

The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School
Department of Education Policy Studies

**PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AMONG BUSINESS
DOCTORAL STUDENTS: A SOCIAL NETWORKS PERSPECTIVE**

A Thesis in
Higher Education
by
Vicki L. Sweitzer

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2007

The thesis of Vicki L. Sweitzer was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Carol L. Colbeck
Associate Professor of Higher Education
Thesis Advisor
Chair of Committee

Lisa R. Lattuca
Associate Professor of Higher Education

Robert D. Reason
Assistant Professor of Higher Education

James R. Detert
Assistant Professor of Management

Roger L. Geiger
Professor of Higher Education
In Charge of Graduate Programs in Higher Education

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explored longitudinally how the friendship, advice, and developmental support provided by peers, faculty, family, friends, and business associates facilitated doctoral students' early professional identity development leading to persistence to degree or eventual withdrawal in a business doctoral degree program. The case study involved 12 doctoral students enrolled in five business disciplines at a top ranked research university and business college.

This research was grounded in four key theories: mentoring, social network, role, and professional identity. Major concepts explored in this study included students' individual characteristics, their developmental networks and interactions with network partners, the role socialization process and the learning that occurs as a doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher, and how students begin to identify or disidentify with these roles as important to professional identity development and eventual persistence or withdrawal. The study proposes relationships among these concepts and explores students' changes and development over time. The research question that guided this study is: *How does the friendship, advice, and developmental support provided by peers, faculty, family and friends, and business associates facilitate doctoral students' professional identity development and eventual persistence or withdrawal in doctoral degree programs?*

Data collection included interviews with the focal doctoral students, their self-identified network partners, and other Valley faculty and administrators, direct observations of college-wide orientations, and content analysis of Valley documents. A

series of three interviews were conducted throughout the first year of study (September 2005, January 2006, May 2006) to capture students' development and changes throughout the first year. Each student interview elicited information regarding students' goals, definitions of success, their personal relationships, the expectations communicated to students by those relationships, and how they identified with the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. In the final interview, students were asked to discuss how the first-year experience served as a preview of the faculty career. Network partner interviews were conducted during the Spring, 2006 semester and were used as an opportunity to assess consistency (or inconsistency) in students' and network partners' perceptions, as well as to learn more about the Valley culture.

Because the study was longitudinal, data analysis was an on-going process. Individual write-ups were created for each student at each interview time that served as stand alone entities (Eisenhardt, 1989). Included in each student write-up were data from corresponding network partner interviews and drawings of students' developmental networks. Interviews were analyzed to assess changes in students' developmental networks, perceptions of network partner expectations, and early professional identify developmental in the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher.

The doctoral students differed in terms of their developmental networks (i.e., the network partners they chose to identify as important to first-year success). These differences in developmental networks were associated with variations in support provided to students; expectations communicated by network partners; socialization in the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher; and students' resulting conceptions of the faculty career. Two overall groups of students emerged based on these

differences: Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit. Fit, for the purposes of this study, is defined as congruence between students' goals for performance, placement, and weighting of academic roles with Valley's goals for student performance, placement, and weighting of academic roles. I developed two models of doctoral student professional identity development (Perceiving Fit - Figure 8-1; Assessing Fit - Figure 8-2) which posit that the process by which most doctoral students begin to develop professional identities as future faculty members is explained, in part, by their susceptibility to socialization, individual differences such as learning orientation and, by the relationships they develop and maintain during their doctoral education experiences.

I propose working propositions and future research related to the five key findings from the study: socialization susceptibility, emotional support, goal orientation, role prioritization and fit, and professional identity development. I also include practical implications which include the need for doctoral programs to create policies at the college and program levels to monitor student progress throughout *all* stages of the doctoral student experience, the need for doctoral programs to acknowledge work-personal balance issues by incorporating family relationships into the academic community, and recommend that doctoral programs create formal developmental networks for all students.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this book to my developmental network that has helped shape me personally, professionally, and spiritually and for that I am eternally grateful. In the process of learning about the students of Valley University's College of Business, I came to appreciate the individuals in my life and the support they provided realizing not everyone is as fortunate as I.

Let me first start with my fellow cohort members, BD, Carl, Lorenzo, and Kyle. We started this program together and supported each other to make sure we all made it through the program hurdles. True friendships have formed and I cannot imagine four men I would rather go through the trenches with than each of you. I certainly would not have made it through the program without your laughter and encouragement. To Trudi, Sally, Bev, and Sherry, where would I (or our program) be without you? I also thank the students who participated in this study. My research would not exist without your participation and experiences. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your doctoral student experience.

I offer special thanks to Carol, my chair, my advisor, my confidant, and most importantly my friend. You allowed a first-year female student to attach herself to you without asking for permission and you walked along side me on this journey so willingly. Your positivity and warmth helped to make Penn State (and your office) a second home for me – thank you! To Jim - I say thank you for taking a chance on a student from the College of Education. You were the only business faculty member at the time to believe in my ideas and interests and having your support has been tremendous to my success

and development. Lisa, working with you has been an amazing opportunity. Your willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty has set a standard that I hope I can achieve with my own students one day. And Bob, you always pushed me to think bigger than what I originally intended, and your own personal questions about professional identity helped make me explore my ideas further than I expected. I believe the encouragement I received from all of you helped to make my research that much more meaningful, and I thank you for showing me what collegiality and scholarship is supposed to be about.

To my family, I would not be who I am and where I am today without you. To my mother Mary Ann, your unconditional love is so important to me and you have always been there to support me, encourage me, and love me. To my grandmother Mary Ann, from a young age you showed me the true meaning and importance of family and our family would not be what it is today without you. To my sister Lisa, thank you for being different than me. I am not sure I could have always put up with me over the years and I always admired your intelligence and creativity. To Kyle, even though I mentioned you above, you are my family and your support and “criticism” has been so important to pushing me to be better. And most importantly, I honor my grandfather – Dr. Anton J. Brence – for his tireless commitment to education and for his devotion to our family. I will forever carry a piece of you with me throughout my career and will aspire, just as you did, to help my students (and one day my children) to be better than me. You will never know how much I love and respect you and this book and degree are just as much mine as they are yours.

Chapter 1

Doctoral Education: Past, Present, and Future

Sitting in an auditorium-style classroom in the business building, all newly admitted doctoral students enrolled at Valley's¹ College of Business waited for the start of orientation or what they affectionately referred to as "the first day of my doctoral student career." In walked the Ph.D. Program Coordinator and all conversation came to a halt as the doctoral students looked on with excitement and apprehension.

Welcome to Valley's College of Business. All of you are sitting here filled with excitement and trepidation. But I am here to tell you, today is the first day of your careers as researchers and you will call this home for the next four to five years. We received three hundred and seven applications and offered admissions to twenty-one students. The twelve of you sitting here are those who accepted their offers and we expect you to live up to your selection in the program.

After the Ph.D. Program Coordinator shared some other program statistics, students were asked to introduce themselves, and to share how it is that they arrived at Valley. Each student offered details of their professional and educational experiences, with a few students offering details on their personal interests.

Several invited guests spoke of the resources available to students to help them "conduct research." The Ph.D. Program Coordinator then provided an overview of the doctoral program structure. Students were briefed on the typical first-year structure, course offerings, and program milestones they were likely to encounter, followed by an overview of subsequent years' requirements. Students were then informed that they each

¹ Valley College of Business is a pseudonym for the research site.

would be required to submit a Student Annual Report (SAR) in which they addressed how well they thought they had done during the past academic year, followed by a preview of their proposed plans for the upcoming year. The Ph.D. coordinator went on to instruct the students how best to approach the SAR by saying:

When you fill out the SAR each year and think about your progression in the Ph.D. program, you must be prepared to address the most important question here at Valley which is ‘What can I do next year to get “Top 50” placement?’ If you are able to keep this in your minds at all times, you will be successful here at Valley.

It was during this day that the first-year students were introduced to life and the doctoral programs at Valley.

The study described in this dissertation was an exploration of how the multiple relationships a student identified as important within and outside of the academic community throughout the first year influenced persistence to degree or withdrawal from doctoral study. The students were introduced to the Valley College of Business in the fall of 2005 during the college-wide doctoral program orientation described above. It was during orientation that students were first introduced to the “preferred” professional identity that they were expected to assume during the program and to display upon graduation. In other words, students were informed of Valley’s goal of “Top 50” placement (50% of students placing at the top fifty research institutions in the country) and were encouraged to prioritize program responsibilities in a certain manner (i.e., “we train you to be researchers, not consultants or teachers”). In this study, I explored the influence of students’ multiple developmental relationships within and outside of the academic community as important to the first-year experience. Specifically, I examined

how the support provided to and expectations communicated by students' key relationships influenced their early professional identity development as a future faculty member, thereby leading to persistence to degree or withdrawal from doctoral study.

Background

Where Are We Today?

U.S. universities graduate approximately 40,000 doctoral students each year across multiple disciplines (Golde & Dore, 2001). Although doctoral students constitute a relatively small percentage of the total students in U.S. colleges and universities, the influence of doctoral education is quite powerful:

American doctoral education programs play a critically important role in developing future generations of faculty, research scientists, and expert practitioners for business, industry, government, health care, educational, and cultural organizations (Haworth, 1996, p. 372).

Unfortunately, the current system of graduate education is not working optimally. Doctoral student attrition rates are near 50 percent, and even higher in some disciplines such as the humanities (Lovitts, 2001). Studies have found that doctoral student preparation is failing to meet the ever-changing demands of society and higher education in general (Golde & Dore, 2001; Nyquist, Austin, Sprague, & Wulff, 2001). And while no exact figures exist, it is reasonable to assume that the costs of recruiting and training doctoral students and losing them prior to completion are analogous to the costs of losing faculty. Until new research on doctoral education uncovers the factors that contribute to persistence, the costs of attrition will continue to devastate the departing student

emotionally, professionally, and financially, and result in institutions and society losing time, talent, and resources.

Why Should We Care?

Researchers assign responsibility for attrition variously to students or to doctoral programs. Doctoral students leave prior to completion for personal reasons such as pursuing the wrong path or lack of individual motivation (Golde, 1998). Program characteristics such as inadequate information, poor advising, and limited opportunity for professional and personal development also influence a student's decision to forego completing a doctoral degree program (Austin, 2002; Austin et al., 1999; Hartnett & Katz, 1977; Lovitts, 2001). Researchers such as Hernstein and Murray (1994) suggested that graduate school is a survival-of-the-fittest game with only the best and brightest able to succeed. In 1984, Abel argued that the market was oversaturated with many qualified Ph.D.s who were unemployed, and that attrition is a natural and necessary phenomenon.

Understanding the structural and procedural issues and challenges of doctoral education is necessary to prepare the next generation of faculty and ensure the continued vitality of U.S. higher education (Lovitts, 2004). While many disciplines are concerned about hiring and maintaining qualified faculty in the long term, business schools face an immediate challenge in recruiting faculty (DFC, 2003). Recently, The Management Education Task Force (METF) (2002) conducted a study titled "Management Education at Risk" which explored the future of doctoral education in business fields and anticipated the future demand for doctorally-trained business faculty. In the process of

conducting their analysis, the committee projected a need of 28,676 business faculty positions across all institutions types with an actual supply of 26,257 doctorally-qualified individuals resulting in 2,500 vacant faculty positions in business by the year 2012. This shortage jeopardizes the “continued rigor of business education and research conducted in academic, business, and public policy institutions” (METF, 2002, p. 6). Therefore, it appears that the future of management education will be “at risk” unless business programs better understand the factors that contribute to the success of entering doctoral students.

Who is Affected?

A doctoral student’s decision to leave prior to completing the degree is one that is quite costly for all individuals and entities involved. From a program perspective, costs such as recruiting, tuition remission, monthly stipends, and health benefits are unrecoverable. Other costs include those associated with processing applications and students’ campus visits which are lost when a student leaves before completing a degree. Faculty time spent advising and mentoring students who choose to leave prior to degree completion is also costly and may result in faculty only wanting to work with “star” students. In some instances, however, academic programs may benefit by intentionally over-admitting students in order to reduce teaching loads and provide them with graduate assistants to help their research agendas. In this instance, students are viewed by the academic program as temporary staff rather than future scholars. Programs may provide no individual development or guidance to their students.

Society stands to lose good potential faculty because of the high attrition rates. Efforts such as The Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate explored the question – what is the purpose of doctoral education? This important initiative is the direct result of the loss that society has likely faced over the years and the failure of doctoral education, in general, to acknowledge that Ph.D. recipients make contributions to society beyond peer-reviewed journal publications. While most, if not all, doctoral degrees are awarded at research universities, not all doctoral degree recipients earn faculty appointments at comparable institutions or enter the academy. Therefore, research institutions that ignore these trends during the doctoral student experience are doing society a disservice by not preparing their graduates for the variety of opportunities available to doctorally-trained individuals.

The student who leaves prior to completion is also greatly affected emotionally and financially. “The most important reason to be concerned about graduate student attrition is that it can ruin individuals’ lives. The financial, personal, and professional costs of attrition to the student are immense” (Lovitts, 2001, p. 6). Students who remain in ABD status are adversely affected in terms of individual well-being, and their time spent in the program becomes a waste of public as well as private resources (Bargar & Mayo-Chamberlain, 1983). Faculty and administrators involved with doctoral programs need to begin tracking attrition consistently and make more concerted efforts to understand *why* a student chooses to leave.

Purpose of Study

Nearly thirty years after Hartnett and Katz (1977) asserted that little research attention is given to doctoral students or the process by which doctoral students become scholars, there is still a paucity of research on the development and learning that occurs while on the path to the professoriate. The majority of those studies that do exist focus on the negative experiences that often result in attrition; very little research has focused on the positive experiences or factors that support doctoral student persistence. Yet, studies that report on the positive experiences students have while pursuing a doctoral degree could serve as “Best Practices” for institutions and doctoral programs interested in improving the doctoral student experience. And, although research on doctoral students has identified both personal and program characteristics that influence withdrawal, a more in-depth examination is needed to understand the doctoral student experience *as it occurs*.

Furthermore, most studies that examine the influence of advising on doctoral student persistence and time-to-degree only focus on the student-advisor dyad (Baird, 2006; Golde, 2000; Green & Bauer, 1995; Green, 1991; Nettles & Millett, 2006; Paglis, Green, & Bauer, 2006). This focus suggests that the advisor is the only individual who can provide developmental support during doctoral education. While a primary advisor may be more important to student success at the graduate level than the undergraduate level, doctoral students may receive additional support from individuals both within and outside of the academic community such as peers and family and friends throughout all stages of doctoral education. Doctoral students have needs that go beyond information

acquisition, and may seek social or emotional support from a variety of individuals. In some instances, these relationships may be more important to persistence and individual development than the advisor relationship and yet, the majority of research that examines the experiences of doctoral students fails to acknowledge or study these relationships.

As much as faculty and administrators would like to gain a better idea of the doctoral student experience in business programs, they have yet to adequately determine what factors contribute to a student's decision to persist or withdraw. This study begins to address these issues by exploring the following question:

How does the friendship, advice, and developmental support provided by peers, faculty, family and friends, and business associates facilitate doctoral students' professional identity development and eventual persistence to degree or withdrawal from graduate study in business doctoral degree programs?

This study focused on the experiences and relationships of first-year doctoral students enrolled in a top-rated-business doctoral program at a public research university. The few existing studies of doctoral student attrition primarily involved students from the sciences or humanities (Golde, 1998; Golde & Dore, 2001; Golde & Walker, 2006; Lovitts, 2001). The lack of studies focusing on professional fields such as business contributes to the problem faced by management and business education. Therefore, the current study examined how business doctoral students' multiple relationships and the support provided in those relationships influenced students' professional identity formation and development, thereby supporting or hindering persistence.

Significance of the Study

Previous research on doctoral education has provided statistics on who attends, why individuals choose to attend, and what financial support doctoral students receive (Golde & Dore, 2001; Nettles & Millett, 2006). Few studies have delved into the experiences of doctoral students *as they happen* to understand the learning or development that occurs once they arrive on campus.

Scholars have seldom probed inside the “Black Box” of doctoral programs to study the kinds of learning experiences that students (and faculty) have in them, nor have they systematically explored how these experiences contributed to outcomes, including time-to-degree, completion rates, and students’ cognitive, attitudinal, and psychosocial development (Haworth, 1996, p. 406).

One reason for this lack of information is that doctoral education has only become a true concern in the past ten years. Researchers like Ann Austin, Chris Golde, and Barbara Lovitts have only recently brought it to the forefront as a critical concern. In the past, faculty and administrators have been quick to blame the departing student rather than looking for structural issues such as mixed messages or inadequate advising that may also contribute to attrition (Golde, 2004; Lovitts, 2001).

Another reason for the need to examine the doctoral student experience is that institutions are just now beginning to understand the importance of tracking the extent of and reasons for doctoral attrition, and are unsure of where to begin. A colleague and I presented at the annual conference of the Northeast Association for Institutional Research (NEAIR) on the topic of doctoral attrition (Baker & Sweitzer, 2004). Representatives from major research institutions such as the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Massachusetts Institute of Technology who attended the session informed us that their

institutional research offices had been charged with the task of tracking attrition and gaining a better understanding of doctoral education at their institutions, but they were not sure where to start.

In order to truly understand the doctoral student experience, there is a need for longitudinal qualitative investigation. The majority of doctoral education studies are retrospective and consist of surveys of or interviews with individuals which ask them to think back about their doctoral student experiences (Golde, 1996; Lovitts, 2001). Some studies have only featured the departing student while other studies included both completers and noncompleters (Gardner, 2005; Nettles & Millett, 2006). Furthermore, most doctoral education studies only focus on the student perspective or fail to examine the student experience beginning as early the first year (Nettles & Millett, 2006). To date, a social networks perspective has not been applied to the study of the doctoral student experience or doctoral student development. By examining *all* influential relationships identified by students beginning with the first year, this study provides insight into the types of support students require, uncovers who students go to for different types of support, and how that support influences their overall development and commitment to persist beyond year one. Now, it is time to dig into the “Black Box” that Haworth (1996) described by examining the doctoral experience from both the student perspective and from the perspective of the individuals most closely involved with the students within and outside the academic community. This type of in-depth examination is needed to truly understand the personal changes and development that takes place while in a doctoral program and to identify who or what facilitates or hinders those changes as they occur.

The findings from this study are relevant to several sets of stakeholders. For example, university administrators and faculty involved in doctoral education will benefit from having more detailed information about the types of support needed by students and how successfully that support is provided to doctoral students, particularly in the first year. Many academic departments, faculty, and administrators believe that doctoral students are receiving adequate guidance, support and mentoring; research on doctoral students themselves reveals otherwise (Austin et al., 1999; Lovitts, 2001; Nettles & Millett, 2006). The current study uncovered the issues that first-year doctoral students faced and who they went to for assistance when dealing with those issues. This information is likely to be beneficial to all academic programs and the faculty and administrators involved.

In addition, these findings will likely be of benefit to other collegiate schools of business, particularly those schools with highly ranked doctoral programs. One goal of top-rated business doctoral programs is the successful placement of as many graduate students in tenure-track faculty positions in other top-rated business programs. If these business programs can provide the support and guidance needed by their doctoral students, these students are more likely to persist with possible placement as faculty members at other top-rated programs upon graduation. This, in turn, will enable these top-rated programs to remain competitive.

Other professional fields such as education, law, and medicine and higher education institutions interested in improving the graduate student experience will likely be interested in the study findings. Stanford University recently created an office entirely devoted to graduate and professional education and appointed one of the fields leading

scholars in doctoral education to the post of Associate Vice Provost of graduate education. The creation of such an office and position symbolizes higher education's commitment to improving graduate and professional education, and the desire to better understand the student experience as an important component of that commitment.

The results of this study will likely influence policy initiatives at the program, college, and institutional levels. As this study shows, monitoring student progress and identifying student needs as early as the first year is critical to persistence. As realized by this study, personal relationships are an important aspect of the professional identity development process and those relationships do not always include the academic advisor or other faculty members. Academic programs can use this information to ensure that support systems within the academic environment are encouraging persistence.

Finally, the findings from this study will likely benefit doctoral students themselves. While every student's experiences and circumstances are different, comfort and guidance can be gained by hearing about others' experiences which can then be used as benchmarks and learning opportunities. Hearing about how doctoral students' first-year experiences and the relationships they relied on to help them persist, can help current and future doctoral students learn how to network successfully through the social structures within and around academe.

In summary, existing doctoral educational studies have provided information on who attends doctoral programs, why they attend, how many students earn doctoral degrees each year, and the loss that is incurred by institutions, society, and the student when the decision to depart is made. The current study explored longitudinally, through the case study method, how support received by network partners (both positive and

negative) influenced the professional identity development process for business doctoral students. By studying Ph.D. students throughout their first year, this study shed light on how students develop and come to accept or reject the professional identity of a future faculty member through the learning that occurred while in the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation contains eight chapters. Chapter 1 presents the concern that doctoral student attrition causes for institutions, society, and the departing student, and the purpose and significance of the study. Chapter 2 covers the relevant literature on doctoral student attrition, describing both the student and program characteristics that contribute to attrition. In addition, an overview of the four key theories that guided this study is included. Chapter 3 describes the conceptual framework and key concepts addressed in the study. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the research design for the study, including data collection and analysis. Study limitations are also included in this chapter. Chapter 5 provides an overview of the Valley College of Business and doctoral program. It also highlights the expectations students perceived to be important to and communicated by their primary network partners and Valley's Ph.D. program related to the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. Excerpts from network partner interviews are included in this chapter to reveal consistencies between student and network partner perceptions related to individual and program expectations. Chapter 6 presents the students' developmental networks and primary network partners at each

interview time throughout their first-year experience. Included in chapter 6 is a discussion of the types of support provided by students' primary network partners and the media richness that characterized network partner interactions. Chapter 7 describes students' early professional development related to the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher and how students perceived these roles to be related to the faculty career. And, Chapter 8 summarizes the findings of the study and provides an overview of the proposed models (Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit) of doctoral student professional identity development in the first year of study. Also included are working propositions, recommendations for future research, and implications for practice.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In order to explore how the friendship, advice, and developmental support provided by network partners (peers, faculty, family and friends, and business associates) facilitate doctoral students' professional identity development and eventual persistence or withdrawal in business doctoral degree programs, an examination of current literature is needed. In this chapter, I highlight literature on doctoral student attrition, and include an overview of mentoring, social network, role, and professional identity theories.

Doctoral Student Attrition

The issue of doctoral student attrition has become a critical concern in doctoral degree-granting institutions. A major debate has surfaced on the question of who is to blame for doctoral attrition—the departing student or the academic institution? This debate dates back to research conducted by Berelson (1960) which suggested that graduate deans, faculty, and Ph.D. students themselves believed the departing student was responsible for leaving without completing the degree. Although subsequent research has shown that student characteristics influence the decision to forgo earning a doctoral degree (Golde, 1998; Lovitts, 2001), institutional and program characteristics may also play a role in a departing student's decision to leave without earning the degree (Austin, 2002; Austin et al., 1999; Golde, 1998; Lovitts, 2001).

Student Characteristics

Faculty and administrators suggest that the departing student is to blame for attrition, thereby displaying an unwillingness to accept responsibility or accountability for the high levels of doctoral attrition. Indeed, student characteristics do not account for the majority of attrition noted (Smallwood, 2004). The individual student characteristics most often cited as reasons for attrition are discussed below. They are: academic ability, personal reasons, and unrealistic expectations.

Academic Ability

One reason faculty and administrators suggest doctoral students depart prior to degree completion is student ability. However, Peter Diffley, Associate Dean of the Graduate School at Notre Dame, examined the issue of doctoral attrition and found that there was little to no *academic* difference, in terms of GPA and test scores, between those students who graduated and those who left without completing a doctoral degree. In most cases, students who persisted had slightly lower GPA and standardized test scores than those who left (Smallwood, 2004). As noted in Lovitts' (2001) book, *Leaving the ivory tower*, "lack of academic ability and academic failure account for only a small percentage of all (doctoral) attrition" (p. 6). If academic ability accounts for a small percentage of doctoral attrition, other factors must be influencing a student's decision to leave prior to completing the degree.

Personal Reasons

Lovitts (2001) examined doctoral student attrition and used a variety of data collection strategies ranging from survey responses from both completers and noncompleters, to qualitative interviews with noncompleters, directors of graduate studies, and high and low Ph.D. productive faculty. Lovitts also reviewed faculty retention rate data and conducted on-site departmental observations at each university. The study included two research universities, one rural and one urban, with a total of 816 students, 511 of whom were completers and 305 were noncompleters. From the noncompleter survey responses, Lovitts found four common *personal* reasons contributing to noncompleters' decisions to leave their respective doctoral programs: realization that the student was pursuing the wrong path, lack of individual motivation, the doctoral program involved too much stress or pressure, and the individual students were burned out.

Golde (1998) examined disciplinary and academic departmental differences on attrition. The study involved qualitative interviews at one research university among four departments: two in science fields and two in humanities. Fifty-eight doctoral students who started and stopped between the years 1984–1993 were interviewed between 1995 and 1996 regarding their entire doctoral experiences. Golde (1998) found that some attrition could be attributed to personal reasons, including: wrong department choice, left to enter the job market, advisor mismatch, intellectual reasons, practice or discipline did not meet expectations, and inaccurate understanding of academic profession. However,

the data also suggest that disciplinary norms and program or departmental structures were factors that influenced attrition.

Students' Unrealistic Expectations

Attrition studies also reveal that students have unrealistic expectations about graduate education, particularly doctoral education (Austin, 2002; Golde, 1998; Hartnett & Katz, 1977). Studies have shown that many doctoral students believe they were led astray and received inadequate information regarding basic program requirements, program expectations, and rules and processes. Students often felt as though they received unrealistic previews of life as a doctoral student from faculty and administrators and were not fully prepared to embark on such a stressful and rigorous undertaking. Most believed doctoral education would be an extension of undergraduate or other graduate work and felt overwhelmed by the research and theory-building requirements (Golde, 1998).

Program Characteristics

The above studies highlight individual student characteristics as influential in the decision to depart. However, research on doctoral attrition also reveals that several program characteristics may contribute to a student's choice to leave a doctoral program. These factors include: poor admissions decisions, inadequate information, poor advising, and limited opportunity for professional and personal development.

Poor Admissions Decisions

An important component of the graduate school process is admissions. Typically, programs have admissions committees that review student applications to determine if the student meets the qualifications for entrance. That information is then used as a predictor of academic ability to gauge if the student will be successful in the program. Benkin (1984) found that most admissions committees believed they made solid decisions and the student *chose* to leave. However, with doctoral attrition becoming a more visible issue in recent years, academic departments are beginning to acknowledge weaknesses in the system. Lovitts (2001) noted in her study that faculty believed if they [admissions committees] made more informed admissions decisions, they could reduce department-level attrition. This apparent contradiction over the years is likely a contributing factor to doctoral attrition.

Inadequate Information

Research on doctoral student attrition also attributes the provision of inadequate information to students by programs as one cause for early departure. During a four-year longitudinal study funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Spencer Foundation, Austin et al. (1999) examined the evolution of graduate students into faculty members. Among the seventy-nine doctoral students participating in the study, a common theme emerged: students had trouble making sense of the mixed messages they received regarding disciplinary and institutional priorities. Interestingly, this issue was constant across disciplines *and* institutions.

Respondents in the four-year study strived to make sense of the mixed or inadequate messages received, particularly the relationship between research and teaching. Though teaching was stressed as important by the faculty and administrators associated with their programs, they learned that promotion and tenure were primarily awarded based on research and publication. Often, this type of information is not communicated to students clearly prior to starting a doctoral program as most program advertisements do not explicitly explain this difference. Graduate students perceived an apparent discrepancy between the stated goal of “teaching is important” and the real organizational goal of “research publication is most important.” The students at these institutions were finding it hard to navigate this dilemma effectively.

Lovitts (2001) interviewed directors of graduate study (DSG) as part of her doctoral attrition research and touched on socialization practices, including new student orientation and program planning. Lovitts regarded orientation as an opportunity for students to develop an understanding of their respective programs. However, the directors of graduate study described orientation akin to boot camp aimed at weeding out students unable to succeed in a doctoral program. Students found this approach to be intimidating and questioned their ability to make it past the first year of study. It appeared, based on the interviews Lovitts described, that orientation was geared more towards scare tactics than to the effective dissemination of information.

Poor Advising

To celebrate the one hundredth year of graduate education in the United States, Hartnett and Katz (1977) compiled a book on the *student* in graduate education. The examination highlighted conditions crucial to student development, addressed current and future demographic characteristics of graduate students, and discussed the scant information available to assist students in their decision to attend graduate school. The examination also revealed “graduate student relations with members of the faculty is regarded by most graduate students as the single most important aspect of the quality of their graduate experience; unfortunately, many also report that it is the single most disappointing aspect of their graduate experience” (p. 262). Graduate students expect that faculty relationships will become more intense and influential than undergraduate faculty relationships (Katz & Hartnett, 1976). However, this is often not the case.

Almost thirty years later, academic advising is still an issue in graduate education, particularly doctoral education. During interviews with directors of graduate study, Lovitts (2001) found that traditional program planning was being taken for granted by the directors of graduate study. The faculty and directors of graduate study assumed that students were finding their academic advisor by the end of the first year of study and meeting on a regular basis. While following up with the noncompleters, Lovitts discovered that several students were taking incorrect courses or course overloads. One student managed to schedule five courses each semester in his first year without the academic advisor questioning his decision to do so or suggesting a reduced course load. Based on these interviews, Lovitts concluded that some directors of graduate study failed

to ensure that the *process* of academic advising (i.e., regular meetings with advisor) was meeting student need. Instead, the assumption was made that because the student had an advisor, their needs were automatically being met.

Research also showed that doctoral students sought out mentors in their academic programs, but often went without. Austin and Associates (1999) found students yearned for more support through mentorships, advising, and professional development. “We expected that there would be a number of students who would call for better mentoring and advising, but we were surprised how strongly so many of our participants spoke of battling the isolation that threatens to engulf them as they progress through their graduate programs” (Austin et. al, 1999, p. 5).

Few Opportunities for Fostering Professional/Personal Development

Research reveals that doctoral students are disappointed with the limited opportunities for professional and personal development. Austin (2002) found that doctoral students believed programs emphasized content knowledge and offered few opportunities for rich interaction between faculty and peers and limited occasions for self-reflection, keys to identifying as a doctoral student. The data used in this study were from a previous four-year longitudinal examination in which the researchers followed a sample of graduate students aspiring to the professoriate (Austin et al., 1999). The sample included seventy-nine students from the sciences, the social sciences, and professional areas such as business at two doctoral-granting institutions. “In sum, although focused and guided self-reflection are integral to graduate students’ sense-making process, it is

not an activity that graduate advisors or doctoral programs facilitate” (Austin, 2002, p. 106). Austin argued that many students who achieved content mastery left doctoral programs for other reasons, such as lack of development.

As is evidenced in the above studies, much is left to be understood about the doctoral student experience, the learning process that takes place while in a doctoral program, and how those experiences and relationships with members of one’s network influence professional identity development. Figure 2-1 summarizes the student and program characteristics discussed above that underestimate other factors that influence a student’s decision to persist or depart.

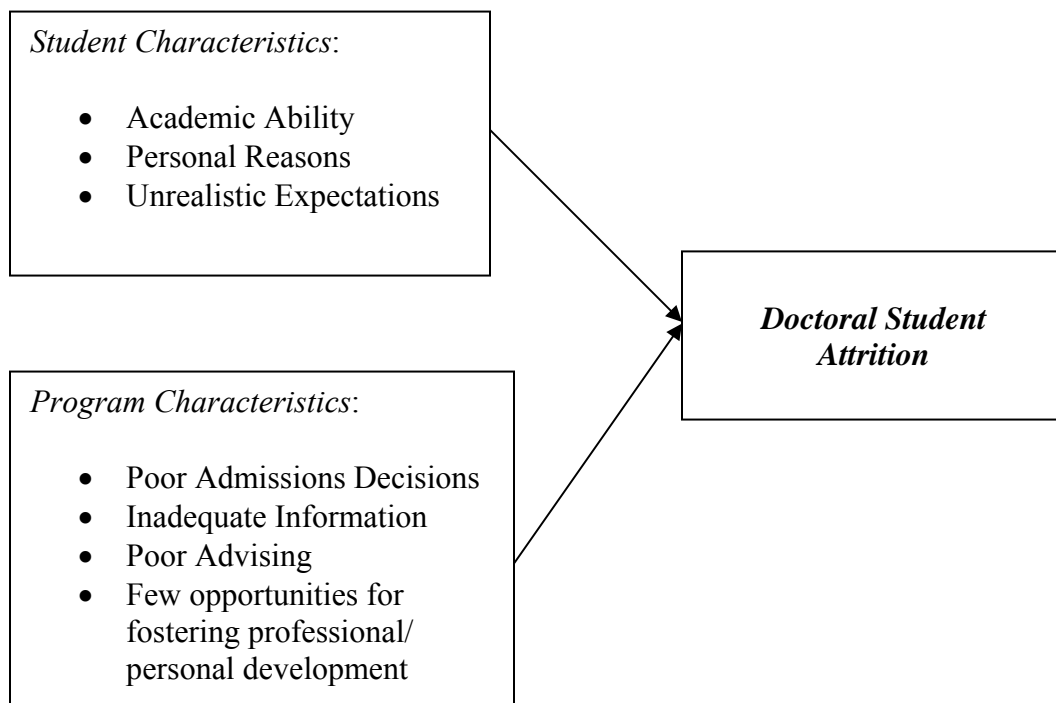


Figure 2-1: *Antecedents of Doctoral Student Attrition*

Review of Theories

As is evidenced in the above discussion of doctoral student attrition, many factors influence a student's decision to depart. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that just as many factors are likely to influence persistence to degree, including development of personal relationships, understanding of program and professional roles and expectations, and the acceptance (or rejection) of a professional identity as a future faculty member. In the following section, I highlight the key theories that guided this study as critical for understanding how first-year doctoral students develop a professional identity as a result of their personal relationships and the roles they engage in as a student.

Mentoring Theory

Mentoring is defined as a “relationship between a young adult and an older, more experienced adult that helps the younger individual learn to navigate the adult world and the world of work” (Kram, 1985, p. 3). This traditional definition of mentoring is somewhat antiquated, as research reveals that mentoring can occur laterally among peers or within a group context, removing the criterion of age as a necessary prerequisite of a mentoring relationship (Dansky, 1996; Kram & Isabella, 1985). One key component of a mentoring relationship in the above definition is experience. For example, when a more experienced member of an organization maintains a relationship with a less-experienced organizational member, the more experienced individual may help the less experienced individual navigate the socialization process by passing along knowledge and information. The more experienced individual may be younger than the less experienced

individual; but may still mentor the other by sharing knowledge, information, and by providing social or emotional support.

Over the years, research has consistently demonstrated that mentoring provides substantial benefits to both protégés and mentors (Allen, Russell & Maetzke, 1997; Kram, 1985; Kram & Isabella, 1985). Studies have described the mentoring relationship as having great potential to support both career enhancement and personal growth by showing that mentoring positively influences promotion and compensation as well as career satisfaction and expectations for advancement (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978).

Levinson et al. (1978) stated that relationships with mentors enable young adults to successfully enter the adult world and the world of work by simultaneously assisting in career growth and the development of personal and career identities. Individuals who have been mentored (protégés) report higher promotion rates and career satisfaction, as well as higher overall compensation than those who have not been mentored (Allen, Russell & Maetzke, 1997; Scandura & Viator, 1994; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993). Although Levinson et al. (1978) are recognized as conducting the first mentoring study, Kram's (1985) seminal book, *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life*, is credited by mentoring researchers with advancing the field and study of mentoring and still serves as the foundational theory in most mentoring research (Arnold & Johnson, 1997; Aryee, Wyatt, & Stone, 1996; Higgins, 2000; Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1992; Williamson & Cable, 2003).

Kram (1983) conducted in-depth biographical interviews with 18 managers in a public-sector organization to identify the functions or benefits provided by mentors.

Content analysis of the interviews revealed that mentoring relationships involved both career and psychosocial functions. Mentoring functions are the aspects or components of a developmental relationship that advance an individual's growth and advancement (Kram, 1985). *Career functions* include those aspects of the mentoring relationship that prepare the protégé for career advancement such as sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments (Kram, 1985). *Psychosocial functions* enhance the protégé's sense of competence, identity, and work-role effectiveness. A mentor achieves this goal by serving as a role model, friend, and counselor. Kram (1983) suggested that the greater the number of functions provided by the mentor, the more beneficial the relationship will be to the protégé.

In *Mentoring at Work*, Kram (1985) proposed the relationship constellation, suggesting that a range of relationships with peers, supervisors, friends, family, and subordinates may provide a range of developmental functions. "Career and psychosocial functions that support development at every career stage, then, can be provided by a range of relationships" (p. 149). The relationships in the constellation may change over time or result in the development of new relationships and the dissolution of others. Even though Kram (1985) proposed the relationship constellation over twenty years ago, few studies have examined the effects of mentoring beyond the traditional dyadic relationship (Higgins, 2000; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Higgins & Thomas, 2001).

Higgins and colleagues explored the notion of the relationship constellation for attorneys. Higgins (2000) conducted a study of 138 lawyers in 12 New York state law firms to test the assumption that mentoring assistance is likely to come from more than one individual either inside or outside of the organization. As Higgins noted in the study,

few empirical mentoring investigations have asked respondents to identify more than one mentor. In essence, Higgins tested the notion, “the more, the merrier”, to understand how multiple developmental relationships affect work satisfaction. The study results showed that both the amount of mentoring assistance received and the number of developmental relationships maintained yielded significant and positive effects on work satisfaction for members of the legal profession.

Higgins and Thomas (2001) examined the effects of an individuals’ primary and multiple developmental relationships in a longitudinal study of lawyers. Underpinning the study was Kram’s (1985) notion of the relationship constellation. Higgins and Thomas defined the developmental constellation as “the set of relationships an individual has with people who take an active interest in and action to advance the individual’s career by assisting with his or her personal and professional development” (p. 223). They examined the quality of an individual’s developmental constellation as critical for career outcomes. Quality was defined in this study according to the amount of career and psychosocial assistance provided. Although Higgins and Thomas found that an individual’s primary developmental relationship is likely to affect short-term career outcomes, the composition of an individual’s developmental constellation accounts for longer-term career outcomes such as organizational retention and career advancement.

To further advance the notion of developmental networks, Higgins and Kram (2001) published a theoretical article in the *Academy of Management Review* entitled, “Reconceptualizing mentoring at work: A developmental network perspective,” as a way to combine social network and mentoring theories. Building on Kram’s (1985) relationship constellation, Higgins and Kram argued that mentoring literature fails to

examine the effects of multiple concurrent relationships in addition to one's primary mentor. The authors noted that, "we extend the mentoring literature beyond its traditional dyadic focus to emphasize the importance of multiple developmental relationships" (p. 268). Higgins and Kram labeled this notion as the "developmental network perspective" which consists of those relationships deemed important by the protégé for both career and psychosocial support, and that occur simultaneously rather than sequentially.

Researchers have begun to explore Higgins and Kram's (2001) propositions by studying the outcomes of multiple mentors and developmental networks in work contexts. For example, van Emmerick (2004) sought to determine if employees who successfully invest in multiple developmental relationships would be more satisfied with their careers. Findings revealed that mentoring was positively associated with career satisfaction and, that larger advice networks were found to be positively related to intrinsic career success (i.e., job satisfaction). de Janasz, Sullivan, and Whiting (2003) also argued that multiple mentors are no longer a luxury, but a necessity due to the changing nature of the workforce and the need for continuous knowledge acquisition that one mentor alone may be unable to fulfill. "It is not enough just to increase the size of the mentoring network; it is important to conduct a careful analysis of what competencies you wish to build and find the best resources for development" (de Janasz, Sullivan, & Whiting, 2003, p. 86). Although de Janasz and Sullivan (2004) offered suggestions on how to improve mentoring in academic contexts based on the notion of multiple mentors; to date, no empirical or qualitative studies have combined mentoring and social network theory to test Higgins' and Kram's notion of developmental networks to examine doctoral education or doctoral student development.

Social Network Theory

All individuals are members of at least one professional or personal network. A network is defined primarily as a set of relationships between two or more individuals (Kadushin, 2004). Previously, social networks analysis typically only considered members from the same organizational or functional context (Baker, 1992; Krackhardt, 1992) at the individual and organizational levels of analysis. Social network researchers over the past fifteen years however, have begun to explore the influence of social context by studying “how the structure of actors’ social world emerges and how the structure of interactions affects outcomes” such as identity development (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003, p. 3). Thus recent, social network theory seeks to explain how a network of actors establish and maintain connections within an organizational context and how those connections facilitate a multitude of outcomes such as professional advancement, information acquisition, and identity development (Kadushin, 2004; Ibarra, 1999).

Multiple perspectives in social network theory literature are appropriate for consideration when discussing doctoral student professional identity development and eventual persistence to degree or withdrawal from graduate study. Doctoral students are likely to have relationships or ties to many types of individuals such as peers, faculty, friends and family, and business associates who may provide various types of support, including friendship, advice, or developmental assistance throughout a student’s doctoral program. Although most social network research examines the types of networks (friendship, advice, entrepreneurial) independent of each other, this study examined *which* network partners provided various types of support and *how* they provided that

support. This information was examined to determine how those relationships and support received by the doctoral student facilitated or hindered professional identity development as it influenced persistence to degree or withdrawal from doctoral study.

Relational Ties

An important component of social network research examines relational ties between individuals and the strength of those ties. Relational ties are defined as linkages or connections between a pair of actors (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Examples of ties can include evaluation of one person by another, transfer of material resources, behavioral interaction, and association or affiliation (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Wellman (1983) noted that network analysts examine structural properties of networks, rather than individual attributes such as gender or ethnicity, in order to understand behavior beyond that of dyadic relationships. “They concentrate on studying how the pattern of ties in a network provides significant opportunities and constraints because it affects the access of people and institutions to such resources as information, wealth, and power” (Wellman, 1983, p. 157). In order to move the study of relationships beyond a dyadic focus, the social network perspective emphasizes the examination of all an individual’s relational ties and the potential outcomes of those ties that may result. Two important concepts in social network research that shed light on network relationships are tie strength and structural holes.

Tie Strength

Granovetter (1973) is credited with introducing the notion of tie strength in his seminal article titled, *The Strength of Weak Ties*, in which he argued that strong ties tend to connect similar individuals, thus leading to the exchange of redundant information. By contrast, Granovetter proposed that weak ties serve as a bridge to other social systems or networks, thus opening the door to new information. In essence, according to Granovetter, weak ties provide access to novel or innovative information whereas strong ties lead to the exchange of redundant information.

Strength of ties is defined in terms of four criteria: frequency of interaction, emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal services (Granovetter, 1973). “Each of these is somewhat independent of the other, though the set is obviously highly intracorrelated” (p. 1361). Frequency of interaction is characterized in terms of time. Krackhardt (1992) argued that for a pair of individuals to have a history of interactions, those interactions need to occur over an extended period of time. Emotional intensity refers to an individual who feels affection for another individual (Krackhardt, 1992). This affection should stimulate motivation to treat the other individual in an encouraging way, thus positively influencing emotional intensity. Intimacy, which results from building trust, results when a pair of individuals share private information related to career and personal endeavors. Both emotional intensity and intimacy are subjective. Lastly, reciprocal services relates to the symmetry of a liking relationship (Heider, 1958). If one person initiates action in a relationship, the other individual will respond with a follow up action of equal importance.

After a review of ten years of research, Granovetter (1982) pointed out that strong ties in fact do serve an important function in network exchange, and should not be ignored. “Weak ties provide people with access to information and resources beyond those available in their own social circles; but strong ties have greater motivation to be of assistance and are typically more easily available” (p. 113). Granovetter further asserted that individuals in insecure positions, such as doctoral students, are more likely to seek out or foster the development of strong ties for protection and uncertainty reduction. Therefore, strong ties appear to constitute a base of trust that can provide reassurance and comfort in times of great uncertainty or change (Krackhardt, 1992).

Structural Holes

Building on the work of Granovetter’s (1973) strength of weak ties argument, Burt (1992) proposed the notion of a structural hole. Burt (1992) asserted that information circulates more readily within than between groups, but that a weaker connection between groups (structural hole) allows for a competitive advantage for the individual who leverages social relations with a diverse set of individuals (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003). When an individual is able to serve as a structural hole, that individual is likely to have access to sources of non-redundant information which further supports Granovetter’s (1973) conceptualization of a weak tie. Structural holes, in essence, fill the gaps between non-redundant contacts, thereby ensuring access to information that otherwise would have been unavailable or nonexistent (Burt, 1998).

Research on the outcomes of structural holes has been associated with manager performance (Burt, 1992), individual and group performance (Hansen, 1999), and creativity and learning (Giuffe, 1999). Structural holes have been found to lead to faster

promotion (Podolny & Baron, 1997), a greater recognition for individual contributions to organizational success (Rosenthal, 1996), and ease with learning the nuances of a new social context (Janicik, 1997). However, the majority of these studies occurred in work organizations. No research that I was able to find examines how, if at all, structural holes influence progression and development in doctoral education.

Developmental Networks

As discussed previously, the article written by Higgins and Kram (2001) is a first attempt to bring together the conceptual underpinnings of social network theory (including the different types of networks such as friendship and advice) and Kram's (1985) notion of the relationship constellation to provide a more comprehensive theoretical foundation for examining the role of relationships and the support provided by those relationship to a focal individual. Higgins and Kram postulated four concepts in their typology: the developmental network itself, the developmental relationships that comprise an individual's network, the diversity of the network, and the strength of the developmental relationships within the network.

Higgins and Kram (2001) defined developmental network as the "set of people a protégé names as taking an active interest in and action to advance the protégé's career by providing developmental assistance" (p. 268). Similar to mentoring theory and the support provided in such relationships, assistance from a developmental network perspective may include two types of support, career and psychosocial. Career support

refers to exposure to and sponsorship for professional opportunities. Psychosocial support refers to friendship, counseling, and sharing beyond the work or school environment.

According to Higgins and Kram (2001), developmental relationships incorporate traditional concepts such as mentor, sponsor, or coach. However, Higgins and Kram created a new term, “developer”, meant to encompass all of the previous terms mentioned. The term “developer” expands the concept of the single, traditional mentor relationship by acknowledging that developmental relationships may provide support beyond just career and/or psychosocial support to include knowledge development and information sharing.

The concept of developmental network diversity is defined as “the number of different social systems the ties originate from, such as one’s employer, school, community, professional association, and so on” (p. 269). In this case, diversity does not refer to race or gender, but instead focuses on the flow of information through relational ties between the protégé and focal individual to determine if the information shared is unique or redundant. For example, a network member from the community is not as likely to provide the same type of support or information to a doctoral student that a faculty advisor is likely to provide. The information shared between the student and these two network members would not be considered redundant. Links to a diverse set of network partners leads to less redundancy of the information provided. Therefore, diversity of developmental networks focuses on the nature of relationships (i.e., type of information or support shared) between the focal individual and developers and not on developers’ attributes such as gender, race, or ethnicity.

In support of Granovetter's strength of strong ties argument, Higgins and Kram defined strength of relationship in terms of emotional affect, reciprocity, and frequency of communication (Higgins & Kram, 2001). Relationships that are characterized by high levels of reciprocity, mutuality, and interdependence are strong ties. However, ties can be strong, weak, or even intermediate. Ties do not necessarily have to be regarded as strong in order to provide the support necessary to the focal individual, yet may still be considered developmental in nature as long as the focal individual receives an opportunity for learning or assistance.

Role Theory

Role theory, rooted in classical sociological theory, seeks to provide a theoretical and conceptual explanation for the relationship between persons and society. A role, defined as a set of normative behaviors associated with a given position (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Katz & Kahn, 1978), is central to understanding individual behavior in organizations (Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 1998) and serves as the building block of social systems (Katz & Kahn, 1978). In order to understand what motivates role behavior, one must first identify and comprehend the expectations associated with a given role and the process by which an individual comes to learn, accept, and enact those expectations. For the purposes of this study, the three roles under investigation are doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. By engaging in these roles, students presumably begin to develop skills and understand the expectations required of the faculty career.

New organizational members come to identify the expectations associated with a given role through what Katz and Kahn (1978) refer to as role-sending. The organizational members who are most closely connected to the focal individual (role set) communicate role expectations based on their own conceptualization of a particular role and the abilities of the new organizational member. The expectations do not remain in the minds of members of the role set. “They tend to be communicated in many ways; sometimes as direct instructions...sometimes less directly as when a colleague expresses admiration or disappointment in behavior” (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 175). The ultimate goal of role sending therefore becomes the attempt to directly influence the focal individual’s behavior in order to conform to the expectations of the individuals comprising the role set.

In his book, *Role transitions in organizational life*, Ashforth (2001) discussed the importance of role entry and how situational and individual influences affect one’s acceptance of assigned roles. Ashforth suggested that individuals are proactive in their own socialization; in order for an individual to derive a sense of meaning of and to exert control over a given role, the individual must first have a clear understanding of the assigned role and the surrounding context. This understanding comes through exchanges with members from the role set as described above through socialization, role learning, and social validation.

Socialization

Defined as “the process by which an individual comes to appreciate the values, abilities, expected behaviors, and social knowledge essential for assuming an organizational role” (Louis, 1980, pp. 229–230), socialization has often been considered an important organizational function. Socialization is said to occur in three phases: anticipatory, encounter, and settling-in (Feldman, 1981; Wanous, Reichers, & Malik, 1984). Anticipatory socialization takes place before an individual enters an organization. During this phase, the organizational newcomer sets certain expectations related to the organization, the position, environmental conditions, and future interpersonal relationships (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Some of these expectations are either confirmed or refuted during the recruitment and selection process as well as through interactions with veteran organizational members. It is believed that individuals will gain accurate information, both positive and negative, about the job, working conditions, and relationships so they enter the organization with a realistic job preview. However, researchers suggest that newcomers are likely to feel some sense of “reality shock” during the entry stage because they are being inundated with unfamiliar cues that require time and space to adjust to (Hughes, 1981).

The encounter phase of socialization occurs when the newcomer enters the organization. Socialization will likely help the individual become familiarized with job tasks through training to assist in the understanding of organizational procedures and practices. Senior organizational members play an important role in this phase of socialization by helping newcomers understand their role by providing important

information about the organization, and by being supportive and sensitive to the stresses that newcomers are likely to experience.

The final phase of socialization, the settling-in phase, occurs when newcomers begin to feel comfortable in the organization and adjust to the job demands and social relationships. As part of the settling-in phase, individuals should begin to focus on the importance of balancing work and non-work activities.

Organizations use what are referred to as socialization tactics or strategies that help facilitate the socialization process. Ashforth (2001) characterized these tactics as collective, sequential, fixed, serial, and divestiture. *Collective socialization* consists of grouping newcomers together, such as an incoming cohort, and exposing organizational newcomers to similar experiences such as orientation. *Sequential socialization* refers to a rigid series of steps that result in the acceptance of a new role (Ashforth, 2001). Examples of sequential socialization may include taking core course requirements the first year, followed by course work in a specialty area during the second year, culminating with the granting of candidacy. *Fixed socialization* provides a schedule for the assumption of a role (Ashforth, 2001). Doctoral education is said to consist of three phases (Golde, 1998). Entering doctoral students must successfully complete each preceding phase before moving on to the next. Typically, doctoral programs assign incoming students an academic advisor, who may or may not serve as a mentor. This veteran organizational member is likely to serve as a role model which is an example of *serial socialization*. Lastly, *divestiture socialization* occurs when “organizations are likely to actively attempt to strip away newcomers’ incoming identities if those identities contradict – or are at least radically different from – the role and organizational

identities” (Ashforth, 2001, p. 166). Doctoral students entering top-rated business programs are likely to encounter such strong socialization tactics in order to ensure that the assigned roles are accepted and performed in a satisfactory manner.

This notion of divestiture socialization is further supported by Trice and Beyer’s (1984) conceptualization of “rites of passage.” The authors suggested that when an individual transitions to a new role, such as an army recruit, prior role behaviors are eliminated and new role behaviors are learned. In other words, when newcomers engage in rites of passage, the organization ensures that the newcomers perform and behave similarly to previous and existing organizational members. In turn, the organization experiences little to no disturbance in traditional organizational operations and social relations (Trice & Beyer, 1984).

In her model of the newcomer experience, Louis (1980) bridged turnover and socialization literatures to identify the key features that are likely to influence organizational entry: change, contrast, and surprise. Since the new organizational setting is likely to differ from prior settings, newcomers may experience some level of change resulting from the new situation. In order to manage this change, newcomers likely engage in varying degrees of coping. Contrast, the process of letting go of previous roles, occurs at the individual level and may continue for quite some time into the socialization process due to its person-specific nature. Finally, surprise results when newcomers’ expectations and assumptions differ from those realized upon entering into a new organization. Surprise may occur because newcomers are bringing prior organizational assumptions with them to the current experience which conflict with existing norms. In

the case of doctoral education, this is a likely occurrence because students may believe that doctoral work is an extension of master's-level work.

Role Learning

Researchers suggest that role learning is paramount to effective role entry (Ashforth, 2001; Brim, 1966; Louis, 1980; Morrison, 1995). According to Brim (1966), organizational newcomers need an understanding of what others expect of them and the ability to achieve those expectations in order to perform a role adequately through the process of role learning. Role learning, therefore, not only focuses on acquiring the technical skills associated with a given role but also mastering the social, normative, organizational, and political information associated with the role and organization (Morrison, 1995).

Previous work on socialization suggests that the organizational newcomer is passive and openly accepting of socialization. However, others would argue that individuals are more proactive in their own socialization and organizational learning (Jones, 1983; Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner, 1995). Jones (1983) argued that two additional factors need to be examined as critical for effective socialization: (1) the effects of individual differences, and (2) the effects of the attributional processes involved in organizational learning. While some individuals certainly enter organizations with limited experience and appear to be more malleable, others come to an organization with a wealth of knowledge and experience which requires alternate forms of socialization such as divestiture socialization or rites of passage. Major et al. (1995)

discussed this paradigm shift in socialization theory by highlighting the importance of proactivity, which refers to those individuals who are highly motivated in their own socialization. “Proactivity fosters role learning and thereby the knowledge and confidence to engage in role innovation and personal change” (Ashforth, 2001, p. 187).

Another critical element of role learning is sources of social support (Ashforth, 2001). Research shows that support from peers, mentors, managers, and family and friends helps facilitate role learning (Bauer & Green, 1998). These individuals are likely to provide guidance, serve as role models, and help newcomers manage the political and technical aspects of a role. In their study of recently employed business graduates, Louis and Associates (1983) assessed the availability of socialization practices by collecting information on formal orientations, buddy or mentoring systems, supervisory support, and peer interactions. While formal orientations helped facilitate the socialization process, their influence was marginal in comparison to the effect of peer interactions, buddy support, and supervisory support in socializing newcomers. Social support was also found to positively influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Social Validation

While organizational newcomers are likely to take on attributes of the assigned role(s) as a result of socialization and role learning, one does not fully accept a role until he/she is deemed as worthy of the role, referred to as social validation (Goffman, 1961). Social validation is said to occur, “when valued members of one’s role set begin to perceive and treat one as a bona fide exemplar of the role” (Ashforth, 2001, p. 215).

When an organizational newcomer receives social validation from veteran organizational members, he/she is likely to feel comfortable in the role and begin to take ownership of it (Ashforth, 2001).

Social validation can be communicated through verbal cues such as positive feedback in performance evaluations. It can also appear as written feedback on a course project or paper. Veteran members may also validate one's role by giving them more responsibility as a reward for a job well done. If an individual is not performing their role(s) to expectation, veteran organizational members may reduce responsibility, give negative feedback in written or verbal form, or may communicate via nonverbal cues through body language to show dissatisfaction. Figure 2.2 contains a summary of the key concepts described in role theory.

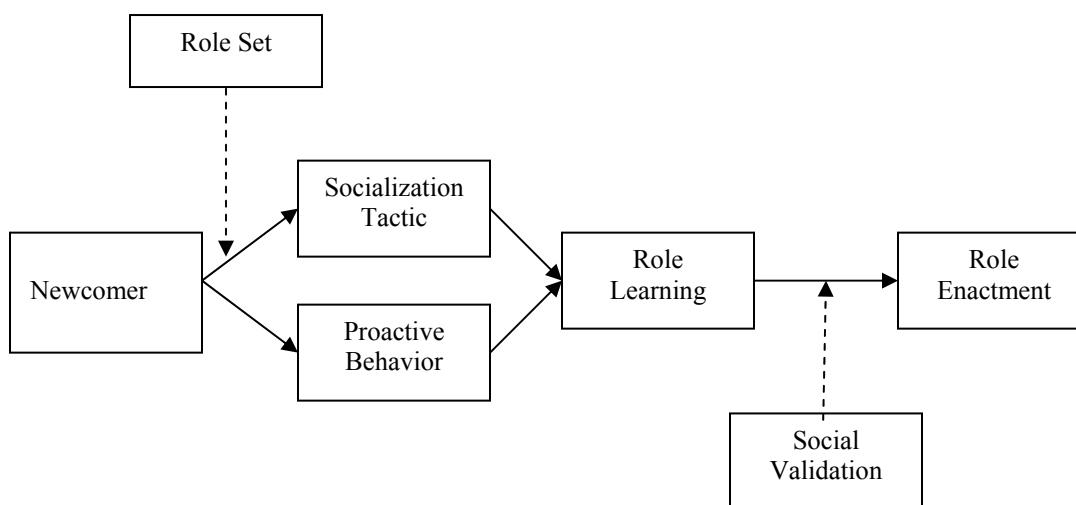


Figure 2.2 *Summary of Role Theory Concepts*

Professional Identity

Researchers have studied various conceptions of identity, including personal identity (Zavalloni, 1983), social identity (Tajfel, 1982, 1978; Zavalloni, 1983), religious identity (Gallagher, 1989), and ethnic identity (Cairns, 1982). Professional identity, an additional area of importance in identity research, has experienced a surge of interest over the past fifteen years. Researchers have examined professional identity in various fields including medicine (Becker & Carper, 1956; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006), education (Hall, 1968; Hansen, 2003; Reybold, 2003; Stout, 2004), and nursing (Fagermoen, 1997; Öhlén & Segesten, 1998). In recent years, more research attention has been given to examining the process by which individuals develop a professional identity by identifying the situational and social factors that influence that development (Dobrow & Higgins; 2005; Ibarra, 1999; Pratt et al., 2006)

Bucher and Stelling (1977) suggested that professional identity is not static; rather, it continues to evolve in relation to one's professional activities and can be defined as "the perception of oneself as a professional and as a particular type of professional" (p. 213). Research suggests that professional identity is relatively stable and encompasses the attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences that help individuals define themselves within a professional role (Schein, 1978). Individuals are thought to present certain personas that convey the qualities prescribed by their profession such as competence, judgment, and trustworthiness with the hopes that others will ascribe those same qualities to them (Ibarra, 1999). While some of these qualities may already be

foundational elements of one's professional identity, others may be incongruent, and some may need to be developed through experience.

In the article titled, "The elements of identification with an occupation", Becker and Carper (1956) sought to determine how individuals identify themselves via their answers to the question, who am I? The study participants were completing graduate work in physiology, philosophy, and mechanical engineering. The interview questions covered the four major elements of work identification as defined by the authors and focused on how individuals identified with: (1) occupational title, (2) commitment to task, (3) commitment to particular organizations or institutional positions, and (4) significance of one's position in the larger society. The overall findings suggested that individuals who identified more concretely with the four major elements of work identification had more difficulty considering changing professions. In addition, it was difficult for them to consider changing to another organization that they perceived as not having opportunities for someone in their chosen profession.

Becker and Associates (1961) took the notion of professional identity further by examining students in medical school. The research agenda was simple—"discover what medical school did to medical students other than giving them a technical education" (p. 17). The assumption was made that medical students would leave medical school with different ideas and perspectives than when they started, in turn influencing their career choices once they became practicing physicians. The study findings suggested:

Students do not simply become what the medical school wants them to become. Indeed, their own broad and idealistic notions about what they ought to become are pushed aside as they turn their concern to the immediate business of getting through school...they become engrossed in matters which are of interest only within the school and have no relevance outside it. When their participation in the

school ends, they give up these concerns, realizing that they are no longer of any value (p. 432).

In order for an internal change to take place within these students (i.e., to think and act like a doctor), the students' long-range goals and expectations needed to match, on some level, the goals and perceived expectations imposed on the students by the school. If there was no congruence between these two areas, no personal transformation was found to take place.

While many existing professional identity development studies focus on medical students, Hall (1968) examined Ph.D. students from MIT during one critical transition of doctoral education—qualifying examinations. Once doctoral students successfully completed the qualifying exam, they received candidacy and were recognized by the academic program as being capable of teaching. The working hypothesis that guided this research was that “passing students will perceive themselves as being significantly more similar to the role of professor after the examinations than they did before” (p. 449). As predicted, students were better able to envision themselves as future faculty members after completing the qualifying exam. What was not expected was that both students who passed and failed experienced this change. Hall noted in this study that very little was known about self-image changes during educational experiences, particularly graduate-level experiences, and argued that doctoral education had not been adequately represented in this body of research. Over thirty years later, not much has changed and still very little is known about the professional identity changes experienced by doctoral students at all stages of the doctoral student experience.

Ibarra (1999) examined the career transition of junior consultants and investment bankers from individual contributors within their organizations to managing client relationships. The purpose of her study was to develop theory and hypotheses about the process of adaptation during career transitions. The interviews focused on issues such as key challenges faced while mastering the demands of their current role and next position, milestones or significant career experiences to date, perceived strength and weaknesses, and resources or relationships that helped them thus far. The study results supported the notion that by experimenting with possible selves, individuals acquire identities consistent with occupational socialization and help construct the self through social interaction. However, this study also advanced some basic ideas about how one's identity develops and evolves. Her study suggested that identities crafted in the early stages of adaptation are only provisional and must be revised and developed through experience. Ibarra's theory of adaptation extends the notion that identities are both stable and changing.

In their article, "Constructing professional identity", Pratt, Rockman, and Kaufmann (2006) tracked medical residents' professional identity development to address the issue of "doing" versus "being". They found that work identity violations were triggered by a mismatch between what a physician did and who they are. In order to manage this disconnect, the medical residents had to customize who they were to match what they did during their six-year residency. The authors argued that identity change is more incremental than static and can result in individuals enriching an existing identity, patching together two or more identities, or using another identity as a temporary splint.

This study advanced professional identity theory by examining how medical residents build a professional identity over time.

Operating under the assumption that individuals construct their identities through their developmental networks, Dobrow and Higgins (2005) studied the extent to which individuals' developmental relationships enhance the clarity of their professional identity. This study was the first to look at the influence of developmental network relationships on professional identity development longitudinally in career contexts and used two developmental network characteristics: high and low developmental network range (social relationships from multiple contexts or from a single context) and density (access to redundant or nonredundant sources of information). Their research suggested that as developmental network density increased (i.e., less access to non-redundant sources of information), the clarity of one's professional identity decreased. However, the authors noted that more research is needed that examines the content and help-giving interactions of relationships and why and how developmental network change over time.

Chapter 3

Conceptual Framework

This study sought to examine how the friendship, advice, and developmental support provided by peers, faculty, family and friends, and business associates facilitated or hindered doctoral students' professional identity development and eventual persistence to degree or withdrawal from a top-rated business degree program. Few studies examine the doctoral student experience or identify the factors that contribute to the success or departure of doctoral students in professional fields such as business. Furthermore, previous research has not examined the doctoral student experience from a social network perspective to identify how network partner support influences the professional identity development process. Figure **3-1** illustrates this study's conceptual framework, which contains the following major concepts: individual differences, networks, role socialization, professional identity, and persistence.

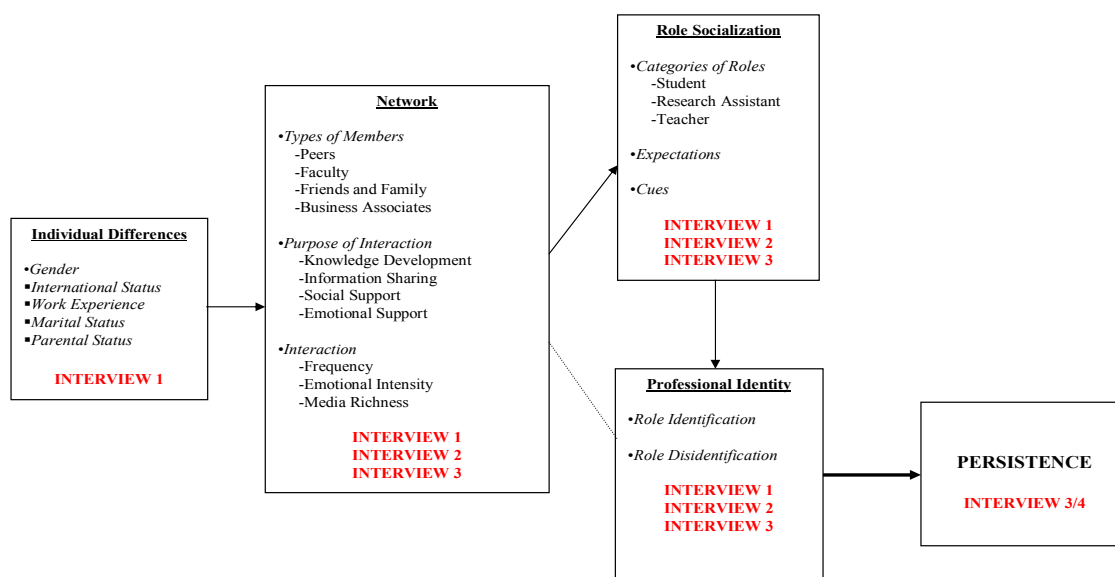


Figure 3-1: Conceptual Framework

Individual Differences

Individuals differ in the way they approach personal and professional experiences. As a result of those differences, individuals are likely to interpret, retain, and use information differently (Herold, Davis, Fedor, & Parsons, 2002; Towler & Dipboye, 2003). The doctoral students entering Valley University College of Business are likely to be different, which will influence their experiences in the program. Individual characteristics of doctoral students likely to affect the types of network partners with whom students associate and the purpose of their interactions are gender, international status, work experience, marital or relationship status, and parental status.

Gender

Gender may affect interactions between doctoral students and network partners at the student and faculty levels. According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac* (2004), 39,955 doctoral degrees were conferred in all fields in 2002 (see Table 3-1). Of the total degrees conferred, 54.5% were earned by male students. Men are more likely than women to pursue doctoral-level work in business disciplines. In fact, 62% of students earning doctoral degrees in business disciplines are male, with only 38% of

Table 3-1: *Characteristics of Recipients of Earned Doctorates, 2002 (The Chronicle Almanac, 2004)*

Gender	All Fields	Business	Education	Engineering	Humanities	Life Sciences	Physical Sciences	Professional Fields	Social Sciences
Male	54.5%	61.5%	33.7%	82.3%	49.6%	52.3%	73.0%	46.8%	44.6%
Female	45.4%	38.0%	66.1%	17.5%	50.3%	47.7%	26.8%	52.9%	55.2%
Unknown	0.2%	0.05%	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%

females earning doctoral degrees in business (*The Chronicle Almanac, 2004*). Since the doctoral students included in the study are expected by Valley faculty and administrators to earn faculty positions at other top-rated business programs, enrollment data were reviewed based on gender from the top fifty business schools across the country according to *US News* (2004). According to IPEDS (2002), 70% of all students enrolled in top-fifty business programs are male and 30% are female. This imbalance may make it more difficult for female students to build strong relationships with other female peers within business or with other females across disciplines. As a result, female students may seek out and rely on cross-gender relationships for peer support. However, if an individual, female or male, is unable to build many strong same-sex or cross-gender

relationships within the program, he/she may be more inclined to withdraw from the program.

One additional gender difference prevalent at research universities and top-rated business programs occurs among the faculty. There are more male than female faculty members in research universities and in business disciplines (*The Chronicle Almanac*, 2004). Entering female doctoral students may feel more comfortable working with and confiding in female faculty members than male faculty members. Female faculty members may also serve as role models for female students, particularly if the faculty member is managing motherhood and the rigors of a career in academe effectively. If female faculty members are not readily available to female students, there may be some hesitation or filtering of feelings on the students' part that may lead to withdrawal from the program. On the other hand, if there are strong female faculty role models that the female students can rely on, those female students may be more likely to persist.

International Status

An international student is defined as anyone who is enrolled at a college or university in the United States who is not a U.S. citizen and is living in the country on a temporary visa for study, temporary work, vocational training, or as a temporary educational exchange-visitor (Institute of International Education, 2004). International students make up a large portion of the total number of students in U.S. higher education. According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) (2004), the number of international students enrolled in U.S. higher education during the 2003–2004 academic

years was 572,509. While international students are likely to enhance the educational experience for all involved due to cultural diversity, differing perspectives, and varying experiences, obstacles such as language barriers, conflicting learning styles, and prior educational and professional work experience may cause international students “to experience more problems than students from the host country” (Arthur, 2004, p. 32).

Even among international students there is a tremendous amount of diversity in terms of gender, age, race, nationality, ethnicity, language, and culture (IIE, 2004). From 2003–2004, 44% of international students studying in the U.S. were female and 57% were from Asia, with slightly more graduate than undergraduate students. In addition, enrollment patterns vary by discipline, with the majority of international students pursuing undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral degrees in business schools.

International students are likely to communicate differently than U.S. students, in turn influencing their interactions with network partners. If the academic program has few students or faculty members who share similar backgrounds, it may be difficult for international students to build relationships or rely on those individuals for support. As a result, international students may look to network partners outside of academe to receive necessary support. While other relationships are helpful, international students may be at a disadvantage if they are unable to build relationships with faculty and peers in the program.

Work Experience

Years of prior work experience may affect which network partners a student connects with in addition to influencing interactions between network partners. Some entering doctoral students may come directly from undergraduate or masters programs, while others may have earned a master's degree a few years prior and worked in industry before deciding to pursue doctoral-level work. In these instances, the students will be entering the program with varying levels of experience and maturity which are likely to influence their ability to adapt to the new environment, interact with faculty and peers, and accept and identify with the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. Despite efforts on the part of doctoral programs, faculty and administrators, and current and previous doctoral students, it is difficult to provide a realistic job preview of what life is like as a doctoral student. In other words, regardless of prior experience (academic or professional), students have very little to refer back to that mirrors the experiences they are likely to encounter during their doctoral-level preparation.

Marital/Relationship Status

Marital or relationship status is another factor that is likely to influence the types of relationships students are likely to develop and rely on during doctoral-level training. Relationship status also has the potential to influence the degree to which a student is able to fully engage in the academic community. Doctoral students who are single while pursuing their degrees do not have the responsibility of maintaining personal relationships that married or committed doctoral students encounter. In some instances,

partners or spouses have to give up previous employment and move to a new area that may have limited employment opportunities in the chosen area of interest. The traveling spouse or partner may have difficulty developing new relationships and therefore rely a great deal on the student. Conversely, the doctoral students' spouse or partner may choose to remain at the prior location. Under these circumstances, the doctoral student has to maintain a long distance relationship while still managing the challenges of the academic program.

Parental Status

An additional factor likely to influence the doctoral student experience, development of a professional identity as a faculty member, and persistence to degree is parental status. Having parental responsibilities is something that can conflict with a student's ability to completely commit to a doctoral program despite one's best efforts. Child care can be expensive and may be difficult to afford on a graduate student assistantship or fellowship. Therefore, pursuing a doctoral degree and raising a child/children simultaneously can be challenging.

Networks

Doctoral students' personal relationships with peers, faculty, friends, family, and business associates are likely to be critical factors that affect the doctoral student experience and influence persistence to degree or withdrawal from graduate study

(Austin, 2002; Hartnett & Katz, 1977). These relationships or relational ties are defined as linkages between actors in a network (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). While scholars have described various forms of networks including advice, entrepreneurial, family or kinship, friendship, and developmental (Baker, 1992; Higgins & Kram 2002; Kadushin, 2004; Kilduff & Tsai, 2003; Krachhardt, 1992), this study explored how the friendship, advice, and developmental support doctoral students in business disciplines gain from their multiple network partners affected their professional identity formation and eventual persistence to degree or withdrawal in doctoral degree programs.

Network analysis focuses on *relations* or *ties* among actors rather than their individual attributes such as gender, race, or ethnicity (Hanneman, 2001). Most studies of the doctoral student experience and mentoring focus on dyadic relationships between a doctoral student mentee and faculty advisor. Network analysis allows for the systematic examination of the multiple relationships any one doctoral student has that may help or hinder progress towards degree attainment.

Doctoral students develop relationships with many types of individuals, including peers, faculty, family, friends, and business associates. These relationships constitute their network. Doctoral students may interact with these network members through formal or informal meetings, ranging in frequency (i.e., daily, monthly, etc.), and emotional intensity. As a result of these relationships and interactions, the doctoral student's network is likely to serve multiple functions, which include support, information transfer, and as a mechanism that supports identity formation (Ibarra, Kilduff, & Tsai, 2005; Kilduff & Tsai, 2003).

Types of Members

Students entering a doctoral program are likely to meet many types of individuals ranging from peers to faculty to business associates *within* the academic program. These relationships may become important throughout the duration of the academic program. However, friends, family, and prior business associates *outside* of the academic program may also be instrumental in providing support and encouragement. These members may provide varying levels and types of support at different stages in the doctoral program. The following groups are discussed here: peers, faculty, family and friends, and business associates.

Peers

Students usually enter a doctoral program as members of a cohort of peers. Their interaction with their peers may provide emotional and social support during the first few months of the academic program. Each new doctoral student may not only receive support from students in the current cohort, but students in prior cohorts may also provide psychosocial support as seasoned veterans of the program. Researchers suggest that frequent interactions and proximity, common characteristics of a cohort in a doctoral program, typically lead to friendships (Krackhard & Stern, 1988).

Krackhart and Stern (1988) reviewed several studies in which students assigned to live next to each other or sit together in class developed friendships because they had increased opportunities for interaction whether or not they had things in common that might otherwise lead to friendship. Due to the nature of doctoral students' interactions

and proximity with fellow cohort members, peers may play a critical role in the development of professional identity during a doctoral program. For example, doctoral students often form study groups to prepare for course work and exams. Interaction among this cohort of peers facilitates the formation of social relationships both in and out of the academic program. These interactions may also assist in the learning process and knowledge or content development necessary to be successful throughout the various stages of a doctoral program.

Faculty

The development of relations with faculty is a central component of doctoral education. Graduate students regard relations with faculty as the most important aspect of the quality of their graduate experience (Golde, 1996; Lovitts, 2001; Nettles & Millett, 2006). However, graduate students also consider the failure to form these relationships as the single most disappointing aspect of their graduate experience (Hartnett & Katz, 1977).

Upon acceptance to a doctoral program, students are assigned to an academic faculty advisor who is supposed to assist the student in course selection, scheduling information, and program requirements, and serve as a source of advice and information (both program and career). If the student received a teaching or research assistantship as part of the admissions offer, the student may also work with the academic advisor or a different faculty member who supervises his/her work. Doctoral students encounter additional faculty in the classroom as part of the academic experience. Students are

provided with opportunities to learn more about the faculty through classroom discussions and lectures. During these interactions, students notice faculty with whom they share common interests. Due to that common interest, a student may forge an informal relationship with a faculty member and seek guidance and support.

Students often rely on faculty for advice about how to manage the rigors of a doctoral education. Faculty members provide advice, information, support, and knowledge development functions often found in advice or communication networks (Rogers & Kincaid, 1981). In the case of doctoral students, faculty advisors or mentors may fulfill the advice function in the network and help doctoral students understand the norms and expectations of the program and discipline.

Family and Friends

While peers and faculty serve important support functions *within* the academic program and network upon acceptance into the program, friends and family provide support functions *outside* of the academic program that are often overlooked in network, attrition, and mentoring studies (Blake-Beard, 2001; Kram, 1985). Friends and family may be involved in the various stages of doctoral education ranging from the search and decision phase to completion of the program. Doctoral students may consider these individuals as vital to their success and perseverance during such an experience.

For example, a doctoral student may seek guidance and support from a family member, such as a grandfather, with similar interests or experience during the search and decision stage. Family and friends may accompany the future doctoral student on campus

visits or provide financial support during this time. The student may also seek advice on the pros and cons of such a decision with friends and family prior to selecting the appropriate doctoral program to pursue. The final decision to embark on a doctoral program is often not made alone, and is likely to involve input from friends and family. In addition, family members who have doctoral degrees or are in the process of earning a doctoral degree may offer valuable guidance, support, or advice that can also support persistence due to shared experiences during the entire doctoral student experience.

A doctoral program is time-consuming and triggers a transition in life. As a result, personal relationships may be difficult to maintain and are likely to be neglected. A doctoral student may realize that previous friendships, that may have been helpful during the application and decision stages of the doctoral education process, are a hindrance and therefore must make the difficult decision of letting go of those relationships. According to Bridges (1980), "Every transition begins with an ending. We have to let go of the old thing before we can pick up the new" (p. 11). Unfortunately, this realization doesn't happen until most of the changes in life have occurred (Bridges, 1980). These important life transitions are likely to influence an individual's professional identity development.

Business Associates

Business associates are yet another important relationship for doctoral students both *inside* and *outside* of the academic setting. Business associates may include relationships with previous co-workers, individuals from local or community work, church or volunteer organizations, faculty relationships that formed during prior

undergraduate or graduate study, or a friend of a friend encountered along the way. Business associates may also be from within the academic community, including research associates affiliated with research centers across the university. For example, if the business associate was a faculty mentor from previous graduate work, that individual may have been instrumental in helping the doctoral student decide on which program to attend, may provide support through a letter of recommendation, or may connect the student with a colleague at the program of interest. The business associate could be a former supervisor or co-worker from an internship or co-op experience. This individual may have provided support, both personally and professionally, during the employment experience which influenced the decision to pursue a doctoral degree. During the academic experience, the doctoral student may make connections with a research center on campus through a faculty advisor connection, resulting in the development of relationships due to research collaborations.

Purpose of Interaction

The purpose of or reason for interaction between doctoral students and network members will more than likely differ depending on the circumstance and the individual involved. Individual doctoral students may interact with network partners for purposes of knowledge development, information dissemination about the program or career levels, social support, and emotional support. Individual network members may provide multiple types of support at varying levels at different periods in time.

Important proficiencies that doctoral students are expected to display beyond traditional content mastery are those skills that will enable the student to be successful as a future researcher, faculty advisor, teacher, colleague, and contributor to society. In other words, a doctoral student must become a master learner throughout a doctoral program in order to apply the necessary skills and knowledge upon graduation. The student's skills are likely to develop as a result of interaction with network members, thus enabling the student to move towards full participation in the current and future academic and disciplinary community. This idea is supported by Morrison's (1995) notion of role learning in which a newcomer gains a clear understanding of his or her role in a particular context such as a top-rated business program. Morrison asserted that role learning is critical to effective role entry and centers on seven core areas, including: (1) technical information about how to perform tasks, (2) referent information about role expectations, (3) social information about other people and one's relationships with them, (4) appraisal information about how one is evaluated, (5) normative information about the organization's culture, (6) organizational information about structure, products/services, and procedures, and (7) political information about the distribution of power. The seven core areas just addressed are likely to evolve through exchanges with network partners during knowledge development, information sharing, social support, and emotional support interactions.

Knowledge Development

Knowledge development, a form of learning, focuses on the “principles and methods of analysis used to solve new problems or develop new applications” (Brint, 2001, p.114). The notion of knowledge development moves beyond the simple transference of knowledge from expert to novice. Rather, knowledge development occurs through the exchange of information, the brainstorming and creation of ideas, and active participation in sensemaking between network partners (Weick, 1993).

While knowledge development may occur in and across various contexts, knowledge development is likely to be tied to an academic discipline, which helps to differentiate it from other disciplines. As King and Brownwell (1966) noted, a discipline may be characterized as a community, a network of communication, a tradition, a particular set of values and beliefs, a domain, a mode of enquiry, and a conceptual structure. Business is no exception. Doctoral students participate in knowledge development with veteran organizational members when they learn about the foundational theories that direct research endeavors, the guiding principles and concepts, the importance of research, and the methods unique to business disciplines.

Knowledge development is likely to occur as part of classroom learning. Doctoral students in business programs are exposed to factual information specific to a chosen discipline such as marketing or management. For example, if a marketing student is studying consumer behavior to predict future trends, certain research methods are likely to apply. The student is likely to learn the statistical techniques through classroom exercises or by working under the direction of a faculty advisor. Doctoral students in

business programs will also learn the foundational theories specific to one's chosen discipline. Students will then use these theories to help explain organizational or individual behaviors or phenomena. Lastly, doctoral students in business may be required to take philosophy courses to gain a better understanding of the concepts and key principles that serve as the foundation for business disciplines. As noted by Becher (1989), "the professional language and literature of a disciplinary group play a key role in establishing its cultural identity...placing them to a greater or lesser degree beyond the reach of an uninitiated audience" (p. 24).

Knowledge development is also likely to occur during interactions between the doctoral student and faculty advisor. Bargar and Duncan (1982) note that the advisor especially needs to be willing to support original thinking while at the same time help students evaluate and refine thinking without losing touch with the intuitive and developmental mainstream of students' thoughts. The goal is to not squash students' ideas; rather, the idea is to help students fully develop ideas into workable research interests.

Knowledge development may also occur among student peers. New knowledge can be created through brainstorming exercises, discussing required readings prior to or after class, and collaborating on group projects or exercises, and through everyday conversation regarding the academic program or personal matters (Colbeck, 1996). Through formal meetings such as study groups or impromptu discussions over lunch, doctoral students are likely to engage in active discussion or sensemaking exercises in order to better understand the disciplinary material presented in class or through some other medium.

Information Sharing

The goal of information sharing, from a doctoral student perspective, is the accurate dissemination of logistical details to aid in the personal and career development of the doctoral student (Cohen, 1995). The types of information shared may include program requirements, assistantship tasks, program expectations, performance standards, networking opportunities, scheduled social events, or program announcements. Information sharing may occur among peers, between students and faculty members, or during interactions with friends, family, or business associates.

For program and career information, doctoral students may look primarily to faculty. Students are likely to schedule meetings with faculty members to discuss course and program requirements, academic progress, and research opportunities within the academic department or across the campus. Students may regard faculty as important sources of information who are likely to provide leads to future career opportunities.

Students may also consult with peers, within the same cohort or in other cohorts, to gather advice about course assignments, how to approach a certain faculty member, which courses to take or avoid, or about the unwritten rules of the program. Peers in previous cohorts may serve as a source of information because of their experiences thus far in the program. For example, current students may speak to veteran students to solicit advice on techniques for preparing for the comprehensive or qualifying exam required of the program. Students may feel more comfortable speaking to a peer on certain issues so as not to appear unprepared to faculty or staff members.

Social Support

Social support involves encouragement to participate in the community aspects of a doctoral program. The social aspects of the doctoral experience include formal social events sponsored by the program as well as informal social events with peers and faculty organized outside of the program. For example, some doctoral programs have student-run organizations that encourage faculty and student participation. Such formal organizations may provide students the opportunity to interact with peers and faculty members in a non-threatening environment. Students may learn more about each other than they might in the classroom or other academic setting. Students are likely to be encouraged by fellow peers and faculty to attend such events to promote a work/personal balance and take a break from the rigors of doctoral study.

Informal social events may include dinners or gatherings at local restaurants or students' apartments, athletic events, concerts or speakers, or attending movies. These events may provide opportunities for students to relax, enjoy each other outside of the academic environment, and learn more about each other's individual interests outside of academe. Gatherings such as these also help students to feel a sense of belongingness. Students are typically eager to participate in such events and appreciate the opportunity to spend time with each other. However, if the cohort of students is large, smaller groups of students may make personal connections. Students not involved in the smaller group of peers may feel left out.

Social support may also serve as a model to doctoral students by communicating preferred norms or social behavior among colleagues, particularly when faculty are

involved. Students may be expected to attend certain social activities hosted by faculty. Other faculty members and advanced doctoral students may be in attendance. New doctoral students are likely to see how faculty members interact with each other and with veteran students. In essence, the new doctoral students may be learning about accepted modes of interaction among professionals within and outside of the academic community.

Emotional Support

Emotional support is defined as providing reassurance in relation to one's feelings, concerns, or beliefs (Higgins, 2000). Doctoral students may seek such support from peers, faculty, family, friends, or business associates throughout the doctoral experience. Emotional support is a component of psychosocial support, which includes encouragement, listening, mentoring, friendship, and understanding (Higgins, 2000; Kram, 1985). Emotional support can occur within a group context, such as a doctoral student cohort, as well as in one-to-one interactions.

For example, doctoral students may form work groups to aid in course assignments, preparation for comprehensive exams, or to provide support during the proposal or dissertation stage. During these stressful experiences, students may seek reassurance or affirmation from peers undergoing the same obstacles. They may feel that it helps to know other students are struggling with the same issues or material. Knowing one is not alone provides the reassurance and encouragement doctoral students often seek.

Faculty may also provide emotional support. If the student is far from home or unable to communicate with family members on a regular basis, the student may seek out a faculty member to provide the support needed. Perhaps the student feels uncomfortable confiding in a fellow student about a personal matter. Faculty are in a position to provide support as a result of their own experience as successful doctoral students that peers are unable to provide.

Family and friends outside of the academic program may also provide emotional support. If a student is struggling in the program or failing to build personal relationships within the program, the student may not feel comfortable confiding in members of the academic community. Therefore, the student may seek such support from family and friends. Some students may develop personal relationships with faculty members or peers that result in a great deal of trust. As a result, students may also turn to peers or faculty to share the issues and challenges being faced while progressing through the program.

This study sought to use social network theory as a lens to better understand interactions between individuals. Although the interviews with doctoral students provided insight into their personal experiences and perceived expectations, which are the most important for this study, interviews with network partners provided a more complete picture of how a student developed throughout the first year.

Interaction

A key component of social network analysis is interaction, defined as an action displayed by one person that evokes specific action by another (Weick, 1993).

Interactions vary in terms of frequency, emotional intensity, and media richness and are likely to affect doctoral students' identity development. Interaction occurs during verbal, nonverbal, or written communication between two or more individuals.

Doctoral students are likely to interact with network partners (peers, faculty, family and friends, business associates) in a variety of settings such as the classroom, program or departmental meetings, social events, at home, in the office, or at conferences. Interactions may also vary in terms of media richness such as face-to-face or via electronic communication.

Frequency

Frequency is defined in terms of the number of interactions and duration of contact between an individual doctoral student and one other member of the student's network (Wellman, 1983). Interactions may occur daily, weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly and may last for a moment or for hours. Although interactions between network members and doctoral students are often formal or scheduled meetings, interactions may also be impromptu or unplanned, yet related to the students' academic program, research, career, or personal matters.

Emotional Intensity

Emotional intensity signifies either a strong liking or friendliness between individuals (Krackhardt, 1992) or a strong dislike or negative reaction towards an

individual(s). Once emotional intensity develops, individuals are more inclined to provide support and are more likely to be motivated to reciprocate such liking and affection. Emotional intensity may also result in mutual trust and the formation of a friendship outside of one's traditional roles and expectations.

Media Richness

Media richness is an important measure of communication and is grounded in the characteristics of the medium and the content requirements of the message (Gilman et al., 2001; Treviño et al., 2000). Media richness is likely to be important for the student experience because it sheds light on the kinds of relationships developed by students. For example, if a student only interacts via e-mail or by telephone with a faculty advisor, it may be difficult for the student to feel a true connection. On the other hand, daily interactions in person with peers, family, friends, or faculty may result in the development of positive, trusting relationships. Therefore, the type of communication is likely to influence a student's ability to persist in graduate school and willingness to seek feedback and support from network partners. Media richness is said to exist on a hierarchy ranging from high to low degrees of richness based on: (1) the availability of instant feedback, (2) the capacity of the medium to transmit cues such as body language, voice tone, and inflection, (3) the use of natural language, and (4) the personal focus of the medium (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Based on the media richness hierarchy, face-to-face communication is characterized as the richest communication medium followed by

telephone, electronic mail, letter, notes and memos, and fliers and bulletins (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

Role Socialization

The term “role,” often used interchangeably with “position,” enables individuals to establish their place and responsibilities within a certain group (Stryker & Stantham, 1985). Roles, the set of normative behaviors associated with a given position (Katz & Kahn, 1978), may be established by formal written job descriptions, although this is likely not the case for doctoral students. Alternatively, roles may be created through informal social interaction and the communication of expectations among members of social structures or networks (Grean, 1976; Katz & Kahn, 1978). The primary mode of social interaction occurs in the group, or in the case of this study, a doctoral student’s developmental network.

Veteran organizational members, such as current faculty members or advanced doctoral students, set expectations that evolve as a result of group properties, norms, and behaviors (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Stryker & Stantham, 1985). Entering doctoral students come to understand and learn group properties, norms, and behaviors through various socialization tactics such as orientation, classroom, and in or out of class interactions with faculty or more advanced doctoral students. As a result of role socialization, doctoral students come to realize they are expected to behave in varying but complementary ways by the current, more senior network members within the specific community as well as with individuals outside of a given context. For example, each student is expected to

perform tasks related to his/her roles as a doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. Each student may be involved in a different research project, but these various projects are likely to collectively support the academic program and the students' progress in the program. Expected patterns of behavior, also called norms, dictate the social behavior attached to roles in a network. As a result, role expectations form that are grounded in the organizational culture and supported by society (Ashforth, 2001).

Role expectations are likely to be communicated through institutionalized socialization processes that involve the deliberate structuring of early experiences that encourage newcomers to accept preset roles passively and thereby maintain status quo (Jones, 1983). Doctoral students are likely to undergo intense socialization sometimes referred to as "boot camp" to ensure that the expectations top-rated business programs set are clear to students. Socialization can occur at the group level or individually.

The doctoral student's role is defined as a result of social interaction occurring in the student's network. Network members, through the use of cues, communicate expectations associated with the doctoral student's role. For the purposes of this study, a cue is defined as a signal or suggestion prompting action. The cues or signals received by the students are likely to prompt action or activate a given role. If the student is willing and able to assume that role, role-taking is triggered. Role-taking is "the process of anticipating the responses of others with whom one is implicated in social interaction...one formulates a definition of others' attitudes that is then validated or reshaped in ongoing interaction" (Stryker & Statham, 1985 p. 324). As a result of ongoing interactions, the student will either accept or reject the assigned role. Doctoral students are more than likely expected to perform multiple roles proficiently. In this

study, I examined three categories of roles: doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. I also looked at the cues and expectations associated with each role.

Student

The role of student in a doctoral program is an important role for the duration of an academic program. A doctoral student enrolls in coursework, which requires the completion of assignments including mini-writing exercises, article critiques, analyzing case studies, paper and proposal writing, group projects, individual and group presentations, and reading articles related to course topics. Doctoral students are also likely to participate in discussions in and out of the classroom, attend professional development lectures, participate in social activities, or hold leadership positions in various campus or community organizations.

Doctoral students also progress through program requirements or hurdles that include candidacy, comprehensive or qualifying examinations, program or committee reviews, oral proposal defense, and oral dissertation defense. In general, each doctoral student is expected to learn and gain competency in core subject areas specific to a chosen discipline, display proficiency in basic and advanced research skills, complete a specialization in the major field of study, and pursue coursework outside of the major. This learning may be acquired through knowledge development interactions with network partners and as part of the classroom experience. As the student gains greater competency and skills in these areas, the student will likely accept or activate the student role more readily.

Although undergraduate students are likely to participate in some of the above activities, doctoral students are also expected to participate in critical thinking, theory analysis and generation, and developing research ideas. Faculty expect doctoral students to be actively engaged in the learning process by displaying their ability to link classroom learning to application experiences such as research and teaching. The ability to link classroom learning to practical experiences or use theories to explain organizational issues is a key to doctoral education and an expectation of most doctoral programs.

Doctoral students become aware of these expectations by interacting with members of the academic program. For instance, faculty are likely to provide feedback in class, both verbal and written, about assignments or students' comments in class. The faculty member may ask for further clarification about an idea or encourage the student to examine an issue in greater detail. The faculty member may also provide personal examples of current projects to show the students how his/her research supports classroom teaching or other research projects. Faculty members are likely to encourage students to take learning beyond the mere acquisition of content knowledge by applying what they have learned to a problem or issue. If the individual is able to perform the role of student in a satisfactory manner, the individual is likely to accept the role more readily. However, the students' role identity will be reinforced only when valued network partners perceive that student as a bona fide exemplar of the role. This process is referred to as social validation and may be communicated in the form of a cue such as verbal or written feedback (Ashforth, 2001).

One initial proposition that guided this study relates to the acceptance of the various roles discussed. The student must first learn to be a doctoral student before

having the ability to identify as a faculty member at a top-rated business program. The process is slow and requires a great deal of patience. It is during this time that I believe positive support provided by network partners is most crucial. Students may struggle with who they are and what they want to accomplish, and may look to veteran organizational members to serve as role models. If a student fails to identify with being a doctoral student, research assistant, or teacher or the tasks and expectations associated with any of these roles that are performed by veteran organizational members, the student may encounter difficulty in the program and could be more inclined to withdraw. On the other hand, a student who assumes the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher openly and receives support from network partners might be more inclined to persist in the program.

Research Assistant

Doctoral students are also likely to assist current faculty members on research projects when employed as graduate research assistants. Often, research assistantships are part of the admissions offer and are required roles of students in top-rated business programs. Research assistants will perform tasks such as data collection and analysis, database management, literature searches, survey development, event planning, proposal and paper writing, proofreading and editing, participating in conference presentations, as well as any other related duties on a particular research project. The purposes of a research assistantship are to provide practical research experience to students and to advance the faculty supervisor's research agenda. As the student learns more about the

research process (knowledge development), the student will be able to participate more fully and provide the faculty supervisor with valuable assistance and insight that he/she was unable to do at the start of the doctoral program.

Research skills are critical to a student's success in a top-rated business program. According to web sites for top-rated business programs as ranked by *US News* (2004), they seek to train individuals aspiring to an academic research career. One expectation of top-rated business programs is that students graduating will be at the cutting-edge of knowledge development in their chosen field and will contribute to society as world-class researchers. During my interviews with Valley faculty and administrators and observations conducted at college-wide orientations, it appeared that top-rated business programs based their status primarily on the placement of their graduates in other top-rated business programs and as a result of the research productivity among tenured and non-tenure faculty. To help maintain the high program ranking, faculty are likely to expect doctoral students to become proficient researchers, understand the importance of sound research methods, apply that knowledge to research endeavors both inside and outside of the classroom, and earn faculty positions at other top-rated business programs. Faculty are likely to expect doctoral students to be involved in multiple research projects throughout the duration of the doctoral program in order to publish in top-tier journals prior to graduation.

The emphasis on research and the importance of the research assistantship may be evident in most program-related communications such as brochures, web sites, and pamphlets. Most top-rated business programs encourage students to visit the campus as part of the admissions process. During such a visit, research is discussed by the faculty as

an important component of the program. In fact, most faculty have long lists of publications and spend a great deal of time on research.

As part of the socialization process used in a top-rated business program, doctoral students are likely to receive cues, both verbal and written, in the first year regarding the importance of research. For instance, students may be encouraged to begin working with a faculty member other than the academic advisor on a research project in the first year. The student is likely to work on literature reviews, collaborate on survey instrument creation, and discuss the project regularly with the supervising faculty member. During those meetings, the student may be assigned various responsibilities for the completion of the project. The faculty member is likely to set expectations for work to be done, set deadlines for when the work is to be done, and encourage the student to accept ownership of those expectations. If expectations are not met, the student may receive evaluative information via e-mail or in a face-to-face meeting. On the other hand, if the student is meeting expectations the student is likely to receive positive cues from the faculty member. Faculty are also likely to serve as models of the importance of research by continuing to be productive and discussing their experiences with research in and out of the classroom.

Teacher

Top-rated business programs often make the assumption that students who are trained as good researchers will also become good teachers. The idea is that research experience and expertise informs one's role in the classroom. In order to provide doctoral

students with teaching experience, students may be required to teach undergraduate-level business courses. Teaching responsibilities include text selection, exam creation, lecture preparation, student advising and tutoring, maintaining regular office hours, grading exams and assignments, and overall course management.

The idea behind the teaching requirement is to provide doctoral students with experience so they may learn the skills of classroom teaching while balancing research and teaching. As part of their learning experience, doctoral students may be encouraged to sit in on faculty members' or other students' classes to gain a better idea of how to teach. Students may be encouraged to speak with faculty or peers about the teaching experience to get tips on teaching undergraduate business courses.

Though teaching is an important role, it sometimes takes a secondary position to research, particularly at a top research university or in a top-rated business program. The cues doctoral students receive from veteran organizational members are likely to reinforce the research-teaching hierarchy. For example, most promotion and tenure decisions are based primarily on research productivity in a top-rated business program. A faculty member may be an outstanding instructor and receive consistently high evaluations from students. That same instructor may even receive a teaching award for excellence in the classroom. However, if that faculty member does not have a certain number of top-tier publications, he/she may not be granted tenure. This scenario sends a strong message to students regarding the importance of teaching in relation to research.

Another proposition guiding this study deals with the roles of research assistant and teacher. Although teaching is a part of the experience, often it takes a distant second to research. For example, an incoming student may have an equal interest in research and

teaching. If that is the case, the student may be able to manage those interests effectively and be successful in both areas and is likely to persist in the program. If a student realizes he/she enjoys teaching more than research after teaching a summer course or serving as a teaching assistant, that discrepancy might be difficult to manage for a doctoral student in a top-rated business program. He/she may feel uncomfortable discussing this issue with veteran organizational members, leading to withdrawal. If the student is more interested in research than teaching, the student may be more likely to persist because the personal goals and program goals are more in-line with each other.

Professional Identity

Professional identity is defined as “the perception of oneself as a professional and as a particular type of professional” (Bucher & Stelling, 1977, p. 213). Researchers have suggested that professional identity encompasses the attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences that help individuals define themselves within a professional role (Schein, 1978). A professional identity is said to be associated with having unique skills and knowledge, the ability to perform specific work tasks, and an association with a particular reference group (Becker & Carper, 1956; Bucher & Stelling, 1977; Holland, 1988). In other words, one must think, act, and feel like a member of a profession (Merton et al., 1957). The process of assuming a professional identity occurs through the process of role identification. If an individual fails to assume a particular professional identity, role disidentification may occur.

Role Identification

Through interactions with network partners, the student is likely to better understand the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher, and the expectations associated with those roles. As a result, the student will likely take ownership of the roles, also known as identification (Ashforth, 2001). Identification occurs when doctoral students begin to define themselves in terms of assigned roles. Through interactions with veteran organizational members and personal experience, doctoral students will likely gain a realistic preview of what it means to be a faculty member in a top-rated business program and the expectations associated with such a position. According to Becker and Carper (1956), as students apply these labels (doctoral student, research assistant, teacher), they will learn how one ought to behave as a faculty member which in turn will help shape future conduct in the profession. For example, students are more likely to submit papers and proposals to top-tier journals in their chosen discipline, understand the importance of publishing sound research, and participate in collegial discussions with peers.

A doctoral student is likely to encounter the process of identification early in the graduate school experience, particularly in a top-rated business program. In a study entitled, *The Elements of Identification with an Occupation*, Becker and Carper (1956) studied graduate students “because of the central character of graduate school in developing professional identifications” which revealed that one begins to assume a professional identity in the first year of study (p. 341). The process of identification is gradual as the student begins to internalize different aspects of the assigned roles of

doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. The student then defines the roles by associating them with specific work tasks (Becker & Carper, 1956). Once the student accepts the roles and the corresponding tasks, the student will likely envision him/herself as a future faculty member at a top-rated business program (Ashforth, 2001). Faculty and administrators associated with the academic program are likely to hope that through the process of identification, doctoral students will embrace the expected roles and aspire to be placed at another top-rated business program upon graduation.

Role identification enables the student to evolve as a member of the academic community by gaining competence and receiving social validation from veteran organizational members, a prerequisite to developing a professional identity (Bucher & Stelling, 1977). “It also follows that with increasing skill and knowledge in a particular area of the discipline, professional identity is likely to become more specific” (Bucher & Stelling, 1977, p. 214). On the other hand, if a doctoral student fails to assume the assigned role(s) and accept the corresponding expectations, the student may go through a process of role disidentification.

Role Disidentification

Role disidentification “refers to an active differentiation and distancing of oneself from the entity” (Ashforth, 2001, p. 75). The “entity” in this case is the acceptance of a professional identity as a future faculty member at a top-rated business program. If a doctoral student undergoes the process of disidentification, he/she may perceive that the assigned role(s) somehow challenge or contradict the valued aspects of the self thus

creating an internal conflict. The process of disidentification is more difficult to sustain than identification because negative emotions are involved with a greater emphasis on what one is *not* (Ashforth, 2001). Disidentification may be difficult for some students to accept simply because graduate students are exposed to long periods of a sort of adolescence in which they are expected to show adult competence and commitment, without being given full adult responsibility (Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss 1961). Some students may eventually resent being treated as adolescents or having a professional identity imposed on them by the academic program, and choose to disengage.

For example, an individual may be interested in becoming a business faculty member and therefore applies to a top-rated business program. During the socialization process, that student may realize that perhaps he/she does not fully identify with being a researcher at a top-rated business program and feels the values and behaviors that are enforced and rewarded by veteran organizational members conflict with his/her perceived professional identity. The student may feel unable to confide in members of the academic program and conceal his or her intention for fear of negative reprisal. If the student begins to see peers or cohort members identifying with the assigned roles while he/she is not, the student may continue to disidentify more deeply, resulting in dysfunctional behaviors such as absenteeism, lack of motivation, inattentiveness, lack of enthusiasm, or even withdrawal from the program.

Persistence

In chapter one of *Paths to the professoriate*, Austin and Wulff (2004) highlighted the challenges that future faculty members face. It is estimated that approximately half of the current faculty in higher education will retire over the next ten years which raises the issue of how to best prepare future faculty members in order to fill predicted vacant positions (Wulff & Austin, 2004). One of the major challenges Austin and Wulff noted in chapter one are the concerns about doctoral student dropout and the need to identify factors that contribute to a doctoral student's decision to leave. While research on doctoral attrition has identified the factors that contribute to student departure, there is a need to identify the factors and support systems that help students persist and succeed in doctoral programs to ensure that future faculty positions are filled by qualified and well-prepared individuals.

Tinto (1993) proposed a theory of persistence at the graduate student level, particularly relating to doctoral students. He stated, "a theory of graduate persistence must recognize that the primary reference groups for doctoral students, as opposed to undergraduates generally, are the more local student and faculty communities that reside in the schools, programs, and departments" (p. 231). Tinto also noted that very few studies have examined how doctoral student experiences, over time, help shape the completion of a doctoral degree. Due to the nature of doctoral education, not much work has been done to expand upon Tinto's theory of doctoral student persistence likely because of limited time and resources.

As part of the theory of doctoral student persistence, Tinto highlighted two key factors that influence doctoral student persistence: (1) individuals who provide support to the student throughout the doctoral program (referred to as social networks in this study), and (2) institutional experiences, including program level, which support or inhibit degree attainment. Researchers have uncovered and continue to examine the institutional and program factors that influence a student's decision to withdraw. However, no studies I was able to find examine the doctoral student experience from a social network perspective to determine how, if at all, that social structure influences persistence or withdrawal.

Withdrawal can occur in two ways: a student may disengage entirely from the program, or a student may continue involvement with the program but fail to finish the degree. As was the case for this study, the former occurred during the first year of the program for one student who chose to withdraw during the spring semester. As I continue to follow the students over the duration of their doctoral experience, it is possible that a student may earn candidacy, pass oral comprehensives, and stall at the dissertation stage. I will be able to report on those students further along in the study.

Chapter 4

Methods

This study explored how the friendship, advice, and developmental support that doctoral students received from network partners (peers, faculty, family and friends, and business associates) influenced their professional identity formation and eventual persistence or withdrawal from business doctoral degree programs. Social network analysis has been used as a way to understand how relationships with multiple partners influence outcomes such as career advancement, information acquisition, and identity formation (Ibarra, 1999).

The current study used a longitudinal design and followed a multiple-case study approach as it is often considered more compelling than single-case studies and regarded as more robust (Yin, 1989). Each individual doctoral student's network was examined as a mini-case embedded in a larger case study of the Valley University College of Business. The case study strategy is often used to better understand the dynamics present within a single setting (Eisenhardt, 1989).

The goal of this study was to build theory that explains how students' multiple relationships and the support provided by those relationships influenced the professional identity development process for first-year business doctoral students. Very little research has been done to date on doctoral student persistence or time-to-degree that focuses on relationships beyond the advisor-student dyad (Bauer & Green, 1994). Few studies, if any, examine the *process* by which doctoral students begin to develop a professional

identity as a future faculty member. Therefore, the aim of the current study was to build theory about the professional identity development process by using the case study approach. Theory building from case study research is particularly salient when existing theory seems inadequate (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Sample

The doctoral students who were the focus of this study were all newly admitted, first-year students in five disciplines at the Valley University College of Business: Accounting, Finance, Management and Organization, Marketing, and Supply Chain and Information Systems. Valley University College of Business offered admissions to 21 students, and the 12 students who participated in this study accepted their offers of admission for the 2005–2006 incoming class. Valley’s College of Business was selected as the research site because it served as an extreme case (Pettigrew, 1990) due to the strong nature of the socialization efforts present at Valley (i.e., explicit performance and post-graduation placement goals). This enabled me to study new students’ reactions and perceptions to Valley’s socialization efforts. I also studied how their reactions to such efforts influenced which relationships they selected as important and how those relationships shaped their early professional identity development.

Typically, students admitted to Valley are quite diverse in terms of gender, work experience, nation of origin, marital and relationship status, and parental status. Five of the students who participated in the study were female; seven were male. Nine of the students had five or more years of prior professional work experience, and all of the

doctoral students earned graduate-level degrees prior to beginning their doctoral degree programs at Valley. Ten of the students were in committed relationships upon arriving at Valley, and three of the students were parents. Due to the small sample size, demographic and individual differences will not be referenced beyond the methods chapter in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

All first-year students are required to take a doctoral seminar offered specifically for all Valley business doctoral students. In addition, each academic department has first-year core courses that all newly admitted doctoral students are required to take together as a cohort. Each student is guaranteed five years of funding including tuition remission, a monthly living stipend, and health insurance, as faculty and administrators of the College of Business expect doctoral students will need that amount of time to complete the degree.

Data Collection

The data collection strategies used in this study included interviews with all doctoral students, the students' self-identified network partners (up to a maximum of four network partners per student), and Valley faculty and administrators, observations of departmental orientations required of first-year students, and an analysis of documents, including strategic plans, placement records, and Internet publications. I used semi-structured protocols to guide the interviews. Prestructuring simplifies the analytic work required later in the study (Maxwell, 1996). In addition, semi-structured interviews

allowed for deviation in the interview protocol when further questioning was required. In total, 82 interviews were conducted during the 2005–2006 academic year.

Interviews

Pilot Interviews

In order to collect feedback on the interview protocol, I conducted pilot interviews with 5 current Valley Business doctoral students and collected written feedback from 5 additional students, one of whom was from Higher Education Administration. The pilot participants represented three out of the five disciplines included in the study. Six males and four females participated, and three nations of origin were represented. As noted by Maxwell (1996), pilot studies help the researcher test specific ideas, hypotheses, and methods. Pilot studies for qualitative research are particularly useful in order to “generate an understanding of the concepts and theories held by the people you are studying” (p. 45).

Pilot participants provided suggestions about how to improve the protocol and offered insight into their personal experiences. They also provided feedback on the clarity of the questions, offered suggestions on ways to effectively word the questions, shared personal anecdotes to use as examples, and offered their own hypotheses of what findings may result. The students also provided valuable information about the various departments at Valley that was not available by viewing website or program brochures.

Doctoral Students

After making the interview protocol adjustments suggested during the pilot interviews, I began examining the doctoral student experience in business disciplines by conducting a series of three interviews throughout the course of the first year. In addition, I conducted a fourth interview which served as the final data point for this study to report on persistence to Year 2. At present, the majority of doctoral education studies are retrospective in nature. To address this methodological issue, I used a longitudinal approach to examine “continuous processes in context” and to allow students to discuss their experiences as first-year doctoral students as they occurred (Pettigrew, 1990, p. 97). I spaced the interviews by approximately three to four months throughout the first year to capture changes that occurred during this first phase of the doctoral program.

First Interview

I interviewed each newly admitted doctoral student in the Valley College of Business at the start of the fall semester. The interviews occurred as soon as the students arrived on campus (Time 1) and immediately following the mandatory orientation. I conducted these interviews early in the first year to capture baseline student perceptions and beliefs before they were “socialized” into their respective doctoral programs. The questions that guided the first interview are contained in Appendix A. I used the first interview as an opportunity to learn more about the students as individuals, to build a rapport, and to earn their trust. Each interview lasted approximately one hour in length and was tape-recorded and transcribed in its entirety.

The questions in the first interview elicited information about: (1) the students' personal characteristics, (2) how the individual came to be a doctoral student, (3) the qualities or accomplishments the student believed were necessary to be a successful doctoral student, and (4) how the student identified with the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher at the start of the doctoral student experience. Demographic questions were asked at the beginning of the interview to obtain prior work or educational experiences that may have influenced their decision to pursue a doctoral degree. In addition, questions were asked about personal relationships that were influential during the decision-making and application stages to capture information on the students' social networks at the start of the program.

Second Interview

The second interview with each first-year student was conducted at the start of the spring semester (Time 2). The start of the spring semester, rather than the end of the fall semester, was appropriate for the second interview because the timing allowed the students to finish all finals, meet proposal submission deadlines for disciplinary conferences, and reflect on the prior semester over the winter break. The second interview focused on the students' first-semester experiences in the doctoral program at Valley. See Appendix A for Interview 2 protocol.

The second interview protocol elicited information about: (1) doctoral students' relationships with key individuals (network partners) within and outside of the academic program, (2) the type(s) of support they received from each network partner, (3) their

perceptions of network partners' expectations, (4) how network partners communicated those expectations, (5) if the student believed he/she was meeting those expectations, (6) if the student believed he/she possessed the qualities to be a successful doctoral student, and (7) how the student identified with the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. During this interview, I asked the students to identify as network partners all of the individuals they believed had been influential to their progress up to that point.

Third Interview

The third interview was conducted at the end of the spring semester after finals were completed and prior to the start of summer program requirements (Time 3). Again, I interviewed all returning doctoral students ($N=11$) and one student who withdrew from Valley one month after the start of the spring semester. During the Time 3 interview, students were asked about the spring semester as well as to reflect on the entire first-year experience. Therefore, the interview focused on changes that each student experienced during the first year of graduate study and I asked them to anticipate Year 2 in the program. See Appendix A for Interview 3 protocol.

The questions in the third interview elicited information about: (1) doctoral students' personal relationships with network partners, (2) the type(s) of support they received from each network partner, (3) their perceptions of network partners' expectations, (4) how network partners communicated those expectations, (5) if the student believed he/she was meeting those expectations, (6) if the student believed he/she possesses the qualities to be a successful doctoral student, (7) how the student identified

with the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher, and (8) if the student believed he/she was successful over the past year. The students were again asked to identify their network partners in order to assess changes in social networks over time. In addition, students were asked about personal and professional goals they set for the second year in the program and to describe how, if at all, the first year served as a preview of the faculty career.

Interview Four

While this study focused on the first year of the doctoral experience for Valley Business students, the second-year interviews (Time 1/Year 2) were conducted at the beginning of the fall 2006 semester with ten of the twelve original students. Two of the first-year participants opted out of second year and beyond interviews. Interview four served as the fourth and final data point for this dissertation and was used to report on students' decisions to persist to year two or withdrawal from Valley. As already noted, one student chose to withdraw from Valley during the spring semester of the first year. A second student was planning to leave Valley after the second year of study and hopes to apply to other doctoral programs.

Network Partners

During the Time 2 interviews, the doctoral students were asked to identify individuals (network partners) who were most influential to their doctoral experience and

progress to date. Upon completion of the second round of student interviews, network partners were invited to participate in the study to provide their perspectives on the students' first-year experiences. The questions that guided the network partner interviews may be found in Appendix B. This procedure followed Maxwell's (1996) recommendation that researchers should make concerted efforts to triangulate their sources of data by collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings. Peltó and Peltó (1975) discussed the inherent issues with using data from a single source by noting, "There is often a systematic bias in fieldwork data gathered by means of key informant interviewing" (p. 2). The notion of triangulation is particularly salient for my study. While I captured information about the doctoral students' experiences, changes over time, and perceptions by interviewing them directly, I wanted to interview network partners to obtain a complete picture of the students' social networks. Interviews with individuals identified by the doctoral students as influential enabled me to ascertain the expectations network partners had for the doctoral students in this study. Patricia McDonough (1997) used a similar design in her study, *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity*. She examined the experiences of high school seniors during the college choice process by interviewing the focal students and the other individuals who contributed to that process such as family and guidance counselors.

Interviews with network partners collected information about: (1) the expectations they had for the doctoral student, (2) how they believed they communicated those expectations, (3) how well they believed the student met those expectations, (4) the support they provided to the doctoral student, and (5) their perceptions of what qualities or abilities were needed to be successful in the Valley doctoral program.

Interviews with network partners *within* the academic program (faculty and peers) started off broadly in order to protect the confidentiality of the students who identified them as network partners. General questions involving overall program or disciplinary expectations and performance standards were asked first. I then followed-up with general questions about several students prior to asking specific questions about any one particular student in order to keep identifications as network partners private. Examples of students' networks are illustrated in Figure 4-1.

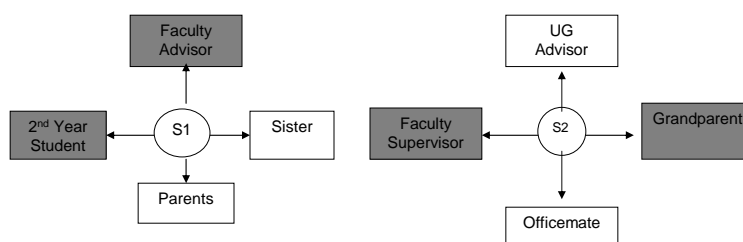


Figure 4-1: *Sample Students' Networks*

The doctoral students discussed each of the individuals noted in their particular network. However, the individuals in the shaded boxes were identified by the student as the most influential in their progress to date.

Valley Faculty and Administrators

In addition to interviewing student and network partners, I conducted interviews with the faculty and administrators most involved with the first-year experience and doctoral program administration. This included faculty who taught first-year required courses, disciplinary Ph.D. program coordinators, department chairs, associate deans, and the Valley College of Business dean. I asked these individuals to describe the doctoral program as if I were a prospective doctoral student applying to the program. Other questions sought to obtain information about overall program expectations, how expectations were communicated, support provided to students to help them achieve program expectations, and faculty life at a research institution and top-rated business program.

Observations

Observations involved all first-year doctoral students, and took place at two points during the first year: the new student orientation at the start of the fall semester and teaching camp at the start of the spring semester. The Valley University College of Business hosts an orientation for all incoming doctoral students to introduce them to the college, discuss available resources, and provide a general overview of the doctoral program at Valley. Teaching camp involved a one and one half day overview of teaching resources at Valley University aimed at preparing doctoral students to teach during their doctoral student experience. As Maxwell (1996) noted, observational data enable the researcher to draw inferences about someone's perspective that might otherwise be

missed if the study only examined interview data. I took field notes, paying particular attention to how faculty members, administrators, and advanced Valley students interacted with the first-year doctoral students, how the mission and goals of the doctoral programs were communicated, and how, if at all, specific departments (disciplines) communicated expectations and program requirements to their first-year doctoral students.

Data Analysis

In this study, I aimed to develop a theory of doctoral student professional identity development facilitated by interactions with and support provided to doctoral students by their network partners. I grounded this research in literatures from Higher Education and Organization Studies and prior empirical evidence. I began this study by exploring concepts in the literature and then successfully iterated between data collection, data analysis, and the extant literature (Eisenhardt, 1989). Data analysis involved the examination of multiple sources of data, including interviews with students, network partners, Valley faculty and administrators most involved with the doctoral programs, observations, and post-interview memos that highlighted key points from the interviews that included my personal reflections and reactions during the interviews. Data from all sources were analyzed throughout the study in order to make necessary adjustments in data collection due to the longitudinal nature of the study. Before each student interview, in particular, I reviewed the prior interview transcript in order to follow-up on ideas

specific to each student while maintaining consistency in questioning across individual students.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and I used the computer program Nvivo to identify categories of topics and responses. I created the first round of coding categories based on interview protocol and each interview was analyzed using this primary coding scheme. I selected the coding categories that I believed most related to the concepts and phenomenon under investigation. In particular, I focused on coding categories that related to students' relationships (networks) and the support and expectations associated with their relationships. Also included were the coding categories that captured information about the students' early professional identity development across the three interviews.

I developed detailed case write-ups for each student that served as stand-alone entities (Eisenhardt, 1989) and the information from the selected coding categories was included in the individual student write-ups to identify unique patterns of perceptions and behaviors for each student. As part of the individual student case write-ups, I incorporated network partner responses to similar questions asked of the students to identify agreement of responses in types and frequency of interactions, support provided, program and role expectations, and how those expectations were communicated. For example, when I asked one student about the student-advisor relationship, the student said the advisor was "very proactive with his students" by always checking in to see "how things were going with them." When I questioned the advisor about his advisee relationships, he said he was "always in my students' faces to make sure they are progressing and I expect them to tell me when things are not going well." This

comparison of student and network partner responses allowed me to identify consistency in perceptions.

The within-case analysis described facilitated a cross-case analysis. I reviewed each coded category to identify potential patterns within codes that resulted in the creation of a secondary coding scheme. All interviews were once again reviewed and coded based on the secondary coding categories to identify patterns within and across students. For example, I asked each student to tell me the “two to three take-aways” they heard from the new student orientation. After reviewing the students’ responses, four primary themes emerged within this coding category. These four codes were used for the second round of coding which aimed to identify patterns across students for this particular question. The same process was used for other questions/codes.

I once again focused on the types of relationships students relied on at each interview time, the support provided in those relationships, the associated expectations, and how the expectations were communicated for the cross-case analysis. I took that information and compared it to how students responded to three questions: what does it mean to be a doctoral student, what does it mean to be a research assistant, and what does it mean to be a teacher? After reviewing the students’ responses to these questions and others related to early professional identity development, a pattern emerged relative to students’ perceptions of Valley and the faculty career as defined by Valley.

Valley’s doctoral program has one overarching goal that guides the socialization efforts throughout the doctoral student experience – “we train researchers who aspire for placement at “Top 50” research institutions upon graduation.” This goal, therefore, influences the priority that new and advanced students, faculty, and administrators are

encouraged to place on the various aspects of the faculty career, namely research, teaching, and service. The faculty career, as defined by Valley, requires a “weighting of professional roles” that emphasizes research over other aspects of the faculty career. According to a Valley faculty member, promotion and tenure at Valley is “based 100% on research because that is really the only thing that gets recognized or encouraged here. This emphasis also spills over into the doctoral program.”

Based on students’ responses by the Time 3 interviews, six students appeared to buy into or accept the preferred professional identity or weighting of academic roles that Valley socialized their students to accept and six students appeared to still be questioning Valley’s strong socialization about and conception of the faculty career. The six students who accepted Valley’s goals consistently mentioned the notion of “Top 50” placement upon graduation as the ultimate goal, focused mostly on research or the importance of research as critical to their experience at Valley, and believed they were there to become researchers. I labeled this group of students as Perceiving Fit based on my own assessment of their responses. The other six students who appeared to still be questioning Valley’s preferred professional identity did not explicitly focus on “Top 50” placement as their primary goal throughout the three interviews. Rather, these students focused on their personal development as individuals and the learning that occurred during their experiences as more important than achieving Valley’s desired goals. They also saw more integration among the roles and were not as quick to focus on one aspect of the faculty career over another. I labeled this group of students Assessing Fit.

After assigning students to one of these two categories, I wanted to determine if there was a connection between the categories students were assigned to and the number

or types of relationships (network partners) they identified as important to their experience and persistence throughout the first year. I looked for similarities and differences across students and a pattern emerged in terms of the relationships and support provided in those relationships that the students identified. The six students who were labeled as Perceiving Fit relied solely on relationships with faculty and peers within the Valley community. The six students I categorized as Assessing Fit relied on a combination of relationships within and outside of the Valley community with faculty and family members.

Data Verification

Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlighted the issue of trustworthiness when conducting qualitative studies. The four criteria they consider to be most important are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To ensure the trustworthiness of my data, I employed several techniques. First, I made deliberate efforts to triangulate the data that served as a way to “draw on the particular and different strengths of various data-collection methods” (Pettigrew, 1990, p. 105). By interviewing multiple individuals, conducting direct observations, and reviewing various Valley College of Business documents, I was able to cross-check and verify the data that was collected. Second, I randomly shared my post-interview memos with the study participants throughout the data collection stage to ensure that I captured their thoughts and perceptions accurately. One student, in particular, did not grant permission to be audio-taped. I therefore shared my interview notes with the student from each interview

to confirm that the information was recorded and interpreted correctly. Third, by conducting this study longitudinally, I was able to have prolonged engagement with the participants and the Valley College of Business community (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). This enabled me to build a rapport with the participants, earn their trust, and learn more about the Valley culture that proved to be helpful during data analysis and interpretation. Lastly, I consulted with my thesis advisor and other committee members to review coding categories, my interpretation of the data, and to review my data analysis efforts throughout the course of the study. I also believe that my professional experience at other top-rated business programs, my educational degrees in business and management, and my current position as a doctoral student allowed me to relate to these students and understand the competitive environment in which they were being trained.

Limitations

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, it is not meant to produce definitive conclusions regarding the relationship between network partner support and professional identity development of doctoral students that are generalizable to other business doctoral students. Instead, the relationships found in this study were intended to generalize to other theories that focus on doctoral education including doctoral student persistence and withdrawal and to formal theory about how network partner support influences professional identity development (Yin, 1989).

Because the intent of this study was to generalize to theory rather than to a population of doctoral students, the doctoral students participating in the study are not

representative of a population of doctoral students. The study sample presents a self-selection bias. All entering Valley College of Business doctoral students were invited to participate in the study. As opposed to using a purposeful sampling strategy to ensure a level of heterogeneity, the doctoral students decided if they were willing to participate in the study.

Another limitation of the study is that data gathered and study participants are from a single site – Valley University College of Business. As a result, there is no intention to compare these students' experiences to other doctoral students' experiences at the University or across universities.

While this study contributes to our understanding of the doctoral student experience because it is one of the few that examines the experience longitudinally, it only focuses on the first-year experience. In order to truly develop a comprehensive theory of doctoral student professional identity development, an examination of the entire experience is necessary.

Chapter 5

Foundations of Professional Identity: Context and Expectations

Two important factors of early professional identity development are context and expectations as noted in the conceptual framework. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the Valley College of Business to illustrate the context and the preferred professional identity that Valley socializes its students to accept and display to highlight the expectations. In addition, I provide an overview of the students who participated in this study to illustrate changes over time in terms of three areas: (1) definitions of success, (2) confidence in abilities as a doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher, and (3) how students described themselves before arriving at Valley and once they became members of the Valley community. Questions about these areas allowed me to assess at what point, if any, students began to accept Valley's dominant messages and expectations as their own and to assess the extent to which students arrived at Valley more willing to accept and engage in the strong socialization that occurred at Valley.

I describe the role socialization process by which first-year students come to learn and understand the expectations associated with the positions of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. This process presumably serves as a realistic job preview of life as a future faculty member. Using the two groups of students (Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit), I (1) discuss Valley's overall expectations for student performance and placement according to Valley administrators, faculty, and program-related materials, (2) offer a comparison of the interpretations of messages as heard by me and by the students at orientation and teaching camp, (3) describe perceived messages communicated to each

group of students by their two primary types of network partners, and (4) compare the key differences and similarities in messages communicated to and perceived by each group of students. Unless otherwise noted, the information in this chapter came from student and network partner interviews at Time 3.

Valley College of Business

Valley University and its College of Business are both rated in the top fifty national research universities and business programs according to U.S. News and World Report. Valley's College of Business admits approximately 12-15 doctoral students per year. The standard time-to-degree at Valley is five years. However, some students finish in four years while other students require five or more. Within Valley's College of Business, there are five disciplines or departments in which students can earn a Ph.D.: Accounting, Finance, Management and Organization, Marketing, and Supply Chain and Information Systems. Students receive funding through their respective disciplines in the form of research assistantships, teaching assistantships, or fellowships for the duration of their programs. Research assistantships are the most common source of support. Each academic discipline has a Ph.D. coordinator who oversees the daily operations of their doctoral program at Valley. Upon arrival at Valley, each student is assigned an academic advisor. In some departments, the Ph.D. Coordinator may serve as the academic advisor until students choose committee members. Doctoral student attrition happens equally at Valley across all three stages of the doctoral student experience as defined by Golde

(1998). For students and faculty alike, research productivity is the primary measure of success and advancement.

In the fall of 2001, the Dean of the Valley College of Business formed the Ph.D. Renewal Committee and charged it with examining the Ph.D. programs. The Renewal Committee reviewed departments' current programs and student placement records, benchmarked against other business doctoral programs, and interviewed Directors of doctoral programs at other top-rated business schools. The committee decided that Valley would not admit any students who were primarily interested in teaching-oriented institutions or consulting; rather they would only admit those students who wanted to secure tenure track positions at other prominent business doctoral programs at research-oriented institutions upon graduation. The committee agreed that the overarching goal of the doctoral programs at Valley would be "50 in 50" or "Top 50" placement of half the graduating students. In other words, 50 percent of all graduating students should place at other "Top 50" business programs.

To provide a baseline description of overall student performance and placement expectations at the Valley College of Business, I reviewed Valley program brochures and interviewed key Valley administrators and faculty most involved with doctoral students. I wanted to see and hear what Valley students were hearing and reading when they were deciding to apply to and accept admission to Valley.

Valley's Ph.D. program website is explicit about the research focus of its Ph.D. programs and where administrators and faculty expect students to secure employment after graduation. According to the website:

During the doctoral program, you'll focus intensively on learning how to do research, reading research articles, collaborating with professors on research projects, and embarking on your own research career. The Ph.D. is for students who want an academic research career. The Ph.D. is not for part-time students. It is not an extension of the M.B.A., nor it is it designed for people pursuing careers as consultants or managers.

Valley's website communicates the idea that as students become good researchers, they will thereby become good teachers. The website does not otherwise discuss how students would be trained as teachers during the doctoral program.

Interviews with Valley administrators and faculty most involved with the Ph.D. programs revealed that their perspectives of Valley's performance and placement goals for students were mostly consistent with information on the website. One faculty member commented:

We are only interested in Ph.D. students who want to be placed upon graduation in a top fifty research-oriented university. Each department has a list, their "Top 50" schools.... So then departments get evaluated when students graduate based on whether the students are placed in one of these "Top 50" schools or not.

Since forming the Ph.D. Renewal Committee, Valley has struggled to achieve the "50 in 50" goal. In 2001, Valley's overall student placement was 67 percent which was attributable to one discipline out of the five. After 2001, Valley has failed to place more than 25 percent of its students in other "Top 50" programs placing just 18 percent in 2004, 10 percent in 2005, and 25 percent in 2006.

Based on faculty and administrator interviews and program brochures and web sites, "Top 50" placement is the primary goal of Valley faculty and administrators. Valley believes that in order to achieve "Top 50" placement, students must accept Valley's preferred professional identity or weighting of academic roles. The acceptable

weighting of academic roles at Valley based on interviews with faculty is: 100 percent of time spent devoted to research with little to no emphasis on teaching or service. As noted in the conceptual framework (chapter 3), students engage in three key roles during the doctoral student experience: doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. From the student perspective, primary focus on the research assistantship role would indicate acceptance of Valley's preferred weighting of academic roles.

During several faculty interviews it became clear that while the faculty appreciated the importance of setting performance expectations such as "Top 50", not all faculty fully supported the goal. In fact, one administrator, who was also a faculty member, stated, "I know that we have a college goal of increasing the number of [student] placements in top 50 research institutions upon graduation based on the strategic plan through 2008. That may not be realistic, but at least that's what the goal is." When I asked another senior faculty member about the Top 50 goal, he provided the following opinion:

I believe in it as a goal because when I first got here, I didn't think our Ph.D. program was frankly very good. We had lots of students who were here to have their ticket punched and go off to teach at Hollywood College. I don't like that orientation....We would love it if students would aspire for "Top 50" placement. It would enhance our reputation. I'm not sure that every student has the constitution to do that, so I don't think that we should advise every student to do it...I don't want to send them to places where they would not thrive. And, if that means they don't go to "Top 50" programs, I wouldn't commit Hara-kiri because of it.

College-wide Messages and Expectations

Valley conducted two college-wide sessions for all first-year doctoral students: orientation and teaching camp. Orientation occurred before the start of classes in the fall

semester, and teaching camp was a one and one-half day overview of teaching scheduled at the start of the spring semester.

Orientation

Researcher's Observations of Orientation

New student orientation was the doctoral students' first official exposure to what life would be like during their four to five years in the program. The primary emphasis was focused at the business college and program levels with little emphasis on disciplinary differences in program structure. A faculty presenter at orientation stated that the goal of the program is "to prepare Ph.D. students for placement in the top research institutions in the world and for productive research careers." The faculty member explained that each department (discipline) is required to submit a list of their top "Top 20" and "Top 50" schools in their respective fields where they hope at least 50 percent of students will place upon graduation. The faculty member informed the students that they would be hearing this goal "a lot" and to get "used to the expectation." However, this particular faculty member did acknowledge that placing 50 percent of students in "Top 50" research institutions was difficult to achieve.

The orientation agenda also included an overview of the library and the various resources that students had available to "help them be productive in terms of research" and "finding a dissertation topic." Students were given an outline of the typical structure of the doctoral program by the Ph.D. Coordinator who oversees all Ph.D. programs at

Valley and an overview of the critical hurdles students must jump to progress in a satisfactory manner. While one faculty presenter commented that the staff, students, and faculty at Valley were here to help first-year students accomplish these goals, another faculty speaker noted:

The only relationships the faculty are interested in are “value-added” relationships. Therefore, if you do not add value to the relationship, the faculty aren’t interested. So if you came here to be told what to do by your advisor, you came to the wrong place.

“Value-added” in the Valley context is related to research support and assistance.

Students’ Perspective of Orientation

During the Time 1 interviews with students, I asked them “to describe for me the two to three main messages you heard communicated at orientation” to determine if the messages I heard were similar to those they heard. Four themes emerged from their responses: “Publish or Perish”, must place in “Top 50”, the program has high expectations, and “Research is King.”

Students definitely picked up on the main message at orientation that Valley trains researchers. One student noted, “You are going to have to publish, publish, publish. And you need to have at least six [publications] by the time that you finish.” Another student commented, “Get published, get published, get published. Get published a lot. Hook up with faculty quickly to get published. Use the library as much as you can so you can get published. That was the big message.” Of all the students who mentioned research as a main message ($N=11$), several left orientation with anxiety and fear of the unknown. In

fact, one student commented, “they just tried to scare the hell out of me.” Very few of the students had prior experience conducting research, so to be “bombarded” with the need to start researching right away made them uncomfortable.

First-year students also spoke about the high expectations Valley was already placing on them before they even took their first class. One student stated, “First thing, I can’t stay for more than five years. I can’t do that. If I do, it’s not successful.” Several students thought it would be fairly easy to make connections with faculty based on their experiences during recruiting campus visits. However, one student commented on the boundaries placed on relationship expectations that Valley faculty and administrators communicated at orientation.

Another expectation that you should know in addition to that [research] is that you don’t want to take up too much of their [faculty] time. If you’re just wasting their time that’s not going to be....you know they’re not going to be very willing to continue in that type of relationship.

Other students spoke of the placement expectation of “50 in 50” and the need to be as productive in research and proactive in moving through the program as possible. The first-year students’ perspectives and my observations were consistent; orientation was primarily focused on communicating the need to be productive in research, the Ph.D. program does not train consultants or teachers, and if “you do not have a dissertation idea or publication idea, you are already behind.”

Teaching Camp

Valley faculty and administrators conducted a teaching camp at the start of the spring semester, realizing that students were already or would soon serve as teaching assistants. Some doctoral students at Valley had the opportunity to serve as primary instructors of undergraduate courses during the summer for extra funding. The teaching camp agenda included an overview of the Valley undergraduate curriculum, an informational session conducted by testing services and support, time management advice for balancing research and teaching, and other teaching-related topics such as academic integrity and test creation.

Researcher's Observations of Teaching Camp

During the teaching camp, several faculty and advanced doctoral students described their experiences with managing teaching and research responsibilities and spoke of the time management challenges these two responsibilities caused at a research institution. The teaching camp overview started with three key ideas of “organization, enthusiasm, and sincerity when approaching undergraduate teaching” to help students focus their future efforts when teaching. Several of the faculty members who participated in teaching camps spoke of their struggles as doctoral students when dealing with the performance and placement pressures placed on them while pursuing doctoral degrees. In fact, one professor who was trained at a “Top 50” research institution told the students that the advisors and other faculty members from the degree-granting institution were “upset with my decision to go to [name] University because it was not considered a top

research institution, but I was operating under geographical constraints which greatly influenced my decision.”

One senior faculty member spoke at great length about his approach to teaching and how to use time efficiently. This particular faculty member urged students to focus on research when involved in research, “but to focus on teaching and students when its time to focus on teaching and students.” The faculty member informed the first-year students that it is possible to have one’s teaching inform one’s research and vice versa and that this approach should be their ultimate goal. This faculty member said, “I went into higher education for the teaching. Research was just an add-on.” A first-year student quickly put his hand up to comment, “I know you said you got into this profession because of teaching, but Valley does not want us here to be teaching...we are here to be researching.” The faculty member quickly responded, “I meant to tell you to keep your interest in teaching private.” Although the emphasis on teaching camp was about the teaching role, the message that teaching was not to interfere with research was evident.

Students’ Perspectives of Teaching Camp

During interviews conducted shortly after Teaching Camp at Time 2 (January 2006), I asked students to tell me “the main take-aways they left teaching camp with” to get an idea of how they viewed teaching based on their experiences at teaching camp and during the fall semester. Since most students would not be teaching for several semesters, they felt the teaching camp was helpful but not as salient as it could have been had it been offered at a later time. Those students who had already served as teaching assistants

during the fall semester felt the teaching camp would have been more helpful prior to their teaching duties.

Several students mentioned the faculty member who acknowledged teaching as the reason for getting into higher education. The students were surprised the faculty member admitted this, but agreed that teaching was certainly a factor in their decision to pursue doctoral-level work. Those students also quickly added that they realized it was important *not* to mention this interest to many people for fear of losing faculty interest and support.

A few students also discussed the advice about teaching performance they received at teaching camp. One faculty member instructed students to “be good, but not necessarily great teachers.” During the fall semester students heard faculty and advanced students say that if a doctoral student’s teaching evaluations are too good, the department perceives the student to be spending too much time on teaching and not enough time on research. Students said this message was clear based on the advice offered at teaching camp. But, several of the students were not quite sure what it meant to be good, but not great.

The Students

After reviewing Valley’s strategic plan, website, and program brochures, and conducting observations and interviews with Valley faculty and administrators, I wanted to better understand who the students were, identify what their goals and expectations were for the program, and to determine how they defined success in relation to the

program. Identifying these characteristics allowed me to examine the congruence or mismatch between students' expectations, goals, and definition of program success with those of Valley faculty and administrators.

Time 1 – A Starting Point

Time 1 interviews were conducted during the first week of the fall 2005 semester immediately following new student orientation. I used the first interview with students to learn more about who they were before arriving at Valley and what their expectations and goals were for the upcoming year. Questions asked during the first interview included: (1) define success in terms of the doctoral program, (2) how confident are you that you can succeed in the first year, and (3) tell me who you were prior to arriving at Valley.

Students identified three main criteria for success at Time 1: to finish the program regardless of "Top 50" placement, to maintain balance, and to earn "Top 50" placement upon graduation. Several students spoke of the desire to finish the degree and find employment upon graduation. For example, one student commented, "Success would be getting through the program, getting hired, and still maintaining some sort of balance at the same time." Another student stated, "Success is getting the Ph.D. and graduating with it. I do not have to be in a "Top 50" school, even though I understand that that's where they want me to go." One of the students who focused on top placement as the key to success shared the following comment, "Success would mean getting into a very decent school, a "Top 50" school. I would like to conduct research, publish, and get tenure." A different student shared the following definition of success, "Well, I think I have to give

the standard answer right? It's being placed in a "Top 50" research school." Within the first week, students differed in terms of how they defined success in relation to the program. Some of the students appeared to more readily accept the goal of "Top 50" placement while other students chose to focus on the more immediate task of progressing through the program and graduating.

The students also differed in the degree of confidence about their abilities. Approximately half the students were confident that they would succeed in the first year and beyond, while the other half of students appeared to be lacking confidence in their ability to manage all the roles effectively. Of the students who expressed confidence during the Time 1 interview, one student stated, "I'm very confident." Another student commented, "I wouldn't have come here if I didn't think I could finish." Of the students who were hesitant about their abilities, one shared the following, "I don't really have that much confidence right now. I'm excited and terrified all at the same time." Another student said, "I'm definitely scared at this point that I'm going to be able to do everything." All the students were hopeful, but some were more confident than others about their likelihood of graduating.

To end the first interview, I asked students "Who were you prior to coming to Valley?" This question was deliberately vague because I wanted to hear whether the students would describe themselves from a professional standpoint, personal standpoint, or combination of the two. Two main patterns emerged among students responses' to this question. Half of the students described themselves in relation to their most recent professional role or interest such as consultant, research analyst, or "someone with a strong interest in [discipline]." The other students described personal characteristics such

as “laid back,” “active,” or “interested in learning.” These patterns helped me to better understand how the students perceived and described themselves prior to their arrival at Valley.

To summarize the Time 1 interviews, students’ definitions of success, self confidence about program completion, and their descriptions of themselves served as a foundation for identifying changes over time. It appeared that some students were more eager or willing to accept Valley’s goals and expectations of “Top 50” placement at the beginning of the first-year. Other students were more focused on “just getting through.” All students shared a basic confidence, but some students were more hesitant than others about their ability to manage all the roles adequately. Finally, students’ self-descriptions either centered on their prior professional identities or their personal identities. Table 5-1 summarizes key trends in students’ apparent congruence with Valley’s goals and expectations for placement post graduation and definition of success at Time 1 based on students’ responses. If I considered a student’s response to be in line with Valley’s preferred goals, expectations, and definition of success I indicated such with an “X” in the table.

<i>Table 5-1: Summary of Time 1- Congruence between Students’ and Valley’s Goals, Expectations, and Definition of Success</i>			
<i>Student</i>	<i>Define Success</i>	<i>Confidence</i>	<i>Who Were You</i>
A	X		X
B		X	X
C			X
D			
E	X	X	
F		X	
G	X	X	X
H			

I	X	X	X
J			
K			
L	X	X	X

Time 2 – Accepting Valley’s Expectations as Their Own?

I conducted the Time 2 interviews at the beginning of the spring 2006 semester immediately following teaching camp. Once again, I asked students (1) to define success in terms of the doctoral program, (2) how confident are you that you can succeed in the first year, and (3) tell me who you are now with one semester completed. I was most interested in assessing changes over time and to determine if students’ definitions of success were adapting to Valley’s expectations and standards of success. I wanted to assess changes in confidence (positive or negative) from Time 1 to Time 2, and to find out how students described themselves after becoming part of the Valley community.

During the Time 2 interviews, approximately half of the students appeared to acknowledge or accept the “Top 50” goal as their own. One student stated, “Success is getting a tenure track position in a “Top 50” university.” Another student supported this notion by stating, “Success in a PhD program means at the end of it you’re graduating from Valley and getting a job in a “Top 50” research institution.” Of the students who did not talk about “Top 50” placement, one believed that, “figuring out what’s important to me is success.” Other students asserted that getting through the spring semester and doctoral program was success.

The students' confidence levels differed once again. However, the issue of confidence at Time 2 centered more on the issue of "Top 50" placement. Several students acknowledged that the fall semester courses were challenging and they sometimes questioned their own abilities. All made it through to the spring semester successfully in terms of performance in seminars. When asked about confidence in relation to "Top 50" placement, one student noted, "I have confidence in my ability to develop in these three areas (doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher), but having the confidence to achieve the goals of the University [Valley] remains to be seen." Another student noted, "I hope so, right...You can have all the confidence you want. You can get A's and still stink, and I've seen that here already. " Students began to learn after one semester that being successful in the program was a starting point, but "Top 50" placement required more than success in the classroom.

To end the Time 2 interviews, I asked the students to tell me "Who are you now with one semester completed?" Once again, I noticed two distinct patterns: students described themselves in relation to their emerging Valley identity or described themselves in relation to all the roles they engaged in within and outside of the academic community. The first group described themselves as doctoral students studying [discipline] at Valley training to become researchers. Students in the other group described themselves in more personal terms such as spouse, parent, and someone trying to learn new things.

I noticed distinct changes in students' expectations, perceptions of success, and how they described themselves from Time 1 to Time 2. These changes appeared to lead to the emergence of two groups of students. The fundamental difference between the

groups was on congruence of individual goals, expectations, and definitions of success with those of the Valley College of Business. Approximately half of the students began to accept the goal of “Top 50” placement and to adjust their definitions of success accordingly. The other group of students focused more on short-term measures of success such as getting through the first year, developing ideas for upcoming course or summer paper requirements, and building skills. Confidence seemed to center on the issue of “Top 50” placement for the first group of students, while the other group of students described their confidence based on managing the three academic roles and other personal roles successfully. Finally, approximately half of the students appeared to define themselves as members of the Valley community such as “I am a doctoral student” or “I study [discipline].” The other group of students appeared more comfortable defining themselves according to the multiple identities and roles they performed on a routine basis such as parent, spouse, or learner. Table 5-2 summarizes key trends in students’ apparent congruence with Valley’s goals and expectations for placement post graduation and definition of success at Time 2 based on students’ responses. If I considered a student’s response to be in line with Valley’s preferred goals, expectations, and definition of success I indicated such with an “X” in the table. Two or more columns marked with an “X” indicate an overall congruence between students’ and Valley’s goals, expectations, and definition of success.

<i>Table 5-2: Summary of Time 2 - Congruence between Students’ and Valley’s Goals, Expectations, and Definition of Success</i>			
<i>Student</i>	<i>Define Success</i>	<i>Confidence</i>	<i>Who Are You</i>
A	X		X
B			

C		X	X
D		X	
E		X	X
F		X	
G	X	X	X
H		X	
I	X	X	X
J		X	
K	X		
L	X	X	

Time 3 – Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit

By the Time 3 interviews, it was clear that two distinct groups of students had emerged. The fundamental difference between these two groups of students was the degree of congruence with Valley’s goals and expectations for placement and weighting of academic roles. I categorized the two groups of students as either Perceiving Fit or Assessing Fit. Perceiving Fit students appeared to accept Valley’s goal of “Top 50” placement and research productivity as the most important measures of success in academe. The Perceiving Fit students were beginning to take ownership of Valley’s goals and expectations as their own. The Assessing Fit students, on the other hand, appeared to be questioning Valley’s goals and expectations and were more hesitant to adopt those goals as their own by the end of the first year. The Assessing Fit students focused mostly on individual development, learning, and the achievement of smaller program milestones such as successful completion of semester courses as the primary metric of success. Fit in the context of doctoral education is important because it likely serves a short-term indicator of persistence. If a student perceives a fit with the academic program and future

faculty career, the student is more likely to persist to degree attainment. Table 5-3 summarizes students' congruence with Valley's goals, expectations, and definition of success at Time 3. Two or more columns marked with an "X" indicate classification as Perceived Fit.

<i>Table 5-3: Summary of Time 3 - Congruence between Students' and Valley's Goals, Expectations, and Definition of Success</i>			
<i>Student</i>	<i>Define Success</i>	<i>Confidence</i>	<i>Who Are You</i>
A	X		X
B	X	X	X
C		X	X
D			
E		X	
F		X	
G	X	X	X
H		X	
I	X	X	X
J		X	
K	X		
L	X	X	X

All the students heard the standard messages and Valley expectations communicated at orientation, teaching camp, and during seminars. I was interested, however, in determining their apparent acceptance or questioning of Valley's goals and expectations could be associated with students' relationships. Chapter 6 (Developmental Networks) provides more detail about students' developmental networks, changes in networks during their first year, and the types of support provided by network partners. In the following section, I provide an analysis of the expectations communicated to students by their primary network partners as indicators of similarities and differences between the messages received and perceived by the two groups of students, why these differences

existed, and when the differences may have occurred between the Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit students.

During the interviews conducted at the end of the first year (Time 3), I asked students “what expectations do you think these individuals [network partners] have for you and your progression in the program moving forward.” I probed further about network partners’ specific expectations for the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. When interviewing the network partners directly, I asked them “to describe the expectations you have for [student name] and his/her progression in the program” to identify consistencies or inconsistencies in perceived expectations between student and network partner. In the following sections, I describe the key expectations perceived by each group of students and compare their perceptions to those communicated by their primary types of network partners.

Perceiving Fit

The students who were perceiving fit, based on my assessment, with Valley after one year of study ($N=6$) relied on two primary types of network partners: faculty and peers. According to the perceptions of the Perceiving Fit students, faculty placed great emphasis on research throughout the first year and communicated clear expectations for good research performance, followed by satisfactory performance in seminars. Faculty did not communicate any expectations for teaching or teaching performance. Peers did not communicate specific performance expectations related to the three primary roles.

Rather, peer expectations were more focused on overall support and program success. Peers also validated Perceiving Fit students' perceptions of faculty expectations.

Faculty

The Perceiving Fit students believed that faculty did not consider the doctoral student role or performance in seminars as high priorities for succeeding in the program. Several of the students commented that their faculty advisors expected satisfactory performance in seminars, but they were only expected to achieve a minimum standard. One student reported that her advisor said, "coursework is not important and that you just need to pass." Other students believed that as long as they made it through the coursework, the faculty would be satisfied. In fact, several of the students who were perceiving fit with Valley felt that the coursework was a "waste of time" and "interfered with one's ability to do research."

When I talked directly with the faculty members whom these first-year students identified as important, the message that coursework was not a high priority was confirmed. One advisor commented, "So, the first year I don't think I had high expectations in terms of coursework. I just wanted [student] to make it through without needing major assistance." Another faculty advisor stated:

In the first year, I just want them to get through their classes with a 3.0, and sort of get a sense of what it is like to be around here. I expect them to go to seminars, and I expect them to start learning how to ask questions in seminars....I don't expect a whole lot more beyond that in terms of coursework.

The majority of the faculty I spoke with about coursework considered required credits as something that students “need to get through” and “do well in”, but they should always be thinking about research ideas when reading course papers. It appeared that as long as students performed at a “decent level” in the coursework and “did not irritate too many faculty in the process,” the students should not encounter trouble getting through the required course sequence.

The Perceiving Fit students believed that their research assistant role was the “most important,” had the “highest priority” for faculty, and would “get you the most recognition” in the program when being compared to peers. Advice the Perceiving Fit students received from faculty included: “begin to develop your research and paper ideas now,” “make a substantial contribution to your RAship” by actively participating in weekly meetings and by moving projects further, and “be successful in your RA duties by keeping your RA faculty supervisor happy.” One student said that his faculty mentor had high expectations for his research productivity and had said, “You want to be the person that people call when they have a question about X area. Or, the papers that come in for journals, you want those papers to come to you because you are that expert.”

Faculty network partners and program faculty in general told me they placed the greatest importance on research productivity and performance for success in the Ph.D. program at Valley. While faculty did not believe first-year students had the ability to conduct research alone, they did expect students to start thinking about research ideas for summer paper requirements that could possibly become dissertation ideas. One advisor commented:

I expect that [student] and I discuss research ideas to make sure [student] has exposure to topics beyond the classroom....and then gradually we experiment a little bit by looking for possible data and clarify our ideas a bit more to help [student] prepare for the summer paper and possible publications.

Other faculty members said they expected students to “excel in RA work” because that could lead to future funding in the program and possibly “result in exposure at national disciplinary conferences.” One faculty member informed me that it was highly likely that if a student performed at a “mediocre level teaching” and managed to “just pass the required classes”, but excelled in research and appears to have a high potential for publishing papers, that student would be considered “*very* successful and probably highly desirable by Valley standards.”

After Year 1, the students who were perceiving fit felt faculty had little to no expectations for teaching performance. One student said she never had discussions about teaching with her advisor, while other students commented that there were no expectations for teaching other than “don’t let it interfere with your research.” A few of the students in this group were scheduled to teach over the summer and were told by the faculty to “get decent student evaluations, but don’t kill yourself doing it.” Based on their responses during the interviews, the Perceiving Fit students did not appear to disagree with or question the lack of discussion surrounding the topic of teaching. Rather, several of the Perceiving Fit students talked about being hesitant to teach over the summer because it might take time away from their summer research paper progress.

Students’ perceptions of the minimal value placed on teaching matched those articulated directly by most faculty. One senior faculty member told me, however, that teaching was becoming more important in theory, even at top-tier research institutions.

In addition to research, we also emphasize teaching quality. In keeping with both Valley policy, and to be frank about it, with the policy that's emerging at other universities, even the ones that are considered top-tier research oriented universities, in recent years attention has begun to be paid and weight to be placed upon having a demonstrable level of effectiveness in classroom instruction. Basically being able to show some evidence of having a positive impact on the learning process for students. Unfortunately, Valley does not do a good job preparing students, especially international students, to be effective in the classroom because not a lot of value is placed on teaching for P and T [promotion and tenure].

Overall, most faculty said that teaching was not emphasized as important to success in the program because teaching was not Valley's mission. One faculty member shared the following:

I remember being on the university faculty senate years ago and faculty complaining that all that matters is research, and all Valley wants you to do is research. And I'm thinking this is a major research University, if that is not what you want to do, go somewhere else. It shouldn't be any major shock that the focus here is on research, and if you are not a researcher, there are lots of other places you can be.

The emphasis on research over teaching trickled down to the student-level because I was told by one faculty member that even when doctoral students earned low student evaluations for ineffective classroom teaching, not much was done to really help doctoral students improve, particularly if they were performing research assistantship duties adequately.

Peers

The Perceiving Fit students looked to peers as “examples of what to do and what *not* to do” during their first year at Valley. The first-year students did not think that

advanced students or fellow cohort members had specific expectations about their performance in the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, or teacher. First-year students did feel, however, that peers had expectations for their overall individual performance, contribution to the program, and their mutual success.

Perceiving Fit students felt that the overall expectation of their peers was that they succeed in the program. One student stated, “Well, I think the biggest thing they [advanced students] expect of us is that we do succeed. They have the best wishes that we make it.” Other students felt that advanced students expected the first-year students to use them as a resource to help them be successful in the program. While one student supported the sentiment that advanced students wanted to see him succeed, he also felt there was sense of competition.

I suspect strongly that the older students would like to see all of us do well, all of us first years. With any year there’s always a certain amount of competition. I would strongly suspect that some of those people would like to see themselves do better than me and I want to do better than them.

Although advanced students did not have specific expectations for first-year students’ research and teaching, the advanced students identified by the first-year students who were perceiving fit reiterated faculty expectations. During an interview with an advanced student, I was told the following:

I think that early on it’s communicated to the students, or through faculty members and definitely through the recruiting process, that research is more important than teaching. Although you’d have to be a good teacher I guess. It’s the research is more important than teaching thing, and so these students kind of buy into that, I guess, early on.

Another advanced student in the program supported the notion that research is more important than teaching and spoke about how much support students should expect to receive from faculty:

For the most part I would say that is a major thing that people expect of you as a student - do it yourself. And then in terms of beyond that, they don't want you to be too good at teaching, but you've got to be good enough. If you are too good that is a bad signal. If you are really bad, that is a bad signal because they can't sell you. So you need to be within some range of decent.

The first-year students also spoke of cohort expectations. However, the expectations they had for each other were much more about supporting each other than about performance expectations for the roles of doctoral student, researcher, and teacher. One first-year student said his only expectation for cohort members was that "they support each other and help each other succeed." Another first-year student echoed this opinion, "Well, I think we expect to be able to support each other and expect each other to be there when we need them." Overall, cohort members felt they were "in this together" and "were mature enough to realize this is something they all have to do and why not make the best of it to get through together."

Assessing Fit

The Assessing Fit students ($N=6$) relied on two primary types of network partners: faculty and family. The faculty relationships mentioned by this group of first-year students (two were advisors and two were seminar faculty) appeared to be developmental in nature. The faculty helped students manage the rigors and challenges of the first year and develop individually. Although the faculty did have expectations for

students' performance in the program, they allowed the first-year students to get acclimated before pushing them into the research process. Family members served as motivating forces and did not necessarily have performance expectations as much as they had expectations for "balance, happiness, and personal success."

Faculty

The Assessing Fit students perceived an overlap in faculty expectations for the doctoral student and research assistant roles. While this group of first-year students did not discuss conversations with faculty regarding teaching expectations, the Assessing Fit students did not mention any explicit negative impressions of the teacher role communicated to them by the faculty they identified. The two students who identified their faculty advisors as important network partners described their advisors' help, particularly for easing them into research. The advisors, according to the first-year students, acknowledged the importance of learning and developing skills through the seminars, and not just getting through the coursework with a passing grade. For example, one student described his relationship with his advisor as very developmental in nature. This particular student came to Valley with prior research and methodological experience that enabled him to take on more detailed tasks than typical for a first-year research assistant. However, the advisor pushed him to think more conceptually and encouraged him to use seminar papers and projects as opportunities to build conceptual skills rather than relying solely on his methodological training to get him through. The student commented:

[Advisor's] main expectation is that I do my best...it's in my best interest to be less of a methodological oriented person and more of a conceptual thinker...so for that I think [advisor] is very good at separating the two and reminding me to focus on this as well. [Advisor] forces me to get away from the data and the literature and to just think about what I am interested in before I start worrying about the data.

Another student perceived that his advisor had high expectations for his performance, particularly because of his prior work experience. But, the student also commented that the advisor was very deliberate about not inundating him with too much research assistantship work because the advisor felt that learning and skill building through seminars was of utmost importance.

I think [advisor's] expectations are high, but at the same time to reiterate, [advisor] was also very good about giving me space to be the student when I needed to be the student. So in some ways, [advisor] had the uncanny ability of knowing when that was without me having to say, 'You know, I am not going to call you all this week because I have a paper due.' Some of it was just talking to [advisor] and telling [advisor] what I had going on and [advisor] would say, 'Okay, next week you do what you need to do.'

My own conversations with these advisors, confirmed that the students perceived their advisors' expectations accurately. In other words, the two Assessing Fit students' perceptions of their advisors' expectations for individual development and progression matched the expectations communicated to me by these two advisors. I asked the advisor of the student who needed to improve theory building and conceptual skills, to describe expectations for this student without mentioning the conversation I had with the advisee.

The advisor shared the following:

I think my expectations are maybe different from other faculty in the department. I don't care if he is the star in the class. I don't care if he gets an A in every class. I hope he uses each class as an opportunity to work specifically on areas for development. So, for example, I specifically advised him to work really hard in a

seminar last semester on his theory development, theory writing skills - even if it meant getting a worse grade and producing a relatively crappy product. I wanted him to see that the developmental experience of trying to produce a product was more valuable than turning in the best potential paper. So for me it's pretty much about developmental opportunities.

The other faculty advisor described the following expectations:

My expectations are high and I have three of them: academic performance, citizenship, and stewardship...High academic performance is important since you've got to do the work and you've got to do it well...You balance that with citizenship, which is we help each other in terms of other grad students. If one grad student is giving a presentation you know you try to attend and take an interest . . . taking an interest is actually a learned skill you know. And stewardship—leaving things better than you found them. So you know you took a course, it wasn't the best course. My expectation is that we don't spend our time talking for a year about why it was a bad course. Instead, I want us to talk about what and how things can be done differently to improve.

Both of these advisors acknowledged the “Top 50” placement goal as important to the college. The advisors informed me, however, that they would rather have their students place at institutions where they can “make a contribution to ideas and student development.” They also said that if the institutions their students placed were not “Top 50,” they would not be disappointed as long as the students were pleased with their placement.

Other faculty relationships mentioned as important to students who were still assessing fit were with faculty who taught first-year required doctoral seminars. Both students who identified seminar faculty as network partners noted that these relationships were certainly not the most important to first year success. Nonetheless, the first-year students assessing fit felt that the seminar faculty, particularly from the spring semester, did a good job of helping them “to find the ideas that interested them” and enabled the

students to develop those ideas through seminar papers. In fact, one student mentioned, “[Seminar faculty] really liked one of my ideas and strongly encouraged me to keep working on it, which surprised me because [topic] is not an *accepted* mainstream line of research in [department].”

Family

First-year students still assessing fit after one year told me that family did not specify performance expectations for the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. Rather, they perceived expectations communicated by family to be much more about happiness, balance, not losing sight of the goal in attending Valley, focus on the importance of family, and developing into a talented individual.

Three students still assessing fit had family members with experience with graduate-level work including doctoral-level work. In fact, several of the students were in reversed roles prior to becoming doctoral students themselves and were therefore required to be supportive family members while respective partners and siblings pursued graduate degrees. This understanding of what it was like to be a full-time graduate student and have family responsibility influenced the expectations that family members placed on this group of first-year students. One student commented that family expectations are “much more about me doing and becoming my best while maintaining a level of balance which I lacked the first semester.” Another stated that family expectations were about “performing well enough in the program so that I have placement options upon graduation.” This same student also said that there was “an

expectation of balance...to not become so focused on the program and pleasing the faculty that I lose sight of the goals of my family and I.” While one student did comment that one parent would like to see her earn “top placement” upon graduation, the other parent and spouse ultimately expect “that I graduate, and then do what makes me happy...what I feel called to do.” Other students mentioned that family expectations were about “doing what is best for me” and “sticking together as a family.”

I spoke with the family members that this group of students identified as important to their success, including spouses, parents, and siblings. I wanted to get a feel for the interactions students had with family members, the topics of discussion, and how the family members felt about their loved ones pursuing doctoral degrees. I asked each family member, “What are your expectations for [student] while he/she is attending Valley” and “What are your hopes for [student] after he/she graduates?” Interviews with family members revealed that students’ perceptions of expectations matched family member expectations. One spouse shared the following story:

We talk on a regular basis about how classes are going, what projects [student] has, what tests [student] has...I encourage [student] by reminding [student], you know this is what we wanted to do and you’re doing well...I remind [student] that in four to five years you are going to be teaching, you’re going to be in a university and this was our plan...and it’s not in a pressure kind of way, its more of an acceptance of this is how it is and this is where our family will be and wants to be in four to five years.

When I asked another student’s spouse, “what do you hope for [student]?” the spouse responded, “That [student] gain confidence and be the strong, intelligent person that I know [student] is and most importantly do what makes [student] happy.” One family member who is also in the process of earning a Ph.D. said the main expectation

for the sibling's progression in the program was to "learn from my mistakes." This network partner described the uninformed approach taken during the admissions process and it became clear to me during my interview with this individual that the network partner had no real understanding of rankings, or research ideas, or what to say and not say when applying. Once this individual learned that the sibling was considering applying to schools for a Ph.D., this network partner spent a great deal of time talking about the pros and cons of doctoral-level work, and encouraged this first-year student to go into this experience "with your eyes open." This individual said that while the first-year student was doing well, they still talk "every day to let each other know that they are here for each other and offer support."

Comparison of Key Messages: Perceiving Fit vs. Assessing Fit

As summarized in Table 5-4, the students who were assessing fit with Valley's goals, expectations, and weighting of academic roles heard different expectations communicated to them by their network partners compared to the students I characterized as Perceiving Fit. Both groups of students considered faculty members as one primary type of network partner. The students who were perceiving fit with Valley's preferred professional identity also relied on peers throughout the first year. Those still assessing fit relied instead on family. The primary difference in messages communicated to and perceived by these two groups of first-year students is redundancy of message due to the source(s) of the message and intent of the message/expectation communicated. In other words, the first-year students who I believed were perceiving fit with Valley heard

similar messages from faculty and peers related to the roles of research and teaching, the associated expectations, and the preferred weighting of those roles. Conversely, the first-year students who were still assessing fit heard a variety of messages due to the nature of their relationships and network partners that concentrated on individual student development as the priority.

Table 5-4: *Key Messages Perceiving by the Two Overall Groups of First-Year Students*

	<i>Perceiving Fit</i>	<i>Assessing Fit</i>
<i>Faculty</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Coursework is not important •Coursework interferes with research •Research is the most important priority •Research gets you the most recognition •Don't let teaching interfere with research •Get decent teaching evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Coursework is an opportunity to develop •Not being the star in class is okay as long as you learn and push yourself •Learn to take an interest in other grad students •Place at an institution where you can make a contribution •Explore ideas that interest you
<i>Peers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Advanced students expect us to succeed •Advanced students support faculty expectations •Fellow cohort members expect to be supportive of each other •Fellow cohort members "are in this together" 	
<i>Family & Friends</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Don't lose balance •Do what makes you happy •Be the best you can be •Don't forget about the importance of family •We'll move if this is not right for you

The expectations communicated to and perceived by the first-year students who were perceiving fit were solely from Valley organizational members and focused on Valley's goals for performance, placement, and weighting of academic roles. Perceiving

Fit students felt that Valley faculty expectations required them to accept dominant messages and progress in the program accordingly. In fact, first-year students and advanced students informed me that communicating differences in opinion or individual expectations that did not match those of the faculty could result in diminished support and attention from the faculty. In essence, the first-year students who were perceiving fit were expected to live up to Valley's expectations with little to no consideration for the students' own expectations. However, the Perceiving Fit students did not express apprehension with buying into Valley's goals and "hoped to meet them." Some of the Perceiving Fit students appeared more accepting of such strong socialization based on their responses at Time 1. Referring back to the Time 1 interviews, all of the students I characterized as Perceiving Fit by Time 3 described themselves to me in relation to their most immediate professional role. The Assessing Fit students described themselves in more personal terms. Perhaps this individual difference or propensity to focus on the professional self, at least in part, helped explain some of the differences between the Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit students. While peers did not have specific performance expectations other than "to be successful in the program", the messages communicated by peers matched those communicated by the faculty, especially in terms of placement and role priority.

Key Expectations

The messages communicated to and perceived by students still assessing fit with Valley were focused on individual development, balance, and individual goals—even if

those goals did not match Valley's goals. The Assessing Fit students and the faculty members they identified did not see much distinction between the roles of doctoral student and research assistant. Rather, these roles were viewed as opportunities to develop individually, build skills, and "discover topics of interest." The Valley faculty in the Assessing Fit students' networks were more vocal than those in the Perceiving Fit students' networks about their disagreement with Valley's "Top 50" goal. During my interviews with faculty members in the Assessing Fit students' networks, they communicated that they did not believe that all students are motivated by the same goals or that all students have the desire to place at "Top 50" institutions. Their opinion of the "Top 50" goal and Valley's inability to place students in "Top 50" business programs appeared to influence the messages and expectations they communicated to their advisees.

While performance expectations were important, becoming the best self was more important. Family served as sources of balance and "life away" from the expectations and "mixed messages" communicated by Valley members. One student assessing fit mentioned that while the faculty relationships she regarded as important focused more on her individual progression, the messages she heard from other Valley faculty focused on her achieving what they thought was best for her based on Valley's overall placement goals. The student said:

There are definitely discrepancies among the faculty... you have some faculty who are all about Valley and firmly believe that Valley's goals are the end all, and other faculty who acknowledge that Valley has no right to dictate where we should want to place and who we should want to become.

Changes over Time – Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit

To gain a better understanding of who these students were when they arrived at Valley compared to who they were at the end of the first year, I looked for changes over time in congruence between students' and Valley's goals, expectations, and definition of success. I was interested in determining which, if any, students appeared to be Perceiving Fit or Assessing Fit at the beginning of the academic year and if there were any changes in these categorizations throughout the year. Table 5-5 summarizes students' classifications with letters in blue indicating students' categorizations at Time 3.

<i>Table 5-5: Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit: Changes over Time by Student</i>		
<i>Perceiving Fit</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>Assessing Fit</i>
A		
B	B	
C	C	
		D
	E	E
		F
G		
		H
I		
		J
	K	K
L		

Based on students' responses and my definition of Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit, four students would have been categorized as Perceiving Fit and four students would have been categorized as Assessing Fit throughout their first year in the doctoral program. Four students, however, appeared to change during the first year. Of the four

students who experienced change, I categorized two as Perceiving Fit (students B & C) and I categorized two as Assessing Fit (students E & K) by the end of Year 1.

Analysis of the experiences of the four students whose sense of fit with Valley's preferred professional identity changed during the first year, showed similarities in their experiences that contributed to those changes. Each student had an interaction with Valley faculty members that either supported Valley's preferred research identity or that deterred their interests in the "Top 50" goal. In addition, family relationships appeared important for the two students I categorized as Assessing Fit by Time 3 (students E & K). Interactions with family members during the spring semester made these two Assessing Fit students question their lack of work-personal balance during the fall semester. As a result of interactions with Valley faculty or family members, students B and K deliberately changed their networks. By Time 3, student B identified relationships from within the Valley community only which is in stark contrast to the outside Valley relationships only mentioned at Time 2. Student K identified a combination of relationships, with emphasis on the faculty advisor, during the Time 2 interview. By Time 3, student K identified relationships outside of the Valley community only with no mention of the academic advisor. Students C and E changed their perceptions of themselves and goals for placement as a result of interactions with Valley faculty.

Other Key Comparisons

After conducting an analysis of Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit students, I examined other possible individual differences that may have contributed to students'

categorizations as Perceiving Fit or Assessing Fit. The comparisons were based on gender (Table 5-6) and international status (Table 5-7).

Table 5-6: *Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit by Gender*

	<i>Perceiving Fit</i>	<i>Assessing Fit</i>
<i>Male</i>	4	3
<i>Female</i>	2	3

Table 5-7: *Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit by International Status*

	<i>Perceiving Fit</i>	<i>Assessing Fit</i>
<i>International</i>	2	3
<i>Domestic</i>	4	3

As is evidenced by the Tables 5.6 and 5.7, gender and internationality did not appear to influence a student being categorized as Perceiving Fit or Assessing Fit in this group of students. While this is a small sample size, males were just as likely to be Perceiving Fit or Assessing Fit as were females with this group of students. International status also did not appear to be a contributing factor. Other individual differences considered were marital and parental status. However, in order to protect students' identities, those comparisons are not included.

In summary, this chapter highlights the importance of context and expectations to early professional identity development. To provide a foundation, I included information about the Valley College of Business including an overview of the overall program goal

and expectation of “Top 50” placement and weighting of academic roles which emphasizes research as the priority. These expectations were communicated through program brochures, websites, scheduled meetings such as orientation and teaching camp, and faculty-student interactions.

Also included in this chapter was a summary of three key questions asked during the student interviews: define success in terms of the doctoral program, how confident are you that you will progress, and tell me who you were/are. An analysis of these questions allowed me to identify changes in students’ perceptions over time and to evaluate congruence or a mismatch between students’ and Valley’s goals and expectations. Based on what appeared to be congruence or mismatch in students’ and Valley’s goals, expectations, and weighting of academic roles, I categorized students in two ways: Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit. Perceiving Fit students relied on faculty and peers and believed the primary expectation of the program and their primary network partners was research excellence. Upon interviewing the network partners of the Perceiving Fit students, it became clear that there were consistent perceptions between student and network partner because they too communicated the importance of excelling in research. The Assessing Fit students relied on faculty and family throughout the first year. The most important expectation the Assessing Fit students perceived was the emphasis on development as individuals and learning as a result of participating in the roles and other first-year experiences. The Assessing Fit students’ perceptions were in line with the Assessing Fit network partners’ perceptions.

Chapter 6 addresses the role students’ relationships (i.e., developmental networks) played in the early professional identity development process in the first year. Included in

Chapter 6, is a discussion of the types and numbers of network partners students identified as well as the types of support that were regarded by the students as important to first year success. In addition, information regarding the frequency of interaction and nature of interaction is reviewed. To conclude, a comparison of the Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit developmental networks, types of support, and frequency of interaction is included.

Chapter 6

The Role of Relationships: Students' Developmental Networks

As discussed in Chapter 5, two groups of students emerged based on my assessment of their responses: Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit. Chapter 5 provided an overview of Valley's College of Business, the students who participated in this study, and a comparison of the key expectations communicated to students by their primary network partners throughout the first year of study. Fit was defined in chapter 5 as congruence between students' and Valley's goals for placement, expectations for performance, definition of success, and weighting of academic roles. In addition to context and expectations, students' relationships or developmental networks were highlighted as an important component of the professional identity development process (refer to chapter 3, Conceptual Framework).

In this chapter, I provide more detail about students' developmental networks as they described them during interviews at the start of their first year (Time 1), at the start of their second semester (Time 2), and at the end of their first year (Time 3). In comparing the two groups of students, I (1) describe the types and number of network partners for each group, (2) discuss the types of support provided by each network partner to the two groups of students, (3) report on the nature of interaction (media richness) by network partner, (4) include a comparison of the two student groups in the above categories for each interview time, and (5) highlight changes in networks from Time 2 to Time 3.

Time 1 (September 2005)

The first interview was conducted at the beginning of the fall semester, first year immediately following new student orientation. During the first interview, I asked each first-year student to name the individual(s) “who was/were most influential in your decision to pursue doctoral level study.” As expected, several of the first-year students discussed the importance of previous academic advisors at the undergraduate and graduate levels, family and friends, and business associates such as a supervisor. None of the students mentioned Valley faculty members or veteran doctoral students as critical to their decision to pursue doctoral study or to attend Valley.

Table 6-1 provides a summary of students’ developmental networks at Time 1. Of the twelve students, eight described conversations they had with previous undergraduate or graduate faculty advisors when deciding to pursue doctoral level study. Several students stated that the connections they had with their previous advisors and the honest evaluation of the faculty career they heard during those conversations contributed to their decision. One student stated:

Sally Smith² who is probably the biggest catalyst in my decision to pursue doctoral-level study is a [discipline] professor at Southern University³.... I was actually the first class at Southern University to get a certificate in [program] so I was very comfortable going back to her and saying . . . my crazy thoughts. She was very honest with me and said here’s the good things, here’s the not so good things. So that’s kind of how it came about.

² Sally Smith is a pseudonym.

³ Southern University is a pseudonym.

Table 6-1: *Students' Developmental Networks at Time 1*

Number of Students Who Discussed Previous Advisor	Number of Students Who Discussed Family & Friends	Number of Students Who Discussed Both (Previous Advisors and Family)	Number of Students Who Did Not Rely on Support
8	8	6	2

Family and friends were also important to the first-year students' decisions to embark on faculty careers. Eight students described the importance of family support and encouragement as vital to their decision. While the majority of students were among the first in their families to pursue doctoral-level study, a few had family members who had already earned Ph.D.s or were in the process of earning a Ph.D. Having this exposure prior to arriving at Valley provided this handful of students with a "realistic job preview" of the academic career. As one student noted:

My spouse was working on a Ph.D. in [discipline], and I started to discuss ideas with doctoral students at the university my spouse attended, and we got engaged in projects. So for me it was just the natural progression that I acquired some skills in working on these projects. And, it was just normal to pursue the degree.

The students who discussed family and friends who had no personal experience with doctoral-level work regarded the support and encouragement those individuals provided as important during the decision-making stage. For example, one student described spousal support in the following way,

So I talked with [spouse] and [spouse] was completely supportive and allowing the decision to be my choice....my [spouse] really wasn't influential in telling me to go as much as just affording me the opportunity to pursue my dream.

When discussing reaching out for support, whether from previous advisors, family, or friends, ten of the twelve first-year doctoral students discussed at least one individual and described the conversations they had with that individual in some detail

during our first interview. Only two students stated that they did not rely on support or advice from other individuals during the decision and admission stages. One of the students mentioned that he was the first to attend college or beyond in his family and therefore made this decision mostly on his own. The other student stated that pursuing doctoral-level work was always an interest and therefore made the decision individually. The types of network partners and the level of involvement described by the students at Time 1 served as a foundation for the development (or dissolution) of relationships throughout the first year of study.

Time 2 (January, 2006)

Types and Numbers of Network Partners

During the spring interviews which were conducted at the beginning of the spring 2006 semester, I asked the first-year students, “Who has been most influential to your experience and success to date” in order to identify the students’ relationships with network partners that developed during the fall semester. Several themes emerged across students as a result of our conversations. The Perceiving Fit students relied on faculty and peers while the Assessing Fit students relied on faculty and family.

Perceiving Fit with Valley Professional Identity

For the first-year students who I believed were perceiving fit with Valley’s preferred professional identity after one semester ($N=6$), developmental networks

consisted of relationships with two types of network partners: faculty and peers. Three of the students in this group identified faculty relationships as important to first semester success. Two of these students discussed their academic advisor, while the other described a faculty relationship that began developing towards the end of the first semester because of a common research interest. Peers were also identified by this group of students as contributing to first-semester success. Peers included fellow first-year students and advanced students within and outside of the students' respective academic disciplines. Four students described associations with advanced students, and four students discussed relationships with cohort members. The average number of network partners discussed by first-year students in this group was two. Table 6-2 provides a summary of the developmental networks for students who were perceiving fit with Valley's preferred professional identity at Time 2.

Table 6-2: *Students' Developmental Networks at Time 2*

	# of Students Who Identified Academic Advisor	# of Students Who Identified "Other" Faculty Relationships	# of Students Who Identified Cohort Members	# of Students Who Identified Advanced Ph.D. Students from Valley	# of Students Who Identified Relationships with Family/Friends
<i>Perceiving Fit (N=6)</i>	2	1	4	4	0
<i>Assessing Fit (N=4)</i>	2	0	1	0	4
<i>Not in Either Group (N=2)</i>	2	0	2	0	1

Assessing Fit with Valley Professional Identity

After one semester, four first-year students appeared to be assessing their fit with Valley's preferred professional identity. These students identified relationships with a variety of individuals including faculty, peers, and family. All four of these students discussed the importance of family to "making it through" the first semester of study. Supportive family members included spouses, parents, siblings, partners, and children. Two of the students described relationships with a faculty advisor as significant to first-semester success, while only one student discussed relationships with cohort members. Of the four students who appeared to be assessing fit after one semester, one student only identified relationships outside of the Valley community. The average number of network partners discussed by this overall group of first-year students was three. Table 6.2 provides a summary of students' developmental networks for those students assessing fit with Valley's professional identity.

Comparison of Groups — Types of Network Partners

After reviewing the types of network partners these two groups of first-year students identified and later described, I noticed two distinct patterns in relation to the development of a professional identity after only one semester. The students who were perceiving fit only identified relationships with members within the Valley community. Conversely, the students who were assessing fit acknowledged a *combination* of relationships including individuals both within and outside of the Valley community.

There were two exceptions to the classification described above after my analysis of the Time 2 interviews only. Two students did not meet the above criteria regarding network partner relationships and perceptions of fit in order to be included in one of the two groups after one semester. Although one student identified relationships with Valley faculty and peers, this student appeared to still be assessing fit with Valley's preferred professional identity because Valley's dominant emphasis on research over teaching conflicted with the student's personal interests.

Here [Valley], it seems like teaching is a necessary evil, you know....we went out with one of the younger professors and he was telling me, 'It's a pain I have to teach this semester, blah, blah, blah' and I don't look at teaching this way. I wanted to get my PhD because I was interested in teaching and think it's important.

The other student who was not easy to place in either group after one semester described a combination of relationships (advisor, spouse, and business associates) as important to persistence to the spring semester, yet appeared to be perceiving fit with Valley's preferred professional identity. Each network partner in this student's development network, however, possessed a Ph.D. degree in a business field and was a tenure-track faculty member in a business program. While this student appeared to be perceiving fit during the Time 2 interview, the student's important relationships were mostly outside the Valley community.

Type of Network Partner and Purpose of Interaction & Media Richness

After the students identified their network partners from the fall semester, I asked them to "describe a typical interaction you have with this individual and give me an

example or two of the types of support these individuals provided to you.” I used their responses as an opportunity to identify the types of support (knowledge development, information sharing, social support, emotional support) provided during the fall semester using the conceptual framework as a guide. I then sought to determine which network partners provided which types of support. In addition to identifying the types of support network partners provided, I asked students to discuss the frequency (daily, weekly, bi-weekly, etc.) of exchanges and media richness (face-to-face, e-mail, telephone) with which they interacted. In the following section, I discuss the four key network partners (faculty, peers, family and friends, business associates) and the types of support they provided, and the frequency and media richness of interaction for the two overall groups of students.

Faculty – From Students’ Perspective

Perceiving Fit with Valley Professional Identity

All of the first-year students who were perceiving fit with Valley’s preferred professional identity discussed interactions with faculty. Based on student descriptions, faculty provided mainly two types of support to this group of students during the fall semester: information sharing and knowledge development. As described in chapter 3 (Conceptual Framework), information sharing is the communication of program-related requirements including, but not limited to, course requirements, assignment specifications, or political considerations such as who to go to for what program-related

information. Knowledge development is geared towards helping students understand disciplinary norms and develop in areas such as research methods or research topics.

Information Sharing

These first-year students characterized faculty as a vital resource for information during the first semester. Faculty communicated information that enabled the students to better understand program expectations, offered advice on how to approach seminars and other academic events, and helped students manage some of the unknown areas and unwritten rules of the program in order to be successful. For example, one student explained how her academic advisor helped prioritize her efforts the first semester of study:

My advisor told me, ‘The first year you don’t need to be very focused and narrow. Narrow it down once you settle on a major topic area. Then you will find something interesting’ which helped take away some of the pressure early on and helped me realize I don’t need to have a dissertation topic in the first semester.

One student said he relied on his academic advisor’s advice to help him “set and achieve program and personal expectations the first semester.” Another student not only relied on his faculty connection to offer advice on how to balance the sometimes overwhelming workload, but also offered advice on how to maneuver the politics of the department:

My relationship with [faculty member] is primarily academic. [Faculty member] offers advice on how to be more efficient with my time and the things to focus on...what’s most important and guides me on how to go about assessing the lay of the land. Basically, how to go about doing things the correct way early on.

Knowledge Development

Based on student descriptions of their typical interactions with faculty, it became evident that faculty acted mostly in an information-sharing capacity the first semester. However, faculty did engage in some basic knowledge development activities with the students as well. For instance, several of the disciplines require submission of a summer paper at the beginning of Year 2. At orientation and in first-semester seminars, students were encouraged to begin thinking about potential topics or areas of interest. One student asked the advisor for help to consider ways of approaching this program hurdle:

My advisor helped me begin to develop my summer paper ideas. Basically, he told me what we are to do to fulfill the requirement but he also suggested some ways to start looking for a topic. Then, once I came up with an idea he would keep asking me questions until I could not come up with answers or was unsure which meant I needed to keep digging in the literature until I could clearly communicate my ideas.

Another student described the “cat and mouse” game he had with a faculty member. They shared a similar research interest and he felt the faculty member tested him to determine if he was really serious about pursuing this area. The student described the initial interaction as follows:

Okay, this is how it [relationship with faculty member] came about. [Faculty member] said, ‘I have an article that I would like for you to read. I’ll give you a week then get back to me on it and let’s talk about your ideas and thoughts on the topic.’ It turns out the article was quite long and so to me when I saw it I just laughed. I was like okay. I mean, this was basically a test to determine if I was serious about it, so [faculty member] was basically like, ‘show me something’ and so I was prepared to discuss the topic in pretty in-depth detail which helped me understand what I was going to have to do on a regular basis and these exchanges went on for quite awhile... It’s not something that I can’t do and I appreciate it, actually I do. I think it’s funny.

Media Richness

Of the first-year students I characterized as perceiving fit, all had regular interactions with faculty, particularly those who identified their advisor as important to first-semester success. In some instances, the faculty appeared to drive the interactions particularly when related to research. The Perceiving Fit students initiated contact with faculty mostly to obtain program or course-related information. Faculty interacted with students on a regular basis (weekly and biweekly) via two primary means: in person and e-mail.

Assessing Fit with Valley Professional Identity

Of the four first-year students who after the first semester appeared to still be assessing fit with Valley's preferred professional identity, two discussed relationships with faculty. The faculty described by these two students provided three types of support: information sharing, knowledge development, and emotional support.

Information Sharing

The two students who mentioned faculty relationships as important referred specifically to their academic advisors and characterized them as "critical" to their first-semester success. These students relied heavily on their advisors and viewed them as "links" to key program information. One student described interactions with her advisor as very informative and stated:

There's a comfort level with my advisor. He advises me as to who I should be approaching for what, who's important, who's not important, where the funds are, what I should be doing, how I should approach requests for funds and stuff like that. He even gave me advice on who I should approach if I want good funding later.

Another student described his challenge with the non-traditional course sequence he was taking, and relied heavily on his advisor to help alleviate some of his concerns:

Some of the coursework was another area of concern because I hadn't been able to take courses in the order they are prescribed. [Faculty advisor] helped me through the mechanics and implications of this difference and made sure not only that I was okay and understood, but made sure that the other faculty in the department knew what I was doing and made sure they approved of this difference as well.

Knowledge Development

The students also described knowledge development interactions with their academic advisors. The student who described her comfort level with her advisor later told me he was also very proactive in helping her build skills that she would need to be successful in the analytical seminars she would encounter during the next two semesters.

I went on a vacation [winter break] and I could have done anything. But, my advisor asked me 'what subject are you interested in?' He asked me to go into some kind of [discipline] models and learn those, and he gave me a data set and said analyze that. Because I will be taking a course on that model next fall anyway, a required course in [discipline]. But he said 'do it now so that you have it in your head and you always know what to do.' I did do some work on that and it really helped me. It really, really helped me and it's basically learning the [discipline] end of modeling and now I know as much or more than some of the people in the program.

The academic advisor for the student who faced the challenge of managing a non-traditional course sequence also began providing knowledge development support. When

I spoke with this student at the start of the year, he said his biggest unknown coming into the program was research. However, after the fall semester and interactions with his advisor, he was starting to feel less anxiety.

We clicked professionally very well, and so I think part of that is [advisor's] interests and my interests are similar. The research that [advisor] has me working on is something that could potentially further things for me as well...and so research itself is no longer this thing that I have no clue about. In fact, [advisor] lets me get involved and I am learning more what research actually is and beginning to feel less anxious about it.

Emotional Support

The first-year students still assessing fit with Valley's preferred professional identity also spoke of the non-academic or emotional support that their advisors provided. Emotional support, as discussed in chapter 3, is a reassurance of one's feelings, emotions, or concerns. One semester into their doctoral experiences, these students appreciated that reassurance from their advisors. One student remarked:

I guess my interactions with my advisor were pretty much across the board. I don't know... just general I guess ranging from where should I be in the program and is what I'm feeling normal or am I out here on an island, and nobody else has ever been there. [Advisor] helped me realize I wasn't the only one who ever had these feelings.

Another student noted:

The first thing is my advisor is very proactive, and not only in research... What he does is comes to your office. He calls you regularly to his office. And, he does it on his own, you know. That's really encouraging at least for me otherwise they [the program] let you do it on your own and you don't know what to do and where to do it. So, that is one point definitely where he's helped me because I have trouble really speaking out.

Media Richness

Two of the four students who appeared to be assessing fit with Valley's preferred professional identity during the Time 2 interviews, described relationships with a faculty advisor. Both characterized their advisors as proactive, which translated into daily to weekly exchanges that occurred primarily in person, followed by e-mail and telephone conversations. The majority of interactions were academic in nature.

Students Not in Either Category

Two students who were not assigned to either category after one semester both identified their faculty advisors as supportive and described interactions involving information sharing and knowledge development support. One student shared the following interaction:

Well, I was at one point concerned about my grades and how much I should put into it, and I talked with [advisor] and [advisor] was very supportive. [Advisor] said that I shouldn't put that much effort into the classes because at the end what the recruiters are going to look at are the papers that I write and everything else. So as long as I was able to keep a 3.0 average [advisor] didn't even want to know what grades I got.

Media Richness

Both students who did not place in either category based on developmental networks at Time 2 discussed relationships with their academic advisors. One of the students discussed weekly in-person interactions, as a result of course work, and monthly

in-person interactions resulting from advisory meetings. The other student described weekly in-person interactions due to program required events, as well as bi-weekly advisory meetings to discuss academic progress and performance. Both students noted that they had regular e-mail exchanges with their advisors.

Comparison of Groups—Faculty Support

All groups of students identified faculty relationships that developed during the fall semester. Students said faculty primarily provided information-sharing support, followed by knowledge development support. The primary difference between the two groups was the addition of emotional support provided by the faculty to the Assessing Fit students.

One possible explanation for the addition of emotional support provided to the Assessing Fit students by their faculty relationships was students' willingness to display vulnerability and self doubt about their ability to successfully complete the doctoral program during interactions with the faculty. I did not perceive this vulnerability from the Perceiving Fit students. Based on the Assessing Fit students' descriptions of the emotional support, two primary forms were provided: (1) helping students understand that the feelings or doubts they experienced were natural and (2) helping the students move past the dominant institutional goals (i.e., must place in "Top 50" research institution) to feel comfortable focusing on their own individual, developmental goals.

*Peers**Perceiving Fit with Valley Professional Identity*

The first-year students who were perceiving fit with Valley's preferred professional identity also described interactions with peers, including advanced students and cohort members. Some of the departments were deliberate about facilitating interactions between the advanced and first-year students. In some instances, advanced students served as buffers between the first-year students and faculty and also reinforced the messages the first-year students were hearing from Valley faculty and administrators. Based on student responses, three primary types of support were provided to the first-year students by peers: information sharing, knowledge development, and social support. As described in chapter 3 (Conceptual Framework), social support is encouragement to participate in the community aspects (academic and social) of a doctoral program.

Information Sharing

Several students characterized peers, especially advanced students, as important resources for communicating the unwritten rules of the program as well as sharing the basics of what to expect and how to handle various academic situations. The students described, in some detail, the information provided by these veteran Valley members. For instance, one student noted that conversations with advanced students were particularly helpful when preparing for exams:

Well, one of the common things was when we were getting reading for first exams and we really didn't know what to expect and so we talked to them and they would say, 'Okay, who do you have? Okay, this is how they prepare for a big test. This is kind of what they [seminar faculty] look for. Don't be surprised if the scores look like this. This is what they [seminar faculty] normally do. This is how it usually works. This is how they [seminar faculty] curve it or whatever.'

Other first-year students leaned on advanced students to help them better prepare for seminar experiences:

The advanced students that are just one year ahead of me were taking some of the same courses that we [first-year students] were taking. So, I found it very helpful because they had also gone through some additional courses, and they had better or easier ways of getting through the homework than what I had done. So getting their input and help in the classes and being able to talk to them and go, 'I can't believe I don't understand this - I need help' was important for me.

Interactions with advanced students also served as an opportunity for the first-year students to "learn from the mistakes" of these veteran organizational members through their communication of "best practices." One student, who relied heavily on the support of an advanced student, described interactions with this network partner in the following way:

She has advised me that the courses are not the first priority. She told me 'start your research as early as you can.' That's kind of the lesson that she learned as well. She told me that she focused on course work too much the first two years and she thought if she could start again, her research would take more of her time and she would use seminar projects as an opportunity to further her research interests/agenda.

First-year cohort members also offered each other information-sharing support, although the support was not as well informed as that provided by advanced students. One student noted, "We [cohort] talk about just anything...We talk about classes. We talk about faculty. We talk about our potential dissertation ideas." Another student

described interactions with cohort members as “collegial discussions about classes and research ideas.” One first-year student described the future information-sharing interactions she would likely have with her cohort. “I expect that we probably will start discussing that [summer paper] pretty shortly at the end of this semester. You know, how to select a topic, who to select as committee members...just the basic requirements.”

Knowledge Development

Advanced students also served as a source of knowledge development support for the Perceiving Fit students. Advanced students not only helped the Perceiving Fit students organize course work, they offered suggestions about how to approach and think about course topics and handle the pressures of seminar and research assistantship or teaching assistantship duties. One student noted:

When we read a paper for class the understanding that we may glean from it is certainly not the same understanding that they [advanced students] have gleaned from it because they've read more papers than we have read at that point. So they [advanced students] can say, 'Well, there's this other issue in the paper where you might think about it in a different way. So, you might think about it in this way.' Talking with them really helped me learn how to read academic articles in ways that I had not done before.

Another student described his early interactions with advanced students as critical to his understanding of seminar expectations.

Like the other day I was asked to present in the first class before we had any classes. I didn't know what [faculty] was expecting or anything like that. So, I asked [advanced student], 'What's it like? What is [professor] looking for? What should I include in the presentation? How should I approach [topic]?' And things like that.

The first-year students began fairly early in the fall semester to rely heavily on cohort members to engage in knowledge development activities as well. During a description of a typical interaction with cohort members, one student stated, “Most of our interactions are in the academic sense like discussing course papers or journal articles...talking about how we each interpreted the paper or approached the assignment in order to help each other do well.” Another student simply stated, “we help each other in the areas we are deficient.”

Social Support

According to the Perceiving Fit students, advanced students served as sources of social support. Perceiving Fit students who identified advanced student relationships spoke about spending time with advanced students at departmental activities, and appreciated the opportunities to connect with advanced students outside the business building.

We have parties and social events too, oh yes. Let’s see, there was the Halloween party, there was the Christmas party, there was a big pot luck that we had at [advanced student’s] housethey [advanced students] were telling us all sorts of things like what the program was like and what life as a PhD student is like. And everyone was just talking about the things that had gone on in the past, some of the crazy stuff that had happened.

Other students talked about the personal relationships that began to develop with advanced students, such as spending time one-on-one with them, participating in sports, riding to campus together, or just visiting personal offices as a break from the work. One student summed up his connection to advanced students by saying, “I mean, it’s a pretty

friendly department. We have social events and everything like that which is a nice break from the work.”

The Perceiving Fit students were also very quick to discuss the social relationships they were developing among each other. While one student described the various ways they support each other, he was also quick to note, “we make sure a person isn’t working too hard and we take time to go out and not talk about school.” Another student described the connection she is making with her cohort by stating, “We’ve often made strides to get together outside of classes in an individual group...again, being very supportive of each other.”

Media Richness

The first-year students described the in-person interactions with advanced students that occurred anywhere from daily to weekly both on-and-off-campus as well as e-mail exchanges on a weekly basis. This group of first-year students also discussed interactions with cohort members. Interactions with cohort members occurred in person on a daily basis as a result of seminars, colloquia, and time in the office. The majority of students also discussed the efforts made to connect off campus on a bi-weekly to monthly basis such as having lunch, hosting pot-lucks, or walking on campus together. Students also noted that they engaged in e-mail exchanges regarding assignments, faculty, and program events as well as non-academic topics such as campus or community events.

Assessing Fit with Valley's Preferred Professional Identity

Of the first-year students who after one semester appeared to still be assessing fit with Valley's preferred professional identity, only one discussed relationships with peers.

The student described cohort relationships as mostly academic:

It's more academic related, so we'll split assignments together and discuss assignments. We just try to discuss the things that are coming up so that maybe we all have an idea of what the others are thinking so we're not completely off in one direction or another. So that I would say is the most ... one particular person of the two sometimes I will go for a little bit more personal support, but not very much, not nearly the type of support that I would look for in someone else. So our relationship is mostly academic.

Students Not in Either Category

The two students who were not assigned to one of the two groups at the end of the first semester discussed the importance of peers—specifically cohort members. One student discussed his low expectations prior to arriving at Valley about building connections with his cohort members. Based on prior experience, he assumed it would be too competitive an environment to build those connections. He explained, “Actually, I wasn't expecting as much support from other students, you know, but we've been very supportive of each other.” This student described both the academic support (knowledge development) such as help with course assignments and social support. The other student described his relationships with cohort members in strictly academic terms. “We discuss basically everything that's in the program that's related to class requirements, everything except personal stuff. We don't discuss that...there is no time to talk.”

Media Richness

Only one first-year student who appeared to still be assessing fit described interactions with cohort members. This student characterized relationships with cohort members as strictly academic. Interactions occurred daily on campus as a result of seminars, guest speakers, and other program events. This student, along with cohort members, also engaged in e-mail exchanges regarding academic matters only.

Comparison of Groups—Peer Support

The primary difference between the first-year students who were perceiving fit with Valley and those still assessing fit was relationships with peers. The Perceiving Fit students relied on peer relationships and peer support a great deal throughout the fall semester. Conversely, the Assessing Fit students did not discuss personal relationships with peers after one semester. A few of the departments were more deliberate about facilitating connections between advanced and first-year students. Some departments assigned advanced and first-year students to the same office, to serve as informal mentors to first-year students, or to act as intermediaries between the first-year students and faculty. Rather than relying on or building personal relationships with peers during the first semester, the Assessing Fit students spoke quite intently about the support provided to them by family outside the Valley community.

*Family and Friends**Assessing Fit with Valley Preferred Professional Identity*

The four first-year students who were assessing fit after one semester spoke in great detail about their personal relationships with individuals outside the Valley community. The primary types of support family members provided were emotional support, social support, and information sharing.

Emotional Support

Emotional support appeared to be quite important to each of the first-year students assessing fit. Each student discussed the struggles and internal dilemmas they faced during the fall semester and described how their family members helped them through these times. For example, the one student described an interaction with a spouse in the following way:

[Spouse] is my go-to... my, 'Yes, you can really do this.' But [spouse] is the one that encourages me when I think it would be easier to go back to industry. My [spouse] will say 'Three months into that job where would you be or six months into the job or pick a day? Would you be thinking why did I do this? This is the same as when I left and here's why I left it.' My [spouse] is good at grounding me back and reminding me of where we feel we want to be. And, the sacrifices that we need to make now should be more than worth where we think it would get us in the future. My [spouse] is very good at that.

Another student discussed the pressure imposed by the faculty and academic program to focus on a narrow research topic by the end of the spring semester. This challenge,

according to the student, caused a great deal of stress. Therefore, the student relied heavily on the emotional (and knowledge development) support provided by the spouse.

I found myself struggling with which topic I wanted to pursue for my research interest. So I was in a dilemma. I really wanted to make the decision fast, so I could choose my advisor and enter the major faster. It was really eating me up. I couldn't think of anything else except this and I couldn't make up my mind. I called my [spouse] and for two days discussed the pros and cons with each topic. And, [spouse] showed me the pros and the cons from a different perspective, and I made up my mind. [Spouse] kind of gives me a direction always when I am in a dilemma and helps me feel comfortable with a decision once its made.

One student's dilemma was about whether Valley was the appropriate place to be. The student had serious doubts related to the match between program placement goals and actual placement trends the several years prior to starting the program. The student informed me that this was really an issue that was communicated in great detail to a partner.

I was really worried about the placement. I don't see a good match between the goals of the school compared to what they really do to pursue this. I was really worried that they don't really expect a lot from the students here....So that made me worried because I know that you have to work your students. I mean, I felt I was in an environment where there was a lot of slacking. It's not rigorous enough. That's what I think. I don't know. [Partner] told me that [partner] is confident in me so I can push myself. And, [partner] also said to give Valley another chance because it's just the first semester and that perhaps things will improve for me.

Social Support

Family, particularly spouses, served as the primary source of social support for this group of students. One student commented:

It's [support from family] not academically inclined. It's just basically talking about what I'm doing. I don't think they are really that interested in what it is I'm doing...They are just basically helping me on those tough days to get through and

[spouse] and I will just spend time together that is not related to the program which helps. I have to take those days.

Another student commented on the challenge of balancing the rigors of the program while maintaining some semblance of a family life at home. “So they [family] provide both sides of that support – I get time when I need it to focus. And, the break and freedom of letting me forget about the work and the pressure for a while which is so critical.” Social support provided by family to the Assessing Fit students was very much geared towards how to help the students’ most immediate needs.

Information Sharing

Three of the first-year students assessing fit after one semester had family members who pursued some level of graduate work, including doctoral-level work. These family members not only provided emotional and social support, but were able to offer information sharing support because of their experiences. One student had a history of doctoral degrees in the family and spoke very intently about the support received from a sibling. “We discuss general stuff because Pat knows what it’s like and has a few publications. Pat really goes into a subject very deep, which I find difficult. Pat will read the same thing again and again... I mean Pat really helps me with that.” Another student, whose partner earned a Ph.D., would seek advice regarding difficulties with seminar assignments. “Well, I was telling [partner] about this course that I was taking that was giving me a hard time. You know, one of those really abstract ones, so sometimes I spoke to [partner] to get advice.”

Media Richness

The only students who identified family relationships as important to first semester success were those who were assessing fit with Valley. All interactions with family members occurred on a daily basis either in person or via telephone. In addition, e-mail exchanges occurred between the students and family members not in the Valley University area. While some interactions were related to the program, according to the students, the majority of interactions were not program specific as much as the interactions were individual specific (i.e., well-being).

Students Not in Either Category

One student not classified in one of the two groups discussed family relationships as important. Most interactions with this student's family member(s) occurred via telephone and e-mail (daily) with in-person interactions on a weekly basis. Some exchanges centered on program-related activities. However, the majority of interactions were non-program-related.

Business Associates

Only one first-year student identified and discussed relationships with business associates during the Time 2 interviews. This student was one of two who was not assigned to either category. Based on the student's descriptions of interactions with these

network partners, both information sharing and knowledge development was involved.

The student described his relationships with business associates in the following way:

They give you a different perspective...They are at the point where I will be in the future and I'm thinking what decisions they made and why they are there. They are not necessarily happy with all the aspects of the jobs and the schools they are at. This is for me sort of curious learning because I'm trying not to make the same mistakes and I am trying to think why this happened. Maybe they focused too much on a particular area. Maybe they chose an area that's not that popular. So, it's very good for me to see this from the inside.

Media Richness

The interactions this student described occurred on a bi-weekly or monthly basis, mostly via e-mail and telephone. Since the business associates were this student's research partners, most interactions were related to research projects currently underway. However, this student also characterized relationships with business associates as social.

Time 3 (May-June 2006)

Types and Numbers of Network Partners

At the end of their first year (Time 3), I asked the students, "Who has been most influential to your success and first-year experience." I used students' responses to identify the students' relationships with network partners that developed throughout the entire first year experience and to determine which ones were most important based on students' perceptions.

Perceiving Fit with Valley Professional Identity

For those first-year students who were perceiving fit with Valley’s preferred professional identity after one year ($N=6$), developmental networks consisted of relationships with two types of network partners—faculty and peers. Four of the students identified relationships with faculty and regarded them as important to first-year success. Of these four students, two specifically named their faculty advisors, and the other two students discussed faculty relationships that developed through research assistantship duties. Peers were also identified by five of these six first-year students as important. Once again, peers included advanced students at Valley and fellow first-year students in the entering cohort. Only one of the students acknowledged advanced students as influential, and four described relationships with cohort members. The average number of network partners discussed by students in this overall group was two at Time 3. Table 6-3 provides a summary of the developmental networks for students who were perceiving fit with Valley’s preferred professional identity at Time 3.

Table 6-3: *Students’ Developmental Networks at Time 3*

	# of Students Who Identified Academic Advisor	# of Students Who Identified “Other” Faculty Relationships	# of Students Who Identified Cohort Members	# of Students Who Identified Advanced Ph.D. Students from Valley	# of Students Who Identified Relationships with Family/Friends
<i>Perceiving Fit (N=6)</i>	2	1	4	4	0
<i>Assessing Fit (N=4)</i>	2	0	1	0	4
<i>Not in Either Group (N=2)</i>	2	0	2	0	1

Assessing Fit with Valley Professional Identity

After one year, six students appeared to still be assessing a fit with Valley's preferred professional identity. These first-year students identified relationships with a range of individuals including faculty, peers, and family. Five of the students characterized family as "absolutely essential" to their first-year success. Similar to student responses at Time 2, family relationships included spouses, parents, siblings, partners, and children. One possible explanation for the Assessing Fit students' continued reliance on family may be because they were assessing fit. It became evident throughout my interviews with all students that showing signs of doubt or weakness in front of Valley faculty and administrators was unacceptable. Therefore, the Assessing Fit students may have been relying on family support because they were unable to share doubts with many individuals within the Valley community. Four of the students identified and described relationships with faculty, two of whom served as faculty advisors. Only one student discussed relationships with peers, including both fellow cohort members and advanced students within the discipline. The average number of network partners discussed by this overall group of students was three individuals per developmental network. Table 6.4 provides a summary of students' developmental networks for the first-year students who appeared to still be assessing fit with Valley's preferred professional identity.

Change in Developmental Networks from Time 2 to Time 3

From Time 2 to Time 3, the majority of students experienced two overall types of changes in developmental networks: (1) transition from Perceiving Fit to Assessing Fit or from Assessing Fit to Perceiving fit, and (2) types of network partners identified. The two students who were not assigned to either category after Time 2 appeared to be assessing fit with Valley's preferred professional identity at Time 3. In fact, one of these two students withdrew from Valley. I labeled this student as Assessing Fit at Time 3 because the student was still unsure of the decision to withdraw from Valley when we spoke four months after the decision to depart. Other developmental networks changes included the types of network partners identified. In fact, only two of the twelve students did not have any changes in types of network partners from Time 2 to Time 3. The remainder of the students experienced some change.

Type of Network Partner and Purpose of Interaction & Media Richness

Similar to the Time 2 interview, I asked students to "describe a typical interaction" with the individuals identified and discuss "what it is about these individuals that you found to be important to your first year progression." I used student descriptions to identify the four types of support (knowledge development, information sharing, social support, emotional support) provided by network partners to students during the first-year experience using the conceptual framework as a guide. During the interviews, I also asked students to discuss the frequency and media richness of interactions with their self-identified network partners. In the following section, I highlight the four key network

partners (faculty, peers, family and friends, business associates) and the types of support each provided. In addition, I include a discussion of the frequency and media richness of interaction for the two overall groups of students.

Faculty

Perceiving Fit with Valley Professional Identity

Of the first-year students who were perceiving fit with Valley's preferred professional identity after one year, four identified and discussed faculty relationships as important to first-year success. According to the students' characterizations, faculty offered two types of support throughout the first year: knowledge development and information sharing.

Knowledge Development

While faculty were still offering the same types of support to this group of first-year students from Time 2 to Time 3, faculty interactions shifted from a predominant focus on information sharing to more instances of knowledge development. One student described an interaction with the academic advisor as follows:

For example, I was working on a presentation for a class that is also the topic that my advisor is interested in. So, I asked [advisor] to go through my slides while I was presenting to give me feedback and [advisor] attacked my ideas in a constructive way and pushed me to think more broadly about the area.

Another student noted that his faculty advisor began to discuss course topics with him to make sure that “something was learned through the seminars” that would lead to future research ideas even if the student did not yet have the skills to start conducting the research. One student, who began working on a research project with two faculty members, felt the faculty helped him to understand the process. This student said, “you know, each professor would sit down and try to tell me what to do and how to do it which helped me a great deal.”

Information Sharing

Throughout the year and spring semester, faculty still offered this group of students’ information-sharing support. One student said his faculty mentor communicated key information to him from the faculty perspective by specifically offering advice about “what to focus on, what’s important, and what’s not.” Another student said his academic advisor would just check in to “make sure I was taking care of RA responsibilities and just offer suggestions on how to balance that with the course work.” One student felt that the faculty were quite supportive in providing him with information that they did not provide to other students in the cohort which he found to be reassuring. The student noted, “Some of the professors that I don’t even have yet gave me advice on how to get me some extra funding. I didn’t ask you know so . . . I thought that was a good validation of my performance.”

Media Richness

The first-year students in the Perceiving Fit group all noted weekly to bi-weekly interactions with faculty members. The majority of these interactions primarily occurred in person and secondarily by e-mail exchanges. Meetings typically lasted one hour in length, and focused mostly on academic purposes.

Assessing Fit with Valley Professional Identity

Of the six first-year students who still appeared to be assessing fit at the end of Year 1, four described relationships with faculty. Faculty relationships included the academic advisor and seminar faculty teaching required courses during the spring semester. The faculty provided two types of support to this group of first-year students: knowledge development and information sharing.

Knowledge Development

The first-year students commented that they felt their relationships with faculty members began to change at some point during the spring semester; the students were able to contribute more to the work being done between the student and advisor. Two of the students spoke of support provided by their faculty advisors. One student shared the following example:

[Advisor] pushed me a great deal on our first research project that we started knowing that I had some prior research experience. For a second year class I was taking, I was required to bring a data set and I first planned to use one of my data

sets which was not very good. So [advisor] gave me the cites from one of [advisor's] papers and one of [advisor's] data sets so that I would be able to do higher power analyses than I could have done on my data. That was very helpful. Plus, [advisor] always gave me very good and honest feedback.

Another student noted:

[Advisor's] research interests are matching up with mine really well so far. We were thinking about that going in, and we've been working pretty much on the same topic for the whole year. [Advisor] has really allowed me to contribute quite substantially to the project, and there's potential that I could go ahead and take a piece of this and develop a dissertation out of it which would be wonderful.

Information Sharing

The Assessing Fit students also offered stories about their continued reliance on faculty to help them navigate through the spring semester, and prepare for upcoming summer paper requirements and comprehensive exams. They spoke in particular and in some detail about the helpful information that the faculty provided to them during the spring semester and throughout the entire first-year experience. One student offered the following story about the seminar faculty from the spring semester.

I don't think [the support] was actually personal, you know. Neither seminar professor gave me one-on-one support necessarily. It's more that in class they're encouraging and very open about their expectations and what they hoped we would take out of the class. They created an atmosphere that made me want to participate and want to be a part of it. It just was a different environment than I guess I had felt from the fall. I really felt that I could ask these faculty questions and they would be open to sharing their own experiences.

Another student described the support received from a faculty member related to a summer course that this student was responsible for teaching. "The one professor, whose

class I'm teaching this summer, let me sit in on the spring class the whole semester. [Professor] has been very open about talking with me about different issues that might come up with students or course topics, which has been a huge help.”

Media Richness

The first-year students in this group interacted with faculty on a daily to weekly basis in person and via e-mail. Two of the students discussed their regularly scheduled advisory meetings. Other students spoke of seminar faculty and the regular exchanges that occurred, with a predominant focus on course topics or projects. Similar to the students who were perceiving fit after one year, this group of students interacted with faculty regarding academic matters with little to no personal or social exchanges.

Comparison of Groups—Faculty Support

Both groups of first-year students identified faculty support as important to first year success. The same number of students in each group ($N=4$) identified relationships with faculty. Two students in each group described relationships with faculty advisors. Based on student descriptions, faculty provided knowledge development and information-sharing support. Neither group of students appeared to have personal or social relationships with faculty members outside the Valley community.

*Peers**Perceiving Fit with Valley Professional Identity*

Peer support received from advanced students and fellow first-year cohort members was regarded as important to first-year success for those first-year students who were perceiving fit with Valley's preferred professional identity. According to student responses, peers provided three types of support to the Perceiving Fit students: information sharing, knowledge development, and social support.

Information Sharing

While the Perceiving Fit students relied on each other to share important program-related information, they continued to rely heavily on advanced student support in this area due to their experiences in the program.

[Advanced students] have been there to let us know what's coming next in terms of coursework and program hurdles. They gave us advice on how to get through what's going on and offer support by giving us examples of the kinds of work we need to be submitting as well as giving us input about what professors expect from us. . . they just offer us a lot of perspective on everything.

Another student simply stated that advanced students offer "that experienced student perspective of I guess more insight on, on faculty....having experience with the faculty."

Knowledge Development

The Perceiving Fit students relied quite heavily on each other to provide support related to course assignments, readings, and other program-specific activities where “performance was key.” One student noted that he, along with his fellow first-year peers, “always talked about classes and the assignments to make sure we were getting the main points.” Another student also relied on cohort members to, “talk about classes, content, what we were doing and to talk through future research ideas and offer feedback.”

Social Support

The Perceiving Fit students, while focused mainly on their academic success in the first year, also found time to spend with each other outside the “Valley walls.” Several of the students described the personal relationships they formed with each other. “Well let’s say it’s mostly social. Although I mean we talk about the department and classes and so maybe we do it in a friendly way. But mostly we just talk about each other’s friends or what is going on in our personal lives not related to the program.” Another student said, “We like to go out and have a good time. We go to parties with folks from my [partner’s] program and it’s nice to not be in the office all the time reading journal articles.”

Media Richness

The first-year students who were perceiving fit after one year interacted with their peers on a daily to weekly basis. The majority of these interactions occurred in person and via e-mail. The first-year students interacted mostly on campus with the advanced students and both on and off campus with fellow first-year cohort members. Advanced student relationships were mostly academic in nature while relationships with cohort members were academic and social in nature.

Assessing Fit with Valley Professional Identity

Of the first-year students who appeared to still be assessing fit with Valley's preferred professional identity after one year, only one described relationships with peers.

Emotional Support and Information Sharing

This student relied mostly on support from advanced students. The predominant types of support provided by advanced students included emotional support and information sharing. The first-year student shared the following story about the support received from advanced students.

[Advanced students] offer an understanding about what you're going through as compared to what they're going through and really let you know its okay. They offer some advice on what to do, what not to do, you know, playing part of the political game here as far as who to talk to. They even give advice as far as if you want to know something more about a particular topic, which professor would be the best one to go to talk about it. And they let us know who we could rely on to

help us out at certain stages and give advice about life as a PhD student and future faculty member.

Media Richness

The first-year student noted above interacted mostly on campus and in person on a weekly basis with advanced students. The intent of those interactions focused mostly on academic matters related to the program. The first-year student also engaged in e-mail exchanges semi-regularly regarding course work or program requirements.

Comparison of Two Groups—Peer Support

One primary difference between the two groups was reliance on peer support during the first year of study. The students who were perceiving fit with Valley's preferred professional identity shared several stories about the variety of relationships and interactions they had with peers. Conversely, of the students who appeared to still be assessing fit, only one spoke of peer relationships. This difference in relationships is similar to the data reported at Time 2. Thus, the students still assessing fit relied heavily on family relationships at Time 3.

Two possible explanations may shed light on why this difference existed and remained consistent throughout the first year. As previously mentioned, a few departments were more deliberate about connecting advanced students with first-year students and using advanced students to further support and communicate Valley's expectations and goals. Second, because the Assessing Fit students were still questioning

Valley's goals and expectations, the Assessing Fit students may have felt more comfortable confiding in relationships outside of the Valley community.

Family

Assessing Fit with Valley Professional Identity

Of the six Assessing Fit students after one year, five identified family relationships as “critical” and “imperative” to making it through the first year. This group of first-year students spoke at great lengths about how much their family's support helped to keep them grounded and confident throughout their experiences to date. Based on student descriptions, family members predominantly provided emotional support during the spring semester and throughout the year.

Emotional Support

Emotional support was quite important to persistence to Year 2 for this group of first-year students. In fact, several students talked of the balance family members such as parents, spouses, and siblings provided. One student noted:

They [family] provided that emotional support and balance that I felt was of utmost importance and that I was lacking during the first semester. I fell victim to only interacting with folks directly involved in the academic community and I lost sight of balance. The first semester I was solely focused on being an academic, but that changed during the second semester. My goal of being an academic hasn't changed, but I made more of an effort to interact with individuals outside of the community in order to hear thoughts, perspectives, and ideas other than what I hear in Valley alone.

Other students commented on the motivational support that family members provided such as encouragement, concern, and offering the “you can do it” support. Another student simply stated, “Without them I don’t think that it would have worked out.” One student in particular learned a great deal about herself during the first year of study by relying on her family for support. She shared the following story:

It’s just that I’ve been learning patience throughout my first year. You don’t get that much sleep and you’re irritable and you know there are people, like my family, who are patient with you when you don’t really deserve it . . . they know what you’re going through and they understand it. And you know, they’re calm and they bring calm into your life...and that support helps me to keep peace of mind which is something they have taught me.

Media Richness

This group of first-year students interacted with family members on a daily basis. Interactions occurred in person, by telephone and via e-mail. While students confided in family members about their program struggles, most interactions were not academically based, but served to offer motivational support and encouragement.

In closing, in this chapter I provided descriptive information on the first-year students’ developmental networks at the beginning of the academic year (Time 1), at the start of the spring semester (Time 2), and at the end of the first academic year (Time 3). By the end of the first year half of the students ($N=6$) were perceiving fit with Valley’s preferred professional identity and relied on support from relationships *within* the Valley community including faculty and peers. In contrast, half of the first-year students ($N=6$) still appeared to be assessing fit after one year. They relied on a *combination* of relationships within and outside of the Valley community, including faculty and family.

Chapter 6 also provides detailed information on the types of support each network partner provided. To summarize, the first-year students who were perceiving fit after one year received information sharing and knowledge development support from faculty. In addition to information and knowledge development support, however, the students still assessing fit also received emotional support from faculty at Time 2. Both groups of first-year students received knowledge development support and information-sharing support at Time 3. Peers, identified as important to the students who were perceiving fit with Valley, provided information sharing, knowledge development, and social support. Family relationships were more important than peers to the students still assessing fit and they offered emotional and social support to these students. Business associates were identified as important at Time 2, but were not identified as important at Time 3.

Frequency and media richness of interactions between network partner and first-year students was also described in this chapter. In review, there was not much difference in media richness or frequency of interaction for faculty between the two groups of students. The majority of student-faculty interactions occurred on campus, on a weekly to biweekly basis, and were related to academic matters. Student-peer interactions, while social in nature at times, were mostly academic in nature and occurred on a daily basis. Conversely, interactions with family and friends occurred regularly in person and by phone, but were mostly non-academic in nature.

In addition to the differences in types of network partners between the students who were perceiving fit versus assessing fit, there were differences in types of support received between these two groups of first-year students. For instance, the Perceiving Fit students relied almost exclusively on information sharing and knowledge development

support to persist to Year 2, while the first-year students assessing fit relied on knowledge development, information sharing, and emotional support. A handful of Perceiving Fit students shared with me that they did not feel comfortable or able to confide in faculty or peers about doubts or insecurities about the program for fear of showing weakness. Therefore, it appears that the Perceiving Fit students only relied on the types of support that they believed would show their individual initiative and not reveal insecurities or an inability to handle the stress of the program. This suggests that success in the Valley program entailed showing no signs of vulnerability or weakness.

Chapter 7 addresses the early professional identity development process experienced by these first-year doctoral students at Valley. Their development is linked to three key interview questions: what does it mean to be a doctoral student, what does it mean to be a research assistant, and what does it mean to be a teacher? After comparing the two groups of students (Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit), I summarize how these two groups describe the three roles based on their experiences and perceived expectations. Also included is an overview of how their experiences while engaging in these roles relate to the faculty career based on their perceptions.

Chapter 7

Early Professional Identity Development

In this chapter, I describe how the first-year doctoral students came to understand what it means to be a doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher based on interactions with network partners and through other program-related experiences. Engaging in these three roles was assumed to serve as a preview of the faculty career (refer to chapter 3, Conceptual Framework). Using the two groups of students that emerged from my analysis (Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit), I (1) summarize how students characterized each role at Time 2 and Time 3, (2) describe how each student groups' perceptions of what it means to engage in the roles served as a preview of the faculty career, and (3) compare the similarities and differences in descriptions of the three roles for each group of students.

Early Professional Identity Development—Perceiving Fit versus Assessing Fit

During each interview, I asked the first-year students to tell me, “what does it mean to be a doctoral student,” “what does it mean to be a research assistant,” and “what does it mean to be a teacher.” I used students' responses as an opportunity to determine (1) how they personally characterized and described each role, (2) how their responses changed and developed over time as a result of interactions with network partners and program experiences, and (3) how students' perceptions differed by group (Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit), thus influencing their early development of a professional identity as a future faculty member. In the following sections, I summarize the key characterizations

of the three roles (doctoral student, research assistant, teacher) provided by students who were perceiving a fit with Valley's preferred professional identity and those still assessing whether they fit at the end of their first year in the program (Time 3).

Perceiving Fit

The first-year students who were perceiving fit with Valley's preferred professional identity focused almost entirely on research when describing what it means to be a doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher. In fact, the students' responses at Time 2 and Time 3 centered on the amount of time or opportunity the roles allowed them to "engage in research" and "put them on the path to a research career" or as "an extra responsibility" that detracted from the ability to conduct one's research.

Doctoral Student

At Time 2, several of the Perceiving Fit students commented that "being a doctoral student is like nothing I have ever done before." The challenge this role presented during the first semester was something these students were not expecting. One student said that in order to be a doctoral student, "one has to be something of a masochist." However, this group of students also felt that the doctoral student role was a precursor to being a researcher and believed that the spring semester would enhance their opportunities to develop more professionally. One student simply stated, "We're training to be professors."

There was little difference between the Time 2 and Time 3 interviews in terms of students' perceptions of what it means to be a doctoral student. Similar to the Time 2 descriptions of the doctoral student role, the Perceiving Fit students focused on the research component during the Time 3 interviews. The doctoral student role was described as "the first stage of the research career" and several students felt this notion characterized their first-year experience as a whole. All their descriptions of what it means to be a doctoral student focused on research and the learning process that leads to productive research. One student commented:

The first year as a doctoral student was more about settling down and making progress. "Basically, my research career starts here and the future will just be a continuation of the research and ideas I am exploring now and in the future....I think the salary will be different as a faculty member, hopefully." Another student saw the doctoral student role as an opportunity to "make yourself into a researcher." The student also added:

The doctoral student role helps you to do top notch research and get published, and hopefully only teach a small bit...to basically help you really become a master at your subject area and be able to produce things that are interesting in that particular area.

Other Perceiving Fit students said that being a doctoral student demanded multi-tasking and managing many projects due to multiple course requirements. "It means spending time trying to get an understanding of the topics, articles, and readings...basically being able to juggle a lot of stuff." Because of the amount of work required to be successful, one student described the doctoral student role as "self-inflicted punishment because you have to want it, work hard for it, be naturally curious and inquisitive, but you have to

have some brains.” Another student described the doctoral student role as challenging but noted “that the only reason that someone ends up leaving from Valley is because they didn’t put the effort in and didn’t try....”

For the Perceiving Fit first-year students, being a doctoral student meant “becoming a researcher” and was a “segue into a research career.” Therefore, being successful as a doctoral student opened “up the door to research” and provided “students with the opportunity to get attention from the faculty.” Although this role was characterized as challenging due to the need to multi-task effectively, the Perceiving Fit students felt that developing research ideas, pursuing those ideas through course assignments, and learning to be a researcher were what the doctoral student role was about throughout the first year.

Research Assistant

The Perceiving Fit students’ understanding of the research assistant role at the beginning of the spring semester (Time 2) focused mostly on the tasks done by a research assistant. This group of first-year students spoke of the practical skills developed such as “getting data, knowing what to do with the data, how to present the data, and figuring out how to get data.” Many of these students had not engaged much in the research assistant role during the fall semester because most of their early efforts were focused on the doctoral student role. One student noted that while his personal experience was limited, he believed that “you figure out a way to use your data to add insight in your specific

area.” Another student commented, “Being a research assistant is about coming to the table with something...not being an equal yet but trying to be an asset.”

While this group of first-year students focused on the tasks associated with the research assistant role at Time 2, the Perceiving Fit students believed this role was the key to success at Valley during the spring semester. At Time 3, this group of first-year students again focused on research as important for continued success at Valley. Although a few of the Perceiving Fit students did not formally engage in research assistantship duties during the first year, all made connections on some level with faculty in order to begin participating in the research process. These students believed that excelling or showing promise in research to be the best or only way to get faculty attention. The Perceiving Fit students believed the research assistant role related most to what the faculty career would be. One student commented that being a research assistant was an “opportunity to do what I really want to be doing.”

A few of the Perceiving Fit first-year students acknowledged that research assistantship duties provided a way of earning money while in their doctoral programs, but succeeding in this role was more than just earning your keep. One student noted:

To me, the most important aspect of being a research assistant is finding confidence in my ideas and earning the respect from faculty when doing research....doing research is basically the only way you get attention so that is what I plan to do. I want to make it so my contribution to projects is so essential that the faculty will have to acknowledge my work and reward me with co-authorship.

Other first-year students in this group believed that being a research assistant is about contributing to and supporting the work of the faculty. All of the first-year Perceiving Fit students admitted to having very little research experience prior to arriving at Valley, yet

they saw the research assistantship role as a way to understand topics, provide support and information to the faculty, and add value to Valley. One student acknowledged that if one was fortunate, being a research assistant allowed “you to contribute your own ideas if the faculty are willing to listen.”

For some of the Perceiving Fit students, research assistantship duties were the only important aspect of the doctoral student experience. One student commented:

I wish I could do it more. I kind of get tired of doing coursework and reading stuff I don't really want to read necessarily. I mean, it's [coursework] interesting, but it's not what I want to be doing. Basically, the research assistantship role is an opportunity to get a taste of what it is I want to be doing so it's nice to be able to do that now. And, I will hopefully focus most of my efforts on that for the remainder of my time at Valley.

Another student said that he did not have much of an opportunity to get involved in research during the first year due to discipline-specific requirements. However, this particular student and a faculty member “gravitated to each other because of a common research interest” and began to collaborate on research. The student wished his department facilitated the opportunity to get involved in research more readily in the first year “because that's what we're here for, right?” Overall, this group of first-year students described the research assistant role as a way of getting recognition, learning how to be a faculty member, and something this group of students wanted to gain more experience in during their time in the program.

Teacher

Many of the Perceiving Fit students did not have experience with the teacher role either prior to arriving at Valley or during the first semester at Valley. Therefore, when asked what it means to be a teacher during the Time 2 interview, most students based their comments on what they heard or observed from Valley faculty. This group of first-year students described teaching “as a duty,” “crowd control,” and something “that is only going to take about 10% of my time.” Other students believed that teaching is about “giving students what they need” and “managing the challenge of all the roles without sacrificing your own time and learning.”

The Perceiving Fit students’ perceptions of what it means to be a teacher did not change from Time 2 to Time 3. At the end of the first year (Time 3), the Perceiving Fit students continued to describe teaching in two ways: “an extra responsibility” and “a time drain,” or “a means of conveying information to help students learn.” All of the first-year students in this group spoke of the need to help students learn as an important teaching function. However, the Perceiving Fit students also relayed a somewhat negative impression of undergraduate teaching based on their observations throughout the first year, interactions with Valley members, and through their own experiences in the classroom at Valley. Many of the Perceiving Fit students described teaching as an obligation, something that “just has to be done”, or “another distraction from research.” Several Perceiving Fit students felt that Valley undergraduate students expected them to “dumb down” the material, leading them to question the undergraduate’s motivation and

work ethic. For example, one doctoral student shared the following opinion of what it means to be a teacher at Valley.

To want the students to learn. To want the students to understand the information and to not dumb it down for them...make the students step it up in the classroom. When I am in the classroom, my thoughts and experiences go back to when I was a manager, in that you're just going to have people who don't want to work...if you lower your expectations of them, that's what they'll go down to...So I think it's incumbent even as an instructor to push the students to achieve what I want them to achieve.

Another student expressed similar concerns about lowering expectations for Valley undergraduate students. His student evaluations from the previous semester indicated that he had not spent enough class time working on example problems, or that the problems were too hard and did not match what he taught in class. This doctoral student said he thought he was “already dumbing down the material to their level” and was “surprised at the undergraduate student comments” because he already felt he was simplifying the material.

Other first-year students spoke of the extra time and effort it took to teach. According to one student, “It’s an extra responsibility and time which I don’t really have at the moment, but it’s a very good opportunity in terms of learning those skills.” Another student described being a TA as “grunt work” and “time consuming” but described being the actual instructor of record as “more fun and interesting than being a TA.” This particular student continued by saying, “interacting with the students is the fun part, but the work surrounding teaching, such as the preparation and planning that goes into making a course good, takes more energy than anticipated...so you really have to enjoy teaching to want to do it.”

Overall, the Perceiving Fit students' descriptions of what it means to be a teacher did not change much from the Time 2 to the Time 3 interviews. While these students communicated the need to help students learn, most conveyed a negative impression of teaching due to its time-consuming nature and the need to “dumb down” material for Valley undergraduate students. I also heard that “teaching is not something we should want to do if we want to place in a Top 50.”

Preview of the Faculty Career

To determine how, if at all, the Perceiving Fit students' experiences in the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher related to their perceptions of what life would be like as a faculty member, I asked the students, “How have your experiences prepared you for life as a faculty member?” Figure 7-1 provides a summary of the Perceiving Fit students' characterizations of what it means to be a doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher throughout the first year, leading to their perceptions of how the first-year experience relates to a faculty career.

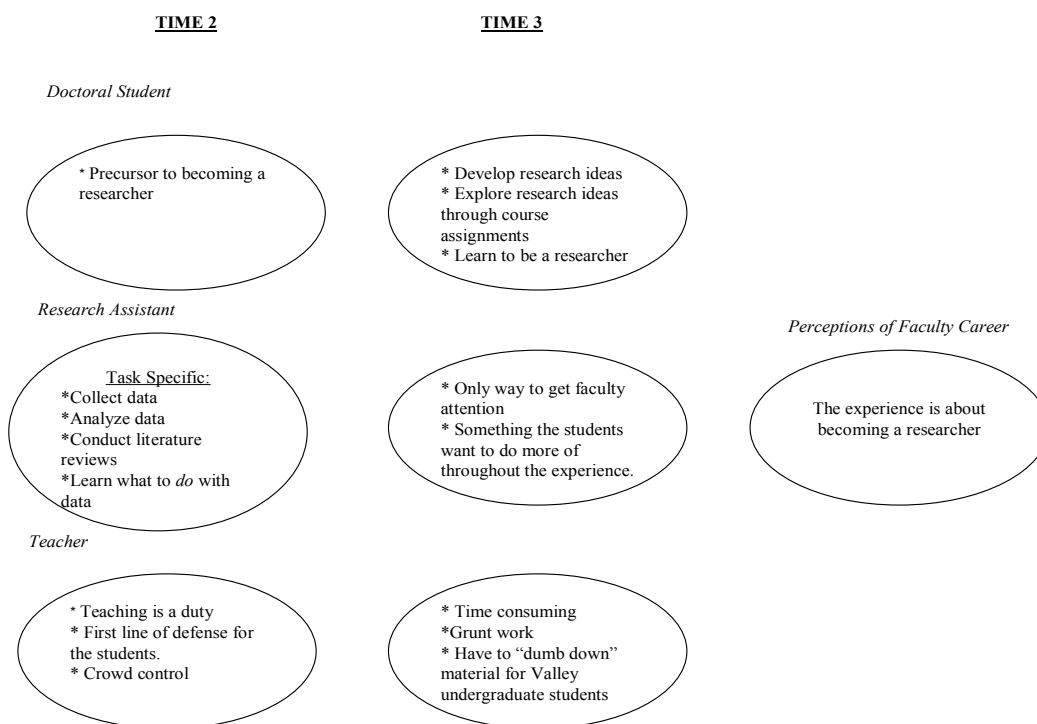


Figure 7-1: Summary of Perceiving Fit Key Themes for Each Role at Time 2 and Time 3

All of the Perceiving Fit students agreed that the first-year experience at Valley was a realistic introduction into “becoming a researcher.” One student commented that the first year was “pretty realistic in that we were able to dig into research, understand what research is about. I think the summer paper will just be another opportunity to see how rigorous and cut throat research can be.” A different student noted, “Let’s just say I have a less romantic view of what being a researcher is....you always have to think about the publishability of your ideas.” An additional student added, “I think so...I think this [research] is what it’s about.” Although I asked the Perceiving Fit students to tell me how their experiences related to becoming a *faculty* member, they all described how their first-year experiences related to becoming a *researcher*, which in their minds is becoming a faculty member.

Assessing Fit

The first-year students who were still assessing fit with Valley's preferred professional identity characterized the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher in terms of their own development, which took place while performing each of the roles. This focus on individual development and learning as fundamental to these three roles was a consistent theme during both the Time 2 and Time 3 interviews. The first-year students in the Assessing Fit group described their experiences and personal growth with me, but were also quick to inform me if they had no experience in one or more of these areas for a variety of reasons.

Doctoral Student

During the Time 2 interviews, the Assessing Fit students described the "interesting" and "fascinating" challenge the doctoral student role presented during the first semester. One student said that being a doctoral student meant, "You're interested in something else, at least in my case, besides money...You actually want to learn something." Others spoke of the opportunity to create self-awareness through personal reflection and "tap into interests previously unknown prior to arriving at Valley." At both the Time 2 and Time 3 interviews, the Assessing Fit first-year students did not see much difference between the doctoral student and research assistant roles. They perceived that both roles were focused on allowing them to develop and grow personally and professionally as a result of first-year experiences.

When I asked the Assessing Fit students what it means to be a doctoral student at Time 3, they described the need to “successfully complete coursework,” “understand key concepts of required seminars,” and characterized the doctoral student role as a “different way of looking at things” compared to prior academic experiences. However, the Assessing Fit first-year students also spoke in great detail about their own individual development during the first year. As one student said, the doctoral student role is a way of “seeing how hard you can push yourself.”

Several of the students described the personal development they experienced while being a doctoral student. Fundamentally, performing successfully as a doctoral student required “meeting the expectations of the faculty,” but the doctoral student role was “more than just meeting expectations” according to several of the Assessing Fit students. One student commented:

I guess I am realizing more that it means different things to different people. We had a pep talk yesterday from one of the faculty members that’s enthusiastic in a positive way about faculty life which is not typical here at Valley. After listening to [faculty member] talk, I realize there’s really so many amazing things you can do with your Ph.D. And even though the socialization is so strong here that you need to be a researcher and you need to go Top 50, that there are other opportunities out there and not everyone is cut out for this....We’re human beings and we have directions and non-directions and we have things that interest us and don’t, and so we have to keep that in mind along the way.

Another student offered the following explanation of what it means to be a doctoral student:

It’s not unlike any other challenge in life where you have to hold multiple hats and you need to make sure that you’ve juggled them all appropriately so that you can complete them all appropriately. And, you always have to keep in mind what’s important to you and focus on that.

One of the first-year students who came to Valley with a wealth of professional experience relayed during several interviews that in order to be successful at Valley it was necessary to strip away the old self and be “malleable.” At the end of the first year, the student still wrestled with combining the new preferred Valley professional identity and the prior professional identity. “I still say you need to wipe the slate clean in some respects and start building a new foundation....but I am realizing you don’t want to lose the old foundation, but instead build something new next to it and figure out how they play off of each other.” Overall, the first-year students still assessing fit regarded the doctoral student role as a way to develop as individuals, as an opportunity to explore areas of personal interest, and as a way to supplement prior experience.

Research Assistant

At the start of the spring semester (Time 2), only one Assessing Fit student had engaged in research assistantship activities on a minimal level. One reason a few of the Assessing Fit students did not engage in research assistantship activities early was because they were either on fellowships or teaching assistantships the first year. The Assessing Fit students who were assigned research assistantships said their RA supervisors were deliberate about not inundating them with too much research responsibility until they were more comfortable with the class work. Some Assessing Fit students felt being a research assistant meant “doing the grunt work”; while other students said they hoped it would be “a way to be creative.” All of the Assessing Fit students said the research piece of the doctoral student experience was the “biggest

unknown” coming in to the program. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the Perceiving Fit students also described one of the roles as “grunt work,” but the roles they characterized in that manner were the teacher and teaching assistant roles, not the research assistant role as described by their Assessing Fit peers.

At the end of the first year (Time 3), this group of first-year students described what it meant to be a research assistant in two ways: (1) an opportunity to continue building skills, and (2) still an unknown area that the students had not yet done. Three of the students assessing fit described the research assistant role as the area in which they improved the most but found to be the most frustrating due to the learning curve. Two of the first-year students assessing fit did not perform research assistant duties or participate in research other than what was required through coursework. The remaining first-year student in this group withdrew from Valley during the spring semester because the narrow research expectations required by the program did not match the student’s personal expectations for the program.

The three first-year Assessing Fit students who characterized the research assistant role as the area in which they most improved spoke of their excitement with the role. One student commented:

It’s much more fun and interesting than I even thought it would be. You know, maybe I just got really lucky and the topic that I’m working on happens to be that interesting to me...There’s still a lot left to learn, but I’m pleasantly surprised at how I have progressed. So we’ll see what I get done this summer and go from there.

Another student found the role of research assistant to be very important to his personal development throughout the first-year experience. This particular student also felt that

building relationships with faculty through research projects was an unexpected outcome of the research assistantship role. “The faculty I work with really have confidence in me and actually think I can do things that I don’t think I really know how to do...so that is a nice surprise.”

Two of the first-year students still assessing fit did not engage in many research-related or research assistantship activities. One of the students served as a teaching assistant for first-year funding. Another student attributed the lack of exposure to research to a poor advisor-advisee relationship.

I don’t know because I haven’t actually done that much in that particular area [research assistantship]. But it definitely seems like walking a fine line...My relationship with my advisor is not as good as I had hoped it to be. I can’t actually gauge what this person’s opinion is of me. I don’t have a lot of feedback from [advisor]. I get feedback from the other faculty, just not from this one...so I feel like I’m never meeting whatever expectations [advisor] has for me. It always seems like even if I did think that I met them [expectations], there’s always something that still hasn’t been touched and as a result [advisor] doesn’t really have the confidence in me and doesn’t give me the work to do.

The student who withdrew from Valley cited personal reasons for leaving. When we spoke at the end of the academic year, approximately four months after the student’s departure, the student shared the following reason as the primary one for choosing to withdraw.

Well to tell you the truth, I think it was a couple of things. First of all, I thought that the Ph.D. program was very, very specific and the program required too much specialization in a particular area of [discipline] which actually leads to knowing very little in the world of [discipline]. I was hoping for something a little broader, you know, and to have more time to explore what really interested me.

Overall, the research assistantship role was described by the Assessing Fit students as an opportunity to further explore research ideas of personal interest and for

some to continue to develop and build skills. Similar to their descriptions of the doctoral student role, the Assessing Fit students believed the research assistant role was about learning and personal development.

Teacher

Similar to the Perceiving Fit students at the end of the first semester, the Assessing Fit students did not have much, if any, experience with the teacher role at the time of our second interview. Most of their perceptions were based on interactions with veteran Valley members or observations of conversations among Valley faculty members. Several first-year students in this group thought teaching would be daunting because of the responsibility associated, but regarded the role as very personally important. Based on Valley's preferred weighting of academic roles, teaching is not supposed to be personally important. This suggests, from a Valley perspective, that Valley may have made selection errors because their website clearly states we do not train teachers and we do not admit students who want to be teachers. A few of the students hoped to engage more with the role during the summer or at the start of the following year. During the Time 3 interviews, three of the Assessing Fit students still did not have much to share about teaching during the interview other than, "talk to me next time because I am teaching in the summer or next fall."

Three of the students, however, did have experience in the classroom because they served as teaching assistants or had prior experience. They compared these experiences to the messages they heard from Valley faculty and peers during the first

year in the program. One student believed teaching to be an important part of the faculty career and was disappointed in the attitude toward teaching displayed by the majority of Valley faculty. The student noted:

I just realized more that at an institution like this you don't have the opportunity to see a teacher have an impact on a one-on-one basis. Here at Valley it's more of a 'Oh, I have to do it and it's going to be a pain because it will be a huge class and I'm going to be really irritated with all the students.' At least that's the opinion that I'm getting from other people. So it's kind of sad that they don't get what I would think is the exciting part of teaching, of teaching here.

Another student just started teaching during the summer session at the time I conducted our third interview. This student had the following to share about what it meant to be a teacher.

It's daunting. It's definitely daunting....But you should do basic things like be organized, you should be well prepared for the classes, you should devote the time to teaching that's necessary to make sure that the students are learning. At the same time, you shouldn't devote so much time to it that you're trying to please everyone and losing the overall focus of the course. So, it's a delicate balance between maintaining control and doing the right things for the students. I have enjoyed it, but it is tiring.

The Assessing Fit students with whom I spoke did not have any prior experience teaching undergraduate students in an environment like Valley and said they did not have much of an idea personally speaking. I did hear, however, that teaching was "not high on the priority list of Valley faculty or the Ph.D. program." Many of the first-year students in this group are scheduled to teach during the fall semester and said they looked forward to chatting about their teaching experiences next time.

Preview of the Faculty Career

I also asked the Assessing Fit students to describe how their first-year experiences prepared them for and served as a preview of the faculty career. All perceived that, to some extent, the first year was similar to what they believed they would experience as a faculty member. Since the first year focused mostly on coursework, however, the Assessing Fit students projected that the later years in the doctoral program would provide a more accurate preview of faculty life because they would likely have to manage all of the roles simultaneously. Figure 7-2 provides a summary of the Assessing Fit students' perceptions of what it means to be a doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher as these lead to a faculty career.

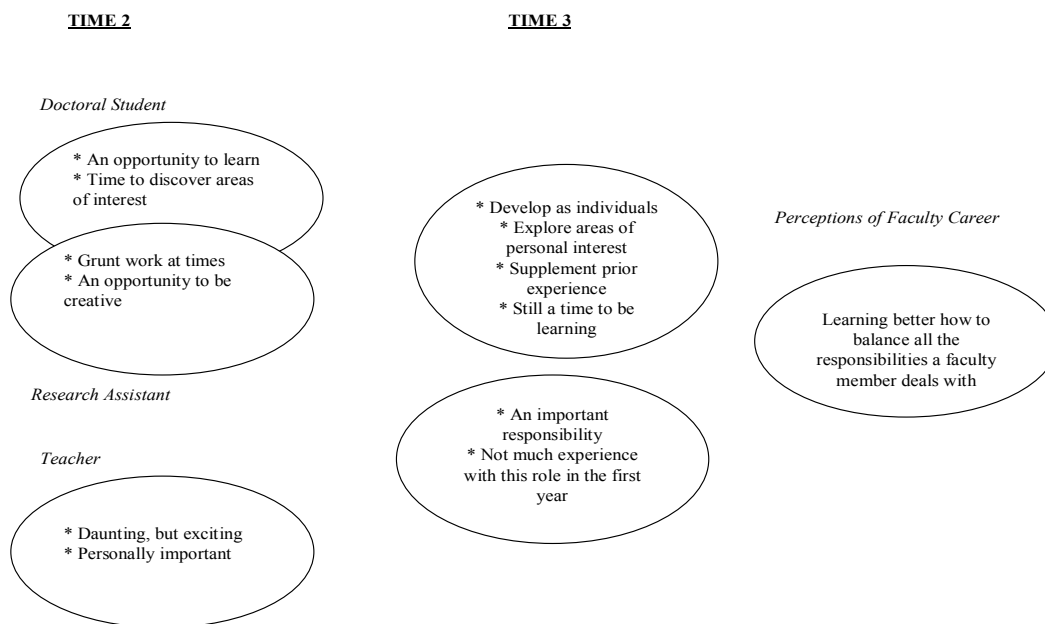


Figure 7-2: Summary of Assessing Fit Key Themes for Each Role at Time 2 and Time 3

When describing their first-year experiences as they relate to faculty life, nearly all of the Assessing Fit students once again spoke of the need to develop as people and build skills before they would have a true understanding of the faculty career. One student noted that, “while the first year provided some insight, I believe the later years will be more reminiscent of being a faculty member....we were just so focused on individual development through the coursework and finding those areas that interested us this past year.” Another student said, “I think it’s getting there to some extent...It’s kind of hard because it’s the first year so we are focused on courses and coursework, building what they [faculty] call your toolbox...so this year was really about learning how to do research and balancing it with teaching.” Finally, a third student said while he could relate some of his first-year experiences to what faculty life might be like, a great deal of his future experiences will depend on the type of institution that employs him.

I wouldn’t say I’ve become completely accustomed to what life would be like as a faculty member based on this past year...I have realized that it depends greatly on what that institution is like [research or teaching focused] and what your colleagues are like and what they value...based on the past year I have some understanding of what it might be like at a research institution, but even that is still vague for me, because I doubt all research institutions are like Valley.

The Assessing Fit students were less willing than the Perceiving Fit students to make generalizations about the first year and how their experiences predicted what faculty life would be like. They saw similarities between the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher and the faculty career. They were more focused, however, on the need to keep building skills, find areas of personal interest, and learn better how to balance all of the responsibilities a faculty member is likely to face. This focus on personal interests, development, and growth is consistent with their self-descriptions and

definitions of success throughout the three interviews and appeared to influence their approach to and priorities in the program. They anticipated that a more informed understanding would come with more time and experience in the program.

Similarities & Differences in Role Characterizations

The primary difference between the Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit students was their relative emphasis on research or individual development. The Perceiving Fit students focused almost entirely on research as the ultimate goal of the Ph.D. program. The Assessing Fit students considered each role, especially the doctoral student and research assistant roles, as areas for individual development and exploration.

The Perceiving Fit students only found merit in the roles they believed supported Valley's goal of producing "Top 50" researchers. The Perceiving Fit students therefore believed research was the area where they should focus their efforts. Consequently, because they did not see how the teaching role could support the research role, teaching was not an area in which one should focus "massive amounts of effort." None of the Perceiving Fit students had served as the instructors of record for any course at Valley by the time of our third interview. Their perceptions were based on their work as teaching assistants or through interactions with veteran Valley members. The Perceiving Fit students' approach to the program and their willingness to accept Valley's goals and expectations as their own was consistent with their self-descriptions and definition of success throughout the first year. Four of the six students whom I labeled as Perceiving Fit by Time 3 would have been characterized as Perceiving Fit at Time 1 based on my

criteria. It appears that several of the students I labeled as Perceiving Fit came into the first year willing and ready to adopt Valley's definition of faculty life. From a Valley perspective, admitting these students supported the goals established by the Ph.D. Renewal Committee.

Throughout the first year in the program, the Assessing Fit students were more focused on their own individual development. The Assessing Fit students were also interested in becoming researchers, but they believed that in order to become a good researcher one must first find areas of interest and "continue to be a sponge for another year before any real contribution can be made in the area of research." While the Assessing Fit students knew Valley's placement and publication expectations, they believed their first priority was to do what fit their individual goals as these were set throughout the first year of the program. If their individual goals aligned with Valley's goals, the Assessing Fit students would be pleased. However, if their personal goals and expectations did not match Valley's expectations at the end of the four to five years in the program, several believed "it was not the end of the world."

In closing, this chapter illustrated the early professional identity development process of the first-year doctoral students participating in this study. The primary focus of the chapter was on the key characterizations of the three roles (doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher) by the two groups of students (Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit). The Perceiving Fit students emphasized the research component when describing the doctoral student and research assistant roles. In fact, the Perceiving Fit students believed the first year was about "becoming a researcher." This group of students conveyed a negative impression of the teacher role during each interview. The Assessing Fit students,

on the other hand, focused on the individual development and learning that resulted from engaging in these roles. Consequently, the Assessing Fit students did not differentiate between the doctoral student and research assistant roles because of the perceived underlying commonality of individual development. They described the teacher role as an “important responsibility.”

The students’ perceptions of the roles influenced their view of the faculty career. The Perceiving Fit students felt that being a researcher was being a faculty member. The Assessing Fit students were not as willing to make comparisons between the first-year experience and life as a faculty member. They did believe that understanding would come after more individual development and experience in the program.

Chapter 8 includes an overview of the research purpose, question, and study findings. I provide a summary of the conceptual framework which guided this study. I developed two contrasting models of doctoral student professional identity development based on Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit students’ experiences. I include working propositions that can be tested on larger populations of doctoral students, and I discuss implications for future research and practice.

Chapter 8

Towards a Theory of Doctoral Student Professional Identity Development: Findings, Propositions, and Implications.

Purpose of the Study

Growing public concern about the quality of U.S. higher education has caused a variety of constituents, such as legislatures, parents, faculty, and administrators, to take a closer look at how graduate programs educate and train the next generation of professionals. One critical segment of the professional population which has received increasing attention over the past ten years is the professoriate. The expectations of the faculty career are changing in many fields and institutional types. The predominant currencies for promotion and tenure are “A-level” (top-tier) publications in top academic journals, procurement of external funding, and a reputation for being the best among one’s peers. This intensive focus on research in disciplinary and institutional expectations affects the ways doctoral programs prepare future faculty and may be influencing many students’ decisions to leave prior to degree completion.

The astounding numbers of students who leave doctoral programs are cause for great concern. Research suggests that doctoral attrition rates are at or near 50 percent and may be even higher in some disciplines (Smallwood, 2004). When a student leaves a doctoral program, the associated costs can be quite devastating for all constituents involved (Golde, 1996; Lovitts, 2001). Although several studies have explored the factors that influence doctoral student persistence or withdrawal (Golde, 2000; Herzig, 2002; Kowalick, 1989), this study addressed an important gap by examining how doctoral

students' experiences and relationships within and outside of the academic community influence their developing conceptions of the faculty career.

While many academic disciplines are concerned about preparing the next generation of faculty, business schools in particular are faced with a growing decline in doctorally prepared faculty. The Management Education Task Force (2002) reported that more than 400 faculty positions were vacant in "Top 50" research institutions as ranked by Business week in 2000-2001. While those same institutions granted 447 business doctoral degrees, only an estimated 278 of those individuals sought academic positions which resulted in a one-year shortage of more than 30 percent in the "Top 50" ranked institutions alone. In an effort to further explore the projected decline in business faculty as reported by the Management Education Task Force, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) created the Doctoral Faculty Commission (DFC) to identify possible contributing factors. After an analysis of current Ph.D. enrollment trends, projected faculty demand in business education, faculty retirements, and the typical hiring patterns of Ph.D trained individuals at accredited and nonaccredited institutions, the committee projected a need of 28,676 business faculty positions across all institutions types. The actual supply is likely to be 26,257 doctorally qualified individuals by the year 2012. This difference results in a shortage of nearly 2,500 faculty members which, according to the report, was a conservative estimate. The DFC acknowledged that doctorally trained individuals were the most crucial element in ensuring the continued rigor of business education and research, but unless decisive action was taken, business education and research would inevitably erode due to a decline in business doctoral student enrollment and persistence to degree. In an attempt to

address the shortage, business schools began hiring individuals with extensive business experience as clinical faculty and individuals from other disciplines such as psychology and sociology.

To improve understanding of the factors that affect business doctoral student persistence, I explored longitudinally the first-year experiences of twelve business doctoral students. An important contributor to students' experiences were the relationships, labeled network partners, within and outside of the academic community students identified as influential (positive or negative) to success in the first year. I examined how the support provided by students' relationships influenced their professional identity development process thereby supporting or hindering persistence. During their first year, doctoral students began to learn what it means to be a faculty member at a top-ranked business program by interacting with network partners within and outside of the academic community, perceiving network partners' expectations, and observing and engaging in the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher.

The research question that guided this study is:

How does the friendship, advice, and developmental support provided by peers, faculty, family and friends, and business associates facilitate doctoral students' professional identity development and eventual persistence or withdrawal in doctoral degree programs?

In the following sections, I summarize the conceptual framework and research and describe contrasting models of professional identity development for Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit doctoral students based on first-year experiences. I also formulate working propositions that may be tested with larger populations of graduate students. Finally, I discuss implications for research and practice.

Conceptual Framework Overview

Tinto's (1993) theory of doctoral student persistence highlights two key factors: (1) individuals who provide support to the student throughout the doctoral program, and (2) institutional experiences, including those at the program level, which support or inhibit degree attainment. While researchers have examined the institutional and program factors that influence a doctoral student's decision to withdraw (Ferrer de Valero, 2001; Lovitts, 2001), very little is known about the individuals, beyond the academic advisor, who provide support to students or the kinds of support that influence doctoral student development and persistence. Using four key theories—mentoring, social networks, role, and professional identity development—I began to address this gap (see Figure 3.1). I examined the individuals and relationships students regarded as critical to first-year success and the types of support those individuals provided. I explored how students were socialized (through the communication of expectations) into the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and instructor as a result of these relationships, and how these factors influenced the acceptance (or rejection) of a professional identity as a business faculty member, thus leading to persistence or withdrawal in the first year.

I relied on social network and mentoring theories to examine students' relationships and help-giving interactions provided in those relationships. Social network theory explains how a network of actors establish and maintain connections within an organizational context and how those connections serve as a source of information, support, and personal and professional development (Ibarra, Kilduff, & Tsai, 2005; Kadushin, 2004). The relationship constellation (Kram, 1985), an important concept in

mentoring theory, acknowledges that individuals may have multiple mentors or relationships (social network) that provide multiple types of support at various points in time. Multiple mentors result in better career outcomes than a single mentor alone (Higgins, 2000; Higgins & Thomas, 2001). However, most research to date on the relationship constellation or an individual's social network solely focuses on relationships within the work context as important to career success. I extend this line of research by exploring the types of relationships within *and* outside the organization that are likely to be important to career success by including individuals such as family, friends, and prior business associates.

Using role theory as another analytical lens, I examined the process by which doctoral students learn the expectations attached to three key roles: doctoral student, research assistant, and instructor. Roles, defined as sets of normative behaviors associated with given positions (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Katz & Kahn, 1978), are central to understanding individual behavior in organizations (Welbourne, Johnson, & Erez, 1998). By studying how students' behavior patterns and perceptions changed over time in relation to doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher roles, I discovered whether they accepted these roles throughout the first year, and how they were socialized by communication of expectations by Valley College of Business faculty and other members of their developmental networks.

Researchers interested in identity theory have explored the reasons *why* individuals are who they are, with increasing interest in understanding the process by which individuals develop a professional identity. Bucher and Stelling (1977) suggested that professional identity is not static; rather, it continues to evolve in relation to one's

professional activities and can be defined as “the perception of oneself as a professional and as a particular type of professional” (p. 213). Understanding the professional identity development process at the doctoral-student level is likely to provide important insights into students’ developing conceptions of the faculty career and to enable identification of who or what influences that process.

Summary of Methods

To explore the first-year doctoral student experience, this study used a longitudinal design and followed a multiple-case study approach at a single college of business at a public research university, both of which are ranked in the top 50 nationally. Data collection methods included direct observation of college-wide training for students such as orientation and teaching camp, content analysis of Valley College of Business documents, and a series of three interviews throughout the first year with the 12 focal students enrolled in Valley’s College of Business during the 2005-2006 academic year. A fourth student interview was conducted at the beginning of the second year (fall 2006) to ascertain persistence to Year 2. I also conducted interviews with students’ self-identified network partners and other Valley faculty and administrators most involved in the doctoral program and first-year experience. I conducted 82 interviews in total. Each individual doctoral student’s network was examined as a mini-case embedded in a larger case study of the Valley University College of Business, allowing for the development of working propositions aimed at extending or building theory on doctoral student professional identity development (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Building the Models – A Comparison of Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit

The doctoral students differed in terms of their developmental networks (i.e., the network partners they chose to identify as important to first-year success). These differences in developmental networks were associated with variations in support provided to students; expectations communicated by network partners; socialization in the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher; and students' resulting conceptions of the faculty career. I identified and categorized two overall groups of students: Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit. Fit was based on congruence between Valley's placement goals and preferred professional identity (i.e., weighting of academic roles) and the students' goals for placement and developing conceptions of the faculty career. Valley aspired to have students place in the "Top 50" institutions in their respective fields upon graduation and focus most efforts on research during the doctoral program and beyond.

The Perceiving Fit students identified relationships with faculty and peers within the Valley community as most important to first-year success. Due to their reliance on within- community relationships and the messages and expectations communicated by their network partners, the Perceiving Fit students began to adopt Valley's placement and research productivity goals as their own. By the end of the first year, it appeared that the Perceiving Fit students had accepted the prototypical Valley College of Business professional identity. Thus, the Perceiving Fit students accepted that research was the priority in the program and A-level publications and tenure track faculty positions at

other top-ranked business programs were the only way to make a meaningful contribution in the field.

The Assessing Fit students, on the other hand, relied on a combination of developmental network relationships within and outside of the academic community. They identified relationships with both faculty and family as most important to first-year success. Rather than focus on achievement of institutional or disciplinary goals, as was the case for the Perceiving Fit students, the Assessing Fit students and their network partners were more focused on the students' development as the primary goal in the first year. Such messages appeared to contribute to Assessing Fit students' continued questioning of Valley's prototypical professional identity by the end of Year 1.

Perceiving Fit – The Model

The proposed model of doctoral student professional identity development for Perceiving Fit (see Figure Figure 8-1) posits that the process by which most doctoral students begin to develop professional identities as future faculty members is explained, in part, by their susceptibility to socialization, individual differences such as learning orientation and, by the relationships they develop and maintain during their doctoral education experiences. For most of the students I labeled as Perceiving Fit in this study, activities such as early involvement in research assistantship duties and the establishment of shared goals among network members were associated with the creation of developmental networks that supported Valley's goals for research productivity and "Top

50” placement. I characterized these as *internal-mission supporting developmental networks*.

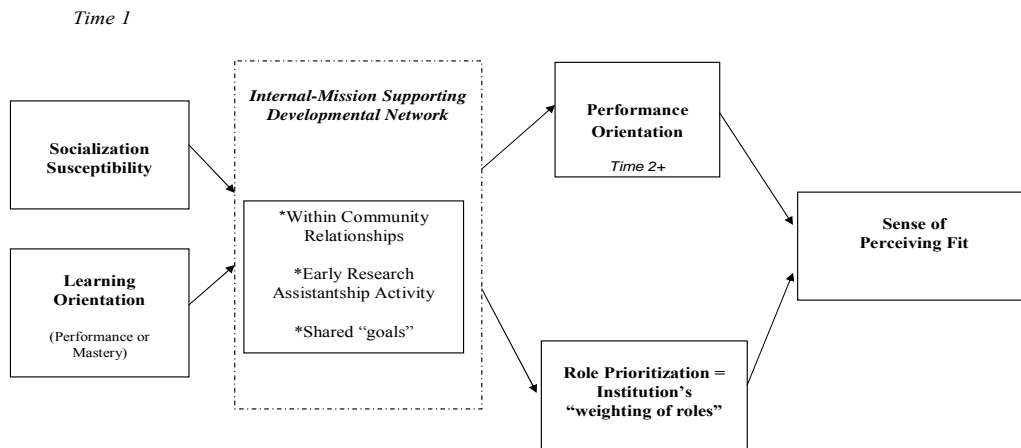


Figure 8-1: *Perceiving Fit Model of Doctoral Student Professional Identity Development*

Valley faculty and administrator emphasis on pre-established indicators of success as a basis for interaction (i.e., training of “Top 50” researchers) appeared to activate students’ adoption of performance orientation learning goals. According to Graham (2003), performance orientation occurs when individuals are motivated by the desire to demonstrate adequate mastery while simultaneously displaying tendencies to conceal low levels of ability. Socialization efforts that encourage students’ activation of performance orientation as the primary goal may persuade students to adopt an “all or nothing” metric of success and thereby contribute to students’ assessment of fit with the institution or discipline. Fit, for the purposes of the current study, is related to an

acceptance or questioning of Valley's preferred role prioritization (i.e., weighting of academic roles). Most of the Perceiving Fit students' responses to interview questions throughout the first year were consistent with a role prioritization similar to Valley faculty's weighting of academic roles (i.e., research is more important than teaching or service), thus indicating the acceptance of Valley's "prototypical" professional identity.

Assessing Fit – The Model

Similar to the Perceiving Fit model of doctoral student professional identity development, the Assessing Fit model suggests that an individual's susceptibility to socialization, individual differences such as learning orientation, and the types of relationships he/she develops influence students' professional identity development process (see Figure 8-2). The Assessing Fit students in this study identified relationships within and outside Valley with faculty and family as important to their first-year success. Two important commonalities existed among the Assessing Fit students' network relationships. First, these students perceived their own individual development and personal growth as the primary indicator of success in the first year rather than achievement of institutional goals. Second, due to their emphasis on individual development, most Assessing Fit students and the network partners they identified viewed the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher as integrated and as opportunities for learning. Integration occurs when engagement in academic roles achieves more than one goal such as when a professor uses findings from a research

study to inform a class discussion among graduate students (Colbeck, 2002). I labeled this network *individual-development supporting*.

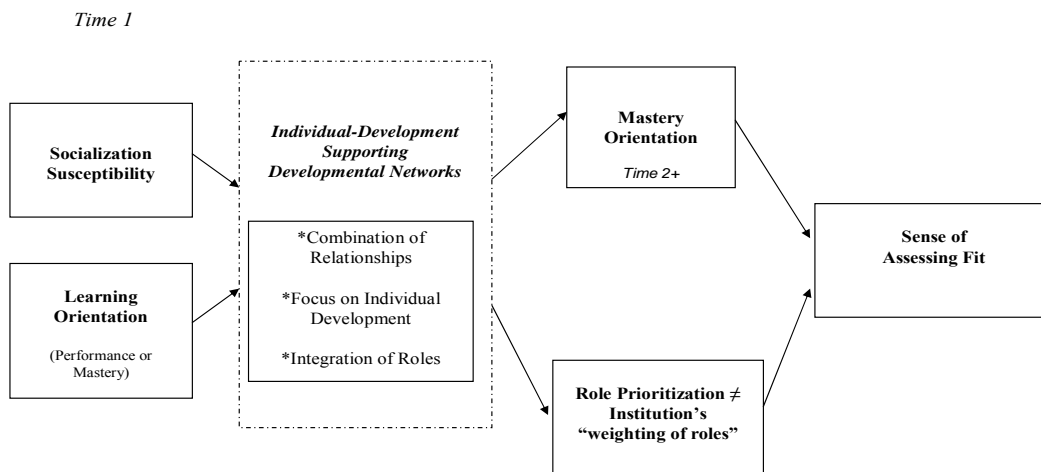


Figure 8-2: *Assessing Fit Model of Doctoral Student Professional Identity Development*

This emphasis on individual development and the desire to integrate academic roles appeared to activate the Assessing Fit students' adoption of a mastery orientation toward learning. A mastery orientation results, according to Graham (2003), when students "are oriented toward acquiring new skills or improving their level of competence...they may strive to develop competence by learning as much as they can" (p. 1694). In some cases, socialization that encourages a mastery orientation may lead students to question their fit with the role prioritization encouraged by the institution. Thus, it may be possible for a student to accept the given roles of doctoral student,

research assistant, and teacher but not place the roles in the same priority that veteran organizational members assign to the given roles. While it is likely that the Assessing Fit students began to develop professional identities as future faculty members, at the start of the second year they did not appear to accept Valley's "prototypical" professional identity.

While all students who participated in this study were characterized as Perceiving Fit (N=6) or Assessing Fit (N=6) by the end of Year 1 (Time 3), not all students would have been classified as such throughout the first year. As discussed in chapter 5, four students would have been characterized as Perceiving Fit and four students would have been characterized as Assessing Fit throughout the first year in their doctoral programs. However, four students experienced change during the first year in terms of the types of relationships they identified as influential, their prioritization of academic roles, and what appeared to be their learning orientation. In examining these changes, all could be linked to interactions students had with Valley faculty members that either supported or detracted from the research identity and "Top 50" placement goal. The experiences of these four students seems to suggest that simple solutions such as better selection on the part of the doctoral program or more deliberate socialization efforts do not provide insight into the changes these students experienced during the first year. While the proposed models of doctoral student professional identity development that were just discussed appear to capture the experiences of most students in this study, the models do not illustrate the experiences of all students.

Findings and Working Propositions

In the next section, I discuss the five major findings from this study and suggest propositions that can be tested with larger populations of doctoral students. The use of the case study strategy allowed for a more in-depth examination of the dynamics present within the Valley College of Business. In turn, this facilitated theory development which explains how a student's multiple relationships and the support provided by those relationships influenced the professional identity development process for first-year business doctoral students (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Socialization Susceptibility

Organizational socialization has received substantial research attention as a means of understanding how organizational newcomers come to identify and understand the norms and expectations of their new environment (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardener, 1994; Schein, 1971). Theories of graduate student socialization, in particular, have grown in prominence due to the ever-changing nature of the academy and the need to identify and examine the processes and outcomes of preparing the next generation of faculty (Austin & McDaniels, 2006).

Researchers have acknowledged that both individual differences and situational variables influence the socialization process and have proposed an interactionist model that accounts for both (Jones, 1983; Reichers, 1987). Individuals respond differently to organizational contexts as a result of past experiences and recall these past experiences to make sense of their current environment (Louis, 1980; Trice, 1993). One criticism of

socialization research is its failure to account for individual agency as an important contributor to the process. This leads to an important, yet still unanswered, question in socialization research: who is “socializable” and who is not?

Individuals differ in terms of their beliefs, attitudes, and experiences. And while a large number of organizations seem to offer a “one-size-fits-all” socialization experience, not all individuals may be challenged or motivated similarly by such experiences. Few studies on organizational socialization have accounted for individual differences or treated “socialization susceptibility” as a stable individual difference trait. For example, individuals who display low levels of socialization susceptibility may have a high need for personal control. When personal control is threatened it can lead to depression, stress, decreased job performance, and satisfaction (Greenberger & Strasser, 1991). Other important individual difference variables that may influence socialization susceptibility include openness to experience, self-monitoring, and learning orientation. Raymark, Schmit, and Guion (1997) found that individuals demonstrating high levels of openness to experience were likely to think innovatively and were able to implement creative ways of performing and improving tasks. Studies have shown that open individuals are also more willing to engage in the self-monitoring and assessment activities that are crucial for learning (Blickle, 1996). Individuals enter academic and training contexts with different learning orientations that influence their approach to tasks in such environments (Ames, 1992; Ford et al., 1998). However, academic and training structures can support individuals’ adoption of one learning orientation over another (Ames, 1992). Thus, using the interactionist perspective described above, individual variation in socialization

susceptibility may influence an individual's willingness to accept and engage in a socialization process.

Valley faculty appeared to have tacit assumptions about students' susceptibility to socialization. They believed that older, more experienced applicants were not the best potential students for a variety of reasons. Throughout this study, many faculty and administrators at Valley's College of Business explicitly expressed hesitation about admitting students who were married, who were parents, or who had worked in industry for a substantial amount of time. The faculty and administrators who expressed these opinions believed that all of these characteristics reduced students' ability to focus solely on their academic responsibilities or to accept an academic rather than a practical perspective. Faculty and administrators openly stated a preference for younger students with fewer outside commitments and professional experience because they were more "malleable." However, based on the results of this study, age and experience may not be as detrimental to students' socialization susceptibility as the Valley faculty and administrators assumed.

Instead, what appeared to be associated with socialization susceptibility were students' initial self-descriptions. During the Time 1 interviews, I asked the students to tell me, "Who you were prior to coming to Valley." All students I categorized as Perceiving Fit by Time 3 described themselves in relation to their most recent professional experience, such as consultant or research analyst. The Assessing Fit students, in contrast, described themselves in more personal terms such as "loyal," "creative," or "interested in learning." This finding appears counterintuitive to business school faculty members' and administrators' assumptions about the influence of

prospective students' age, work experience, and marital or parental status to success in business doctoral programs. The students who initially identified with their prior professional lives appeared, at least by the end of the first year, more open to Valley's socialization. Thus, with this sample, individuals who readily identified with a prior professional role were more accepting of strong socialization efforts because they already had the propensity or "susceptibility" to be socialized and had a stronger focus on external, professional self-descriptors. Conversely, the individuals who described themselves in more personal terms, regardless of age, prior work experience, or outside commitments, were less susceptible to strong socialization efforts because they were more focused on internal, individual self-descriptors. Their experience led to the following proposition, testable with other populations. Individuals entering doctoral programs will differ in their "susceptibility to socialization."

Proposition 1a: Students higher in socialization susceptibility will more readily accept the messages and expectations communicated through socialization efforts because of their focus on external, professional self-descriptors and their prior experience with and acceptance of professional socialization.

Proposition 1b: Students lower in socialization susceptibility will have a more difficult time accepting the messages and expectations communicated through socialization efforts regardless of prior professional experiences because of their focus on personal self-descriptors rather than professional self-descriptors.

It is important to note that while an individual may have a strong sense of professional identity, that individual may still be open to learning and developing beyond his/her current professional sense of self. Although the doctoral students in this study

were classified as professionally-oriented or individually-oriented during Year 1, there may be individuals who identify both professionally *and* personally. It is possible the doctoral students in this study may describe themselves both ways in later stages of the study.

Emotional Support

Prior research shows that mentoring relationships serve two primary functions: career and psychosocial (Kram, 1985). Career support is important because of its link with professional advancement. Psychosocial support helps to promote feelings of self-worth inside and outside of the organization (Kram, 1985). As described in chapter 6 (Developmental Networks), both the Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit students received support for their future academic careers in the form of knowledge development and information sharing. However, students in the Assessing Fit group received additional emotional support from their faculty and family network partners. The emotional support the Assessing Fit students described took on two primary forms: (1) helping students understand that the feelings or doubts about the graduate experience they felt were natural, and (2) helping the students move past the dominant institutional goals (i.e., must place in “Top 50” research institution) to feel comfortable focusing on their own individual, developmental goals.

One important distinguishing characteristic between these two groups of students may have been their degree of willingness to display vulnerability with network partners. Throughout the year, the Assessing Fit students described a level of vulnerability when

interacting with network partners that I did not perceive in the remarks offered by the Perceiving Fit students. In fact, the Perceiving Fit students believed that showing signs of weakness in front of veteran Valley members was not appropriate and could be costly in terms of faculty support. Due to this fear of showing vulnerability, both groups of students were selective and deliberate about whom they chose to identify as network partners and what they were willing to share with those individuals. I gave students the opportunity to identify and describe all network partners they believed were most influential to their academic progression during each interview. Students' responses indicated identification with network partners who most supported their own sense of who they were or who they hoped to become. This seemed especially true for the students who experienced change during the first year. For example, two of the four students deliberately changed their networks which appeared to influence how they perceived themselves and their definitions of success. One student changed from total reliance on outside Valley relationships only at Times 1 and 2 to complete reliance on within Valley only relationships by Time 3. I labeled this student as Perceiving Fit because the change in network appeared to influence the student's evolving definition of success, that is, "Top 50" placement. Therefore, it appears that individual agency and students' sense of themselves influences the relationships they identify as important and that susceptibility to socialization (and other individual differences) leads students early on in the academic experience to create different developmental networks.

Proposition 2a: The interaction between high socialization susceptibility and the selection of network partners that support institutional and program goals over individual development encourages students' emphasis on the professional self.

Proposition 2b: The interaction between low socialization susceptibility and the selection of network partners that encourage individual development over institutional and program goals encourages students' emphasis on the learning sense of self.

Goal Orientation

Over the past 20 years, much research interest has focused on understanding the motivational processes that affect learning (Ames & Archer, 1987; Dweck, 1986; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989). Researchers have been most interested in uncovering the different types of goal orientations individuals display in academic and training environments (Ree, Carretta, & Teachout, 1995), understanding the motivational processes that influence different goal orientations (Nicholls, Cheung, Lauer, & Patashnick, 1989), and identifying the conditions that elicit such orientations (Ames, 1992; Ames & Ames, 1984). Two important goal orientations that have received research attention are mastery orientation and performance orientation (Dweck, 1986).

Mastery orientation is defined as “the belief that effort leads to improvement in outcomes and that ability is malleable” (Ford, Smith, Weissbein, Gully, & Salas, 1998, p. 222). Mastery-oriented individuals are focused on developing new skills and believe that success is realized by achieving self-referenced standards (Ford et al., 1998). Mastery orientation emphasizes the value of learning and the realization that errors and mistakes are part of that process (Ames & Archer, 1988). Individuals who approach learning environments with a mastery orientation are more proactive in understanding and

correcting their approach to the various tasks they encounter which results in a direct, positive effect on self-efficacy (Ford et al., 1998).

In contrast, performance orientation individuals are concerned with being judged as capable, they strive to outperform others, and they value ability and achievement of normatively high standards (Ames & Archer, 1988). Research has shown that educational environments that foster performance goals as the primary metric of achievement encourage students to focus more on their ability than on the learning process itself. When performance-oriented individuals fail to achieve the normative standards set by the educational setting, they tend to view their ability in negative terms, which becomes anxiety inducing (Ames & Archer, 1988).

In the case of doctoral students, two contributing factors are likely to influence students' adoption of one learning orientation over another throughout the academic experience: the mission of the academic program and students' developmental networks. Programs differ in the extent to which their mission encourages the achievement of narrowly defined targets. For example, Valley's "Top 50" placement goal can be categorized as a narrowly defined measure of student success, and by its very nature, is likely to encourage students to adopt a performance orientation. Conversely, programs which have more diffuse missions may be more likely to allow students' adoption of mastery learning goals because of the focus on individual development.

Differences in within-developmental network socialization may also be associated with students adopting different learning orientations. Based on my analysis of the messages and expectations communicated by students' network partners, there was a major difference in how the Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit students were socialized.

While all students were exposed to the same messages and expectations from Valley, the messages and expectations that were communicated *within* their developmental networks appeared to influence the primary socialization these two groups of students experienced. Through interactions with their internal-mission supporting networks, the Perceiving Fit students were continually reminded that research productivity resulting in “A-level” publications and placement at “Top 50” institutions upon graduation were the only metrics of success by Valley standards. Conversely, the messages and expectations communicated to the Assessing Fit students by their individual-development supporting network partners emphasized individual growth and skill building. Taking into account the importance of the academic program’s mission and the observed difference in within-network socialization to learning orientation led to the following propositions:

Proposition 3a: Socialization that occurs in networks focused on the academic program’s mission facilitates students’ adoption of performance orientation learning goals because of the congruence between programmatic goals and developmental network goals.

Proposition 3b: Socialization that occurs in individual-development networks facilitates students’ adoption of mastery orientation learning goals because of the greater within network emphasis on individual development and learning rather than achievement of programmatic goals.

It is important to note that while an academic context may promote the adoption of a performance orientation, implicitly that same student has to display an acceptable level of mastery. In other words, a student may be focused on earning an “A” in a methods course which would appear to support a performance orientation (i.e., a primary

focus on the end result). However, the professor will not assign the student an “A” if the student does not display mastery of the material.

Role Prioritization and Fit

Students’ orientation to learning as mastery- or performance-based and their type of developmental network may shape their assessment of fit with the institution and academic program. Person-environment fit is defined as the “compatibility between an individual and a work environment that occurs when their characteristics are well matched” (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005, p. 281). The notion of fit is important in the context of doctoral education and to exploring issues such as doctoral student development and persistence.

In the conceptual framework (chapter 3), I anticipated that role identification or disidentification would be important to professional identity development and persistence or withdrawal. I suggested that students who self-identified with the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher may be more likely to persist to the second year of their doctoral program. Conversely, I suggested that the students who experienced role disidentification may be more likely to withdraw. This was the case for the student who withdrew from Valley during the spring semester and did not accept the dominant Valley professional identity. However, the empirical evidence revealed that for all 12 students, role identification and role disidentification did not adequately address the differences between the students’ experiences and perceptions surrounding the three roles. This was especially true for the Assessing Fit students because these students appeared to identify

with the three roles (doctoral student, research assistant, teacher), but not place them in the same priority that Valley preferred.

This observation leads to an important question: can doctoral students persist to degree attainment if individual role priority does not match program role priority? During the doctoral student experience, it may be possible for a student to accept the given roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher but not place the roles in the same priority that veteran organizational members assign to them. Perhaps the doctoral student is more interested in teaching than research, but still has an interest in research. In this instance, the student struggles not with the roles themselves, but with the priority placed on the given roles by veteran organizational members. This, in turn, may cause the student to perceive a poor fit with the disciplinary department. The student may feel that sharing this discrepancy in role priority with veteran organizational members may result in negative consequences such as lack of developmental and financial support. This fear of negative reprisal may have accounted for the composition of the Assessing Fit students' developmental networks. Developmental network type (internal-mission or individual-development) and the resulting socialization may be associated with doctoral students' evaluation of fit with the surrounding environment.

Proposition 4a: Internal-mission supporting networks contribute to students' perceptions of fit because of the congruence between within network goals, institutional or disciplinary goals, and the way students prioritize academic roles.

Proposition 4b: Individual-development supporting networks contribute to students' questioning of fit because of the difference between within network goals, institutional or disciplinary goals, and the way students prioritize academic roles.

Professional Identity

An important outcome of engagement in developmental networks is the development of a professional identity, particularly in the early career stage (Dobrow & Higgins, 2005). The results of this study are consistent with this finding. However, the relationships students chose to identify as important influenced the professional identity development process in different ways. For example, Dobrow and Higgins (2005) found that as developmental network density increased, one's professional identity was less personally salient. Network density is characterized by access (or lack thereof) to sources of information that are unique, or non-redundant. In this study, however, the opposite appears to be true. Although the Perceiving Fit students' reliance on internal-mission networks was associated with redundancy of messages at both the developmental network and program levels (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1973), they initially accepted Valley's "prototypical" professional identity or "weighting of academic roles" that they were socialized to accept. The Assessing Fit students, on the other hand, relied on networks that encouraged them to focus on individual development, explore areas of interest, and not to focus on grades as much as learning. I argue that the Assessing Fit students were also developing professional identities as future faculty members, but their conception of the faculty career and what it means to be a faculty member differed from those of the Perceiving Fit students because of the *nonredundancy* in messages and the nature of their developmental networks. In other words, the different messages communicated and types of support provided by network partners to these two groups of

students influenced the professional identity development process, resulting in different conceptions of the faculty career.

Proposition 5(a): High susceptibility to socialization and messages communicated by internal-mission supporting networks and the academic program lead to students' prioritization of academic roles matching the program's prioritization because of the primary focus on achievement of institutional goals (i.e., "Top" 50 placement).

Proposition 5(b): Low susceptibility to socialization and nonredundant messages communicated to students by their individual-development supporting networks and the academic program lead to students' mismatched prioritization of academic roles because of the primary focus on individual goals rather than institutional goals.

Discussion & Implications for Research

Socialization Susceptibility

Propositions 1a and 1b and the notion of socialization susceptibility are consistent with prior research which suggests that individuals bring a multitude of experiences to work and academic contexts that are likely to influence the ways they make sense of socialization experiences (Louis, 1980; Trice, 1993). Treating socialization susceptibility as a stable individual difference trait, however, contributes to existing socialization literature. This view contradicts the traditional one-size-fits-all perspective of socialization and supports the notion that organizations that are able to effectively tailor such efforts at the individual level are more effective, beneficial, and current with the

times (Murphy, 2002; Towler & Dipboye, 2003). While an individual may be new to a particular organization, s/he may not be new to a given field or to being a professional; the notion of socialization susceptibility acknowledges this difference. Doctoral programs that are able to effectively embrace students' differences, rather than viewing them as obstacles to student success, and use those differences to the programs' and students' advantage will likely be more successful in preparing the next generation of faculty.

Socialization susceptibility was salient for me when analyzing the experiences of these students, particularly the four students who changed during the first year. These four students' experiences suggested that selection and socialization alone were insufficient predictors of or contributors to their early professional identity development and perceptions of organizational fit with Valley. Rather, their individual agency and interactions with organizational members appeared to be quite influential. For each of the four students, interactions with Valley faculty that supported or detracted from the research focus greatly influenced their perceptions of themselves as future faculty and their willingness to accept Valley's goal of "Top 50" placement. The experiences of these four students who changed during the first year suggests that future research which explores and develops a socialization susceptibility construct and identifies ways to measure it will add to existing socialization research.

Emotional Support

The majority of mentoring research in academic settings examines the impact of the advisor-advisee relationship on student success (Green & Bauer, 1995; Paglis, Green,

& Bauer, 2006). Recent mentoring research, however, suggests that the traditional, dyadic view of the mentor-protégé relationship is outdated (de Janasz, Sullivan, & Whiting, 2003; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). Prior research revealed that individuals rely on many individuals to help navigate professional and personal experiences (Higgins, 2000; Higgins & Thomas, 2001). Findings from this study support the notion that multiple mentors or developmental relationships are important for both career and psychosocial support. Further, this study suggests that the formal advising relationship may not always be the most important to doctoral student success, at least during the first year. All of the students who participated in this study were formally assigned an academic advisor. And, while the academic advisor was an important relationship for a handful of students, not all students chose to identify and describe their advisor as critical to first-year success. Instead, the Assessing Fit doctoral students who participated in this study identified family as being just as important, if not more important, than the advisor to success in the first year.

The current study contributes to existing mentoring research by examining the role family relationships play in career development. In her study of formal mentoring programs and their effect on women, Blake-Beard (2001) noted that no empirical or anecdotal research examined familial relationships as possible mentoring relationships. This study began to fill this gap in mentoring research by exploring the role family relationships play in the developmental networks of first-year doctoral students.

Family members' influence may differ based on their own professional or academic experiences. For example, a few of the doctoral students in the current study had family members with doctoral degrees. While these students received emotional and

social support from their family members, they also received important knowledge development and information-sharing support. Students whose family members had little to no doctoral-level experience still described the emotional support they received from family throughout the first year as vital to their persistence. While it appeared that family relationships were important to first-year success for several students, family relationships may not be as important in later years or different phases of the doctoral experience. Future research on familial relationships and the roles they play throughout all phases of doctoral education will contribute to research on doctoral students, preparing future faculty, and mentoring.

Social network theory and the notion of developmental networks appear quite promising when examining doctoral student development beyond the advisor-student dyad. This study serves as a first step and building block for examining the role of multiple relationships in doctoral student experience and development. For example, Weidman, Twale, and Stein (2001) suggested that a student's personal communities, including family, friends, and employers, are likely to be important to graduate and professional socialization. This study suggests that such relationships contribute to the doctoral student experience. In fact, findings from this study suggest that support provided by relationships from students' personal communities may be more important to first-year success than support provided by faculty or peers within the academic community. To further build on this dissertation, future research on longitudinal changes in developmental networks and why those changes occur will contribute to our understanding of which types of support are important, when that support is important, who provides that support, and how it influences the professional identity development

process and persistence to degree. By exploring these questions, I was able to identify the four students who changed during the first year and discover opportunities that Valley missed to help two of these students potentially perceive a fit with the doctoral program. I am currently examining these issues further by following the students who participated in this study throughout their entire doctoral student careers. In addition, I have added a second cohort of business doctoral students to the study.

Goal Orientation

Findings from this study support prior research which suggests that classroom learning environments influence how students view themselves and the learning process (Ames, 1992; Ames & Ames, 1984). This study shows how powerful early socialization efforts can be in contributing to students' apparent adoption of one learning goal over another. Prior research on learning goals has shown that self-efficacy, knowledge development, and increased metacognitive activity have been positively linked to mastery orientation (Ford et al., 1998). Findings from this study suggest that learning goals may be associated with professional identity development. This study only focused on the first year of doctoral education; future longitudinal research on the effect of role performance and mastery orientations on professional identity development and their subsequent influence on preparing future faculty would add to existing research on learning goals and preparing future faculty. Other research might also explore the effects of learning goals on persistence to degree or withdrawal from graduate study. Such research might address questions such as: Is mastery orientation or performance orientation most likely

to contribute positively to long-term persistence and degree attainment? How does mastery or performance orientation interact with institutional mission to influence persistence?

Role Prioritization and Fit

Students in this study were categorized as Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit based on my direct assessment of their acceptance of Valley's role prioritization at the end of Year 1. The findings from this study answered calls for more qualitative examinations of fit, particularly in university settings, to better understand the consequences and outcomes of fit perceptions (Lindholm, 2003). This study began to explore the role fit plays in the early professional identity development process. Findings suggest that perceptions of fit influenced students' development of the prototypical professional identity they were socialized to accept. The Perceiving Fit students appeared to initially accept Valley's prototypical professional identity because of the congruence between developmental network goals and Valley's goals, whereas the Assessing Fit students were still questioning fit due to the apparent incongruence between developmental network goals and Valley's goals. By studying this phenomenon longitudinally, one could examine the point at which fit supports or hinders professional identity development or persistence. In other words, at what level is questioning of fit so overwhelming that it causes a student to leave a particular institution or a given field entirely? Additionally, future research on changes in fit perceptions and why those changes occur would add to existing research. For example, are there times or events in

the doctoral student experience such as comprehensive exams that make a student question or perceive fit more readily? Future studies could explore the influence of relationships on fit perceptions. Are there key organizational relationships that support or hinder fit perceptions?

Professional Identity

Propositions 5a and 5b contribute to a long-standing debate about the purpose of doctoral education. In, *Envisioning the future of doctoral education*, Golde (2006) talked about the need to develop and cultivate stewards of the discipline “who will creatively generate new knowledge, critically conserve valuable and useful ideas, and responsibly transform those understandings through writing, teaching, and application” (p. 5). She further asserted that a Ph.D. recipient is not simply a research specialist; rather, a Ph.D. recipient has the great responsibility of maintaining the integrity of his/her field.

According to Golde (2006), developing stewards of the discipline should improve doctoral education. The question becomes—how do doctoral programs develop stewards? While I believe that most individuals would acknowledge that a Ph.D. is a research degree, doctoral programs need to “take a hard look at how doctoral training can be better designed to teach the skills and instill the habits of the mind that, in fact, will increase the odds of careers success...” (Prewitt, 2006, p. 26). This statement suggests that although research is fundamental to Ph.D.-level training, doctoral programs are missing the mark because the majority of individuals who graduate from doctoral programs at the top research institutions do not place at comparable institutions (Prewitt, 2006). This implies

that even research institutions, such as Valley, have a responsibility to train their doctoral students to educate others at institutions not in the “Top 50” schools where their students are likely to earn faculty appointments. Valley College of Business is faced with the challenge, just as other doctoral programs at major research universities, of preparing future faculty based on the realities and expectations of research eminence and “A-level” publications, and encouraging students to focus on their individual growth and development and to explore areas of personal interest that may take them away from a research career. In fact, STEM fields (Sciences, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) at research institutions are attempting to reconcile this challenge by actively engaging in Teaching-as-Research to reform teaching practices and student learning and to lead the way in advancing change and innovation in graduate education (Mathieu, 2004) to ensure that the field does not lose good potential faculty.

I previously argued that both groups of students, Perceiving Fit and Assessing Fit, began to develop professional identities as future faculty members in business. However, their conceptions at the end of the first year varied due to their experiences and relationships. It appears that even within the same program, students were being exposed to different experiences. The Perceiving Fit students might be likely to achieve the ideal touted by Valley which would enable them to earn “Top 50” placement because of their willingness to accept the existing model of success. The Assessing Fit students, on the other hand, may be at risk for attrition. It is important to note, however, that the Perceiving Fit or Assessing Fit characterizations I assigned to the students in this study were not based on quality of work or academic performance and do not indicate such. In

order to assess quality of work, I would need access to performance indicators such as grades, faculty feedback, and year-end evaluations which may be difficult to obtain.

Until I complete the five-year longitudinal study that will follow these students throughout their entire doctoral experience, I cannot say with certainty which students will persist in the long term or successfully maneuver the daunting road towards tenure. The pressures these doctoral students are facing at Valley appears reminiscent to the pressures Colbeck (2000) described that occur at the junior faculty level in which individuals on the tenure track are discouraged from “taking intellectual risks that might involve questioning the status quo” (p. 38). The Assessing Fit students appeared more willing to question the status quo in order to focus on individual development and areas of personal interest as more important, at least initially, than achieving Valley’s preferred professional identity. It is possible that the Assessing Fit students will be more likely than the Perceiving Fit students to become the big thinkers in the field who question ideas and the standards of success because they chose to first focus on their individual needs, learning as the primary metric of success, and personal interests. Regardless, findings about these two groups of students are likely to serve as a springboard to future research on the role relationships within and outside of the academic community play in doctoral education and professional identity development. Additionally, these students’ experiences beg the question: are we training scholars or are we training clones?

Implications for Practice

Identifying the factors that influence doctoral student persistence is critical to the continued vitality of doctoral education. Since doctoral education is typically discipline- or program-specific, policy initiatives must begin at the program and college levels. Doctoral programs need to have policies in place that monitor student progress and identify students' needs during each year and throughout all phases of the doctoral student experience. By examining *all* influential relationships as identified by the students, this study provided insight into the types of support students required in the first year, uncovered who students go to for different types of support, and how that support influenced their overall development and commitment to persist to Year 2. In turn, this information can be used at the program, college, and institutional levels to ensure that support systems within the academic environment are encouraging rather than inhibiting persistence.

Findings from this study suggest that the faculty advisor is not always the most important relationship, particularly in the first year. Unlike the traditional undergraduate student, most doctoral students have outside responsibilities such as family that extend beyond their academic pursuits and may conflict with doctoral studies. However, most doctoral programs fail to acknowledge this reality. Based on the findings of the study, family support was believed to be the most important factor in encouraging persistence in the first year for several students. This suggests that doctoral programs would likely benefit by instituting policies that allow for work-personal balance at the doctoral student level or that, at a minimum, encourage family involvement in the academic as well as

social community. This study suggested that perceived detractors such as marital or parental status or substantial prior work experience may not be as detrimental as once thought and could instead be used more effectively in socialization efforts.

One additional outcome of using social network theory as a lens in studying doctoral student development is that it allows for an examination of interactions between individuals. As Lovitts (2004) noted, one cause of attrition is program culture. An important component of program culture is the messages communicated between organizational veterans and newcomers. The messages communicated to students, particularly early in the doctoral student experience, serve as critical sources of information and set the tone for performance expectations and future interactions. Inconsistent messages communicated between new students and faculty, or between program and developmental network, can lead to confusion and frustration or even a lack of information that may lead to withdrawal. Alternatively, inconsistent messages may serve as a “saving grace” or opportunities for students to explore areas of personal interest despite the messages communicated college-wide, which appeared to be the case for the Assessing Fit students.

An additional policy implication of this study is the need for doctoral programs to create formal developmental networks for each student. Creating formal developmental networks for students has benefits for students and academic programs. For instance, a student can be assigned mentors, both faculty and advanced students, in addition to the academic advisor. In instances in which the faculty advising relationship is less than adequate, students can seek guidance and support from the assigned mentors, which may encourage persistence and not result in students feeling isolated or having no where to

turn. Programs can benefit by creating formal developmental networks for students by assigning network partners based on common research, teaching, or personal interests. Based on the findings of this study, having formal relationships with individuals beyond the academic advisor but within the academic program may create more opportunities for research collaborations which can result in knowledge development and dissemination which is of particular importance in research institutions.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol – Student Interviews

Student Interview # 1: Start of Fall Semester (end of August/early September)

(1) The student's personal characteristics

- What is your age?
- Describe/discuss your prior work experience.
- Where did you do your undergraduate work, graduate work? Please describe any other educational experiences you had prior to arriving at Valley.
- What are your interests, hobbies, etc.?
- Marital status? Partner? Committed relationship? Children?

(2) How the individual came to be a doctoral student

- Tell me who you were prior to coming to Valley.
- What influenced your decision to enter a doctoral program?
- Who influenced your decision to pursue a doctoral degree? How/why did they influence you? What type of support did they provide?
- Which individuals were the most influential in your decision to pursue a doctoral degree?
- Why did you decide on Valley?

(3) What qualities or accomplishments the student believes are necessary to be a successful doctoral student

- What does it take to be successful in a PhD program? Define success.
- How many hours do you think it will require in terms of class preparation, outside reading, paper writing to be successful in this program?
- What are your professional goals for the first year?
- What are your personal goals for the first year?

~At this point, how do you describe your ability as a:

- Student learner
- Writer
- Creative Thinker
- Analyst
- Theorist

(4) How the student identifies with the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher

~At this point, what does it mean to you to be a:

- Doctoral student
- Research assistant
- Teacher

~How do you prioritize these roles?

~How important are each of these roles to you?

~How important do you believe these roles are to the faculty?

- ~At this point, how confident are you that you can develop each of these areas well enough to be a world class faculty member?
- ~What are the 2-3 main messages you “heard” at Orientation?
- ~What questions, if any, do you still have?

Student Interview #2: Early in the spring semester (January)

(1) If the student believes he/she possesses the qualities to be a successful doctoral student

- Now that you have one semester completed, define success for me.
- What does it take to be successful in a PhD program/What qualities do you believe are essential for being successful in this PhD program?
- In your opinion, do you believe you have the qualities to be successful as a doctoral student in this program?

PROBES:

*Please explain why you believe you can be/currently are successful.

- How has what you've learned changed, if at all, your definition of success?
- How many hours do you think it will require in terms of class preparation, outside reading, paper writing to be successful in this program?
- What are your professional goals for the first year?
- What are your personal goals for the first year?

(2) How the student rates his/her ability in the following areas with one semester completed.

~At this point, how do you describe your ability as a:

- Student learner
- Writer
- Creative Thinker
- Analyst
- Theorist

(3) Personal relationships with individuals (network partners) within and outside of the academic program

~Tell me about the people in your life:

- Who has been influential in your PhD program thus far (positive or negative)?
- Which relationships would you say have been the most important to your progress to date in the program? Why/how?

*****ASK QUESTIONS 4-7 FOR EACH NETWORK PARTNER LISTED BY STUDENT**

(4) The type(s) of support received from each network partner (draw networks here*)**

For each of the individuals you named, rank them in order of importance (**looking to interview top 3-4*)

Describe, in detail, a typical interaction with each person listed, and tell me:

- What types of issues do you discuss with this particular individual? Give me an example.
- What types/kinds of support has he/she provided? Give a few examples
- How has the support influenced your experience thus far? Explain/ give me an example.

(5) Perceptions of network partners' expectations

~Keeping in mind the individuals you just discussed:

- In general, what do you think their expectations are for you in the program?

What are their expectations for you as a:

- Doctoral student
- Research assistant
- Teacher

(6) How network partners communicate those expectations

- How do you know those are their expectations?

(7) If student believes he/she is meeting those expectations

~In your opinion, do you believe you are meeting those expectations? Why/why not?

Explain and provide examples.

(8) How the student identifies with the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher

~Ok, so now we've talked about everyone else. With one semester completed, what does it mean to YOU to be a:

- Doctoral Student
- Research Assistant
- Teacher

~At this point, how confident are you that you can develop in each of these areas well enough to be a world class faculty member?

~Tell me who you are now with one semester completed in your PhD program.

Student Interview #3: End of spring semester (mid-May/end of May)

(1) If the student believes he/she possesses the qualities to be a successful doctoral student

- With one year completed, what qualities do you believe are important to being successful in a PhD program?
- In your opinion, do you believe you possess the qualities needed to be a successful doctoral student?
- What has been your biggest accomplishment this year in the PhD program?
- What, if anything, would you change if you could start your first year over?
- How confident are you that you will receive the doctorate for which you are now studying (Hall, 1968)?
- What things do you know now that you wish you had known in August when you started? (from Golde, 2000)

(2) Doctoral student's personal relationships with network partners (*draw network here)

- Which relationships have been most important to your success in the first year? How/why?
- How would you rank those relationships?
- Have your personal relationships, both inside and outside of the program, changed at all? If so how?

(3) The type(s) of support they received from each network partner

- What type(s)/kind(s) of support have they provided?
- How has that support influenced your success/experience in the first year?
- Take-aways from relationships – how do you think these relationships have helped you, if at all, develop as a doc. student, RA, TA throughout your first year?

(4) Perceptions of network partners' expectations

- What expectations do these individuals have for you?
- If individuals **are the same** from previous interview – have their expectations changed for you at all? If so, how?
- If individuals **are different** from previous interview – what are the person's expectations for you?
- Have they set any specific expectations for you for next year?

(5) How network partners communicate those expectations

- How do you know those are their expectations?

(6) If the student believes he/she is meeting those expectations

- Do you believe you have been successful in meeting/achieving those expectations? Why/why not?

(7) How the student identifies with the roles of doctoral student, research assistant, and teacher

~With one year completed, what does it mean to you to be a:

- Doctoral Student
- Research Assistant
- Teacher

Closing Questions

- How have your experiences prepared you for life as a faculty member at a research institution? Why/Why not?
- What has been most meaningful to your first year experience as a doctoral student?
- What has been most rewarding to your first year experience (earned you the most recognition from peers, faculty, etc.)?
- What are the norms/values of the academic career (that you are aware of after one year)? How/why do you think that?
- What are your plans for next year?
- What professional goals have you set for yourself in year two of the program?
- What personal goals have you set for yourself in year two of the program?
- What have you learned about yourself this past year?
- Tell me who you are now with one year of your program completed.

Appendix B

Network Partner, Faculty, and Administrator Interview Protocol

Faculty/Peer Interview: Conducted after second student interview (spring semester)

General Questions:

1. If I were a prospective doctoral student, how would you describe the program?
2. What qualities do you believe are essential to be successful as a doctoral student in this doctoral program?
3. In general, what are the overall expectations for doctoral students in this program?
4. In general, how are those expectations communicated to the students?
5. How do you help students achieve those expectations?
6. What is most meaningful in your work as a faculty member?
7. What is the most rewarding aspect of your career in academe?
8. What are the institutionalized set of norms and values inherent in the academic profession?
 - a. How have you come to learn/understand those norms and values?

Do you advise any of the first year students? Or do you serve as a supervisor to any of the first year students?

Specific:

1. What specific expectations do you have for (student) as a:
 - a. Doctoral Student
 - b. Research Assistant

c. Teacher

2. In what ways do you communicate those expectations with (student)?
3. How well do you believe (student) is meeting those expectations?
4. Do you communicate with (student) when he/she is/is not meeting expectations?
5. What kind of support do you provide to (student) to help him/her achieve expectations?
6. Does that support change if/when (student) is not meeting expectation? If so, how?
7. Does (student) have the ability to be successful in this PhD program? As a future researcher?

Family, Friends, or Business Associates: Conducted after second student interview
(spring semester)

General Questions:

1. Tell me a little bit about (student)
2. What qualities do you believe (student) possesses that will help him/her be successful in a doctoral program?
3. How often does (student) confide in you regarding matters related to the doctoral program?
4. In your opinion, how important do you think it is for (student) to receive support from family/business/business associates? Please explain.
5. Was that support instrumental in helping (student) decide to pursue a doctoral degree? If so, how?

Specific:

Now that we covered some general questions regarding (student), I am going to ask specific questions regarding your role/relationship with (student).

6. What specific expectations do you have for (student) as a:
 - a. Doctoral Student
 - b. Research Assistant
 - c. Teacher
7. In what ways do you communicate those expectations with (student)?
8. How well do you believe (student) is meeting those expectations?
9. Do you communicate with (student) when he/she is/is not meeting expectations?

10. What kind(s) of support do you provide to (student) to help him/her achieve those expectations?

11. Does that support change if/when the student is not meeting expectation? If so, how?

12. Have you noticed any changes in (student) since he/she started the doctoral program?

Please explain/provide examples.

13. Does the student possess the qualities to be a successful PhD Student?
Researcher/Faculty member?

VITA

Vicki L. Sweitzer

Education

Ph.D., Higher Education Administration, The Pennsylvania State University, May 2007

M.S., Management and Organization, The Pennsylvania State University, May 2007

M.B.A., Business Administration, Clarion University of Pennsylvania, May 2001

B.S., Safety Sciences, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, August 1999

Professional Experience

Albion College, Fall 2007 -

Assistant Professor, Economics and Management

The Pennsylvania State University, 2003-2007

Graduate Research Assistant, Smeal College of Business (05-07)

Instructor of Management, Smeal College of Business (04-07)

Graduate Research Assistant, Center for the Study of Higher Education (03-05)

Harvard Business School, 2001-2003

Administrator, Executive Education

Clarion University of Pennsylvania, 1999-2001

Graduate Research Assistant, MBA programs

Professional Presentations and Service

Made eleven presentations at national conferences

Serve as paper reviewer for national conferences and peer-reviewed journals

Professional Memberships

Academy of Management (AOM)

The American Educational Research Association (AERA)

The Association for Institutional Research (AIR)

The Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)

The Northeast Association for Institutional Research (NEAIR)