An Exploration of Senior Student Affairs Officers' Career and Life Paths

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the career and life paths of male and female Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs). The study used Super's components of Work Salience and Career maturity to examine gender differences and commonalities of individuals in their climb to a SSAO position. Specifically, the study examined the role of family and personal life and the intersection with career. Employing qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured interviews, this study investigated the following research questions:

1. How do female SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

2. How do male SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

3. How do male and female SSAOs life and career development experiences compare to one another according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

The transcripts were analyzed using open and focused coding to find themes present in the data. The coding process was reviewed by a peer as well as a panel of experts to ensure trustworthiness. The findings of the study indicated themes regarding caregiving, work experience, leisure activities, marital status, scheduling, and career planning.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The percentage of men and women in the workforce is equalizing with men making up 51% of the workforce and women making up the remaining 49% (Bond, Thompson, Galinksy, & Prottas, 2002). However, men and women have vastly different employment experiences (Acker, 1990; Amott & Matthaei, 1996; Budig, 2002). Workforce disparity between men and women is witnessed extensively in the world of career development and achievement. The role of caregiving (Erickson & Ritter, 2001), occupational segregation (Amott & Matthaei; Cohen & Huffman, 2003; Hill & Silva, 2005), discrimination in the workplace, and differences in skill and education (Hill & Silva) contribute to varied career experiences for men and women. Although research has been conducted on the career and life paths of student affairs professionals, there has been little attention paid to Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) career and life paths.

There are several gender issues affecting the workplace in American society and many of these issues occur within the field of higher education as well as within student affairs. Career and life path experiences also differ beyond gender because of race and class. Race, class, and gender form intersections and it is often difficult to segregate one aspect from another to determine why an individual encounters a differing experience or opportunity. This study investigated the career and life paths of male and female SSAOs while recognizing the intersection of race, class, and gender may provide more complex findings beyond the discussion of gender or the scope of this study. In this chapter, I discuss gender as it pertains to the general workplace, followed by higher education, and conclude with a discussion of gender as it pertains to student affairs. Acknowledging workplace bias aids in understanding why it is important to

study how some men and women can overcome bias and discrimination and be successful in achieving senior student affairs positions.

Gender in the Workplace

Both student affairs and higher education are smaller components of a larger workforce. The American workforce is comprised of men and women who encounter differing career experiences where the work of women is often devalued (Cohen & Huffman, 2003). Identified in the literature are several factors including: caregiving, occupational segregation, discrimination, and skills and education.

Caregiving

The responsibility for caregiving and domestic work is placed upon women regardless of whether they are employed full-time or part-time (Hochschild, 1997; Twiggs, McQuillan, & Ferree, 1999). Women who work outside of the home are expected to work a "second shift" (Budig, 2002) putting in long hours for their paid positions and then working at home taking care of family and housework (Wharton, 1994). Women typically receive minimal assistance from their spouses or partners in terms of performing domestic work and often receive limited emotional support as well (Hartmann, 1981; Twiggs, McQuillan, & Ferree, 1999). Balancing the roles of caregiver and full-time employee is not something the majority of men have to negotiate, and balancing work outside the home with work inside the home causes stress for many women (Wharton, 1994).

Women's caregiving does not end in the home but continues within the work force. Many women are found in caring professions, take on more nurturing and caregiving roles within the workforce and are often expected to be more caring and nurturing then men in the workplace regardless of the position (Hochschild, 1989; Steinberg & Figart, 1999). Women therefore tend

to be primarily responsible for caring for others in our society, or in other words, for the emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983).

Although research has shown that women tend to be the primary caregivers more than men, the number of men participating in caregiving and the amount of caregiving men provide is rising (Families and Work Institute, 2002). A recent phenomenon of stay-at-home fathers is an area that lacks research yet needs to be addressed more in the career literature to discuss the issue of navigating multiple roles for men. Men have been traditionally viewed as the breadwinners (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005) and men who deviate from that role may be considered to be non-traditional. Men who choose to stay home and care for children and family often face negative stereotypes and treatment (Brescoll & Uhlmann). Domestic work has long been considered primarily the responsibility of women and is part of the division of labor. Occupational segregation is one example of how society creates a division between men's and women's jobs (Cohen, 2004).

Occupational Segregation

The segregation of labor in the American workforce is structured so women are traditionally tracked into what are considered more traditionally feminine occupations and men into more masculine occupations. Individuals such as bank tellers, nurses, and teachers are now considered women's work. While at one time these professions were dominated by men, as men began to abandon them for fields associated with greater power and higher pay; women began working in the once male dominated fields (Amott & Matthaei, 1996). The jobs men left were opened to women and have since become redefined as female jobs. Additionally, many of these jobs were redefined to require caring or nurturing skills, which are deemed a female characteristic. Based on the nurturing requirement of these occupations women are more likely to

be hired or directed to these jobs than men (Skuratowicz & Hunter, 2004). Nurturing and caring

fields are devalued in society and pay less (Cohen & Huffman, 2003) and women are overly

concentrated in caring and service fields such as education, healthcare, daycare, and food

industries (Amott & Matthaei, 1996).

Discrimination

Directing men and women to different employment opportunities has allowed for

discrimination to occur in the workplace. Companies and organizations aid in occupational

segregation and produce gender and social constructs rewarding certain masculine behaviors, and

thus perpetuating the white male privilege (Acker, 1990; Britton, 2000). Women are put at a

disadvantage because they do not possess or embody the ideal (male) worker image. The ideal

worker stipulates that a worker should not have family obligations or can easily detach himself

from family obligations and is assertive and confident, which are characteristics typically

associated with men more then women (Budig, 2002). The ideal worker is also able to put work

first and work long hours if necessary. Employers use the ideal worker construct and in turn

discriminate against women (Reskin, 1993) based on their gender and their perceived abilities,

experiences, and skills.

Another type of discrimination exists in the form of tokenism. Created by Kanter (1977),

the theory of tokenism states that individuals who are the statistical minority encounter various

challenges due to their "…high visibility, contrast, and [lack of] assimilation…" (Budig, 2002, p.

260). Women who are tokens within an organization often find themselves discriminated against

in terms of expectations, stereotypes, and opportunities for advancement (Budig; Williams,

1992). Men are more likely to be tokens within feminized fields where they are often fast

tracked, regardless of skills and/or education, to management positions more quickly than female

counterparts (Budig, 2002; Williams, 1992). Additionally, many men who choose feminized jobs are discriminated against by members of society. Since these men have chosen feminine fields, which does not correlate with societal norms, they are viewed as "feminine", "gay", or "wimpy" (Williams, p. 261). These demasculizing stereotypes may thwart many men from choosing feminine jobs in which they are truly interested (Williams).

Skills and Education

Aside from the personality and desired qualities, such as traditional family arrangements, associated with the ideal worker, skills and education are more tangible traits that influence employment opportunities. An increasing number of women and minorities are pursuing higher education with women outnumbering men as undergraduates in colleges and universities. In the 2002-03 academic year more women earned associates, bachelors, and masters degrees than men and by 2014 women will outnumber men in all degrees earned and will outnumber men at the bachelors and masters levels by nearly 300%. The one place men continue to outnumber women is in the number of doctoral degrees awarded (*The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac*, 2005-2006).

Advancement by women in traditionally male dominated professional fields and positions is attributed by some to increases in educational attainment (Hill & Silva, 2005). While women are becoming increasingly represented in the ranks of doctors, lawyers, and executives, they are still highly underrepresented in some professional and traditional male fields (Amott & Matthaei, 1996) such as science, technology, and math. In many occupations there is a concentration of women at the entry- and mid-level positions but the top positions remain dominated by men which is often referred to as the glass ceiling. One such field is higher education.

Gender in Higher Education

Men and women encounter different experiences within the workforce (Acker, 1990; Amott & Matthaei, 1996; Budig, 2002) and this extends to men and women working in higher education. Women make up the numerical majority in higher education as students and are bridging the gap in faculty and administrative spots, and although men still outnumber women in administrative positions (Drum, 1993) the number of women in administrative positions almost doubled from 1983-2000 from 38,146 to 75, 313 (BIHE@20: By the numbers, 2004). In addition, the number of men in higher education administration steadily increased in the same 17-year period from 79,340 to 82, 957 (BIHE@20: By the numbers).

Women's career mobility in higher education administration is affected by the fact that there are fewer women in higher positions in the profession (Sandler, 1993). Career mobility or advancement in higher education often times is dependent on the advocacy and encouragement found in mentors and networks, which differ for men and women (Hart, 2003). Informal networks and mentoring assist more men in climbing the managerial ladder due to more males achieving high-ranking positions (Sagaria & Rychener, 2002). Part of the reason for the lack of advancement and mentors for women in higher education is there are fewer women in top positions to act as mentors and aid in career progression (Sagaria & Rychener). Many women could benefit from networks and mentors to advance their careers as well as to cope with many of the issues they face including isolation, harassment (Hart, 2003), and discrimination (Simpson, 2001).

Caregiving

Higher education is reflective of the American workplace in that it values typically male assets and promotes males based upon these qualities (Mason & Goulden, 2004). Due to this structure

of the higher education system there is little support for family life, which affects more women

due to their role as the primary caregiver. Higher education tends not to be conducive to

individuals with families, in particular for those who are primary caregivers (van Anders, 2004).

Women in higher education find themselves choosing which realm to succeed in: family or

career (O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). These women struggle with how to balance career and

family (Coltrane, 2004) and still climb the professional ladder. For example, earning tenure

requires additional hard work and hours that many administrators believe women are incapable

of managing if they have children (O'Laughlin & Bischoff). Although men's role in the home is

increasing and they are spending on average 42 more minutes a day, during the workweek,

assisting in the home compared to 30 years ago, they do not face the same work life balance

issues as women (Bond, Thompson, Galinksy, & Prottas, 2002). Additionally, women in higher

education have higher levels of stress due to their dual role in career and family (O'Laughlin &

Bischoff, 2005).

Occupational Segregation

Higher education as a gendered organization has set up a gender hierarchy, which is

consistent with society's segregation of occupations (Park, 1996). Within higher education men

obtain more management and administrative positions while women obtain more entry-level and

marginal positions (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Hughes, 1989).

Discrimination

Discrimination exists in various forms in higher education as in most workplaces. From

hiring practices to promotion to daily interactions, women in higher education experience a

variety of discriminatory actions (van Anders, 2004) that men may not experience as readily. The

structure of the institution of higher education lends itself to statistical discrimination as well as

institutional discrimination (Kulis, 1997). Statistical discrimination is based on stereotypes or when employers substitute their beliefs about an entire population as reality. For example, many employers assume that women need to take exorbitant amounts of time from work to fulfill their role as the primary caregiver. Whether this is true for all women is irrelevant as the employer makes this assumption for any woman working in that organization (Kulis). The same example applies to men. Many employers assume that men will not need to take time off from work to fulfill caregiving obligations regardless of whether it is true for all men (Levine & Pittinsky, 1997).

Institutional discrimination is covert discrimination and is inherent in the policies and structure of the organization causing it to be difficult for many to understand that it is discrimination (Barbour, 2008; Kulis, 1997). The organization's policies and procedures place a group of individuals at an advantage over another group (Barbour). Thus, the structure of the organization may allow discrimination or even encourage discrimination within the organization.

The gendered structure of higher education allows many gender issues to be ignored as well as creating barriers and difficulties, particularly for women, in the workplace (Acker & Armenti, 2004). Evidence of this exists in that women fill the majority of mid and entry-level higher education positions (Jones & Komives, 2001). Men make up the majority of full professors and tenured faculty while women comprise the growing number of part-time faculty (Benjamin, 1998). Based on the fact that women are restricted to lower level positions that require less valued skills, have fewer networks or opportunities to network, systems of higher education are indeed gendered.

Skills and Education

Level of education plays a role in higher education employment. As mentioned previously, women outnumber men in higher education degrees attained except for doctoral degrees earned and women are concentrated in the humanities. More men receive doctoral degrees (*The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac*, 2005-2006) making them qualified for the upper-level administrative positions, meaning fewer women are deemed qualified for the upper-level administrative posts.

Although education is identified as a feminine field on the whole, the upper-level higher education administrative positions are seen as masculine positions where many females need to exhibit masculine traits to obtain and succeed in these administrative posts (Street & Kimmel, 1999). These masculine traits are often determined to be skills necessary to be a successful administrator and leader. The experiences of men and women in higher education are reflective of the issues faced in the general workplace.

<div align="center">Gender in Student Affairs</div>

Student affairs administration has been historically viewed as a feminized profession (Hamrick & Carlisle, 1990) in which women outnumber men entering graduate preparation programs and the profession (Jones & Komives, 2001). However, women tend to be overly concentrated in entry- and mid-level positions (Blackhurst, Brandt, & Kalinowski, 1998a; Jones & Komives, 2001) often at small, typically private, institutions (Evans & Kuh, 1983; Reason, Walker, & Robinson, 2002; Rickard, 1985). Conversely, men are typically concentrated in mid and upper-level administrative positions in student affairs (Jones & Komives, 2001).

Caregiving

Female SSAOs report greater stress than their male counterparts in balancing work and life (Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, Johnson, & Kicklighter, 1998; Scott, 1992). Since women are the majority of primary caregivers they find themselves working a double shift; (Sayer, 2005, Hochschild & Machung, 1997) coordinating their home and work identity (Wharton, 1994) and often are held to different expectations than their male counterparts. For instance, women SSAOs are expected to be more caring and team oriented then men (Jones & Komives, 2001) forcing them to be responsible for the majority of emotional labor within the workplace. The difference in expectations of workplace caregiving, as well as the need to balance multiple commitments, are sources of stress for women (Jones & Komives, 2001) which in turn causes work/life balance stress.

Occupational Segregation

The profession of student affairs is considered feminized due to the overwhelming number of women in the field as well as the tasks performed. However, the upper-level administrative positions are viewed as masculine. Due to the varying value of masculine and feminine traits and skills within the field of student affairs different jobs tend to become feminized or masculinized. The upper-level managerial and administrative positions are viewed as the masculine positions while the entry-level and mid-level positions are more feminized (Hughes, 1990; Street & Kimmel, 1999). Functional areas, such as counseling, tend to be more feminized than other functional areas (McEwen, Engstrom, & Williams, 1990) such as recreation. Although the field of student affairs is feminized, many specific areas within higher education are masculine, including the upper-level administration (which the SSAO is a member).

Discrimination

Discrimination exists within student affairs in a variety of forms with the most visible mode of discrimination being pay disparity. Men within student affairs, specifically senior administrators, earn more money for the same work than women (Blackhurst, 2000; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Reason et. al, 2002). Discrimination also occurs in that women are directed towards more nurturing positions, such as counselors, which pay less and have less prestige and power (McEwen, Engstrom, & Williams, 1990).

As mentioned previously due to occupational segregation, senior student affairs positions, which are management positions, are seen as masculine. Therefore many women are not considered for these positions because they are judged to lack the masculine qualities necessary for the job. Women who obtain the senior student affairs positions often face discrimination in the form of stereotyping. These female administrators are either seen as masculine and having given up their feminine identity or they are seen as the typical emotional and nurturing (i.e.weaker) administrator (Cummings, 1979; Drum, 1993; Street & Kimmel, 1999). These women administrators then face discrimination, that may often hinder their ability to be successful.

Skills and Education

The administrative and management positions within student affairs are associated with masculine traits (Hughes, 1989; McEwen & Shertzer, 1979). While women in administrative positions are expected to be caring and nurturing (Jones & Komives, 2001) high level administrators are seen as requiring masculine traits to be successful (Street & Kimmel, 1999). Conflicting expectations for female SSAOs occur when the expectation is set that female

SSAO's must be caring and nurturing while they must also co-opt masculine traits (Hughes, 1989; Jones & Komives, 2001).

The field of student affairs is considered to be feminized not just because of the number of women within the field, but also due to the helping and nurturing nature of the profession. Student affairs professionals embrace traditional feminine values of compassion, tolerance, advocacy, and justice which aid in the field being deemed feminized and not as valued as other masculine careers (Hughes, 1989). These feminine values are viewed as necessary traits to work within the field but not viewed as necessary to climb the administrative ladder.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

In summary, men and women are represented almost equally within the work force in the United States (*U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics*, 2007). Men and women in the workplace face a plethora of issues including discrimination, balancing of work and family, perceptions of difference in skill and education levels, and occupational segregation (Hill & Silva, 2005). These issues affect men and women differently and often make it difficult for women in the workforce to move to upper-level administrative and managerial positions (Amott & Matthaei, 1996; Budig, 2002).

Women find it difficult to advance professionally is higher education administration. Women are more likely to be concentrated in entry- to mid-level positions (Kulis, 1997) and those in top positions may be viewed as tokens and placed under greater scrutiny than men in such positions (Budig, 2002) and often experience greater stress in work and family life (O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). Tokenism occurs when individuals who are the statistical minority encounter various issues due to their "…high visibility, contrast, and [lack of] assimilation…" (Budig, 2002, p. 260). Although not all token individuals experience the same

issues, research demonstrates that women do encounter more issues providing a negative impact (Budig, 2002). Women in student affairs have been identified as the minority in administrative positions therefore making them more visible and in some instances, representative of their entire gender (Trimble, Allen, & Vidoni, 1991).

One particular group of women who report stress in balancing work and family life are SSAOs (Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, Johnson, & Kicklighter, 1998; Scott, 1992). Although the number of women in the student affairs profession is far greater than the number of men (Jones & Komives, 2001), women still hold more entry- and mid-level positions (Evans & Kuh, 1983) and fewer SSAO positions than men. Women who do make it to a senior student affairs position are more likely to be at small and private institutions (Reason et. al, 2002; Rickard, 1985; Jones & Komives, 2001).

With all of the challenges in the work place, in higher education, and in student affairs, more information is necessary to understand how some men and women achieve the senior student affairs position. A key question to investigate is why SSAO women are able to overcome challenges and issues to persevere to the top. Since women face additional challenges in the workplace and particularly in their achievement of upper-level positions, it is important to study women who have achieved high ranking positions. It is also important to understand if men experience similar issues to women in terms of career and life paths. There is little research addressing men balancing work and family life and little research that addresses the career and life paths of SSAOs, with most of the research stemming from the 1980s and 90s. It is important to study the life and career paths of male and female SSAOs for several reasons: a) men's increasing role in caregiving, b) increasing numbers of women in SSAO positions, c) to understand if there is a clear career path to the SSAO position, and d) to explore how life and

career paths intersect. Additionally, more information is needed to provide an outline for those aspiring to be SSAOs.

<center>Theoretical Framework</center>

There are many theories regarding either career development or life development. However, Super (1984) created a multi-level theory that combines career and life development. He suggested that individuals go through various phases from birth to death and states that career patterns for men and women are not drastically different. The pattern for women is: "stable homemaking, conventional (work followed by marriage), stable working, double-track (working while homemaking), interrupted (working, homemaking, and working, either while homemaking or after having given up homemaking), unstable (recycling), and multiple-trial." (Super, 1985, p. 215). For men, the career pattern is: "stable, conventional, unstable, and multiple-trial."(Super, 1985, p. 216). The main difference between the career patterns is the role women play in their family life. Although this model was created during a time when more women stayed at home, women today are still the primary caregivers. Super (1984) argues that men's and women's career patterns are similar with the exception of the role women play in the home and family.

Finally, Super (1984) provides a model for assessing an individual's career development. This model involves the assessment of five key aspects: Work Salience, Career Maturity, Self-Concepts, Level of Abilities and Potential Functioning, and Field of Interest and Probable Activity. The Work Salience aspect examines the importance of the individual's diverse roles in work, home, and the community. Career Maturity focuses on how individuals planned for their career, the exploration of careers, and the process used in deciding on a career. Self-Concepts examine an individual's self-esteem, clarity, cognitive ability, and ability to be realistic. Level of

Abilities explores an individual's ability to function in a given position while Field of Interest determines in what an individual is interested (Super, 1985).

Super's (1984) model, established more than 20 years ago, provides an appropriate avenue to explore career paths of male and female SSAOs. Although Super's model is dated, it is still influential within the field of career development (Brown, 2002) and thus, an appropriate choice for this study. This model provides five key aspects to an individual's career development that Super contends everyone follows, aside from a difference in caregiving for men and women. Super's five aspects align with many of the gender disparities apparent within the working environment. The Work Salience aspect examines issues related to individuals' role as caregiver in addition to their career role. The Career Maturity aspect focuses on the choice of career and process in attaining that career, which aids in exploring the division of labor. The remaining three aspects, Self-Concepts, Level of Abilities, and Field of Interest all contribute to understanding how an individual's skills and education affect career development. All five of the aspects may provide insight to gender differences experienced within the field of student affairs however, Career Maturity and Work Salience address the issues of career path and life path addressed in this study and were the two conceptual components selected for use.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the life and career development of SSAOs. Specifically, this phenomenological study explored male and female work and personal experiences during their climb to senior student affairs positions. For the purposes of this study, a SSAO is defined as an individual holding the highest ranking student affairs position on a campus. Life and career development is defined using Super's model in which life and career

development included all issues, challenges, and events that the SSAO deemed important during their progression to SSAO positions.

The sample included enough male and female SSAOs at a variety of institutional types located in the southeast to reach data saturation. Data saturation is the point in which no new information is provided to determine new codes and/or themes and is said to be reached with as few as 6 total participants (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Participants were identified using the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) website. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews constructed using Super's model of career and life development as a guide. In addition to the interviews, all participants were asked to provide a current resume or curriculum vitae.

Research Questions

The research questions for the study were:

1.   How do female SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

2.   How do male SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

3.   How do male and female SSAOs life and career development experiences compare to one another according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant to future practice, research, and policy in higher education. Several constituencies may benefit from the results of this study. First, upper-level higher education administrators may find the results useful when pursuing gender diversity in

administrative positions. The results provide higher education administrators with data to assess the levels of institutional support for women in SSAO positions.

Second, individuals aspiring to senior student affairs positions may benefit from this study. The results provide those individuals with an understanding of the path to such a position. The results also provide insight into the obstacles and issues that an aspiring SSAO may face.

A third group that may benefit from this research is faculty in student affairs preparation programs. Faculty may gain a better understanding of the experiences of individuals who have become SSAOs. These faculty members may then be able to share this information with graduate students so they may make informed decisions about their career path.

Additionally, the study is significant in terms of future policy. The results might aid higher education administration in their hiring processes as well as diversity of administrators. This study may also aid administrators in reviewing their institutional support policies (i.e. maternity/paternity leave) based on how supported student affairs administrators feel.

Finally, this study provides an opportunity to conduct further research on the topic. This qualitative study is intended to foster common ideas and themes about SSAOs' career and life paths. A quantitative study into the gender differences of SSAOs' life and career paths may provide more generalizable data.

Further information about the career and life paths of SSAOs could be garnered by investigating the role of the institution and institutional culture. Gendered organizations often dictate what roles males and females play and such a study would provide insight into the gendered notion of higher education. My study focuses on gender, however, the sample does include SSAOs of various races and cultures. A study into the role race plays in the career paths of SSAOs may provide more insight.

Limitations

As with any research design there are several initial limitations. One is the issue of candor by the participants. The answers provided by the participants may be skewed based on the personal interaction of the interviewer and participant. Although great diligence was given to ensure the participants felt safe to answer the questions honestly, it was still possible for the participants to be guarded with their answers or to provide information they felt the interviewer was expecting.

A second limitation is that of bias. As I examined the career and life paths of male and female SSAOs I had assumptions about career and life path experiences based upon gender. Every attempt was made to bracket these assumptions. However, it is impossible to set aside all preconceived notions.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic of investigation and provides the purpose of the research as well as the research questions. The second chapter reviews the literature concerning the topic of SSAOs and their life and career paths. The third chapter provides the methodology for the study and includes the sample selection process, interview protocol, and coding and analysis of data. The fourth chapter is a manuscript focusing on the career and life paths of SSAOs while the fifth chapter is a manuscript discussing gender, work and personal life role results found within the study.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

This study explored the career and life paths of SSAOs. To conduct the present study, it was necessary to review the literature regarding career and life path development in student affairs. The literature concerning career and life path is organized according to Super's (1984) career and life development assessment model. In this chapter, Super's components of career maturity and work salience are discussed. Next, key literature pertaining to the career paths of student affairs professionals is addressed followed by the literature pertaining to student affairs professionals' life paths. The purpose of this study was to explore the life and career development of SSAOs. The research questions for this study were:

1.   How do female SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

2.   How do male SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

3.   How do male and female SSAOs life and career development experiences compare to one another according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

Super's Career and Life Development Model

The Developmental Assessment Model (hereafter referred to as the model) is useful in examining individual career and life path. Super developed the model to aid counselors in assessing an individual's career plan and aiding counselors in the career counseling process. The model consists of four steps; preview, depth-view, assessment of all data, and counseling. The preview stage consists of preliminary assessments of an individual while the depth-view stage

involves detailed assessments of an individual's Work Salience, Career Maturity, Self-Concepts, Level of Abilities and Potential Functioning, and Field of Interest and Probable Activity. The model involves matching and predicting an occupation and the counseling step concludes the model with discussion, action planning, and evaluation. While Super's (1984) development assessment model provides a detailed approach to career counseling it also provides a conceptual framework from which to explore the career and life paths of student affairs professionals.

Super addresses the issue of gender within career and life paths and believes that, aside from childbearing, career paths do not differ based on gender. According to Super (1984) the life paths "…differences are differences by degree not of kind…" (p. 216) and are concerned with child rearing, sex role stereotypes, and child bearing. However, Super views these differences as being very slight and not fundamentally altering the general life and career paths men and women follow. This study explored Super's framework as it applies to SSAOs.

I used two components of the model for this study: Work Salience and Career Maturity. Work Salience correlates with life paths and examines work roles, home and family roles, community service, and leisure activities. Career Maturity includes career planning, decision making, world of work knowledge, and experience. The Career Maturity aspect fits with this study's exploration of individuals' career paths. According to the model, there is no difference in career or life path between men and women except from family and this study seeks to examine this for SSAOs.

Career and Life Paths of Student Affairs Professionals

Little research has been conducted that addresses the career and life paths of student affairs professionals. What research that has been completed has not addressed the mobility of student affairs professionals; rather focus has been given to the characteristics of student affairs

professionals (Brown, 1987). The authors researching characteristics of student affairs

professionals discuss the demographics of professionals in the field in addition to addressing

what skills are necessary within the field. What research is provided on career and life paths of

student affairs professionals is dated and appears to peak in the mid 1980s.

Career Maturity

The majority of student affairs professionals do not declare at a young age the intention

of becoming a student affairs professional (Blimling, 2002; Brown, 1987; Hunter, 1992) but

decide to enter the profession based upon co-curricular undergraduate experiences. As

undergraduates, student affairs professionals tend to be involved in leadership positions in Greek

life, residence life, student government, or other student organizations (Blimling; Brown). Those

who enter the student affairs profession seem to drift to the field rather than intentionally

planning to join it (Blimling; Brown). This may be attributed to the fact that there is no academic

major at the undergraduate level that leads to graduate training in student affairs (Hunter, 1992).

Therefore, many student affairs administrators would not have known that the profession was an

option for them until they became involved as undergraduates and interacted with student affairs

professionals. Their undergraduate experiences shape their professional path and identity

(Young, 1985).

Many attribute entering the profession to the encouragement they received from student

affairs professionals. Current student affairs professionals recruit new individuals to the field by

serving as a role model or mentor (Brown, 1987; Hunter, 1992; Taub & McEwen, 2006; Young,

1985). Many student affairs professionals who were encouraged to enter the profession felt

confident about their decision to enter the field because they believed in the purpose and mission

of student affairs (Hunter). If student affairs professionals were not recruited or encouraged to

enter the profession by an existing student affairs officer then they may have experienced a "critical incident" (Hunter, p.183) that shaped the decision to join the profession. Such incidents include involvement with student organizations, dissatisfaction with the current field of study, or dissatisfaction with their undergraduate experience (Hunter). Anecdotally it is believed that not all student affairs professionals enter the field in this manner, as some individuals join the student affairs profession later in their careers after working in other higher education positions or other professional areas. However, the student affairs literature I identified and reviewed does not address these individuals' decisions to enter into the student affairs field.

Wood (1985) argues that individuals have 5 career anchors that assist in determining a career as well as what sacrifices an individual is willing to make to attain and maintain that career. Wood surmises that career anchors are an individual's values that they are unwilling to compromise and ideally, match the profession an individual chooses. The 5 career anchors Wood proposes that are applicable to student affairs are borrowed from Schein's 1978 work and include: technical and functional competence, managerial competence, security, creativity, and autonomy. Hunter (1992) concurs with Wood with respect to values being critical to the recruitment of new student affairs professionals and believes many student affairs professionals who were encouraged to enter the profession felt confident about their decision to enter the field because they believed in the purpose and mission of student affairs and the work being accomplished (Hunter). Values common within the field of student affairs include: empowerment, advocacy, nurturing, and compassion (Hughes, 1989; Jones & Komives, 2001).

After deciding to enter the student affairs profession, professionals find no structure for promotion, how to choose specialty areas, or whether there is job security within the profession (Brown, 1987; Hunter, 1992). One challenge in the career and life paths of student affairs

professionals is the lack of current literature identifying one clear career path (Hunter). Carpenter and Miller (1981) identified a four-stage career path for student affairs professionals. The first stage, formative, is where professionals begin the process of preparing to enter the field through education and professional experience. The second stage, application, allows professionals to continue their education while practicing at an intermediate level. The third stage, additive, refers to the period when a professional is practicing at an intermediate to advanced level while making policies and contributing to the professional knowledge. The final stage, generative, describes an advanced professional's life through retirement. At this stage, the professional contributes to the body of knowledge of student affairs, seeks to mentor new professionals, and influences the field (Carpenter & Miller, 1981). While the Carpenter and Miller model provides some insight into the career development of student affairs professionals it does not give information concerning the specific paths that student affairs professionals take and focuses on the personal growth and development of a professional.

Although there is no clear outline in how to achieve a senior student affairs administrative position, several authors suggest similarities in characteristics of student affairs professionals (Brown, 1987; Burkhalter, 1984; Evans, 1985; Grant & Foy, 1972; Harder, 1983; Jones & Komives, 2001; Kuh, 1983; Lawing, 1982; Lunsford, 1984; Ostroth, Efird, & Lerman, 1984; Randall, 1995; Rickard, 1985; Ting & Watt, 1999). The characteristics, as described in the paragraphs that follow, were examined to provide the field with a snapshot of who the SSAOs are and how they advanced to this senior level position.

Ostroth and colleagues (1984) determined some commonalities existed among participants in a survey of 400 SSAOs including the importance of networking, having some work experience within student affairs, and deliberately setting the goal to become a SSAO.

Harder (1983) provided one main commonality across participants; each participant's professional background included general and broad student affairs experiences. Harder discovered another slight similarity among the SSAOs surveyed in that many of them had experience within the K-12 public school system, a finding supported by Grant and Foy (1972). In a survey of 1,320 NASPA members, Grant and Foy (1972) also concluded that educational training and background were important and more professionals in student affairs were increasing their education. Individuals varied in their experience within student affairs. The majority of student affairs professionals worked in some area of education throughout their work experience.

One study confirms Grant and Foy's (1972) findings about work experience. Lunsford (1984) surveyed 147 SSAOs and found that the majority of SSAOs had similar work experience that typically consisted of general student affairs work and not a specialty area. This study also found similarities in SSAOs academic preparation, possession of a terminal degree, and the need to move to a different institution to advance. Lunsford goes a step further and suggests that there could be a general career path to the senior student affairs position and give recommendations for an individual to become a SSAO. The limitations of this study include the small sample size from one professional association and that the sample was not diversified in terms of gender or race.

Some researchers chose to focus on a single gender during their investigation of student affairs professionals' career paths. In a study of female SSAOs, researchers found that the average female SSAO was white, middle-aged, married, had 10 years of student affairs experience, was employed at a private college located in the northeast, and had a high level of job satisfaction (Randall, Daugherty, & Globetti, 1995). Interviews with 24 female student

affairs administrators revealed that career paths for women with families were more likely to

have interruptions, be influenced by their spouses' career decisions, and have a more diverse

work background than single women (Evans, 1985). Belcher & Strange confirmed Evans'

findings of married women's spouses affecting the woman's career decisions and aspirations.

Additionally, Evans discerned that all women in the study seemed to lack concrete career goals,

which is a difference found in other similar studies (Belcher & Strange, 1995; Nobbe, 1997; Ting

& Watt, 1999). These differences may explain the lack of women in SSAO positions as females

were found to have a lack of career planning and/or goals and less ambition (Belcher & Strange;

Evans; Nobbe; Ting & Watt). However, these differences did not account for study participants'

positions (SSAO versus entry-level) and lack of career planning and ambition could not be

directly tied to all female student affairs professionals.

One study found that women face different challenges and issues within the student

affairs workplace including communicating with males, barriers to advancement, fewer career

goals due to other priorities (balanced work and home life), family responsibilities, and creating

relationships (Ting & Watt, 1999). Other studies have concluded that males and females are

promoted differently within the field of student affairs with women being promoted more from

within an institution than from without (Jones & Komives, 2001; Sherburne, 1970). However,

one study contradicted the finding that women are promoted more from within an institution then

men. Kuh, Evans, and Duke (1983) surveyed SSAOs but had a small sample size of women.

They determined that male SSAOs were more likely to be promoted from within an institution,

achieve the SSAO position younger than previous SSAOs, not require formal education to

achieve the SSAO position, and had prior student affairs experience (Kuh et al.). Women also

obtained SSAO positions at smaller institutions (Burkhalter, 1984; Randall, 1995; Reason et. al,

2002) and Brown (1987) suggested that student affairs professionals working at small colleges achieved advancement more quickly due to the greater breadth of experience they obtained. Administrators at small colleges are able to work a variety of positions attaining expertise in a wide range of student affairs functions. As a result, administrators at small colleges attain a breadth of experience that is unavailable to administrators at larger colleges who tend to focus on one student affairs function (Brown).

Grant and Foy (1972) found a difference between men and women in years of experience with women having an average of seven years compared to men's five (which differed from Randall, Daugherty, & Globetti's 1995 findings). Another gender difference found in this study was among SSAOs previous positions. Male SSAOs tended to come from student affairs positions and backgrounds while female SSAOs more often came from the public school system. This may suggest that perhaps there is a finite career path or at least a career path divergence for SSAOs by gender. For example, Evans and Kuh (1983) found that males and females differed in achieving SSAO positions by institutional size and type as well as females being younger and less experienced. Rickard (1985a) further explored gender characteristics of SSAOs and confirmed Evans and Kuh's finding of females being younger, less experienced, and at smaller institutions and also found that males and females varied in educational attainment.

Part of the career path process is exiting the field (Arnold, 1982) and it is important to understand this component of career development as it includes retention and attrition issues. Lawing (1982) examined an unpublished 1980 survey of SSAOs by Groseth and using multiple regression, compared the results to a 1969 survey by Grant and Foy. Lawing found that job satisfaction, number of years within student affairs, and number of positions within the field led to retention within student affairs. One reason for attrition from the field is due to career

mobility. Individuals who were not able to progress to upper-level administrative positions leave

the field for higher paying, higher level positions in other professional sectors (Bender, 1980).

Women leave student affairs in greater numbers then men (Burns, 1982; Holmes, Verrier, &

Chisholm, 1983; McEwen, Engstrom, & Willams, 1990) and some of the reasons women give

for leaving include lack of mobility (Sagaria & Johnsrud, 1988), low pay (Burns), job

responsibilities (Holmes, et al.), lack of a mentor (Holmes, et al.), and family responsibilities

(Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, Johnson, & Kicklighter, 1998).

The majority of the research concluded there is not one finite career path regardless of

gender distinction (Harder, 1983; Holmes, 1982; Kuh, et al., 1983; Ostroth et al., 1984; Rickard,

1985) despite there being similar characteristics of male and female student affairs professionals

and a few gender distinctions between male and female student affairs professionals. While these

studies' premise is to provide a career path to the SSAO position, the use of the term career path

does not coincide with Super's (1984) Career Maturity definition. When compared to Super's

model that includes career planning, decision making, world of work knowledge, and experience,

the majority of these studies often provided more demographic information than data illustrative

of a student affairs career path or the studies focused on one specific issue or sample.

Additionally, none of the research provides a concrete career path for men and/or women, which

is needed to aid new professionals in their career planning.

Diverse Roles

The Diverse Roles component of Super's (1984) model addresses the multiple roles or

identities an individual may have professionally and personally. One of the primary topics

categorized under diverse roles is balancing work and family life. Balancing work and family life

is of particular importance when discussing gender in the workplace considering women are the

primary caregivers (Sayer, 2005). However, there is an increasing number of men who are taking on caregiving roles (Levine & Pittinsky, 1997). The literature pertaining to diverse roles within student affairs is sparse and mainly reflects three main conceptual areas including: stress, career interruptions, and role conflict.

As within any profession, there is a lot of work related stress in student affairs. However, there is a difference in the amount of stress men and women perceive due to their careers and family obligations (Scott, 1992). Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, Johnson, and Kicklighter (1998) studied the effects of stress on male and female student affairs administrators and found that women feel more stress than men and are said to "burnout" more than men. The difference in stress levels between men and women in student affairs may be attributed to women navigating multiple roles at work and in the home (Howard-Hamilton, et al.).

Women choosing to have children often must take time away from work for the birth of their child with some women choosing to care for their newborn up to 12 weeks, the maximum required by the Family Medical Leave Act (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). The time away from work women spend for childbearing and, in some cases, childrearing leads to an interruption of their careers. Men may have career interruptions for children in terms of paternity leave however; the majority of men do not take a significant amount of time off for paternity, often opting for a few days off (Levine & Pittinsky, 1997). Men may have other career interruptions (that women also may experience) such as continuing education or military obligations. Career interruptions play a large role in the advancement and attainment of leadership positions within student affairs and for most women become an obstacle to overcome (Arnold, 1982; Evans, 1985; Marshall, 1990; Nobbe, 1997; Tinsley, 1984). The notion of women having and caring for children does not stop with career interruptions but also presents role

conflict for many female student affairs professionals and an issue barely addressed for men. One issue that I was not able to identify student affairs literature on is the issue of career interruptions due to caring for elderly parents.

Role conflict is the concept of an individual being pulled in multiple directions; typically these directions are work and home. However, role conflict can occur within the workplace when the expectations for performance and one's identity do not coincide (Blackhurst, 1998b). Women often experience role conflict or strain within the work environment (Blackhurst, 1998b; Evans, 85). Again, women tend to be the primary caregiver (Arnold, 1982; Ting & Watt, 1999) and must find time to balance work expectations with family obligations. Many student affairs women struggle to balance family and work (Jones & Komives, 2001; Nobbe, 1997) and find that often, one must be sacrificed for another (Marshall, 1990; Nobbe). Although no student affairs literature specifically addresses men balancing family and work, Blimling (2002) relates the story of a male SSAO choosing how to balance his life so that he could attend his children's extracurricular events.

Having a family and career is certainly an issue that many individuals face within the workplace and student affairs is no different. Due to the long hours and many evening events and commitments, student affairs is a field that demands more than the routine nine to five time. Many women in student affairs who are not married find difficulty in achieving a balance, causing many within the field to question whether it is better to be single in student affairs (Arnold, 1982; Burkhalter, 1984; Evans, 1985; Grant & Foy, 1972; Ting & Watt, 1999). Despite family life being completely viewed as a hindrance to a successful student affairs career, Ting and Watt found that families can be viewed as a support system as well.

One additional component to the role conflict issue is the differing expectations of male and female student affairs professionals (Jones & Komives, 2001; Trimble, 1991). These different expectations include the difference in areas of supervision and number of reports as well as different supervisory styles. Women are also expected to be more nurturing and collaborative than their male counterparts (Jones & Komives). Women SSAOs must be able to navigate their feminine qualities to match a masculine position while still meeting the feminine expectations of their colleagues and reports. This navigation between masculine and feminine creates an additional role conflict strain for female student affairs professionals (Jones & Komives).

In summary, research addressing the career and life paths of student affairs professionals is sporadic at best. The literature does not provide adequate understanding of the movement of a student affairs professional from entry-level to retirement or resignation (Holmes, 1982). The literature does aid in understanding how some student affairs professionals enter the field (Blimling, 2002; Hunter, 1992; Young, 1985) and why they may leave the field (Bender, 1980. However, more research is needed to understand the career path between entry and exit.

Super's model (1985) provides a lens through which to view the issues of career and life development for SSAOs. Using Super's description of career maturity and work salience to evaluate the experiences of SSAOs provides a better understanding of how male and female SSAOs achieve their positions. Additionally, using Super's model aids in exploring whether there is a difference between male and female SSAO's life and career paths based on their personal lives and obligations.

The literature regarding career and life paths of student affairs administrators, and specifically, SSAOs is dated and provides no clear information regarding career paths. The

literature pertaining to life paths is more recent but sparse and pays no specific attention to men and life paths.

There are many gaps in the literature concerning careers in student affairs administration. The present study seeks to fill one of the gaps pertaining to the career and life development of senior student affairs officers by examining male and female SSAOs and providing insight into the career and life paths of these individuals. This study employs qualitative methods to explore the life and career paths of senior student affairs officers.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the life and career development of SSAOs. Specifically, this phenomenological research explored male and female work and personal experiences during their climb to a senior student affairs position. For the purposes of this study, a SSAO is defined as an individual holding the highest ranking student affairs position on a campus. Life and career development is defined using Super's model of career maturity and work salience in which life and career development included all issues, challenges, and events that the SSAO deemed important during their progression to the SSAO position. The research questions for the study were:

1. How do female SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

2. How do male SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

3. How do male and female SSAOs life and career development experiences compare to one another according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

Sample

As this is a qualitative study, I used purposeful sampling and included male and female SSAOs at a variety of institutional types located in the southeast. Purposeful sampling allows qualitative researchers to select participants who act as an "informant" (Fontana & Fey, 2005, p. 707) and may best provide insight into the issue being studied (Creswell, 2003). To better understand the life and career paths of SSAOs it was necessary for me to interview current SSAOs. I compiled a list of SSAOs by using the institutional membership list of the National

Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). Currently, NASPA has more than

11,000 members from more than 1,400 institutions and 29 countries making it the largest student

affairs professional organization (About NASPA, 2007). The NASPA institutional membership

list was used to recruit participants because of the broad range and vast number of members. The

NASPA institutional membership list provides the name of the highest ranking student affairs

officer (listed as the voting delegate).

The SSAOs compiled from NASPA can be viewed as equal in their ability to be an

informant and as such, I randomly selected 10 SSAOs, 5 men and 5 women, to begin

interviewing. Additionally, to ensure diversity among institutional types, I stratified the sample

by public or private institution. Three participants within each sample were selected using a

random numbers table. Therefore, the sample for this study was a random sample stratified by

gender and institution type and size. Prior to data collection, I obtained the proper Internal

Review Board (IRB) authorization to conduct this study and once IRB approval was obtained, I

contacted the SSAOs via email (Appendix A) at each institution to solicit their participation.

Since the research questions for this study address differences by gender, an equal

number of male and female participants were recruited. The total number of participants was

determined through saturation of data. Data saturation is the point at which no new information

is garnered from participants. Data saturation may occur in as few as 6 interviews but on average

occurs between 6 - 12 interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Several SSAOs declined to

be interviewed or did not respond to the interview requests. When this occurred, I reviewed the

NASPA list and selected another SSAO to replace the individual declining or not responding.

Once a SSAO agreed to participate I arranged a date and time to meet with them to conduct the

interview.

Data Collection

After participants agreed to be interviewed I emailed them an informed consent form and the interview protocol so they knew the expectations prior to the interview. At the time of the interview I brought two copies of the informed consent form and reviewed the form with the participant to ensure they had no questions. I requested that they sign both copies and retain one copy for their records. I maintained the second copy and placed in a locked cabinet through the duration of the study.

All participants were given pseudonyms during the interview to protect confidentiality. I asked the participants for their consent to record the interview via voice recorders. In addition to the interview being recorded, I took notes so that I could compare my notes with the transcriptions during the data analysis phase of the study. I kept a copy of each digitally recorded interview, stored on a flash drive, until the completion of the project. When not in use, the flash drive was locked in a cabinet. Once the transcription service completed the transcription, each participant reviewed an electronic copy of their transcript to verify their statements and make corrections or clarifications if necessary.

The interview protocol was constructed using Super's (1984) model of career and life development as a guide. Interview questions focused on the participant's life and career path in relation to Super's model and the research questions for this study. Questions were semi-structured to allow participants an opportunity to discuss what they felt was important to them regarding their career and life path experiences. Prompts were given as well as follow up questions when necessary. Questions asked included: Tell me about your career progression up to your current position and discuss your family life in relation to your work. The full interview protocol is included as Appendix B.

In addition to interviews, all participants were asked to provide a current resume or curriculum vitae to obtain all educational and work experience they deem important to their career, which will be used to aid in the interview. The ability to review resumes in advance or during the interviews allowed me to ensure that pertinent educational and/or work experience information was discussed.

Data Analysis

The transcripts were sent to a transcription service via cd and flashdrive. Once the transcriptions were returned to me I reviewed them to ensure they were accurate. I also compared the interview transcriptions with my interview notes to ensure accuracy. Once I confirmed the interview data I sent each participant a copy of their interview transcription so they could review and make editions and clarifications as necessary. The process of having interview participants review their interview transcripts is referred to as member checks and is used in qualitative research to enhance a study's credibility and rigor (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Credibility and rigor are methods of judging qualitative research and aid in discerning whether the study's methodologies and results are reliable. Credibility and rigor can be established using triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checks, using a critical friend, and using a community of practice (Rossman & Rallis). I increased the credibility and rigor of my study by performing member checks, using a peer to review my work throughout the process, using triangulation by interviewing and reviewing resumes, and using a panel of experts to review my study throughout the entire process.

After receiving all edited interview transcripts I began the process of coding the transcripts and used open and focused coding in my review of the transcripts. Open coding is the initial coding of data and allowed me to view the data from a fresh perspective and to begin the

process of recognizing patterns and trends in the data (Charmaz, 2006). Using focused coding, I took data trends and investigated them further using in vivo, or the actual language of the participant, where possible (Creswell, 2003). As I coded, I documented the emergence of themes, contradictions, and the linkage of the data to Super's model in the form of analytical memos (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Analytical memos aided me in organizing and exploring the codes and themes. Coding and writing analytical memos allowed me to make meaning of the participants' experiences and to eventually label those experiences. Through several iterations of coding and analytical memos, I was able to conclude several themes regarding the data. The codes, themes, and analytical memos eventually lead to my overarching conclusions of the data provided which is where I made meaning of the data (Seidman, 2006). I organized the coding, themes, and analytical memos using NVivo software. One copy of these memos will be stored on my computer and a back up copy on a flash drive. To maintain the credibility and rigor of the study I reviewed my findings with a peer and panel of experts to ensure that my data analysis is reliable.

Running head: Career and Life Paths

Chapter 4: Manuscript to be submitted to the *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*

Understanding the Career and Life Paths of Senior Student Affairs Officers: A Qualitative Study

Abstract

The researcher explored the career and life paths of male and female Senior Student

Affairs Officers (SSAOs) using Super's components of Work Salience and Career Maturity to

examine gender differences and individual commonalities. Employing qualitative methods in the

form of semi-structured interviews, I found common themes among the 10 participants: marital

status, caregiving role, career planning, scheduling, and work experience.

Understanding the Career and Life Paths of Senior Student Affairs Officers

Historically, student affairs administration has been viewed as a feminized profession (Hamrick & Carlisle, 1990) in which women outnumber men entering graduate preparation programs and the profession (Jones & Komives, 2001). Additionally, the values of the field, those of empowerment, advocacy, nurturing, and compassion, further enhance the feminization of student affairs (Hughes, 1989; Jones & Komives, 2001).

Within the past few years, the student affairs profession has seen a shift in the gender composition of the field. A recent study indicated that women comprised 45% of SSAO positions in 2006 compared to holding 22% of SSAO positions in 1984 (Tull & Freeman, 2008). Previously, women tended to be overly concentrated in entry- and mid-level positions (Blackhurst, Brandt, & Kalinowski, 1998; Jones & Komives, 2001) often at small, typically private, institutions (Evans & Kuh, 1983; Reason, Walker, & Robinson, 2002; Rickard, 1985). Men are still typically concentrated in mid- and upper-level administrative positions in student affairs (Jones & Komives, 2001). Studying the career paths of SSAOs may offer insight into any gendered differences that may exist within the field.

The majority of student affairs professionals do not declare at a young age the intention of becoming a student affairs professional (Blimling, 2002; Brown, 1987; Hunter, 1992) but decide to enter the profession based upon co-curricular undergraduate experiences. As undergraduates, student affairs professionals tend to be involved in leadership positions in Greek life, residence life, student government, or other student organizations (Blimling; Brown). Those who enter the student affairs profession seem to drift to the field rather than intentionally planning to join the field (Blimling; Brown). For many student affairs administrators, their undergraduate experiences shape their professional path and identity (Young, 1985).

One challenge in the career and life paths of student affairs professionals is the lack of an identified career path (Hunter, 1992). Within the field of student affairs, professionals find no structure for promotion, receive little guidance on how to choose specialty areas, or have little knowledge about job security within the profession (Brown, 1987; Hunter). The career paths of student affairs professionals have been studied; however, the majority of studies are dated, focus on one gender's experience, or focus on one type of administrator (either functional area or experience level). Although a single career path has not been identified there have been findings to suggest that there are similarities and differences for male and female SSAOs.

Similarities between male and female SSAOs include work experience (Grant & Foy, 1972; Harder, 1983; Lunsford, 1984; Ostroth, 1984); the importance of networking (Ostroth, 1984); terminal degree (Lunsford); and the need to move to a different institution to advance (Lunsford). However, other findings indicate female and male SSAOS advance differently. Several researchers found that women are promoted more often within one institution than men (Jones & Komives; Sherbourne, 1970) while other researchers found that male SSAOs were more likely to be promoted within one institution than women (Kuh, Evans, & Duke, 1983).

Despite similarities, there are several differences between male and female SSAOs. For example, male and female SSAOs differ in achieving SSAO positions when institutional size and type are examined (Evans & Kuh, 1983; Rickard, 1985). Female SSAOs are also found to be younger and less experienced than their male counterparts and to more frequently take positions at small private institutions (Evans & Kuh; Rickard). Another researcher found that female SSAOs tended to be white, middle aged, married, employed at a private college in the northeast, had a high level of job satisfaction, and had 10 years of experience (Lunsford, 1984).

A difference between male and female SSAOs is that female SSAOs report greater stress than their male counterparts in balancing work and life (Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, Johnson, & Kicklighter, 1998; Scott, 1992). Since women comprise the majority of primary caregivers, they find themselves working a second shift (Sayer, 2005, Hochschild, 1989); coordinating their home and work identity (Wharton, 1994); and often are held to different expectations than their male counterparts. For instance, women SSAOs are expected to be more caring and team oriented than men (Jones & Komives, 2001) forcing them to be responsible for the majority of emotional labor within the workplace.

In addition to caring in the workplace, many female SSAOs struggle to balance work and family obligations (Jones & Komives, 2001; Nobbe, 1997) and find themselves sacrificing one for another (Marshall, 1990; Nobbe). Career interruptions due to family are an obstacle faced by many women in student affairs (Arnold, 1982; Evans, 1985; Marshall, 1990; Nobbe, 1997; Tinsley, 1984). Men may face career interruptions due to family commitments, paternity leave, or military leave; however, there is little literature pertaining to student affairs that specifically addresses the issues of men balancing work and life.

It is important to study the life and career paths of male and female SSAOs for several reasons. First, there are increasing numbers of women in SSAO positions and the literature examining career and life paths is concentrated in a time when SSAOs were predominately men. Since women face additional challenges in the workplace and particularly in their rise to upper-level positions, it is important to study women who have achieved high-ranking positions. Second, this study may aid in understanding if there is a clear career path to the SSAO position or if men and women experience different career paths. Third, it is important to understand how

life and career paths intersect for SSAOs as it may influence SSAOs aspirations or progression.

Additionally, more information is needed to provide an outline for those aspiring to be SSAOs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the life and career development of SSAOs.

Specifically, this phenomenological study explored male and female work and personal

experiences during their climb to senior student affairs officer positions. For the purposes of this

study, a SSAO is defined as an individual holding the highest-ranking student affairs position on

a campus. Life and career development is defined using Super's (1984) model in which life and

career development included all issues, challenges, and events that the SSAO deemed important

during their progression to SSAO positions. The research questions for the study were:

1. How do female SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's

factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

2. How do male SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's

factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

3. How do male and female SSAOs life and career development experiences compare to

one another according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

Super's Career and Life Development Model

The Developmental Assessment Model created by Super (1984) is useful in examining

individual career and life path. Super developed the model to aid counselors in assessing an

individual's career plan and aiding counselors in the career counseling process. The model

consists of four steps: preview, depth-view, assessment of all data, and counseling. The preview

stage consists of preliminary assessments of an individual while the depth-view stage involves

detailed assessments of an individual's Work Salience, Career Maturity, Self-Concepts, Level of

Abilities and Potential Functioning, and Field of Interest and Probable Activity. The model

involves matching and predicting an occupation, and the counseling step concludes the model

with discussion, action planning, and evaluation. While Super's development assessment model

provides a detailed approach to career counseling it also provides a conceptual framework from

which to explore the career and life paths of student affairs professionals.

Super (1984) addresses the issue of gender within career and life paths and believes that,

aside from childbearing, career paths do not differ based on gender. Life paths of men and

women only differ slightly. According to Super, differences in life paths are "…differences by

degree not of kind…" (p. 216) and are concerned with child rearing, sex role stereotypes, and

child bearing. However, Super views these differences as being slight and not fundamentally

altering the general life and career paths men and women follow. This study seeks to explore

Super's framework as it applies to SSAOs.

I used two components of the model for this study: Work Salience and Career Maturity.

Work Salience correlates with life paths and examines work roles, home and family roles,

community service, and leisure activities. Career Maturity includes career planning, decision

making, world of work knowledge, and experience. The Career Maturity aspect fits with this

study's exploration of individuals' career paths. According to the model, there is no difference in

career or life path between men and women except for family, and this study examined whether

there are differences in career and life path for men and women SSAOs.

Methods

Data for this study were collected through interviews with 10 SSAOs. Institutional

Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to collecting data.

Sample

Purposeful sampling was used in this qualitative study. Purposeful sampling allows qualitative researchers to select participants who act as "informants" (Fontana & Fey, 2005, p. 707) and may best provide insight into the issue being studied (Creswell, 2003). A list of SSAOs was compiled by using the institutional membership list of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). The NASPA institutional membership list was used to recruit participants because of the broad range and vast number of members. The NASPA institutional membership list provides the name of the highest-ranking student affairs officer who is listed as the voting delegate.

The voting delegates were compiled from all NASPA members within the states of Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, and the District of Colombia. These states were selected as they were within driving distance for the researcher thereby allowing for face-to-face interviews. There were 58 voting delegates listed as potential study participants. The SSAOs selected were viewed as equal in their ability to be an informant and as such, I randomly selected 10 SSAOs, 5 men and 5 women, to begin interviewing. The sample of 10 SSAOs was stratified by gender, institutional type (public or private), and institutional size (small or large). Small institutions were defined as having less than 5,000 students and large institutions were defined as having more than 5,000 students. I contacted the SSAOs via email (Appendix A) at each institution to solicit their participation.

I began conducting interviews once I received responses from the participants. Several potential participants declined to be interviewed or did not respond to the email solicitation. Data saturation was reached when 10 interviews were completed. Thus, it was no longer necessary to recruit participants.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol was constructed using Super's (1984) model of career and life development as a guide. Interview questions focused on the participant's life and career path in relation to Super's model and the research questions for this study. Questions were semi-structured to allow participants an opportunity to discuss what they felt important to them regarding their career and life path experiences. Prompts were given as well as follow-up questions when necessary. Questions asked included: Tell me about your career progression up to your current position and discuss your family life in relation to your work.

Data Collection

At the time of the interview, I brought two copies of the informed consent form and discussed the form with the participants to ensure they had no questions. I requested they sign both copies and retain one copy for their records. I maintained the second copy through the duration of the study.

All participants were given pseudonyms during the interview to protect confidentiality. In addition to the interview being audio-recorded, I took notes so I could compare them with the transcriptions during the data analysis phase of the study. I conducted all of the interviews to establish consistency and kept a copy of each digitally recorded interview, stored on a flash drive, until the completion of the project. Once the transcription service completed the transcription, participants reviewed a copy of the transcribed interview to verify their statements and make corrections or clarifications if necessary.

In addition to interviews, all participants were asked to provide a current resume or curriculum vitae to obtain all educational and work experience they deemed important to their careers, which was used to aid in the interview. The ability to review resumes in advance or

during the interviews ensured pertinent educational and/or work experience information was

discussed.

Data Analysis

Upon receiving the interview transcripts from the transcriptionist, I compared the

interview transcriptions with the interview notes to ensure accuracy. Once I confirmed the

interview data I sent participants a copy of their interview transcription so they could review and

make editions and clarifications as necessary. The process of having interview participants

review their interview transcripts is referred to as member checks and is used in qualitative

research to enhance a study's credibility and rigor as suggested by Rossman and Rallis (2003).

Credibility and rigor are methods of judging qualitative research and aid in discerning whether

the study's methodologies and findings are reliable. Credibility and rigor can be established

using triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checks, using a critical friend, and using a

community of practice (Rossman & Rallis). The credibility and rigor of this study was increased

by performing member checks, using a peer to review my work throughout the process, using

triangulation by interviewing and reviewing resumes, and using a panel of experts to review the

study throughout the entire process.

After receiving all edited interview transcripts, I began the process of coding the

transcripts and used open and focused coding in the review of the transcripts. Open coding is the

initial coding of data and allowed the data to be viewed from a fresh perspective and to begin the

process of recognizing patterns and trends in the data (Charmaz, 2006). Using focused coding, I

began to identify data trends and investigated them further using the actual language of the

participant, also called in vivo, where possible (Creswell, 2003). As I coded, I documented the

emergence of themes, contradictions, and the linkage of the data to Super's model in the form of

analytical memos (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Analytical memos aided in organizing and

exploring the codes and themes. Coding and writing analytical memos allowed me to make

meaning of the participants' experiences and to eventually label those experiences. Through

several iterations of coding and analytical memos, I was able to define several themes regarding

the data. The codes, themes, and analytical memos eventually led to overarching conclusions of

the data provided which is where meaning was made of the data (Seidman, 2006).

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

There were 10 participants, five male and five female (see Table 1 for participant

demographics). Five themes were identified: marital status, caregiving role,

<div align="center">Insert Table 1 about here</div>

scheduling, career planning, and work experience. These themes fall under the Career Maturity

and Work Salience aspects of Super's (1984) model. Male and female SSAOs described their

career and life paths according to Super's model differently in the marital status, caregiving role,

and work experience aspects, but similarly in the scheduling and career planning aspects.

Marital Status

The participants indicated whether they were single or partnered and whether they had

children. They also discussed their role at home. Five of 10 participants were married; 4 were

divorced; and 1 was widowed. Of the 5 participants who were married, 4 were men. All 4

divorced individuals were women and the widow was male. One of the divorced women,

Rebecca, commented:

> …so I had always intended to have that more traditional American life, but that
>
> didn't work out….I'm not going to be in a relationship that doesn't seem like it's
>
> the right one because I'm pretty independent and I'm pretty happy being single.

Rebecca also mentioned that she was actively dating and still hoping to find the right partner. Rebecca discussed that having a child by herself was not something she wanted to do while Celeste, another participant, discussed her thoughts about work if she had a family. She stated:

> If I did have children or if I did have a husband, I would have to do my job a little differently. I have the luxury, and in some ways it's a blessing and in some ways it's a curse, the autonomy to do, to work as much as I want to, to do it whenever the hours I want to because I don't have to balance my life with somebody else's.

Caregiving

All 5 males had children and 2 of the females had children. One male, Joe, indicated he was the primary caregiver for his son since his wife passed away although prior to that he shared the caregiving role with his wife. Joe also discussed how women were not as likely to let their children go to his house for play dates. Joe stated

> They won't give their child over to a man because their perception is that it's going to be rough because that's how men play with children, right, they let them have a much longer leash and they are not going to let their child go with this single dad like that because who knows what's going on in that house…

Will, a married male with two children, was the only participant to describe a current egalitarian relationship: "It's a dual role. She does her part, I do my part. In fact, I drop the kids off at school, she picks them up. We both share the responsibilities around the house."

The remaining 3 males indicated their spouses were the primary caregivers although they were very involved in raising their children. Paul stated: "…but you know, the kids, my kids felt like this was their backyard, too, and they would, they'd come on campus…" and "…there are

probably 20 trees that they hadn't climbed on this campus..." Matt stated, "…I was very, very much involved…" and went on to discuss his colleagues response to his children "And they'll say I can remember when they were stair stepped. They'd be out and about on campus."

The 2 women with children responded that they were the primary caregivers although one, Alice, mentioned the housework was split evenly with her spouse, "…in terms of who does it, it's probably even…" Alice also discussed the issues she faced while raising a young family:

It's, I can say that the next group coming through has it a heck of a lot easier, and I'm not complaining. …I mean I remember them saying, oh, my God, we don't know what to do with a dean who's pregnant. There were men who were deans… and they had kids…but it wasn't them…I always felt like early on I could never, I would never use the excuse that I need to go do something for my child because I thought they would, and I had incredible people I worked for, that it would come back to think she's not committed enough.

The other female participant with children, Donna, explained that her children were older when she took on her SSAO role, "…they had both left home and were pretty much on their own when I came here and had been on their own…" Donna was also one of two female participants who stated they cared for an older parent or parents who lived separately from them. Jen also cared for a parent and described her situation,

My mother had a stroke at Thanksgiving, and so I took three weeks off in December and was in [state] and so the balance between, you know, what's away time for work and away time for personal has gotten very muddled for me this year, and I've been up in [state] eight times since Thanksgiving. Something like that. So, when I'm away there, I felt like I should check in and check my email all

the time. So I've really struggled this last six months with feeling guilty that I'm

not keeping up at work, guilty I'm not doing enough at [my institution] and for my

siblings who are there taking care of my mother.

Scheduling

All 10 of the participants indicated the use of schedules, planners, or calendars for their

work lives. However, only 1 participant, Alice discussed using calendars and schedules for her

home life. The other 9 participants discussed a more flexible environment where the line

between work and home was sometimes blurred. As Joe stated:

Any emergency, any situation that happens on campus I need to be called, even

late at night. I consider that to be an example actually of my balance, ironically,

because that means that I don't hesitate to come and go during the middle of the

day. So, as I described like yesterday, you know, an hour and a half to go and

exercise because I had an opening, and I don't even think twice about that. I don't

bat an eye. If there's something at my son's school, I mark it off and I go home

and take care of it. So, you know, my cell phone frees me up, my computer at

home, the university has given me both of those things. And some could look at

that and say well, he's always working, and I would look at it and say, it's given

me the freedom to have a personal life.

Matt described his situation: "…I've not felt the need to have absolute strict boundaries

between the two, but and it's certainly not uncommon for me to go home and eat then

come back for a program on campus."

Career Planning

Only 1 of the participants planned on entering the field of student affairs and to be a

SSAO, and 1 participant mapped out the jobs he needed to obtain a SSAO position after he

started working in the field. The majority of participants discussed not intentionally selecting

student affairs or not even knowing that it was an option, let alone planning to be a SSAO. The

one participant, Joe, who planned to enter the field decided as an undergraduate to become a

dean of students but did not necessarily know how to go about achieving this position. Joe stated,

"…I would then become the dean of students and that was my actual plan…"

Two participants used the word "serendipitous" to describe how they found the field of

student affairs. All of the participants mentioned being involved as undergraduates, which

stimulated their interest in student affairs later on. However, this involvement did not necessarily

translate to an immediate interest in the field of student affairs. As Celeste stated, "…it never

occurred to me to work in a college or university even though I had been very involved in

college. This is where I had gone to school, I hadn't thought about it as a career path." One

participant, Dan forged a career plan mid-career. Only Will had any concrete future career plans

which included an aspiration for a presidency of an institution.

Experience

Nine out of the 10 participants had a terminal degree (Ed.D. or Ph.D.), but the field in

which they held the degree varied. One participant had his degree in clinical psychology while

another had his in organizational communication. The remaining participants with doctorates all

had degrees in a higher education related field. The one participant, Celeste, without a terminal

degree had her masters in counseling and stated:

…part of what I think drives the requirement for a degree is the education, but it's

also cachet with the faculty. If you're a Ph.D. then you're more legitimate to some

faculty, and I knew it would take a special place to value experience.

The participants' career paths varied in terms of length of time in the field and positions

held, but there were some similarities: 2 participants had previous stints in the military; 3

participants had student activities jobs; and 4 participants had residence life experience. Five of

the participants moved up to their current position at one institution while the other 5 moved to a

different institution to achieve the SSAO position. Of the 5 participants moving up at one

institution, 4 were male and 1 was female. Of the 5 participants moving up by going to a

different institution, 4 were female and 1 was male. Dan commented that building relationships

with individuals aided in moving up at an institution. He stated: "So, I think networking is key.

Our president took me under his wing."

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

As with any research design, there are several initial limitations with this study. One

limitation of this study is the issue of candor by the participants. The answers provided by the

participants may be skewed based on the personal interaction of the interviewer and participant.

Although great diligence was given to ensure the participants felt safe to answer the questions

honestly, it is still possible for the participants to be guarded with their answers or to provide

information they felt the interviewer wanted to hear.

A second limitation is that of bias. As I examined the career and life paths of male and

female SSAOs I had my own assumptions that there would be different career and life path

experiences based upon gender. It is impossible to set aside all preconceived notions; however,

every attempt was made to bracket these assumptions. Still, the findings offer insight into SSAOs

career and life paths using Super's model.

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

The findings both confirm and expand upon previous literature and research concerning SSAOs.

Although this qualitative study had only 10 participants, the findings may be applicable to other

individuals working in student affairs. Qualitative studies' findings are transferable in that they

provide specific experiences of individuals, which may coincide, with the experiences of others,

specifically those working in the field of student affairs.

Previous studies have not focused on career and life issues for male and female SSAOs.

The male and female SSAOs described their life and career paths similarly and yet, differently

from one another and in comparison to Super's (1984) model. First the male and female SSAOs'

life paths will be discussed, followed by male and female SSAOs career paths and finally, male

and female SSAOs life and career paths in comparison to Super's model.

Life Path

One life path difference described by male and female SSAOs was marital status. The

majority of males were married while the majority of females were not. This finding differs with

Lunsford's (1984) findings that the majority of female SSAOs were married. All four of the

single female participants indicated that being single was not something they planned nor was it

a direct result of their position. A quantitative study would aid in understanding the marital status

and issues of SSAOs further, specifically, the question of whether female SSAOs are as likely as

male SSAOs to be married.

Another life path difference described by male and female SSAOs was caregiving. Joe,

the widowed man, was the primary caregiver for his child although he stated that previously he

and his wife shared caregiving. The 1 married female, Alice, struggled with this question but finally considered herself to be the primary caregiver for her children. She detailed her husband's large role in the caregiving of their children and upkeep of their home.

The remaining 4 male participants all discussed how their wives were the primary caregivers but they actively participated in the caring of their children. Several of the men made comments about their children growing up on campus and being around students. Although Will, Joe, and Alice described a more egalitarian approach to caregiving than did the other 4 participants, researchers conclude that women are still the primary caregivers (Sayer, 2005, Hochschild, 1989). This may have affected all of the participants more than they realized. Those participants who were single, or did not bear the brunt of the caregiving responsibilities, were then able to spend more time on their careers. For those without partners (or for Donna who was single with grown children), this also may translate to more career opportunities due to the ability to work more, as well as the ability to relocate to new positions.

One similarity in life path among the participants was having leisure activities. All of the participants discussed the need for having activities outside of the office. None of the participants complained about the amount of work they did. They worked a lot of hours, although numbers varied for each participant and based on what activities they had coming up. Half of the participants stated they participated in recreational activities. Half of the participants also stated they had friends, peers, or family they spent time with outside of work. Clearly, having activities outside of work was important. However, the line between work and life was blurred for many of the participants. Many of the SSAOs discussed the use of schedules and Blackberrys to keep up with work while enjoying life or vice versa. Only Alice discussed a regimented schedule for her children so she could keep up with them and their activities and

balance her work. The other 9 participants indicated flexibility in their work and lives that allowed them to intermingle work and life.

The issue of work-life balance is an important one, particularly for SSAOs. The majority of SSAOs indicated they worked many hours; however, they indicated they were content with their work-life balance. The participants suggested that if they thought they were getting out of balance, they would rearrange their schedule to alleviate that issue or if they did not have balance, it was because they have chosen to live that way. Jen was the only participant who openly expressed the feeling of guilt about missing work to care for her mom or not spending time with her mom in order to work.

Student affairs professionals may benefit from having conversations about work-life balance and giving examples of how to achieve it. Work-life balance is a topic frequently discussed in the context of faculty; however, it has not been mentioned often in regards to administrators. Starting the discussions about work-life balance and conducting more research on the topic of work-life may aid administrators in achieving more of a balance.

A large component of work-life balance is the issue of caregiving. One of the 2 female SSAOs who had children did not take on her SSAO role until her children were grown while the other female SSAO with younger children discussed splitting duties with her partner. Women hold more SSAO positions than ever (Tull & Freeman, 2008). However, more research is necessary to examine whether women SSAOs are sacrificing family for career and to examine the plausibility of being the primary caregiver and achieving the SSAO position. In this study, Joe, was a single father caring for his son. He did, however, obtain the SSAO position prior to becoming a single parent but he faces other issues as a single father that should be studied in future research.

Career Path

One similarity among the SSAO participants was that they all were involved in co-curricular activities at some level during their undergraduate experience. The types of activities varied, however, most took on some form of a leadership role. Despite being involved as undergraduates, only one participant, Joe, knew that he wanted to become a dean of students. The other nine participants had no idea they would go into student affairs. Although Joe knew he wanted to become a dean he, like the other 9 participants, had no idea about how to achieve a student affairs career. The 9 participants all agreed they did not intentionally look for student affairs as a profession but had varying stories of stumbling into the field.

These findings support previous studies' (Blimling, 2002; Brown, 1982) findings that student affairs professionals are involved as undergraduates and drift towards student affairs rather than stating those intentions early on. Professional organizations such as NASPA and ACPA have supported conferences and workshops for undergraduates to find out more about the field of student affairs; however, more can be done. Establishing more recruiting practices may aid individuals in knowing that student affairs is a professional field. Having recruiters at job and graduate school fairs and conducting educational workshops on college campuses are all ways of increasing the awareness of student affairs as a field and recruiting new professionals.

The fact that 9 of the participants had no career plan to become student affairs professionals may coincide with findings that there is no concrete career path in place to enter or progress through the field of student affairs (Hunter, 1992). One participant, Dan, found a career plan to achieve the SSAO position necessary but that was not until after spending years in the field and being passed over for a promotion. The remaining 9 participants did not offer any concept of career planning. It is important to note that all of the participants indicated being

intentional in positions they chose and institutions they worked to move up. Will was the only participant with a clear career plan in place for the future and he was firmly grounded in his plan to achieve a college presidency.

Previous studies showed that job experience (Grant & Foy, 1972; Harder, 1983; Lunsford, 1984; Ostroth, 1984), and degrees (Lunsford) were common qualifications for SSAOs. Based on these findings, degrees were similar for SSAOs in this study; however, job experience was not. This study conflicts with Harder's findings that SSAOs all shared K-12 experience. In relation to academic degrees, 9 out of the 10 participants had terminal degrees with 7 of those individuals holding a higher education/student affairs based degree. Celeste, the SSAO without a terminal degree, is a SSAO at a small private liberal arts institution. Despite not having a terminal degree, Celeste concurred with the other 9 participants in that a terminal degree is necessary for a SSAO although they varied on the type of degree necessary. Knowing that SSAOs are being required to have terminal degrees is something that should be discussed with entry- and mid-level professionals. Ensuring that younger professionals understand the requirements and expectations of SSAO positions will aid them in laying out a career plan.

My findings concerning staying at one institution to advance, versus moving to a different institution, adds to the current conflicting research. Kuh, Evans, & Duke's (1983) found that male SSAOs were more likely to be promoted within an institution. Jones and Komives (2001) and Sherbourne (1970) found that female SSAOs were more likely to be promoted within an institution. My findings support Kuh, Evans, & Duke's findings that males were more likely to be promoted within an institution and conflict with Jones and Komives and Sherbourne.

Career paths seem to be an individual process for many; however, I found a few similarities. This study conflicts with previous studies concerning how male and female SSAOs are promoted and indicates that more research on this topic needs to be conducted.

Findings Compared to Super's Model

Based upon the findings previously discussed, I was able to understand that male and female SSAOs have some similarities and differences in how they describe their experiences according to Super's (1984) model. Super indicated the main differences between male and females in his model was child bearing, child rearing, and sex role stereotypes. However, Super contended that such differences did not make a large difference in career and life paths. Quite a bit of research has been conducted on child bearing, child rearing, and sex role stereotypes in general and the affect on employment. However, little of this research has been conducted or applied to student affairs professionals.

Super's (1984) model does not account for the issues of children, caregiving, or gender in career and life paths for student affairs professionals. Based on my coding of the data, I determined that these issues played an important role in the SSAOs lives. Since child bearing, child rearing, caring for older parents and relatives, and sex role stereotypes play a role in career and life paths, Super's model should be updated to include these components and ensure a more wholistic career and life development model when referring to SSAOs. Caregiving and gender play a much larger role than Super originally indicated and should not be ignored in developmental models. A comprehensive career and life model would devote adequate attention to caregiving, including the amount of time given to caregiving, as well as the stereotypes and discrimination that occur as a result of being the primary caregiver, particularly for women. A

comprehensive model would address the difference in achieving careers based on the life path an individual takes.

Male and female SSAOs also have some similarities according to Super's (1984). The differences between male and female SSAOs may not be as obvious or large as they once were, but they still exist. Gender bias and discrimination still occurs within higher education (van Anders, 2004). Although student affairs is a feminized profession, female SSAOs are still lagging behind male SSAOs in numbers (Tull & Freeman, 2008) and experience gender bias in the workplace (van Anders). The male and female SSAOs in this study indicated differing experiences in terms of being promoted, and in some cases, in expectations. Additionally, although only 2 participants indicated caring for an older relative, this should be examined in future studies. With a growing baby boomer population and individuals living longer this aspect of caregiving could play a large role. Overall, more research needs to be conducted on career and life paths in student affairs so issues may be addressed and resolved.

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Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Children	Institution Type	Institution Size
Jen	44	Female	Divorced	No	Public 4 year	Large
Will	40	Male	Married	Yes	Private 4 year	Large
Celeste		Female	Divorced	No	Private 4 year	Small
Joe	44	Male	Widowed	Yes	Private 4 year	Small
Dan	51	Male	Married	Yes	Public 4 year	Large
Alice	54	Female	Married	Yes	Public 4 year	Large
Rebecca	41	Female	Divorced	No	Public 4 year	Small
Donna	62	Female	Divorced	Yes	Public 4 year	Large
Matt	58	Male	Married	Yes	Public 4 year	Large
Paul	61	Male	Married	Yes	Public 4 year	Small

Chapter 5: Manuscript to be submitted to *Sex Roles: A Journal*
Senior Student Affairs Officers in Higher Education: Exploring Gender, Work, and Life

Abstract

This study was an exploration of the utility of Super's (1984) career and life development model. Specifically, I used Super's components of Work Salience and Career Maturity to examine gender differences and similarities among a group of senior higher education administrators. Interviewing 10 Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs), I found themes related to work role experience, leisure activities, marital status, and caregiving role.

Senior Student Affairs Officers in Higher Education: Exploring Gender, Work, and Life

The percentage of men and women in the workforce is equalizing, with men making up 51% of the workforce and women making up the remaining 49% (Bond, Thompson, Galinksy, & Prottas, 2002). However, men and women have vastly different employment experiences (Acker, 1990; Amott & Matthaei, 1996; Budig, 2002). Workforce disparity between men and women is witnessed extensively in the world of career development and achievement. The role of caregiving (Erickson & Ritter, 2001), occupational segregation (Amott & Matthaei; Cohen & Huffman, 2003; Hill & Silva, 2005), discrimination in the workplace, and differences in skill and education (Hill & Silva) contribute to varied career experiences for men and women.

The issue of caregiving and work has been discussed in the literature for faculty in higher education; however, much less focus on caregiving and work has been given to higher education administrators. This study seeks to understand male and female higher education administrators, specifically Senior Student Affairs Officers' (SSAOs), work-life balance using Super's (1984) model of career and life development.

Caregiving

Society places the responsibility for caregiving or domestic work upon women who are employed outside of the home, regardless of whether they are employed full-time or part-time (Hochschild, 1997; Twiggs, McQuillan, & Ferree, 1999). Women who work outside of the home are expected to work a "second shift" (Hochschild, 1997) putting in long hours for their paid positions and then working at home taking care of family and housework (Wharton, 1994). Women typically receive minimal assistance from their spouses or partners in terms of performing domestic work and often receive limited emotional support as well (Hartmann, 1981; Twiggs, McQuillan, & Ferree, 1999). Balancing the roles of caregiver and full-time employee is

not something the majority of men have to negotiate, and balancing work outside the home with work inside the home causes stress for many women (Wharton, 1994).

Women's caregiving does not end in the home but continues within the work force. Many women are employed in caring professions, taking on more nurturing and caregiving roles within the workforce and are often expected to be more caring and nurturing then men in the workplace regardless of the position (Hochschild, 1983; Steinberg & Figart, 1999). Women therefore tend to be primarily responsible for caring for others in our society, or in other words, for the emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983).

Although researchers have found that women tend to be the primary caregivers more than men, the number of men participating in caregiving and the amount of caregiving men provide is rising (Families and Work Institute, 2002). A recent phenomenon of stay at home fathers is an area that lacks research yet needs to be addressed more in the career literature to discuss the issue of navigating multiple roles for men. Men have been traditionally viewed as the breadwinners (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005) and men that deviate from that role may be considered to be non-traditional. Men who chose to stay home and care for children and family often face negative stereotypes and treatment (Brescoll & Uhlmann).

<div align="center">Gender in Higher Education</div>

Men and women encounter different experiences within the workforce (Acker, 1990; Amott & Matthaei, 1996; Budig, 2002) and this extends to men and women working in higher education. Women make up the numerical majority in higher education as students and are bridging the gap in faculty and administrative positions. Although men still outnumber women in administrative positions (Drum, 1993), the number of women in administrative positions almost doubled from 1983-2000 from 38,146 to 75, 313 (BIHE@20: By the numbers, 2004). In

addition, the number of men in higher education administration steadily increased in the same 17-year period from 79,340 to 82,957 (BIHE@20: By the numbers).

Women's career mobility in higher education is affected by the fact that there are fewer women in the profession (Sandler, 1993). Career mobility or advancement in higher education often times is dependent on the advocacy and encouragement found in mentors and networks, which differs for men and women (Hart, 2003). Informal networks and mentoring assist more men in climbing the managerial ladder due to more males achieving high-ranking positions (Sagaria & Rychener, 2002). Part of the reason for the lack of advancement and mentors for women in higher education is there are fewer women in top positions to act as mentors and aid in career progression (Sagaria & Rychener). Many women could benefit from networks and mentors to advance their careers as well as to cope with many of the issues they face including isolation, harassment (Hart, 2003), and discrimination (Simpson, 2001).

Discrimination exists in various forms in higher education as in most workplaces. From hiring practices to promotion to daily interactions, women in higher education experience a variety of discriminatory actions (van Anders, 2004) that men may not experience as readily. The structure of the institution of higher education lends itself to statistical discrimination as well as institutional discrimination (Kulis, 1997). Statistical discrimination is based on stereotypes or when employers substitute their beliefs about an entire population as reality. For example, many employers assume that women need to take exorbitant amounts of time from work to fulfill their role as the primary caregiver. Whether this is true for all women is irrelevant as the employer makes this assumption for any woman working in that organization (Kulis). The same example applies to men. Many employers assume that men will not need to take time off from work to

fulfill caregiving obligations regardless of whether it is true for all men (Levine & Pittinsky, 1997).

Institutional discrimination is covert discrimination. Institutional discrimination is inherent in the policies and structure of the organization causing it to be difficult for many to understand that it is discrimination (Barbour, 2008; Kulis, 1997). The organization's policies and procedures place a group of individuals at an advantage over another group (Barbour). Institutional discrimination is covert and unintended. Thus, the structure of the organization may allow discrimination or even encourage discrimination within the organization without individuals recognizing it. An example of institutional discrimination may be a college that does not offer childcare on premises. The lack of readily accessible childcare would disadvantage primary caregivers (typically women).

The gendered structure of higher education allows many gender issues to be ignored as well as creating barriers and difficulties, particularly for women, in the workplace (Acker & Armenti, 2004). Evidence of this exists in that women fill the majority of mid- and entry-level administrative positions (Jones & Komives, 2001) which dictate that men possess the top administrative positions. And, men make up the majority of full professors and tenured faculty while women comprise the growing number of part time faculty (Benjamin, 1998). Because women are restricted to lower level positions that require less skill, have fewer networks or opportunities to network, and men's skills are the ones that are valued, systems of higher education are gendered.

Upper-level higher education administrative positions are seen as masculine positions where many females need to exhibit masculine traits to obtain and succeed in these administrative posts (Street & Kimmel, 1999). However, women are still seen as the caregivers

within the workplace as well as within the home and end up formally or informally taking on the role of counselor, advisor, and nurturer. Women who take on these multiple roles often find themselves unable to negotiate all roles successfully (Steward, Patterson, Morales, Bartell, Dinas, & Powers, 1995). More men are taking on caregiving responsibilities and are finding it difficult to negotiate work and life balance. Men do not have the same resources or support as women when it comes to issues of work and life balance (Levine & Pittinsky, 1997). For example, there are not many working father articles, magazines, or even support groups.

Additionally, level of education plays a role in higher education employment. As mentioned previously, women outnumber men in higher education degrees except for doctoral degrees earned. When women do complete doctorates, they are concentrated in the humanities. More men receive doctoral degrees making them qualified for the upper-level administrative positions (*The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac*, 2005-2006).

Higher education is reflective of the American workplace in that it values typically male assets and promotes men based upon these qualities (Mason & Goulden, 2004). Due to this structure of the higher education system there is little support for family life, which affects more women due to their role as the primary caregiver. Higher education tends not to be conducive for individuals with families, in particular for those who are primary caregivers (van Anders, 2004). Women in higher education find themselves choosing which realm to succeed in: family or career (O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). These women struggle with how to balance career and family (Coltrane, 2004) and still climb the professional ladder. For example, earning tenure requires additional hard work and hours that many administrators believe women are incapable of managing if they have children (O'Laughlin & Bischoff). Although men's role in the home is increasing and they are spending on average 42 more minutes a day, during the workweek,

assisting in the home compared to 30 years ago, they do not face the same work life balance issues as women (Bond, Thompson, Galinksy, & Prottas, 2002). Additionally, women in higher education have higher levels of stress due to their dual role in career and family (O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005).

<center>Gender in Student Affairs</center>

Student affairs administration has been historically viewed as a feminized profession (Hamrick & Carlisle, 1990) in which women outnumber men entering graduate preparation programs and the profession (Jones & Komives, 2001). Student affairs administrators work in a variety of roles on college campuses, including academic advising, health and wellness, judicial affairs, orientation, residence life, and student activities. Women tend to be overly concentrated in entry- and mid-level student affairs positions, such as coordinators or assistant directors, (Blackhurst, Brandt, & Kalinowski, 1998; Jones & Komives, 2001) often at small, typically private, institutions (Evans & Kuh, 1983; Reason, Walker, & Robinson, 2002; Rickard, 1985). Conversely, men are typically concentrated in mid and upper-level administrative positions in student affairs (Jones & Komives, 2001).

Female SSAOs report greater stress than their male counterparts in balancing work and life (Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, Johnson, & Kicklighter, 1998; Scott, 1992). Since women are the majority of primary caregivers they find themselves working a double shift; (Sayer, 2005, Hothschild, 1989) coordinating their home and work identity (Wharton, 1994) and often are held to different expectations than their male counterparts. For instance, women SSAOs are expected to be more caring and team oriented then men (Jones & Komives, 2001) forcing them to be responsible for the majority of emotional labor within the workplace. The difference in expectations of workplace caregiving, as well as the need to balance multiple commitments is a

source of stress for women (Jones & Komives, 2001), which in turn causes work/life balance stress.

Similar to most careers, the administrative and management positions within student affairs are associated with masculine traits (Hughes, 1989; McEwen & Shertzer, 1979). While women in administrative positions are expected to be caring and nurturing (Jones & Komives, 2001) high-level administrators are seen as requiring masculine traits to be successful (Street & Kimmel, 1999). Conflicting expectations for female SSAOs occur when the expectation is set that female SSAO's must be caring and nurturing while they must also co-opt masculine traits (Hughes, 1989; Jones & Komives, 2001).

The field of student affairs is considered to be feminized not just because of the number of women within the field, but also due to the helping and nurturing nature of the profession. Student affairs professionals embrace traditional feminine values of compassion, tolerance, advocacy, and justice, which aids in the field being deemed feminized, and not as valued as other masculine careers (Hughes, 1989). These feminine values are viewed as necessary traits to work within the field but not viewed as necessary to climb the administrative ladder.

The profession of student affairs is also considered feminized due to the types of tasks performed. Student affairs professionals interact with students on a regular basis and often counsel, assist, and advise students. Student affairs professionals in the entry- and mid-level tend to have more student contact than those in higher positions. Due to the varying value of masculine and feminine traits and skills within the field of student affairs different jobs tend to become feminized or masculinized. Managerial and administrative positions are viewed as the masculine positions while the entry-level positions are more feminized (Hughes, 1990; Street & Kimmel, 1999). Functional areas, such as counseling, tend to be more feminized than other

functional areas (McEwen, Engstrom, & Williams, 1990) such as recreation. Although the field

of student affairs is feminized, many specific areas within higher education are masculine,

including the upper-level administration (which the SSAO is a member).

As mentioned previously due to occupational segregation, senior student affairs positions,

which are management positions, are seen as masculine. Therefore, many women are not

considered for these positions because they are judged to lack the masculine qualities necessary

for the job. Women who obtain the senior student affairs positions often face discrimination in

the form of stereotyping. Either these female administrators are seen as masculine and having

given up their feminine identity or they are seen as the typical emotional and nurturing or weaker

administrator (Cummings, 1979; Drum, 1993; Street & Kimmel, 1999). These women

administrators then face huge unseen obstacles, in the form of discrimination, which may often

hinder their ability to be successful.

<center>Theoretical Framework</center>

There are many theories regarding either career development or life development.

However, Super (1984) created a theory that also addressed life paths. Super (1984) argues that

men's and women's career patterns are similar with the exception of the role women play in the

home and family. An individual's domestic role affects work life and needs to be addressed more

fully within the realm of higher education administration and specifically, student affairs.

Super's model was chosen because it is a career and life development model used by many

career planning professionals (Brown, 2002).

Super's (1984) model involves the assessment of five key aspects: Work Salience, Career

Maturity, Self-Concepts, Level of Abilities and Potential Functioning, and Field of Interest and

Probable Activity. The Work Salience aspect examines the importance of the individual's

diverse roles in work, home, and the community. Career Maturity focuses on how individuals planned for their career, the exploration of careers, and the process used in deciding on a career. Self-Concepts examine an individual's self-esteem, clarity, cognitive ability, and ability to be realistic. Level of Abilities explores an individual's ability to function in a given position while Field of Interest determines in what an individual is interested (Super, 1984). Super's (1984) model, established more than 20 years ago, provides an appropriate avenue to explore career paths of male and female SSAOs. Although Super's model is dated, it is still influential within the field of career development (Brown, 2002) and thus, an appropriate choice for this study. This study will provide insight into the applicability of Super's model in present time, specifically examining the intersection of life and career for both male and female SSAOs.

This model provides five key aspects to an individual's career development that Super contends everyone follows aside from a difference in caregiving for men and women. Super's five aspects align with many of the gender disparities apparent within the working environment. The Work Salience aspect examines issues related to individuals' role as caregiver in addition to their career role. The Career Maturity aspect focuses on the choice of career and process in attaining that career, which aids in exploring the division of labor. The remaining three aspects, Self-Concepts, Level of Abilities, and Field of Interest all contribute to understanding how an individual's skills and education affect career development. All five of the aspects may provide insight to gender differences experienced within the field of student affairs however, Career Maturity and Work Salience address the issues of career path and life path addressed in this study and will be the two conceptual components used.

Research Questions

The research questions for the study were:

1. How do female SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

2. How do male SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

3. How do male and female SSAOs life and career development experiences compare to one another according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?

Methods

Prior to any data collection, I received approval for this study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Sample

As this was a qualitative study, purposeful sampling was used. Qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling to find participants with intimate knowledge about the subject being researched so they can provide in depth information (Creswell, 2003). A list of potential study participants was created using the membership list from a national professional student affairs professional organization. The organization selected has more than 11,000 members at campuses internationally and was chosen because of the large number of constituents (NASPA, 2008). The membership database included a voting delegate who is typically the SSAO for that institution. The voting delegate from D.C., Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia were compiled into lists of male and female at large (5,000 students or more) and small (less than 5,000 students) institutions and public and private institutions. There were 58 prospective interview participants. Only the voting delegates from those specific states were gathered as they were in driving distance from the researcher, allowing for face-to-face interviews. Since all of the SSAOs on the list were considered to be equal informants, a random numbers table was used to

randomly select participants. The SSAOs were contacted via a solicitation email and asked to participate in the study.

Data saturation varies for every study but may occur, on average, in 6 to 12 interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). When themes can be reached and no new data is gathered, data saturation has occurred (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Not all participants contacted agreed to be in the study, but when 10 interviews were completed, it was determined that data saturation was reached in this study.

Interview Protocol

Super's (1984) model was the guide for developing the interview protocol. The questions were semi-structured and explored areas of career development as well as family and personal life. Prompts were given as well as follow-up questions when necessary to solicit a response. Questions included: Tell me about your education and describe your life outside of work.

 Data Collection

All participants were required to sign an informed consent form prior to the start of the interview. Additionally, all participants were assigned a pseudonym to establish confidentiality. The interviews were digitally audio-recorded and the interviewer took notes during the interview. Participants were also asked to provide a copy of their resume so the interviewer could follow their career and educational progression.

Data Analysis

The transcripts were read and compared with the interview notes as well as proofed for spelling and typographical errors. Once, the transcripts were corrected, participants were sent their individual transcript to review and edit, if necessary. Member checking, or having participants review their own words, is a vital part of qualitative research and is necessary to

establish credibility and rigor (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Credibility and rigor show that a study's methodology is reliable and sound. There are various methods to establish credibility and rigor including triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checks, and a peer reviewer (Rossman & Rallis). This study used member checks as well as a peer reviewer and a panel of experts to increase credibility and rigor. Additionally, by reviewing resumes and interviews, the researchers used triangulation to increase credibility and rigor.

Analysis of the data was conducted using the open coding method. Open coding allows the researcher to look for trends in the data (Charmaz, 2006). After the open coding process was completed, focused coding was performed. Focused coding takes the data trends and creates categories (Charmaz). During focused coding and the creation of categories, themes began to emerge which were then interpreted into overarching conclusions and the interpretation of the meaning of the data (Seidman, 2006).

Limitations

As with any research, there are several limitations with this design. One issue that many qualitative studies face is the issue of the participants' candor. Allowing the participants to speak freely and without judgment is an important component to interviewing. All efforts were made to ensure that the participants felt they could provide information in a safe environment.

A second limitation is that of researcher bias. Bracketing, the act of setting aside bias, was used in this study to prevent bias (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Although it is difficult to bracket all personal assumptions, every effort was made to ensure researcher bracketing.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are discussed according to the research questions. The findings for the question "How do female SSAOs describe their life and career development according to

Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?" is answered first followed by "How do male SSAOs describe their life and career development according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?". The third research question, "How do male and female SSAOs life and career development experiences compare to one another according to Super's factors of Work Salience and Career Maturity?" is answered last.

Female SSAO Career and Life Descriptions

The 5 female participants had similar experiences according to some aspects of Super's (1984) model and different experiences according to other aspects of the model.

Work role experience.

The female participants were similar in their work role experiences in that they were all the SSAO at their institution and possessed a vice president or dean of students title. The title varied based on the size of the institution where they worked. Rebecca, a SSAO at a smaller institution had the title of Dean of Students while Celeste, also a SSAO at a smaller institution, had a combined title of Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs. Alice, Jen, and Donna, all SSAOs at larger institutions, had Vice President titles.

The types of gender differences discussed by the participants varied but they all agreed that some form of difference existed between the genders. Donna likened her experience to Hillary Clinton's bid for the democratic nomination:

> I think there are different expectations, and I think it's, and I'll say what I said
> about Hillary, when she was running, that it's almost a no-win situation for her
> because she has to show that she has the rationality, the reason, the strength to run
> the most powerful country in the world, which runs counter to the qualities that
> most people look for in women, but she can't show too many qualities, feminine

qualities, because then she'll be too emotional and weak to run the most powerful

country in the world…She's just not nurturing enough.

Donna further expressed that "…some people who report to me think I'm probably very good

and some people reporting to me think or have thought depending on timeframe that I'm nothing

but a bitch." Celeste and Rebecca detailed the dynamics of their institutions' leadership teams

which were predominately men. Celeste stated, "…this is kind of like a boy's club…" and "I do

feel like you have to work harder if you're a woman…" Rebecca indicated her president, a

woman, preferred her male colleagues over Rebecca. Celeste discussed the gender bias she

observed at her institution, "…this is kind of like a boy's club…" and "I do feel like you have to

work harder if you're a woman…"Jen detailed her experience with gender bias: "…I'm the best

golfer. I have never been asked to play golf with any Board of Trustee member with the

President of the Alumni Association." Jen further explained that her male counterparts were

asked to play golf on a regular basis.

Leisure activities.

Other similarities between the 5 female participants were found with leisure activities.

All 5 of the female participants reported participating in some form of leisure activity or

community service although the type of each activity varied. Four of the female participants

(Donna, Celeste, Rebecca, and Alice) discussed friends as something they enjoyed during their

time outside of work. Three of the female participants (Jen, Alice, and Rebecca) indicated sports

or outdoor activities as leisure activities.

Marital status.

In terms of their marital status, 4 of 5 female participants were divorced and currently

single. Alice was the only female participant to be currently married and with children. Donna, 1

of the divorced females, discussed how her children were older when she became a vice

president. Donna mentioned, "…they had both left home and were pretty much on their own

when I came here…" When asked if being single was planned or as a result of the job, none of

the four single participants indicated it was planned or due to their job. Celeste stated her "…ex-

husband, was very supportive…" while Rebecca stated that she "…had always intended to have

that more traditional American life, but that didn't work out and then, I wouldn't say I'm

necessarily gun shy, but I'm picky." Celeste touched on how it would be different for her if she

were married with children:

> If I did have children or if I did have a husband, I would have to do my job a little
>
> differently. I have the luxury, and in some ways it's a blessing and in some ways
>
> it's a curse, the autonomy to do, to work as much as I want to, to do it whenever
>
> the hours I want to because I don't have to balance my life with somebody else's.
>
> There are downsides to that, too, but I also know, someone asked me recently do
>
> you regret not having children? And I used to. I don't anymore, but I would just
>
> have to do the job differently. I would have to set different boundaries.

> In addition to caring for children, Jen brought up the issue of caring for older parents,

which both she and Donna were experiencing. Jen described her lack of children and caring for

an older parent:

> I guess all I can say is for me I have found it to be easier to not have to think
>
> about, you know, leaving the office right at six o'clock because, you know, there's
>
> two people at home who need dinner or expect me to be at some event, and at the
>
> same time when I was married and had to rearrange my life, I did that in a way
>
> that accommodated other people's lives. So, I think what gets harder is when

you're about kind of my age now, late 40's and into 50's and it's that whole

sandwich generation issue of the parenting care and the children care and how do

you have enough support to do both, but not financial support to do both?

Caregiving.

In terms of caregiving, only Alice, the married mother of two discussed a

caregiving role. Alice said:

I'm the one that worries about where everything is. I would say I organize it. I

worry about what's not done, I'm the one who knows who's picking who up when

they were growing up, but in terms of who does it, it's probably even…

…my kids have benefited and they've suffered. …I think I'm a good mother…

And in reference to the stay at home mothers she encountered, Alice stated:

I was kind of in this world of, there's a thing I think women put on each other that

are mothers in a working world. There are mothers who don't work who think I'm

judging them because they don't work. I couldn't do that. Even if I was in a

financial position, I don't have that kind of temperament. I don't have that kind of

patience but then the reverse also happens in that the judgment comes back that

you must be a bad mother if you're working all the time. I don't have a choice, A,

I need it financially, but B, I wouldn't be a good mother. [laughter] I mean I am

great when I'm with them, but I couldn't do that 24/7.

Alice also discussed how her husband contributes a great deal to the caregiving and that she

considered him an equal partner. However, she did notice that people's responses to him were

very different:

I think we [women] have to work harder or you have to balance more and I think

a lot of women are not as lucky as I am to have, well, the thing, I'll tell you the

thing that always makes me laugh is people, say, oh, God, you've got a great

husband. And I'm like what the heck? He's got a great wife. I'm working my ass

off, I mean you know? [laughter] I mean why do they always, I'm working

harder and he gets kudos for cooking, you know? [laughter] Somebody has got to

cook around here. I do the laundry, okay? I'm not getting kudos, you know?

Male SSAO Career and Life Descriptions

The men experienced similarities with one another in their career and life descriptions as

based on the findings below.

Work role experience.

The 5 male SSAOs reported the same work role experiences in that they all had similar

work titles. Four of 5 men had a vice president title while one male, Joe, had a dean of students

title. Joe worked at a small institution. His counterpart, Paul, also worked at a small institution

but had a vice president title.

All 5 of the male SSAOs indicated they felt there was a gender difference in student

affairs but none of them provided examples or indicated that it occurred on their campuses. Dan

stated his thoughts about gender in student affairs: "I mean we still lack women in the top

leadership positions whether it's glass ceiling or whatever problems that we, societal or

institutions (have)…" Will agreed about the gender disparity in higher education and stated, "I

think most institutions are becoming aware of it and have made strides to address it." Will went

on to state about his institution, "I think the environment here tries to promote excellence

regardless of gender." Matt also concurred with this line of thought and stated:

I think our profession has been a leader in terms of being attentive to issues of

gender and race and social orientation and, but having said that we all work

within the context of organizations that may not share the same values as our

profession. I think our profession, our professional organizations have been very

clear in communicating values regarding those areas, but in terms of the

commitment that individual institutions have given to them in terms of whether

it's money for programming or personnel practices and decisions, there probably

is still discrimination from campus to campus depending upon the institution.

Finally, Dan discussed one problem he observed of women moving in upper-level administrative

position:

…one of the concerns that I've had during my career is for women that go up the

ladder, there have been too many instances where I feel like the staff member has

felt she had to prove herself, that she was good as a guy and she could be as tough

as a guy, and that's where I see a problem rather than allowing the femininity or

gender to show and be who you are and be genuine and authentic.

Leisure activities.

In regards to leisure activities all 5 male SSAOs indicated they engaged in leisure

activities, but the activities themselves varied. Will, Joe, and Paul stated spending time with their

children and families were part of their leisure activities while Dan, Joe, and Will all mentioned

sports or exercise as leisure activities. Matt spent his time on travel and outside projects while

Paul also spent his time with church activities, reading, and friends. Paul described his reading:

"I'm always reading something with our staff. Bowling Alone is the latest one…"

Marital status.

Four of the 5 male SSAOs were married while 1, Joe, was widowed. Dan

described his relationship with his wife:

> And so, for example, going through the doctorate, I know the doctorate
>
> was a whole lot harder on her than it was on me because we had two little
>
> kids at the time, and I would not have been able to finish if she hadn't
>
> supported me. So, she was always the primary caregiver, and we worked
>
> things around my schedule really.

Caregiving.

One topic where the male SSAOs differed slightly from one another was caregiving.

First, all 5 male SSAOs had children, with only Joe and Will having elementary aged children.

Matt, Dan, and Paul's children were either finishing high school, in college, or graduated from

college. Three of the 5 male SSAOs (Matt, Dan, and Paul) stated their wives were the primary

caregiver for their children. Will discussed an egalitarian household in terms of the division of

labor and caregiving while Joe stated he was the primary caregiver for his son. Joe indicated that

his role as primary caregiver occurred when his wife passed away and prior to that, they shared

the caregiving role. Joe also stated:

> when I try to make arrangements of a play date or what have you, if I call the
>
> husband and more often than not that's who I'm calling, they tell me to talk with
>
> their wife or they don't, can't set it or they are so irresponsible they don't show up
>
> on time or what have you. They just can't get it together and that is much more
>
> common than I had realized, but in critique to women what I will say is when I
>
> say, well, why don't you send the kid over? Most of them won't do it. They won't

give their child over to a man because their perception is that it's going to be

rough because that's how men play with children, right, they let them have a much

longer leash and they are not going to let their child go with this single dad like

that because who knows what's going on in that house, you know, but in my

neighborhood, in my cul-de-sac, my house is the kid central.

Matt, Dan, and Paul discussed how their wives were the primary caregivers and wanted

to be sure that their role as the father was not diminished. All 3 of these SSAOs indicated that

their children had spent time on campus with them during activities and events. Matt stated that

his children "…were off and on campus attending events with me." Matt also described his role

in the caregiving process:

I was very, very much involved, and she was in that, you know, I did my traveling

and she would stay home with the kids, but since then she took off two years ago

and spent four weeks in an English intensive Spanish, Spanish immersion

program and by that time, of course, the kids were much older and so it wasn't as

demanding as when I went to Thailand and she had all the little ones at home…

The male SSAOs all referred to the role their wives played in the caregiving of their family.

Next, I examine how the male SSAOs and female SSAO experiences compare to one another.

How do male and female SSAOs life and career development experiences compare?

Male and female SSAOs described their career and life experiences in a variety of ways

and included similarities and differences when comparing their responses to Super's (1984)

model. In terms of the work role, all 10 of the SSAOs were similar in title of their position. The

difference in title (between dean and vice president) did not vary by gender but by institutional

size. The SSAOs at the smaller institutions tended to have the title of dean while the SSAOs at larger institutions had the title of vice president.

However, the male and female SSAOs did describe gender bias or discrimination different. All 5 female participants discussed gender bias or discrimination they currently faced at their institution or faced in the past. Donna touched on the issue of expecting women to be nurturing, however, as leaders and managers they need to possess more masculine traits. Jen provided an example of not being included in networking opportunities on the golf course, while her male counterparts were included. According to the experiences of these female SSAOs, the field of student affairs is not exempt from gender bias and discrimination. Although the male SSAOs discussed how they felt gender bias and discrimination still existed in the field of student affairs and in higher education, none of them provided personal examples or concrete examples of this occurring on their campuses. Super's model (1984) does not account for the issue of gender bias or discrimination and should be revisited to account for the issues that women SSAOs may face in the workplace.

All 10 of the SSAOs discussed engaging in leisure activities outside of their work commitments. The type of activities varied and no consistent pattern could be found by gender or institutional type. However, all of the SSAOs indicated that being involved in activities outside of work was necessary for a balanced life. One gender issue that arose in the discussion of leisure activities was Jen's experience with not being included in golfing outings. Her experience indicates the connection between some leisure activities and work, in some cases, even promotion.

There was a clear distinction by gender in marital status of the SSAOs with 4 female SSAOs being divorced and 1 male SSAO being widowed. Only 1 female SSAO was married

while 4 of the male SSAOs were married. Celeste indicated this in her statement detailing how

the expectations would be different for her if she had a husband and/or family.

Not having a family was not something the 3 divorced female SSAOs (Jen, Celeste, and

Rebecca) intended on doing but just happened, according to them. The decision about having

children or a career has been one that women have long considered and affects women in student

affairs. The 1 married female with children, Alice, discussed her dilemmas and encounters with

others as a result of being pregnant and caring for her children. Of the male SSAOs, only Joe, the

widowed father, encountered some form of discrimination due to being a parent. However, Joe's

examples of discrimination were not work related. Again, Super purposefully excluded the issue

of caregiving in his 1984 model as he believed that the difference it caused between men and

women and career path was slight. The caregiving role plays a large part in student affairs work

life as demonstrated by the 10 SSAOs in this study as well as in previous research (see

Hochschild, 1997). Super's omission of caregiving into the equation of career and life

development is a serious one and should be reconsidered to make this model one that is still

applicable for both men and women in the field of student affairs.

Conclusion

The difference in how male and female SSAOs experienced their work roles, marital

status, leisure activities, and caregiving role all played a part in how they were able to get their

job done as well as how they balanced their work and life. The present study is also significant to

future practice, research, and policy in higher education. Several constituencies may benefit from

the results of this study. First, upper-level higher education administrators may find the results

useful when pursuing gender diversity in administrative positions. The results may provide

higher education administrators with data to assess the levels of institutional support for women

in SSAO positions as well as making administrators aware of work-life issues that may be faced by some higher education administrators.

Additionally, the study is significant in terms of future policy. The results might aid higher education administration in their hiring processes as well as diversity of administrators. This study may also aid administrators in reviewing their institutional support policies (i.e. maternity/paternity leave) based on how supported student affairs administrators feel.

This study provides an opportunity to conduct further research on the topic. This qualitative study is intended to foster common ideas and themes about SSAOs' career and life paths. A quantitative study into the gender differences of SSAOs' life and career paths may provide more generalizable data.

Further information about the career and life paths of SSAOs could be garnered by investigating the role of the institution and institutional culture. Gendered organizations often dictate what roles males and females play and such a study would provide insight into the gendered notion of higher education. This study focuses on gender however, the sample does include SSAOs of various races and cultures. A study into the role race plays in the career paths of SSAOs may provide more insight.

Finally, although not the purpose of this study, this study was able to explore the usefulness of Super's (1984) model. There were several areas found to be lacking in his model that could be adjusted to account for the caregiving component found to be important in SSAOs career and life development. First, the connection found between leisure activities and work can inhibit or aide an individual in their work life and is not something clearly addressed in Super's (1984) model. Super acknowledges leisure activities as part of his career and life development

model, but again, does not address the issues of discrimination or bias that may play a role within these leisure activities that could also influence an individual's work life as well.

Super's model dictates that there childbearing does create a difference between men and women when examining career development. However, that difference is seen as slight. Based on my findings, the female SSAOs with caregiving roles experienced more than a slight difference from the male SSAOs. However, the larger difference between the male and female SSAOs career and life experiences seemed to be based on their gender, the institutional culture, and society's expectations. Still, Super's model can be adjusted to take into greater account the role of caregiving, childbearing, and gender.

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Appendix A

Email Invite

Hello _____,

My name is Racheal Stimpson and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education program at Virginia Tech. I am currently working on my dissertation which examines the career and life paths of Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs).

I gathered a list of NASPA SSAO members in MD, DC, VA, and NC and randomly selected participants to contact. Your name was selected and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

The interview would take approximately 60-90 minutes at a location of your choosing and include questions regarding your career path and life path. All information you provide will be held confidential and IRB approval for this study has been obtained. If you are willing to be interviewed, or have questions about this study, please contact me at this email address (rstimpso@vt.edu).

Thank you for your time,

Racheal Stimpson

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

<u>Career Maturity</u>
1. Tell me about your career progression through your current position.
   a. How did you plan for your career?

2. Tell me about your education.

3. Tell me about your knowledge and expectations about the work environment.

<u>Work Salience</u>
1. Describe your life outside of work.
   a. What other activities/groups are you involved in?
   b. What about family?

2. How does your outside of work involvements interact with your work?
   a. How do you negotiate your various commitments?
   b. Discuss your family life in relation to your work.

3. Describe the roles you have in the work environment.
   a. How do you negotiate these roles?

4. Describe the roles you have outside the work environment?
   a. How do you negotiate these roles?

Appendix C

VirginiaTech

DATE: December 20, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Steven M. Janosik
              Racheal Stimpson

FROM: David M. Moore

Approval date: 12/20/2007
Continuing Review Due Date:12/5/2008
Expiration Date: 12/19/2008

SUBJECT: **IRB Expedited Approval:** "**An Exploration Of Senior Student Affairs Officers Career And Life Paths**", IRB # 07-645

This memo is regarding the above-mentioned protocol. The proposed research is eligible for expedited review according to the specifications authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. As Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, I have granted approval to the study for a period of 12 months, effective December 20, 2007.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1.   Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2.   Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.
3.   Report promptly to the IRB of the study's closing (i.e., data collecting and data analysis complete at Virginia Tech). If the study is to continue past the expiration date (listed above), investigators must submit a request for continuing review prior to the continuing review due date (listed above). It is the researcher's responsibility to obtained re-approval from the IRB before the study's expiration date.
4.   If re-approval is not obtained (unless the study has been reported to the IRB as closed) prior to the expiration date, all activities involving human subjects and data analysis must cease immediately, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

Important:
If you are conducting **federally funded non-exempt research**, this approval letter must state that the IRB has compared the OSP grant application and IRB application and found the documents to be consistent. Otherwise, this approval letter is invalid for OSP to release funds. Visit our website at

http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/newstudy.htm#OSP for further information.

cc: File

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Appendix D

VirginiaTech

DATE: November 21, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Steven M. Janosik
               Racheal Stimpson

Approval date: 12/20/2008	
Continuing Review Due Date:12/5/2009	
Expiration Date: 12/19/2009	

FROM: David M. Moore

SUBJECT: **IRB Expedited Continuation 1:** "**An Exploration Of Senior Student Affairs Officers Career And Life Paths**", IRB # 07-645

This memo is regarding the above referenced protocol which was previously granted expedited approval by the IRB. The proposed research is eligible for expedited review according to the specifications authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. Pursuant to your request, as Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, I have granted approval for extension of the study for a period of 12 months, effective as of December 20, 2008.

Approval of your research by the IRB provides the appropriate review as required by federal and state laws regarding human subject research. As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.
3. Report promptly to the IRB of the study's closing (i.e., data collecting and data analysis complete at Virginia Tech). If the study is to continue past the expiration date (listed above), investigators must submit a request for continuing review prior to the continuing review due date (listed above). It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain re-approval from the IRB before the study's expiration date.
4. If re-approval is not obtained (unless the study has been reported to the IRB as closed) prior to the expiration date, all activities involving human subjects and data analysis must cease immediately, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

cc: File

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