation 101
[154]	Amber	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 192-196
[155]	Document Review	CAS Standards, ACUI Core Competencies	Learning Outcomes, skill sets
[156]	Amber	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 50-53
[157]	Benjamin	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 31-36
[158]	Dexter	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 260-264
[159]	Ellie	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 455-457
[160]	Nicole	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 602-603
[161]	Document Review	CAS Standards, Strategic Plan, College Union Job descriptions	Review of empowerment of students
[162]	Amber	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 130-135
[163]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 621-625
[164]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 435-437
[165]	Dexter	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 207-209
[166]	Dexter	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 197-198
[167]	Amber	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 192-206

[168]	Ellie	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 206-211
[169]	Sarah	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 351-351
[170]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 114-118
[171]	Dexter	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 143-150
[172]	Benjamin	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 637-641
[173]	Document Review	<i>college union student employment</i>	Semester student training and orientation outlines
[174]	Document Review	ACUI & NACA websites	Student leadership training
[175]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Amber notes: ILEAD, NACA, ACUI
[176]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Benjamin notes: ILEAD, NACA, ACUI
[177]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Dexter notes: ILEAD, NACA, ACUI
[178]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Nicole notes: ILEAD, NACA, ACUI
[179]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Sarah notes: ILEAD, NACA, ACUI
[180]	Document Review	ILEAD website	Regional Conference materials
[181]	Document Review	ACUI & NACA regional websites	Regional Conference materials
[182]	Researcher Observation	Education Session opportunities	Benjamin, Amber, Nicole, Sarah each presented
[183]	Dexter	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 342
[184]	Dexter	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 353-360

[185]	Ellie	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 199-200
[186]	Nicole	Interview #1 Transcripts	Lines 548-549
[187]	Sarah	Interview #1 Transcript	Lines 372-379
[188]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Success after graduation
[189]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Amber notes: Perception of Self-efficacy
[190]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Benjamin notes: Perception of Self-efficacy
[191]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Dexter notes: Perception of Self-efficacy
[192]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Ellie notes: Perception of Self-efficacy
[193]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Nicole notes: Perception of Self-efficacy
[194]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Sarah notes: Perception of Self-efficacy
[195]	Amber	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 72-84
[196]	Amber	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 94-103
[197]	Benjamin	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 205-208
[198]	Benjamin	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 216-222
[199]	Dexter	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 75-83
[200]	Ellie	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 36-41
[201]	Ellie	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 25-28

[202]	Nicole	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 363-368
[203]	Nicole	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 372-379
[204]	Sarah	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 35-38
[205]	Sarah	Interview #2 Transcript	Lines 44-49
[206]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Notes on community building and student employment
[207]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Notes on feeling apart of the campus community
[208]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Amber notes: Sense of belonging
[209]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Benjamin notes: Feeling like a part of something great
[210]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Dexter notes: Community made him love the university more
[211]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher notes: Community in College union brought students to their job
[212]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher notes: university orientation
[213]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher notes: Hub of Information
[214]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal Participant Observations	Researcher notes: College union is open to All
[215]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher notes: College union is home to many diverse groups
[216]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Amber & Nicole notes: Ethic Diversity
[217]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Dexter & Ellie notes: Social group diversity
[218]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Sarah & Benjamin notes: Intercultural proficiency

[219]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: College union is informal meeting space
[220]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Dexter & Nicole notes: Building manager/facility
[221]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: College union programs make education fun
[222]	Researcher Observation	Researchers Journal	Researcher's notes: Out-of-class learning Co-curriculum
[223]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Core competencies/life skills
[224]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Benefit of learning environment
[225]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Dexter's notes: College union examples in the classroom
[226]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Nicole & Amber notes: interacting with faculty/Admin
[227]	Researcher Observation	Researchers Journal	Ellie & Benjamin notes: Prepared for interviews
[228]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Student Classroom, co-curriculum
[229]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Different learning outcomes
[230]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Decision making
[231]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Problem solving
[232]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Nicole's notes: Reprimanding student staff
[233]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Building foundation for professional life
[234]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: College union, social discourse
[235]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Ellie's notes: Checking, rechecking work

[236]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Problem solving, decision making
[237]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Self-reflection
[238]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Professional and personal success
[239]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Dexter's notes: Manage the facility and events
[240]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Amber's notes: Manage the facility and events
[241]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Nicole's notes: Manage the facility and events
[242]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Ellie's notes: Account management
[243]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Benjamin's notes: Paraprofessional experience
[244]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Sarah's notes: Paraprofessional experience
[245]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: College union vision statement
[246]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Dexter's notes: Mentor relationship
[247]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Benjamin's notes: Supervisor feedback
[248]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: In-service training
[249]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Home away from home
[250]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Still connected to supervisor/social media.
[251]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Still value supervisor relationship
[252]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Supervisor's impacted their lives

[253]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: College major success
[254]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Model supervisor and peers
[255]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: College major goal success
[256]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's notes: Participants self-confidence/confident in abilities
[257]	Researcher Observation	Researcher's Journal	Researcher's Participants life goals