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THE LIVED CAREER EXPERIENCES OF PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC ADVISORS
WHO WENT ON TO EARN DOCTORAL DEGREES
IN HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the lived career experiences of professional academic advisors who went on to earn a doctoral degree in higher education administration. When undergraduate students consider various majors, they often wonder “What can I do with a major in this area? What are my career options?” Such is the case with professional academic advisors who are considering a doctoral degree in higher education administration. Because of a lack of literature, advisors considering the doctoral option may seek out or may be referred to others like them who have accomplished this goal. A connection with role models may be beneficial when making this type of career decision. Unfortunately, it may be that persons considering such an educational pursuit do not have access to potential career and doctoral role models who had an academic advising background. To help address the gap in knowledge, this study documents the career experiences of those academic advisors who had completed a doctorate in order to understand the decision-making process and outcomes.

This study examines the stories of 13 professionals who were academic advisors at the time of application into their doctoral programs and have since completed those terminal degrees. A maximum variation technique was used to form the sample such that they are diverse in key domains. In regards to professional context, study participants vary based on the year their doctorates were earned, current career fields, and titles. Personal demographics also vary by ethnicity, family status, and their means for paying for their doctoral education. Participant demographics also vary with regard to relevance of their doctoral degrees to their post-degree positions, years in position, and subsequent positions, if any. An analysis of the participants’

experiences results in several themes: doctoral required or preferred, financial support and families, career goals, use of mentors, and personality for administration.

These personal career stories inform current and future professional academic advisors as they contemplate this particular career path. Additionally, a greater understanding of these career processes serves to enlighten the National Academic Advising Association membership and influence its research agenda as the profession of academic advising further evolves. Finally, the results of this study add to the body of literature regarding socialization to the profession of academic advising, student affairs, and higher education often taught in associated graduate programs.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1893, George Bernard Shaw (1893/2005) wrote that “the people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they cannot find them, make them” (p. 121). Such is the challenge taken on by many professional academic advisors who choose to embark on a career path to upper levels of education administration through the earning of a doctoral degree in higher education administration.

According to Habley (2000), academic advising has been a fixture in higher education since colleges were first established in colonial America. Habley also noted that advising was a function fulfilled by faculty members who took responsibility for the intellectual, ethical, and moral development of the students through their role as mentors. Even though the role of academic advising essentially remained the same for the first 200 years, several events gradually changed higher education and the look of academic advising on American college campuses (Habley, 2000). These events were the passing of the Morrill Act, which established land-grant colleges, the broadening of the American higher education curriculum, the identification of certain faculty to serve as chief advisors and administrators, the rapid growth of student enrollment following World War II, and the establishment and expansion of community colleges (Habley, 2000). These changes affected the nature and purpose of higher education and the role and function of academic advising.

Habley (2000) identified three additional important milestones that changed the function and role of academic advising. The first was the publication of two articles that created a framework, which included a new expanded definition of academic advising. Crookston (1972) and O'Banion's (1972) articles suggested advising was far too critical to be a clerical function that involved only selecting and scheduling courses, also known as prescriptive advising. A second milestone coincided with an emerging decrease in the number of students going to college after the baby boomers finished college in the late 1970s (Crookston, 1972; O'Banion, 1972). This decrease led colleges to take a serious look at how they could better serve and retain the enrolled student population (Crookston, 1972; O'Banion, 1972). Finally, by the second half of the 1970s, a national organization for professional academic advisors was in the forming stages (Crookston, 1972; O'Banion, 1972). What resulted was the National Academic Advising Association, referred to as NACADA (Crookston, 1972; O'Banion, 1972). The organization held its first national conference in 1979 (Crookston, 1972; O'Banion, 1972).

According to Kramer (2003), faculty advising had been a fairly unexamined activity although it had been an integral component of higher education since it formally began at Johns Hopkins University in 1877. Early American colleges were cognizant of their students' academic and personal concerns, and academic advising became the process for attending to those individual student needs (Gordon & Habley, 2001). Since then, academic advising has experienced many cycles of emphasis and renewal, and the academic advising process has itself been defined and redefined many times, but its acceptance as an integral part of the higher education process has never been stronger than it is today (Gordon & Habley, 2001).

Prior to and through these events, professional academic advising developed as a complement to faculty advising during the 1960s and 1970s, when students were demanding

more personal attention in their academic planning (Gordon & Habley, 2001). This coincided with the entry of many new students into the world of American higher education. These new students included community college students, returning adult students, and minority students (Gordon & Habley, 2001). This was also the beginning stages of developmental academic advising. With this new approach, academic advising became less prescriptive and more about student growth and development (Kramer, 2003).

Prescriptive advising originated from the earliest American residential colleges when students had to live, worship, and study by very strict rules and had no choice in courses (Frost, 2000). After the American Revolution, new colleges in the west started educating a wider population of students and promoted religious freedom, which eventually expanded to curricular freedom with the purpose of advancing students' personal goals (Frost, 2000).

Crookston (1994) explained that developmental advising is concerned with "facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills. Not only are these advising functions but . . . they are essentially teaching functions as well" (Crookston, 1994, p. 5). Additionally, Winston, Miller, Ender, and Grites (1984) described developmental academic advising as "a systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community resources" (p. 19).

The foundations of developmental advising are supported by other well-established theories (Frost, 2000). Specifically, Dewey taught that what a student learns in one situation enables that student to effectively meet the needs of the next situation. Several authors (Creamer, 2000; Creamer & Creamer, 1994; Winston, et al., 1984) noted that developmental advising was

grounded in theory, including cognitive developmental theory, psychosocial theory, and person–environment interaction theory, as well as in theories that focus on specific populations. Hence, developmental advising involves so much more than just choosing classes and often takes longer than prescriptive advising because it requires more frequent advising sessions (Frost, 2000).

More recently, many institutions began to realize the importance of developmental academic advising in the battle to retain students and increase graduation rates (Gordon & Habley, 2001). This realization brought about a detailed examination of academic advising on many campuses (Gordon & Habley, 2001). As a result, the academic advising center staffed with professional advisors was introduced as a vehicle for offering a more visible, centrally located resource that could be used in place of, or in addition to, regular faculty advising (Gordon & Habley, 2001). National interest in improving the experience of first-year students has also developed (Frost, 2000). Through the leadership of John N. Gardner, many types of institutions organized formal programs to orient and advise new students and to strengthen the entire first year experience (Frost, 2000).

At the turn of the millennium, there is much that is known about academic advisors. Nationally, according to a NACADA 2000 survey of members and non-members (Lynch, 2002a), only 15% of academic advisors held a doctoral degree as their highest degree attained, while 62% held a master's degree as their highest degree attained. A total of 19% of academic advisors held a bachelor's degree as their highest degree attained, and 1% held an associate's degree as their highest degree attained (Lynch, 2002a). Additionally, as an advisor, having earned a doctorate was found to increase the likelihood of earning a higher salary (Lynch, 2002a). Specifically, 9% of advisors with doctorates earned salaries in the highest salary category (\$50,000-\$59,999), but only 2% of advisors with master's degrees reported earning

salaries within that range (Lynch, 2002b). In a NACADA study of academic advising career ladders, 68% of advising administrators were women and 22% of administrators had a Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., or equivalent (NACADA, 2008). This discussion continues by focusing on professional academic advisors.

The average day of an academic advisor can be filled with a variety of activities. Most advisors work with course selection and registration as well as new student orientation (Lynch & Stucky, 2001). Additionally, many advisors participate in career and life planning and the creation of advising publications (Lynch & Stucky, 2001). Other advisors have some responsibilities with mentoring, personal counseling, and conducting advising-related research (Lynch & Stucky, 2001). Academic advisors also serve a wide variety of special student populations, including transfer students, first-year students, adult and re-entry students, international students, and student athletes (Lynch & Stucky, 2001). NACADA reported that academic advisors also work with underrepresented students, underprepared students, disabled students, and students with undeclared majors (Lynch & Stucky, 2001).

Academic advisors also often work with probation, dismissal, and reinstatement issues, specialized departmental advising, study abroad advising, and graduate school preparation advising (Lynch & Stucky, 2001). In terms of format, Lynch and Stucky (2001) reported that most advisors use individualized advising appointments, and fewer advisors use group advising or course-based advising as their primary means of advising delivery. Additionally, most academic advisors spent 15-30 minutes per advising meeting (Lynch & Stucky, 2001). More recently, advisors have taken on new roles as career advisors, honors program advisors, international and English as a new language advisors, advisors for student athletes, and support

service coaches through federal programs such as Trio, considering themselves professional academic advisors.

Many in the ranks of professional academic advising are interested in taking their expertise in developmental advising, first year programs, and retention initiatives and applying them in upper-level institutional administration. Assisting in this endeavor has been NACADA's creation of the country's first graduate certificate and master's degree in academic advising through Kansas State University's graduate school (NACADA, 2010b). The distance education option provides access to graduate level professional development to academic advisors and academic advisors-to-be who are located across the nation and the world.

Statement of the Problem

When undergraduate students consider various majors, they often wonder "What can I do with a major in this area? What are my career options?" This is also the case with professional academic advisors who are considering a doctoral degree in higher education administration. Because of a lack of literature, many advisors considering this option often seek out and are referred to others like them who have accomplished this goal. This connection with role models can be very beneficial when making this type of career decision. Unfortunately, many do not have personal access to potential career and doctoral role models with these specific experiences. To help address this issue, this study documents some of these lived career stories and makes them accessible for those professional academic advisors who are considering doctoral degrees in higher education administration.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived career stories of professional academic advisors who went on to earn their doctoral degrees in higher education

administration. Unfortunately, no in-depth research has been published on this population to date although many questions remain. Why are academic advisors pursuing this option? What are their personal, professional, and career goal stories? Additionally, are professional advisors seeking to be directors of advising, deans of students, faculty, student affairs vice presidents, or chancellors (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; Hoffer, Hess, Welch, & Williams, 2007; Komives, 1993; Townsend & Mason, 1990; Townsend & Wiese, 1991)? What advice would they give to someone considering following in a similar path?

Research has shown that there are many characteristics that influence or predict the likelihood of earning a doctoral degree. Sex and racial/ethnic group differences (Howard-Hamilton, 2004; Perna, 2004), amount of undergraduate educational loan debt (Fox, 1992; Millett, 2003), and family situation (Baron, 2008) are just a few examples.

Townsend and Mason (1990) and Geiger (1997) examined the career paths of graduates of higher education doctoral programs to help determine whether the market for graduates of higher education has been saturated. Even though many have conducted this type of study over the years (Carr, 1974; Dressel & Mayhew, 1974; Moore, 1981; Moore, Martorana, & Twombly, 1985), none have focused specifically on academic advisors earning a doctorate in higher education administration.

According to Iten and Matheny (2008), “academic advising has come of age as a profession and is deserving of career ladders” (p. 10). Although several universities have developed an institutional promotion track for professional academic advisors, the practice is not widespread (Iten & Matheny, 2008). The idea of career ladders (Iten & Matheny, 2008) is meant to reward advisors for their breadth and depth of knowledge while encouraging them to stay in the advising ranks rather than move to administration to advance in their careers. Additionally,

Iten and Matheny stated that “there is no systematic understanding of or advocacy for career ladders for academic advisors across the range of educational institutions” (p. 10).

Research Questions

The major or grand tour research question for this study is “What are the lived career experiences of professional academic advisors who have gone on to earn a doctoral degree in higher education administration?” To help answer this question, the following subquestions were investigated:

1. What led to the participants’ decisions to undertake doctoral study?
2. What were the career goals of these professional advisors at the time of application for a higher education administration doctoral program?
3. How, if at all, did the career aspirations of these participants change through the doctoral experience?
4. Did they have mentors from the field and how did those mentors influence them?
5. How did their initial career aspirations compare to their actual post-doctoral degree career trajectories?

To answer the questions, the study used a qualitative approach, including in-depth interviews of 13 participants who were professional academic advisors at the time of application into doctoral programs in higher education administration and who now hold their doctoral degrees. More specifically, this study used phenomenological existentialism (or existential phenomenology), which was described by Valle and King (1978) as a “psychological discipline which seeks to explicate the essence, structure, or form of both human experience and human behavior as revealed through essentially descriptive techniques including disciplined reflection” (p. 7). May (1978) defined existential phenomenology as the “means ideally to take the human

being as he exists, a living, acting, feeling, thinking phenomenon, at this moment in an organic relationship to us” (p. vii-viii). Valle and King also described existential phenomenology as “the result of a blending of two interrelated disciplines: existentialism (a label applied to a number of similar philosophies) and phenomenology (a label applied to a number of similar methodologies)” (p. 6).

Significance of the Study

By focusing on the lived career experiences of current and former professional academic advisors who have gone on to earn doctoral degrees in higher education administration, this phenomenological study contributes to the limited body of literature as it relates to the career paths of professional academic advisors. These personal career stories serve to assist current and future professional academic advisors as they contemplate this particular career path. Additionally, a greater understanding of these career processes serve to enlighten the NACADA membership and influence its research agenda as the profession of academic advising further evolves. Finally, the results of this study add to the body of literature regarding socialization to the profession of academic advising, student affairs, and higher education often taught in associated graduate programs.

Researcher Perspective

In any qualitative study, the researcher’s perspectives play a role in the study and frame its pursuit, interpretations, and conclusions. In my case, I was a professional academic advisor at the time of application and enrollment in a doctoral program in higher education administration. In preparing to make a decision about pursuing a doctoral degree in this field, I sought out the career mentors and career stories of others who were academic advisors when starting their higher education administration doctoral degree but could only find a few. Next, I looked to the

higher education literature for such career stories of academic advisors but was unsuccessful. Unable to locate such literature, I was inspired to fill this gap in the scholarship, providing academic advisor career role model stories that would answer such questions as “What can a doctoral graduate in higher education administration with background in academic advising do with such a degree?”

My current professional position is that of an academic advisor at a midsize regional campus of approximately 13,000 students, advising those who are undecided on their majors, preparing to get into the majors of their choice, or preparing for exchange opportunities. In addition, I completed a term as the NACADA committee chair for the Member Career Services committee. This position allowed me to interact with other advising professionals and leaders, including those with an interest in job search - related services for academic advisors. Through my tenure in the position, my committee and I worked to provide such job search support resources and services for the membership, allowing me to apply much of my knowledge gained through my past experience as a graduate student working in my campus’s career services office.

Definition of Terms

The following are definitions of critical terms and concepts related to this study.

Academic advising: Academic advising is a process in which advisor and student enter a dynamic relationship respectful of the student’s concerns. The advisor serves as teacher and guide in an interactive partnership aimed at enhancing the student’s self-awareness and fulfillment (O’Banion, 1972). According to Frost (1991), academic advising is a supportive and interactive relationship between students and advisors, and this relationship is important for several reasons. Often the one-to-one relationship between

the student and the advisor is the only opportunity a student has to build a long-term personal connection with the institution.

Career: Career is defined as “the development of vocational behavior over time” (Savickas, 2002, p. 151).

Career development: Haney and Howland (1978) defined career development as a process whereby individuals develop realistic goals for professional and personal life-style futures, thereby building strategies for movement towards these goals, through the investigation of appropriate and available options open to the individual based on personal needs and direction-orientation and the dynamics of surrounding social and economic environments. (p. 78)

Existentialism: Existentialism seeks to understand the human condition as it manifests itself in our concrete, lived situations. Its concern for these situations includes not only their physical characteristics (such as the people and places involved), but also all of “our attendant moments of joy, absurdity, and indifference, as well as the range of freedom we experience as having in our responses to these various moments” (Valle & King, 1978, p. 6).

Mentor: Mentors are those people who use an interactive relationship to provide support and advice to a protégé (Gibson, 2004).

NACADA: According to Beatty (1991), the purpose of the National Academic Advising Association is “to promote the quality of Academic Advising in institutions of higher education, and to this end, it is dedicated to the support and professional growth of academic advising and advisors” (p. 5). The mission of NACADA is to

address the academic advising needs of higher education globally, advance the body of knowledge of academic advising, champion the educational role of academic advising to enhance student learning and development, educate university and college decision makers about the role of quality academic advising in higher education, and ensure the effectiveness of the NACADA organization. (NACADA, 2010a)

Phenomenology: Kersten's (1989) definition of phenomenology guides this study.

Descriptions of those acts of thinking and knowing in general and, in particular of the concatenations of acts with respect to which the meant and intended-to objects of thinking and knowing are presented in their most original ways as ideal unities evidentially seized upon in further acts founded on those of thinking and knowing. (p. 6)

Professional academic advisors: Professional academic advisors are those who provide college-level academic advising as their primary career role, versus faculty advisors whose primary activities typically revolve around research, teaching, and service. This group includes expert advisors who work with a generalized student population as well as specialized student populations and programs such as student athletes, honors students, career advisors, at-risk students, international students, and students enrolled in various student support services funded through government grant programs.

Qualitative research: According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative study is defined as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations,

including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

Role model: A role model is “a cognitive construction based on the attributes of people in social roles an individual perceives to be similar to him or herself to some extent and desires to increase perceived similarity by emulating those attributes” (Gibson, 2004, p. 136).

Vocational psychology: “The ‘individual differences’ view of occupations and the ‘individual development’ view of careers are the two grand perspectives in vocational psychology, one focusing on vocational behavior and the other on its development” (Savickas, 2002, p. 149).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In light of the lack of data and literature about professional academic advisors pursuing doctoral degrees, especially in the area of higher education administration, this chapter takes a broader look at these issues by examining a variety of topics from the academic advising and related literatures to inform the study. Furthermore, this literature review includes an examination of the present state of academic advising, the status of women in higher education, career development theory and major theorists, the realities of doctoral study in American higher education, and the process of deciding to pursue a graduate degree, including an examination of the theory of planned behavior.

Academic Advising

Academic advising is the first topic in the literature review. Various aspects of academic advising are discussed. The purpose is to contextualize the field and the framing of the study.

Academic Advising Definitions

According to Light (2001), “of all of the challenges that both faculty and students choose to mention, providing or obtaining good academic advising ranks number one. In fact, good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience” (p. 81). And although academic advising is just one component of higher education, it is at the core of undergraduate learning (Frost, 2000).

Academic advising has been defined by O'Banion (1972) as a process in which an advisor and a student enter a dynamic relationship respectful of the student's concerns. The advisor serves as teacher and guide in an interactive partnership aimed at enhancing the student's self-awareness and fulfillment (O'Banion, 1972). Chickering (1994) wrote that the fundamental purpose of academic advising is to help students become effective agents for their own personal development and lifelong learning.

According to Frost (1991), academic advising is a supportive and interactive relationship between students and advisors. This relationship is important for several reasons. Often the one-to-one relationship between the student and the advisor may be the only opportunity a student acts on to build a long-term personal connection with the institution (Frost, 1991). She also noted that frequent contact with an advisor is an important factor in student involvement and motivation, and can provide students support during the tough times, focusing them on academic success (Frost, 1991). True academic advising can be implemented with any number of specialized student populations such as the at-risk student population, in addition to general advising for specific majors (Kuh, 2008).

Advising Organizational Models

NACADA developed a list of academic advising organizational models that are in use in American higher education today (Pardee, 2000). An organizational model is the formalized way in which academic advising is structured for delivery to students at the institutional level as well as the campus, college, or departmental levels.

According to Pardee (2000), "central to the selection of an appropriate organizational structure is the institution's mission statement, which should include a philosophy on academic advising" (p. 193). This statement can be used as a basis for assessing the various organizational

models. Alignment between the institution's mission and its organization of advising is key to the successful delivery of advising services. This alignment assists in contributing to the achievement of the college's mission and goals.

NACADA recognizes the existence of three different organizational structures in advising, and seven academic advising organizational models within the structures (Pardee, 2000). The organizational models are divided by category: decentralized, centralized, and shared. Pardee (2000) noted that certain types of institutions tend to have similar advising structures.

A decentralized advising structure has advising services that are provided by faculty members or staff in their academic departments (Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2000). The first decentralized model is the faculty only model. This model has all advising services provided by faculty in their department offices. Students are assigned to faculty based on their majors, and students with undecided majors are assigned to faculty.

Another decentralized model of advising is the satellite model, in which academic advising is provided by central offices in each academic unit such as an advising unit in the arts and sciences college (Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2000). Students may continue to be advised in this office through graduation, or they may transition to a faculty advisor after the first year. Undecided students are often advised by the staff of a university college advising office until they choose a major, which unfortunately may mean a shifting around of advisors for a particular student. The advantages of this model include close proximity of advising offices and offering specialized advising services to students throughout the day and throughout the calendar year. As a disadvantage, satellite offices tend to exist in isolation from the rest of the advisors on campus. Only 6% of campuses, mostly larger campuses, reported using this model (American College Testing, 1999).

A centralized advising structure has advising services that are provided by an administrative unit or advising center with a director and advisors housed in one location (Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2000). There is only one centralized advising model, the self-contained model. In this model, all academic advising, from orientation to graduation, is offered through a central administrative unit or advising center. A director or dean oversees all of the advising services of the campus. This model has several advantages, including ease of accessibility, trained staff advisors, consistent advising quality, on-site supervision, and no duplication of services. This model also allows for advising of students with special needs, such as undecided students and those students seeking multiple majors and minors in different colleges. A survey indicated that the self-contained model is used at 12% of institutions and has been in decline (American College Testing, 1999).

A shared advising structure has both a central advising unit and faculty or professional departmental advisors (Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2000). There are four models that share characteristics of both the centralized and decentralized systems: the supplementary model, the split model, dual model, and the total intake model. In each model, advising services are divided between department advisors (faculty or staff), and the central advising staff.

In the supplementary model, all students have department advisors (Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2000). The advising office services the department advisors by providing resources such as advising handbooks, advising training, and maintaining advising information systems. The center operates as a referral source for students, evaluates transfer credit, and finalizes degree and graduation audits. This model offers consistency and coordination of services as advantages over the faculty only model, but because decision-making rests with the department, the advising

staff may lack credibility. Also, students with special needs may not be well served with this model.

In the split model, students are initially advised by department advisors and advisors from the central advising office, depending on their major or lack thereof (Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2000). Advising center staff members monitor and approve academic transactions for students until they declare a major. As an advantage, the advising center may also advise special student populations (underprepared students, student athletes, prelaw majors, etc.) and serve as a clearinghouse for advising needs. As a disadvantage, students in transition between center and faculty advising may experience a difference in accessibility, advising skill, and commitment. In the dual model, students have two advisors, a departmental advisor for their major and an advisor in the advising center for general education and other issues (Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2000). Both advisors monitor student academic plans and approve graduation plans. This model's disadvantages include confusion over which advisor does what, and duplication of services, therefore communication between advisors is the key to success using this model.

In the total intake model, all initial advising is conducted by advisors in a central advising unit, university college, or counseling center (Habley, 1983; Pardee, 2000). Upon completion of certain criteria (GPA, number of credits, etc.) students are then referred to the academic unit of their majors for advising. The central advising unit may have some responsibility for enforcement of academic policy and grade review at the end of each semester. This model utilizes the advantages of a trained professional staff, central access, and economy of scale paired with the benefits of departmental advising and resources. This model also reduces student confusion about which advisor to see, although attention must be paid to make the transition from advisors in the university college to departmental or faculty advisors.

Faculty Academic Advising

Research shows that when faculty advising works well, it significantly impacts student retention (Kramer, 2003). The literature also indicates that most institutions utilize faculty for academic advising purposes, either solely or as a part of a larger advising system administered by either a centralized or decentralized advising professionals. Although national research shows increasing involvement of faculty in advising, results show that this type of advising is mostly uneven across departments and unsatisfactory overall.

According to Habley (2003), faculty advising in the current literature, has been (a) a constant in American institutions of higher education, (b) the predominant form of delivery of academic advising, and (c) a critical factor in the success of college students. Habley also noted that faculty advising has yet to realize its full potential. Faculty advising has received far too little attention, and decision makers and those who allocate resources have remained largely uninformed regarding effective advising practices (Habley, 2003).

In an American College Testing, Inc. (ACT) comprehensive, national survey on students' needs and their impressions of their faculty advisors, Habley (2000) found that although there were several areas of concern, faculty advisors were graded as satisfactory and were meeting the students' needs. Also, students in general had a good impression of the characteristics and traits of their faculty advisors. Habley and Morales (1998) stated that most faculty members were expected to advise as a result of their faculty responsibilities and that on average, typical faculty advisors had four advising contacts per academic term, had a typical load of 26 student advisees, and spent about 11% of their time conducting academic advising sessions. Habley and Morales also stated that there were nonexistent or only slight, spotty gains in support for quality academic

advising by faculty. Additionally, they noted that only about one-third offer training for faculty advising and less than one-quarter of campuses require faculty training in academic advising.

In that same study, of those campuses offering faculty advisor training programs, the focus is typically on communication of factual information rather than on concepts related to relationship building (Habley & Morales, 1998). Furthermore, less than one-third of American college campuses include advising in students' faculty evaluations and less than one-third of the campuses include advising in the reward structure for faculty. The most common form of faculty advising recognition is in promotion and tenure, but that form of recognition is utilized in all academic departments at only 8 percent of the campuses. Finally, many of the essential pieces that support faculty advising tend to be far from ideal.

In another update of the same survey in 2004, only 60% of campuses provided support tools and information sources on advising to faculty advisors (Habley, 2004). More specifically, only 32% of colleges mandated training for faculty advisors in all departments on campus, and only 21% of campuses mandated training in some departments. Additionally, 35% of campuses neither offered nor mandated training for their faculty advisors.

Professional Academic Advising

The number of full-time academic advisors in American higher education increased dramatically from 1990 to 2000 and was considered a role that was just coming of age (Reinarz, 2000). NACADA reported that the number of its members identifying themselves as professional academic advisors increased from 2,236 in February 2001 to 5,207 in February 2007, a 133% increase (Self, 2008). Based on this increase, it is no surprise that so many institutions and executive officers have recognized the importance of this group because of the unique expertise and value they provide in the effective delivery of academic advising (Reinarz, 2000). As stated

in ACT's Fifth National Survey of Academic Advising (Habley & Morales, 1998), one of the most prominent trends in advising is the continued growth in the percentage of institutions having an advising office. The same study indicated that in only 18 years, the percentage of campuses with an advising center nearly tripled to 73% in 1997. This increase is reflected in the varied organizational models on college campuses, all seven of which include full-time advisors other than the faculty-only model (Reinarz, 2000).

These professional, full-time advisors have specialized skills and strengths to contribute to their campuses (Reinarz, 2000). Primarily, they are committed to the role of academic advising and enjoy working with students in an advising relationship in a reliable and accessible way, assuming a manageable advising load. They typically offer one-to-one appointments, answer questions via email and telephone, lead small group sessions, and orient new students. Many come from backgrounds in higher education administration, education, counseling, or social work and come to the profession with a background in student development theory. Other professional advisors tend to come from disciplines within the academic ranks, such as the liberal arts and sciences. The varied backgrounds of a professional advising staff could be particularly beneficial to the campus.

The cost to the institution for choosing to use professional academic advisors varies by campus location and advisor credentials. The credibility of these advisors among faculty and other administrators depends upon campus culture (Reinarz, 2000). It is important for upper-level administrators to seek input from professional advisors regarding academic decisions related to advisors' daily activities, such as course offerings and potential new major offerings. It is also important to create strong relationships between faculty and professional advisors, resulting in respectful and knowledgeable colleagues who act as referral agents.

The weakness of a professional advising staff would be mostly related to an individual's lack of teaching experience and direct involvement in the disciplines (Reinarz, 2000). To address this, Reinarz (2000) suggested that professional advisors need to reserve time for visiting classes and interacting with faculty. Therefore, professional advisors need to participate in ongoing professional development opportunities to keep them connected. Self (2008) suggested that professional academic advisors use their referral skills to get students to appropriate resources. Although professional academic advisors are typically very knowledgeable, there is a point at which they should understand that they cannot be all things to all students. Typical referrals may include those to professional licensed counselors or to financial aid counselors.

Self (2008) identified several additional challenges to professional academic advisors. First is a lack of a clear progression ladder at their institutions. Although many academic advisors choose to remain in the ranks of professional academic advisors through retirement, most institutions lack in opportunities to take on advanced roles, titles, and responsibilities. Second, many institutions rely on professional academic advisors to take on institution-wide challenges such as student retention initiatives on top of their normal duties, which reveals a true misunderstanding by upper administrators of professional academic advisors and how professional advisors spend their time and perform their duties. Third, the decision to hire professional academic advisors requires a significant institutional financial commitment, especially when a master's degree is required, which is the national standard.

Academic Advising in Student Affairs Versus Academic Affairs

According to King (2002), academic advising on college campuses can be found in the student affairs arena, or in the academic affairs division, or both. According to *ACT's Fifth National Survey on Academic Advising* (ACT, 1999), academic affairs reporting lines

outnumbered student affairs by more than two to one. However, nearly 40% of two-year public college advising coordinators reported to student affairs. In a similar 1993 survey sponsored by ACT, student affairs was the reporting line for those in charge of academic advising services in less than one out of five institutions, and most of those institutions were two-year colleges (Habley, 1993).

There are differences in reporting lines in the case of academic advising programs for undeclared or exploratory students (King, 2002). According to *ACT's Fifth National Survey on Academic Advising* (Habley & Morales, 1998), academic department faculty members advise a majority of students with decided majors, with academic advising oversight provided by the academic affairs division. Full-time or professional academic advisors are used most often in academic advising centers for undeclared, freshmen, or at-risk students. Data from the same survey (Habley & Morales, 1998) also suggested that "there is a movement toward the organization of advising services in which responsibility is shared between faculty advisors and staff advisors and counselors" (p. 62). Additionally, Habley and Morales (1998) suggested that there may be an "acceptance of a broader understanding that campus approaches to advising must be systematic and collaborative" (p. 62).

This trend toward seeing academic advising as a shared responsibility reflects a growing movement toward greater collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs (King, 2002). On many American campuses, student success has become a campus-wide initiative, involving both academic affairs and student affairs professionals, and certainly effective campus advising programs contribute to the formation and nourishment of such a climate (King, 2002). As an example, those working in the student affairs arena offer a great deal in terms of

knowledge of student development theory and student learning theory, as well as a desire to partner with those in academic affairs (King, 2002).

As King (2002) pointed out, several professional publications have played an important role “in increased collaboration and connections between student affairs and academic affairs” (p. 1). In 1993, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) produced such a document, called the *Student Learning Imperative* (ACPA, 1996). This document affirms the role of the student affairs division within the overall mission of the institution and its goal of student learning and personal development (ACPA, 1996). According to King (2002), such partnership models seem to be

extremely beneficial for academic advising programs. The ‘silo approach’ that still exists on many campuses, with its clear division between academic affairs and student affairs, is clearly not in the best interest of a campus culture that facilitates student success. (p. 1)

Academic Advising Job Satisfaction and Salaries

The literature shows that overall, academic advisors are satisfied with their jobs (Donnelly, 2004). Specifically, one study (Donnelly, 2004) examined the effect of national and local standards and guidelines on job satisfaction among professional and faculty academic advisors. The study shows that the more advisors are connected to standards of practice, the greater the job satisfaction. Student centeredness and availability of advising-related resources are also important in job satisfaction.

A NACADA 2000 study on advisor satisfaction and perceived avenues to enhancement of advising services examined and compared responses from professional academic advisors, faculty advisors, and academic advising administrators (Lynch, 2002a). The study found that faculty advisors had a higher average rate of satisfaction with their number of advisees than did

professional advisors. The study also noted that professional academic advisors rated the adequacy of advising support staff significantly higher than did academic advising administrators. Conversely, academic advising administrators rated the adequacy of their operating budget and professional development resources significantly higher than did professional academic advisors. When examining satisfaction, professional advisors were more satisfied with their direct service workload than administrators, and administrators held a greater satisfaction than professional academic advisors in the extent to which advisors' opinions are considered in decision making at the institutional level (Lynch, 2002a).

The same NACADA 2000 study also looked at advisor recommendations for improved advising services on their campus (Lynch, 2002a). The study found that 74% of advisors (both professional and faculty advisors) believed that an increase in funding would do the most to improve advising services on their campuses, although increasing the number of advisors (60%) would also be beneficial (Lynch, 2002b). The survey also found that an increase in support staff (51%) as well as an increase in professional development resources (50%) would be a significant step forward in improving campus advising.

A 2000 NACADA survey of academic advising documented levels of compensation for those in the advising field (Lynch, 2002b). As expected, the most relevant qualifications in determining advisor compensation are level of academic training and academic advising experience. For those advisors with associate degrees, an annual salary of \$20,000-\$29,000 was average. Advisors with higher degrees averaged \$30,000-\$39,000, and those with doctoral degrees were more likely to be at the very highest level of compensation (Lynch, 2002b). According to a 2010-2011 survey of senior college administrators, directors of academic

advising earned an average of \$63,054. Those with the title of director of student academic counseling earned an average of \$64,601 per year (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2011).

Women in Higher Education Administration

Most academic advisors in higher education are women, making female professionals working within student affairs and higher education an important group for examination (Lynch, 2002b). This female majority has much to do with how academic advisors view their success in the field of student affairs, academic affairs, and higher education. According to Blackhurst, Brandt, and Kalinowski (1998), women in student affairs are more likely to be committed to their organizations and satisfied with their lives, when they have higher levels of education, are happy with their position titles, have more years of experience in higher education, and have more experience in their present positions. Another study examined women student affairs administrators and the relationships between career development, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction (Blackhurst, et al., 1998). These results also showed a significant relationship between career development factors and both organizational commitment and life satisfaction (Blackhurst et al., 1998).

In most disciplines, women are out-earning men in degree attainment. According to the U. S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (2010), more women than men graduate with Associate's (62%), Bachelor's (57.3%), Master's (60.6%), and Doctoral degrees (51.0%). In the case of doctoral degrees, men earned more degrees (58%) in the 1997-1998 academic year but were later surpassed by women (51.0%) in 2007-2008 (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). Women (49.7%) have not yet caught up to men in the number of first professional degrees awarded, although their share of these degrees has increased 6.8 %

since 1997-1998 and are projected to surpass men by 2017 (U. S. Department of Education, 2010).

Even though women are out-earning men in degree attainment, many women choose to leave higher education as an employment field. For those women who leave their positions in student affairs and higher education, there could be several issues at play. According to Jo (2008), there are the three primary reasons for women administrator turnover in higher education, when studied at one Ivy League school. These reasons are conflict with their supervisors, inadequate advancement opportunities, and work schedules that were incompatible with the demands of their life circumstances.

These themes were personally true for Baron (2008), a woman working in higher education who questioned her next phase of life. She wondered if completing a doctorate was a wise choice. She explored and questioned why she longed for a doctorate, her concerns over her age at the time of earning the doctorate, her ability to focus on doctoral studies while being a wife and mother, how her studies would affect her family, and if institutions of higher education would hire her at the age of 57 (Baron, 2008). Baron recognized that, in the past, “many women were raised to marry and have a family, making our husbands and children our ‘direction.’ It’s what many of our mothers did, and their mothers” (2008, p. 1). She also recognized that “for those of us who chose a different path, we have made rich, strong decisions that may or may not have been met with welcome arms, depending on our audiences” (Baron, 2008, p. 1).

Women Administrators in Community Colleges

In the community college system, there is a “perceived lack of qualified individuals” (VanDerLinden, 2004, p. 1) in leadership positions, yet women are still “disproportionately represented in middle-level administrative positions” (VanDerLinden, 2004, p. 13). Although the

levels of women in senior-level positions in the community college system have been on the rise, “the representation of women in top administrative positions is still not proportionate to their representation in the classroom, nor in the community college faculty ranks” (VanDerLinden, 2004, p. 13).

Underrepresentation of women of color in community college administration also continues. According to Opp and Gosetti (2002), “the increase in the number of women administrators has been particularly pronounced in 2-year institutions. Yet the status of women administrators of color at 2-year institutions is less clear than the status of women administrators overall” (p. 592). Specifically, when examining the proportional representation of women administrators at community colleges, the researchers found that “White women administrators experienced by far the largest increase in proportional representation, followed by considerably smaller increases for Black, Hispanic, Asian American, and American Indian women administrators, respectively” (Opp & Gosetti, 2002, p. 603), but the proportion varied by type of institution (i.e. size, locale, and race).

Women as Senior Administrators

There is a fair amount of literature on women who achieve the highest levels of higher education administration. Touchton, Shavlik, and Davis (1991) find that 40% percent of women college presidents held an education degree as their highest degree. Additionally, as of the early 1990s, 5% of female college presidents held a position in higher education other than teaching for their first positions after earning their bachelor’s degrees (Touchton et al, 1991).

Despite the growing number of women working in higher education and taking on the presidency, men continue to hold more of the senior student affairs positions while women are

clustered in mid-level positions (Jones & Komives, 2001). Additionally, despite this inequality, Jones and Komives noted that

women have consistently contributed to the development of the student affairs profession and continue to provide leadership in both theory generation and practice. The influence of women in student affairs administration is deeply rooted in the history of the profession and permeates current administrative practice and leadership in the field. (p. 231)

Gender inequity also persists outside of student affairs administration. A study of women who have successfully achieved a senior position in higher education identified how these administrators overcame barriers to success. Tiao (2006) found that women who succeeded as top-level executives had to “constantly overachieve, maintain good relationships with others, hold onto personal and institutional values to do the right things, expand themselves constantly, and utilize strong mentors’ assistance as well as sponsorship” (p. v). She also found that when faced with “implicit and explicit challenges such as unequal treatment, gender bias, resistance, political juggling, or personal struggles, they rely on private confrontation, emotional intelligence, and tenacity, as well as all possible support and resources to survive and thrive” (Tiao, 2006, p. v). Additionally, Tiao (2006) determined that “having more women in powerful leadership positions will foster a more diversified, inclusive management culture and improve executive women leaders’ experiences at work” (p. v). A similar study found that women in higher education administration must pursue opportunities presented as well as find their own personal balance between career and family to enjoy the benefits of career advancement (Wooten, 2006).

Patitu and Hinton (2003) examined the experiences of African American women administrators and faculty members in higher education. They found that, in addition to gender inequality in higher education administration, racial inequality remains and that for many African American professional women in higher education, the two exist in tandem, both resulting in marginalization of their positions at the institutions. This would include being “placed at the periphery of the decision-making process, access to resources, and participation in organizations” (Patitu & Hinton, 2003, p. 82). In an earlier research study, Hinton (2001) found that several African American women administrators from various institutional types felt that their race was a more salient factor than their gender as they attempted to maintain their current mid-level or senior-level positions or advance professionally in higher education.

Career Development

Career development is the next topic for examination. This section discusses several major theorists and their most popular theories. The section also explores the career development of doctoral students and the importance of role models in career development.

Major Theorists

The issue of choosing the right career has origins going back as far as the 15th century, and by the end of the 19th century, at least 65 books had been published on the same topic (Zytowski, 1972). However, the roots of modern career development and its theories were not seen until the early 1900s with the publication of Parson’s (1909/1967) book, *Choosing a Vocation*. It is in this book that Parsons wrote,

An occupation out of harmony with the worker’s aptitudes and capacities means inefficiency, unenthusiastic and perhaps distasteful labor, and low pay; while an

occupation in harmony with the nature of the man means enthusiasm, love of work, and high economic values, - superior product, efficient service, and good pay. (p. 3)

This quote typifies Parsons' writings and how they revolve around the notion that if individuals were actively involved in choosing their careers, they would gain more satisfaction with the career activity and their employer. Parsons (1909/1967) also concluded that, as a result, employers' costs would decrease as the efficiency of the individual increases. This premise is still at the core of many modern career choice and career development theories.

From 1951 to 1963, six major vocational development or vocational choice theories were established, but only two have survived to be germinal to the contemporary field of career development, those of John Holland (1959) and Donald Super (Salomone, 1996).

John Holland. In response to then recent theories of occupational choice, Holland (1959) created his theory of vocational choice. This theory explained that

At the time of vocational choice the person is the product of the interaction of his particular heredity with a variety of cultural and personal forces including peers, parents, and significant adults, his social class, American culture, and the physical environment.
(p. 35)

Through this interaction between individual and environment, a person develops a preferred method of dealing with tasks in the environment and these methods are associated with "different kinds of physical and social environments, and with differential patterns of abilities" leading to different occupational orientations (Holland, 1959, p. 35). These occupational orientations include certain variables, such as interests and values, interpersonal skills, role-playing, and other personal factors (Holland, 1959). Each person has several orientations, ranked

by relative strengths (Holland, 1959). This hierarchy may be determined by interest inventories addressing a person's attitudes, values, needs, etc.

These six occupational environments are the following personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (Holland, 1997). These occupational environments/personality types are described next.

The motoric environment/realistic personality type. Traits include being reserved, scientific, quiet, highly trained, and hardheaded. This type is characterized by an interest in motor coordination, physical strength, skill, and masculinity. Realistic individuals often lack social skills. Examples include laborers, machine operators, farmers, carpenters, aviators, and truck drivers, such as Thomas Edison and Admiral Byrd (Holland, 1959; see also Brown, 2002; Weinrach, 1984).

The intellectual environment/investigative personality type. Traits include being curious, scholarly, analytical, intellectual, and precise. Characteristics include organizing and understanding rather than persuading or dominating, antisocial behavior, and thinking rather than acting. Often, investigative individuals lack leadership skills. Examples include chemists, mathematicians, anthropologists, physicists, and biologists, such as Madam Curie and Charles Darwin (Holland, 1959; see also Brown, 2002; Weinrach, 1984).

The esthetic environment/artistic personality type. Traits include being dreamy, idealistic, imaginative, sensitive, verbal, complicated, introspective, and intuitive. Characteristics include a strong ability for self-expression and dislike for structure, preferring activities that involve interpersonal interactions or physical skill. Examples include artists, musicians, sculptors, writers, and poets, such as Maya Angelou, T. S. Eliot and Pablo Picasso (Holland, 1959; see also Brown, 2002; Weinrach, 1984).

The supportive environment/social personality type. Traits include being friendly, persuasive, sincere, trusting, warm, and capable. Characteristics include a preference for working with others in a therapeutic or teaching situation, and avoidance of situations that involve intellectual problem solving or a need for intense physical skill or the use of tools and machinery. Examples include vocational counselors, human relations, therapists, social workers, teachers, and interviewers, such as Jane Addams and Albert Schweitzer (Holland, 1959; see also Brown, 2002; Weinrach, 1984).

The persuasive environment/enterprising personality type. Traits include being aggressive, popular, confident, extroverted, power-seeking, shrewd, and energetic. Characteristics include a preference for situations that require verbal skill for the purpose of manipulating and dominating others. Enterprising individuals tend to avoid systematic and symbolic activities. Examples include leaders, business executives, salespeople, managers, politicians, and promoters, such as Henry Ford and Andrew Carnegie (Holland, 1959; see also Brown, 2002; Weinrach, 1984).

The conforming environment/conventional personality type. Traits include being speculative, conscientious, rebellious, neat, content, practical-minded, and conventional. Characteristics include a deep interest in rules and regulations, subordination of personal neediness, and powerful self-control. Conventional individuals tend to avoid artistic activities. Examples include file clerks, book keepers, bank tellers, and secretaries, such as Bernard Baruch and John D. Rockefeller (Holland, 1959; see also Brown, 2002; Weinrach, 1984)

Among these types, some are more closely related than others, and this relationship may be represented in the shape of a hexagon (Holland, 1997) as shown in Figure 1.

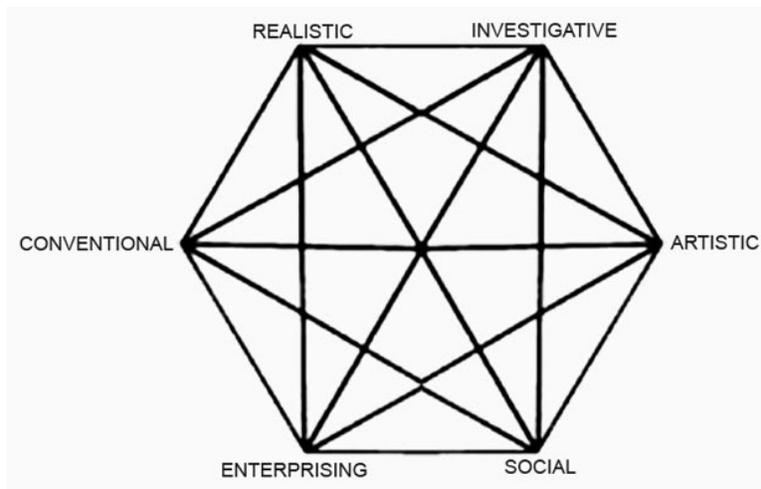


Figure 1. Holland's hexagonal typology. Reproduced by special permission of the publisher, Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., 16204 North Florida Avenue, Lutz, FL 33549, from J. L. Holland, *Making Vocational Choices*, Third Edition, Copyright 1973, 1985, 1992, 1997 by Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc. All rights reserved.

One of the uses of Holland's hexagon is to represent the psychological similarities across types (Weinrach, 1984). For example, artistic and social types are positioned adjacent to each other because they have more traits in common than enterprising and investigative types have in common (Weinrach, 1984). Additionally, the closer on the hexagon two types may be, the more consistent an individual is considered to be (Weinrach, 1984).

As an example, an enterprising (E) individual who also expresses interest in conventional (C) and social (S) activities would have a three letter Holland code of ECS and is considered to be more consistent in his or her type than an enterprising person who has a preference for artistic and investigative (EAI; Weinrach, 1984). The lines on the hexagon show the relationship

between types and the varying degree of fit resulting varied levels of congruency. Shorter lines between types indicate less congruency (Spokane, Luchetta, & Richwine, 2002).

Holland's theory has been used as the basis for many assessments on individuals and their environment. The most widely used of the interest inventories is the Self-Directed Search (SDS; Brown, 2002). Other common career assessments include the Vocational Preference Inventory, My Vocational Situation and the VI Scale, the Position Classification Inventory, and the Career Attitudes and Strategies Inventory (Brown, 2002).

Through the years, Holland has revised his theory several times, created numerous assessment instruments, and spawned hundreds of research studies. The totality of these subsequent theories and assessments has resulted in Holland's theory becoming the germinal and most influential of all vocational choice models to date (Brown, 2002; Gore, & Metz, 2008).

Donald Super. In 1953, Super first published his theory of career choice and development, a theory he continued to refine and revise throughout his life (Brown, 2002). Through its many changes, the theory included 10 to 14 propositions, based on the idea of vocational psychology and focused on how individual work lives unfold through one's lifetime (Savickas, 2002). One of Super's many contributions was the idea of the life-career rainbow (Super, 1980). A life-career rainbow is a concept meant to show the idea of multidimensional careers, how time is involved in these careers, and the emotional commitment that is given to each career role. The life-career rainbow attempts to "describe more adequately the many aspects of a career throughout the lifespan" (Super, 1980, p. 283) as opposed to other theorists such as Holland, who looked at careers as a sequence of jobs or positions a person has throughout their life, or as a decision tree used by those leaving school and entering the world of work.

Super's (1980) life-space concept, an integral element in his career theory, is based on the idea that individuals play many roles as they age, and these roles start early on. In approximate chronological order, these nine roles are child, student, one engaged in leisure activities and idling, citizen, worker or unemployed worker, spouse, homemaker, parent, and pensioner. These nine roles tend to happen in four principal settings or theaters, which are in the home, community, school or college, and the place of work. Although other theaters such as the church, the club, or the retirement home do exist, not all typically apply to each person (Super, 1980). Through his development and study of life-space, Super (1980; Gore, & Metz, 2008) found that, as people play several roles during the same time period while in different theaters, these roles do impact each other; success in one area (such as family or community) assists in achieving success in others (such as leisure and occupation). This results in a vocational self-concept.

Super (1980) also noted that a vocational self-concept is developed as “decision points occur before and at the time of taking on a new role, of giving up an old role, and of making significant changes in the nature of an existing role” (p. 291). As an example, although decisions about working and getting married may be related for some people, for many they are not (Super, 1980). Finally, Super (1980) noted that “roles increase and decrease in importance with the life stage in which a person finds himself, according to the developmental tasks which are encountered with increasing age” (p. 288).

Career Development of Doctoral Students

According to Lehker and Furlong (2006), campus career services tailored to the needs of graduate students foster student success by helping students explore careers outside academia, prepare for academic and nonacademic post-graduation job searches, and assist students in making the transition from graduate school to their professional positions. In addition, campus

career counselors can assist graduate students by using a developmental approach, and being aware of graduate student issues and how they bear on graduate students' career success (Lehker & Furlong, 2006).

Developmentally, graduate students bring many influences to career decision making that one does not usually see in the traditional undergraduate population. D.W. Stewart (1995) suggested a framework for interpreting the experiences of graduate students. He laid out three developmental stages: entry, engagement, and exit. The entry state is characterized by many of the same issues that undergraduates face: maintaining motivation, developing a clear sense of purpose, and living up to academic demands. For graduate students, the entry stage also includes increased isolation, decreasing independence, and the intense scrutiny that often comes with beginning graduate courses and responsibilities. Although graduate student orientations are often available to assist with adjustment issues, many graduate students are too busy to set up a campus support network in the first semester, and their friends and family outside academia do not truly understand the challenges these students face.

During the entry stage, many graduate students are also adjusting to the amount of intense scrutiny they are receiving and the rate at which they must endure continual evaluation from their professors and peers (D.W. Stewart, 1995). For those graduate students in competitive graduate programs, adjustment may be even more intense. Often, graduate students do not feel comfortable turning to their advisors during times of struggle for fear of being seen as weak or losing financial support from their advisors. In other words, graduate students may become duty-bound to their advisors and their academic programs, which erodes their sense of personal autonomy.

The middle stage, or engagement stage of graduate student development, typically occurs in the second and third year of the program and is characterized by a focus on self-preservation and achievement (D.W. Stewart, 1995). By this time, many graduate students have established their confidence in their abilities to make a contribution to their field through the assignment of course grades, being published, or receiving an academic award or scholarship. This comfort may turn to crisis through procrastination. If a graduate student becomes too comfortable with the graduate student lifestyle, she or he may put off graduation, unsure of her or his ability to adjust to the next phase of their career progression. Additionally, if graduate or research advisors starts to perceive that a student is taking too long to graduate, she or he may increase her or his pressure on students, even taking it to the point of harassment or emotional abuse.

During the exit stage, doctoral students may have feelings of inadequacy about their knowledge level or about their ability, and these feelings may continue after finding post-doctoral employment (D.W. Stewart, 1995). The many years of living as a graduate student may result in a lack of social skills, interpersonal comfort, and a lack in the ability to communicate with others, especially outside academia. As they are starting the job search process, graduate students may experience “tremendous disillusionment as the self-sustaining notion of the ideal job crumbles and they are left wondering why they spent so many years pursuing a goal that does not seem likely to pay off in a material sense” (D.W. Stewart, 1995, p. 21). This disillusionment is often accompanied by extreme pressure from one’s research advisor or committee members to quickly finish the dissertation or research component. The combination of these two creates a conflict that may result in depression or burnout that may prevent a student from moving forward for a time. This may lead to a higher level of procrastination or a passive-aggressive

avoidance of finishing the remaining tasks for graduation. Feelings of inadequacy or doubts about one's worthiness for the degree may develop as well.

Although only provided as a model and not a theory, this process of graduate student development (D.W. Stewart, 1995) offers benefits for those seeking to support graduate students, including campus mental health counselors, career counselors, graduate advisors, and researchers. This final stage may be the most salient to the current study because of its ability to affect the future career success of doctoral graduates in higher education administration.

Role Models in Career Development

According to Gibson (2004), traditionally, a role model is a person “who provides an example for individuals to imitate” (p. 135). Although while research on career mentors—someone of greater experience and seniority who facilitates the development of a less-experienced person for the benefit of that person (Javidan, Bemmels, Stratton-Devine, & Dastmalchian, 1995)—has boomed, empirical research on role models is limited (Gibson, 2004; Javidan, et al. 1995). Additionally, little research exists on what a successful role model is and what contributes to being viewed as such (Gibson, 2004; Javidan, et al. 1995). In fact, much research that has focused on mentoring uses the term role model as a function of mentoring or as a synonym for mentoring (Gibson, 2004; Javidan, et al. 1995).

The biggest difference between mentoring and role modeling is that of the personal interaction. Although the mentoring process requires the consent of both parties, a role model may not have knowledge of, let alone interaction with, the person who has taken on a role model. Nonetheless, authors researching career development have created definitions for the term role model. For example, Roth and Esdaile (2003) described role models as

individuals who demonstrate for you how something is done. Professional or personal skills can be patterned after the performance of role models. We usually admire the actions of these individuals and learn by comparing our behavior to theirs, analyzing the gap in performance, and working to behave more like they do. (p. 248)

According to Savickas (2002), “the process of transforming a preoccupation into an occupation relies greatly on identifying role models who show a path forward from the family to the community” (p. 162). Lockwood and Kunda (1997), in their research on predicting the impact of role models on the self, noted that

when an outstanding individual seems relevant, one will compare oneself to this individual. The consequences of this comparison for the self will then depend on the perceived attainability of that individual’s success. If the superstar’s success seems attainable, one will be inspired. The superstar illustrates the wonderful heights of accomplishment one can hope to achieve, encourages and motivates one to strive for this now all the more palpable success, indicates particular goals to aim for along the way, points to the road one should follow to achieve them, and makes one feel more competent and capable of such achievement. (p. 93)

Several other researchers have also examined the function of role models (rather than mentoring) on careers and career theory.

According to Redmond (1991), who studied the life and career paths of deans within nursing programs, having female role models was one of the most significant themes in Redmond’s research regarding female nursing deans. Researchers Flouri and Buchanan (2002) found that having a career role model was positively associated with career maturity for British adolescents. Greene, Sullivan, and Beyard-Tyler (1982) found that student attitudes toward sex-

typed careers can be changed by exposure to career information containing nontraditional role models. Vaughan (1989) found that female community college presidents tended to be motivated to move up their career ladder by a negative role model. More specifically, more than half of the respondents indicated that those in administrative leadership positions at their campuses (who disliked change, delegated too much onto others, hated change, were autocratic leaders, lacked vision or leadership abilities, or performed poorly) inspired them to move up the administrative career ladder, believing that they could do better (Vaughan, 1989).

Doctoral Study in Higher Education

Doctoral study in higher education is the next topic of exploration. The discussion begins with the topic of doctoral students in higher education administration. The section then goes on to discuss other aspects salient to doctoral education and the student experience.

Doctoral Students in Higher Education Administration

Poock and Love's (2001) study examined the program choice of doctoral students in higher education administration through the nationwide use of the Program Choice Questionnaire. Students over the age of 40 considered a location close to home, availability of evening classes, and the ability to pursue studies part-time to be significantly more important than did respondents under the age of 40. Students aged 30 or younger considered several factors to be more important than those over the age of 30: opportunity for assistantship, input from colleagues or current professionals, input from parents and family, and the job responsibilities of assistantships.

A similar study (Talbot, Maier, & Rushlau, 1996) found the following factors to be the most important to those applying to doctoral programs in higher education administration: reputation (of the institution, academic program, and faculty in the program) and opportunities

for an assistantship or fellowship. Other popular factors among participants were whether or not a Ph.D. or Ed.D. was awarded, reputation of the student affairs division at that particular institution, geographical location, reputation of the graduates of the program, flexibility of the program, and advice from the participants' mentors.

A 1988 study of recent graduates of doctoral programs in higher education found that the students who participated in these types of programs had changed dramatically between 1972 and 1987 (Mason & Townsend, 1988). In 1972, typical doctoral students in higher education programs were male (86.9%), White (88.1%), preferred to seek the Ph.D. (59.5%), were just over 36 years of age at graduation, and took an average of three years or less to graduate (66.7%). In 1986, the typical student in this program was female (58.6%), White (82.3%), preferred the Ed.D., was 43 years old at graduation, and took an average of six years (71.8%) to complete the degree. It was reported that these demographic changes reflected a general trend among students in doctoral programs toward more women and other minority students being enrolled in these programs (Budig, Hammond, & Bailey, 1984; Mason, & Townsend, 1988).

This same study (Mason & Townsend, 1988) reported on career patterns for doctoral graduates in higher education. The study found that 71-78% of respondents spent their entire professional career after graduation within higher education, either as an administrator or as a faculty member, with most (41.5%) at middle management levels at the time of the survey. Middle management positions, according to the study, were the first postdoctoral employment position for a decreasing number of graduates; 50% in 1972, and 37.6% in 1988. These include such titles as director of housing, director of counseling, registrar, athletic director, or admissions director. The study also reported that less than 12 % of the sample held a senior administrator position, such as dean of academic or student affairs.

Also in the study (Mason & Townsend, 1988), for those graduates who have pursued careers outside of education (37.5%), most were employed as K-12 principals or teachers, or as employees of various state agencies that work with K-12 education. Others were employed in business positions within career areas such as personnel administration or financial insurance.

The most intriguing results of this survey indicated that only 47.7% (1977) to 61.5% (1984) of the graduates would pursue a doctorate in higher education if they were starting their studies again (Mason & Townsend, 1988). The respondents remarked that the degree, at the time, was not held in as high esteem as traditional, academic-based majors and that it was considered less rigorous than other subject areas by established professional administrators in the field.

Townsend and Wiese (1992) also studied administrators in higher education and their perceptions of the value associated with a higher education doctorate for various college and university administrative positions. Their study found that “individuals desiring administrative positions in community colleges or student affairs administrative positions at any type of college or university should strongly consider seeking a doctorate in higher education” (Townsend & Wiese, 1992, p. 57). Furthermore, their findings suggested that “vice presidents or deans of student affairs regard the higher education doctorate more positively than do presidents and vice presidents or deans of academic affairs” (Townsend & Wiese, 1992, p. 56). They also found that, in general, possession of a doctoral degree is considered necessary for advancement to senior-level administrative positions, particularly at larger institutions of higher education, but that “almost one-third of the respondents at institutions other than community colleges would prefer a student affairs candidate have a doctorate in an academic discipline” (p. 57).

Townsend and Mason (1990) also compared two groups of subjects from 1972 and 1987. The study found that most higher education doctoral recipients in 1987 spent their entire post-

doctoral professional career in higher education. Most of the recent subjects were currently in middle management positions, and the next largest group was that of current faculty members (Townsend & Mason, 1990). The percentage of graduates who had not found employment in higher education had risen from 5% to more than 19% within three years (Townsend & Mason, 1990). Of those who were dissatisfied with their doctoral experience, many felt that higher education as a field of study held a low status and that the program was narrow or not as challenging intellectually as other fields (Townsend & Mason, 1990). Over 70% found their doctoral work to be relevant or highly relevant to their professional duties (Townsend & Mason, 1990).

Coomes, Belch, and Saddlemire (1991) produced a status report on doctoral programs for student affairs practitioners and found that “no accreditation of higher education doctoral programs is in effect” (p. 63). In this report, the authors found that there was a definite need for administrative experience in higher education prior to admission to a doctoral program. They also found that the typical faculty member within a doctoral program in higher education possessed eight years of experience and was a former administrator. Program content was also examined and showed that there was a wide range of degree titles as well as concentration areas, including student personnel administration or student affairs, administration or management, academic administration, and community college administration.

This same study found that, in terms of admission to higher education doctoral programs, most required aptitude examinations (94%), personal interviews (79%), and prior experience in higher education (69%; Coomes et al., 1991). This study also examined the demographics of the students enrolled in such programs. More than half of the students were part-time (63%), women (56%), Caucasian (79%), and planned to pursue careers in administration rather than a career as

a faculty member (80%). Additionally, the majority of students were between 31 and 35 years old. Ethnic minorities made up 21% of the sample. Komives (1993) researched the nature of doctoral preparation for student affairs and higher education administrative, teaching, and research positions. She found that “there is a growing expectation of doctoral study for both advancement and credibility in student affairs” (Komives, 1993, p. 391). More specifically, she pointed out that “most opportunities for advancement or even lateral shifts are likely to be reduced when master’s degree applicants are compared to similarly experienced peers who have doctorates” (Komives, 1993, p. 391). Furthermore, Komives noted that “many mid-management and upper-management positions in most institutions simply will not be available without the doctoral credential” (p. 391). Herbrand (2001) found that “holding a doctorate is an advantage in reaching the Senior Student Affairs Officer position” (p. 53). She also noted that “the doctorate is now a virtual necessity” (Herbrand, 2001, p. 53). Komives stated that “prospective doctoral students without any prior experience in higher education may find the degree alone insufficient in seeking an administrative position in higher education” (p. 391).

Komives (1993) offered several career options for those earning the higher education doctoral degree. She shared that the doctoral degree offers formal, concentrated opportunities to gain specialized career skills and competencies whether one’s career focus is on a specific administrative area such as residence life, becoming a faculty member, or moving into the highest levels of campus-wide management such as a vice president or dean (Komives, 1993). Specifically, Komives also stated that “seeking a doctorate for career advancement often requires shifting from functional-area specialty skills to advanced educational administration skills” (p. 391). In the realm of community colleges, the doctorate in higher education is greatly valued and is fairly common for presidents (Komives, 1993, p. 392).

A study by Daddona, Cooper, and Dunn (2006) explored the career paths and expectations of recent doctoral graduates in higher education and student affairs. The study found that new doctoral graduates obtained their postdoctoral position at a significantly lower level than they had originally expected, but the participants were able to accurately predict their starting salaries. The researchers suggested that willingness to relocate, having a professional position prior to beginning a doctoral program, and interest in administration versus faculty positions as possible limitations to meeting expected career outcomes for these graduates. For example, three respondents took positions as counselors or advisors, but none of the graduates expected that title, perhaps because most counselor or advisor positions do not require a doctoral degree. Also, fewer graduates obtained a position such as vice president, assistant or associate vice president, or dean than originally expected.

Doctoral Graduates in Education

Zimpfer and DeTrude (1990), in their study of doctoral graduates in educational counseling, show that obtaining the doctoral degree did not necessarily mean a new career or new position. In addition, their research shows that the doctorate for many may be more like continuing education or professional development. This study looked at a national population of doctoral graduates in counselor preparation in 1984-85. The study revealed a high level of preparation-related employment representing a diverse number of settings. For those studying educational counseling, private practice has emerged as a significant employment setting and is projected to increase. Professional productivity was substantial as was the average level of experience of the graduates.

In his 1991 research study of K-12 school administrators, Wildman (1991) found that earning a doctorate did not make a person a better education administrator or instructional leader.

The study also showed that education administrators with doctorates provided a broader perspective with educational issues and are more likely to engage in behaviors that align with significantly higher quality of instructional leadership than those without the degree (Wildman, 1991).

Characteristics of Graduate School Attendees

Several authors found that students of “greater academic achievement, higher socioeconomic background, and greater academic and social integration at their undergraduate institution are the most likely to pursue graduate studies” (Kallio, 1995, p. 110). Specifically, Ethington and Smart (1986) found that “background variables do affect decisions to enroll in graduate school, although indirectly through intervening variables. Primary direct influences on graduate school attendance were found from variables associated with the undergraduate experience” (p. 287). In the same study, Ethington and Smart found that students who are more involved in various academic and social integration activities at the undergraduate level are more likely to persist toward degree completion at the undergraduate level, and subsequently are more likely to enroll in graduate education.

The Council of Graduate Schools reported on American graduate school enrollment and degrees awarded, painting a detailed portrait of the graduate student population. This report (Bell, 2010) indicated that, in the fall of 2009, there were 1.8 million students enrolled in graduate certificate and degree programs in the United States. A total of 59.6% of these graduate students were enrolled at public institutions, 31.1% were enrolled at private institutions, and the remaining 9.3% were enrolled at private, for-profit institutions. The study also reported that most students were enrolled full time (56.2%) rather than part time (43.8%). A greater percentage of men (60.3%) than women (54.4%) attended graduate school full time. Additionally,

approximately three-quarters (75.7%) of graduate students were in master's degree programs or graduate certificate programs, while one quarter (24.3%) of graduate students were enrolled in doctoral programs.

The same study by the Council for Graduate Schools reported that the annual number of doctoral degrees awarded in 2008-2009 showed an increase of 3.9% over the prior year, and the total number of master's degrees increased 4.3% within that same period (Bell, 2010). From 2003-2004 through 2008-2009, the average increase in the number of doctorates granted rose 6%, while there was a 3.6% increase for those earning the master's degree. Bell (2010) attributed this increase to the growth in the number of women earning advanced degrees at institutions from all Carnegie classifications.

Gender/race/ethnicity. There were more women (51.9%) than men (41.1%) attending graduate school in the fall of 2009, but a larger share of women were enrolled at the master's or certificate level (61.3%) when compared to the doctoral level (51.4%; Bell, 2010). Those graduate students with U.S. citizenship and permanent residency made up 84.5% of the total graduate student population, while those with temporary residency totaled 15.5% (Bell, 2010). The majority of graduate student attendees during this time period were White (70.8%), followed by Black/African American (13.6%), Hispanic/Latino (8.4%), Asian/Pacific Islander (6.6%), and American Indian/Alaskan Native (.08%). A total of 29.2% of all U.S. citizens and permanent resident graduate students were racial/ethnic minorities.

Field of study. The fields of education (23.8%), business (17.6%), and health sciences (10.2%) had the largest number of graduate students (Bell, 2010). The largest increase in doctoral degrees awarded between 1998-1999 and 2008-2009 was seen in the health sciences (25.8%). Other fields of study with increased degree production at the doctoral level include

public administration and services (7.8%), education (5.4%), and the biological and agriculture sciences (5.1%).

The Decision to Pursue a Graduate Degree

Students pursue graduate education for a number of reasons. Malaney (1987) found that students hope to learn more about a specialty area, gain improved job prospects, gain personal satisfaction, and explore an interest in a particular career path that requires an advanced degree. Malaney also found that younger students tended to go to graduate school because they had nothing better to do or because their job prospects would be better, whereas older students decided to go to graduate school for professional reasons. Additionally, Malaney found that students with higher grade point averages were more likely than their lower GPA peers to attend graduate school to “learn more about a specialty” (p. 253) or because they “had nothing else they wanted to do” (p. 253). Kallio (1995) researched the factors influencing the college choice decisions of graduate students who applied to a major research university. Of the findings, work-related concerns, financial aid, and spouse concerns were factors that affected the decision to attend and the decision to choose a particular graduate school (Kallio, 1995).

Stiber (2000) created a behavioral approach to study the market for business doctoral education at one particular private university. Through this study, Stiber created what he named an enrollment process model, which was used as a guide in a survey of current students in the program. The development of this model led to the creation of a project that characterized the decision-making process leading to student enrollment in the program, and ultimately assisted with enhancing marketing and development activities for the program. The resulting model, in addition to other variables, identified three main categories of variables that influence the decision making process. Stiber referred to the first category as *individual characteristics*, which

includes occupation, age, education, and experience. The second category is called *social influences* and includes culture, peers, and family. The third category, *situational influences*, includes tuition, aid, and income.

Hagedorn and Doyle (1993) found that, among other factors, women 35 and older made choices about graduate school based on personal time constraints. In their research on reasoning for attending graduate school, Chickering and Havighurst (1981) identified several “age-linked developmental tasks relating to individual psycho-social needs, interpersonal relationships of marriage and family life, career preparation and maintenance, and the assumption of social roles in a broader context” (p. 112).

According to Kallio (1995), there have been many studies that analyze the factors of graduate school applicants’ decisions to attend a particular graduate program at a particular institution. Kallio believed that several characteristics are involved in a multistage process of decision-making. The factors involved in this process are the student’s personal characteristics, information gathered, college actions, and characteristics of the particular college or program choice (Kallio, 1995). In addition, the importance of some factors over others may be due to the specific life stage of the student, specifically in the areas of family, marriage, and work considerations (Kallio, 1995). Chickering and Havighurst (1981) found that students at various life stages have different needs that influence their career and educational goals.

Sociology of Professionalization

According to Bragg (1976), for an occupation to be considered a profession, these three distinct elements must exist to a significant degree:

A specialized body of literature must be the field’s foundation, special techniques are used for applying this knowledge to the human condition, and a society-granted

monopoly status is granted because of the recognition that the skills and knowledge provided by this occupation are indeed specialized and distinct. (p. 12)

Bragg (1976) defined socialization as “the process by which an individual achieves his identity within the group” (p. 6). Bragg added that the end product of the socialization process “is the incorporation of group values and norms into the individual’s self-image. (p. 6).

Bragg (1976) went on to write that professional socialization is the “acquisition of the specialized knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, norms and interests of the profession that the individual wishes to practice” (p. 6) that results in the achievement of the professional identity or an acceptable functioning of the individual within the expected roles. Blankenship (1977) added that

when a number of persons agree to the existence and legitimacy of a profession and then act accordingly, using the symbolic profession to account for their activities and give meaning to their activities, the consequence is the construction of the profession as a social object. (p. 7).

Social Achievement of Professional Status in Higher Education and Advising

According to Howard-Hamilton and Hyman (2009), there are two typical career trajectories for those pursuing a doctoral degree in higher education administration, either the faculty or administration route. The socialization of each route differs in noted ways.

The largest challenge for those looking to become faculty members in higher education or student affairs programs is the promotion and tenure process (Howard-Hamilton & Hyman, 2009). The authors acknowledged the issue of institutional fit and whether or not faculty members feel that they are well suited for various types of institutions, namely small or large, public or private, culture and values of the institution, role in teaching master’s or doctoral

students, level of support for their research interests, collegiality of colleagues, and departmental focus on counseling, administration, or a blended model, etc.

For those seeking administrative positions after earning their doctoral degrees, Howard-Hamilton and Hyman (2009) noted that socialization into the field is different from that of faculty and depends upon the preparation of the individual. Successful preparation beyond the earning of the degree would include appropriate “full-time experience in higher education, graduate assistantship experience, and exposure to role models and mentors” (Howard-Hamilton & Hyman, 2009, p. 398-399). These experiences should be tightly coordinated to provide a clear preparation for any aspired to position. Such connections would be in university development, foundation work, institutional research, system administration, and academic administration (Howard-Hamilton & Hyman, 2009).

Freitag (2011) developed the use of four different levels of academic advisor activities to help identify and socialize advisors toward higher levels of professionalism and scholarship, which can serve to assist administrators as they build their advising team. The first and most basic of the levels is that of the academic advising practitioner. Advisors at this level may be new to the advising field or choose to remain at this level for the length of their career. At this level, advisors tend to have a low level of personal commitment to advising. Furthermore, they may not be aware of professional development opportunities such as those offered by NACADA or choose not to participate. To this type of advisor, advising is just his or her job or a part of his or her job.

Several organizational influences may encourage this type of practitioner status (Freitag, 2011). Some such influences are “low entry requirements and expectations for staff advisors, a desire to keep advisor pay low (on par with administrative personnel for staff advisors and no

pay at all for faculty advisors), or a fundamental lack of understanding of the scope and complexity of academic advising in today's institutions of higher learning" (Freitag, 2011, p. 7).

The next level of academic advisor professionalism is referred to as the academic advising emerging professional (Freitag, 2011). This type of advisor is "not satisfied with the view that they should just do a job – they want to be a professional and to be treated as such" (Freitag, 2011, p. 7). This group is actively improving their daily advising practice by seeking out learning opportunities, working with veteran advisors, and professional development activities such as those offered through NACADA. Such professional development activities are considered essential by the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education (CAS, 2008).

Advising administrators tend to appreciate the increased competence of the academic advising emerging professional as he or she increases his or her skills and ask to take on more responsibilities. These emerging professionals are no longer interested in being supervised but yearn to be led in a more collegial relationship. Additionally, they seek out graduate degrees (if not already earned) to improve their advising practice, not just for themselves but also for their students (Freitag, 2011).

One step up, the academic advising professional sees advising as true profession (Freitag, 2011). They are highly qualified and seek out ways to enhance their advising credentials through educational opportunities. They are likely active participants in the growth and governance of NACADA, attending local, regional, state, and national conferences and institutes, often paying their own ways if their institutions cannot provide these funds. Their certifications and credentials are focused on the field of advising, counseling, higher education, student affairs, or another related field of study. These academic advising professionals successfully perform their

duties without close supervision. This is possible because they take great pride in applying their knowledge base, earned through study of the related literature in student development theory, advisor ethics, legal issues, etc. They then utilize this knowledge and experience for the betterment of their students and for the overall improvement of advising on their campus.

The highest of the levels of professionalism in the field of academic advising, the academic advising scholar, would be reserved for those “who have post-graduate degrees and are recognized for their expertise in the advising field” (Freitag, 2011, p. 21). They constantly think about how advising can be improved and, much like other true academics, are dedicated to research and service in the field of advising. Their focus is not on their own academic advising performance but on larger campus-wide, regional, national, and international advising issues. Such issues include advising program assessment, academic advising administration, and scholarly inquiry focused on the advancement of academic advising as a discipline. Furthermore, these scholars often work well beyond the typical 40-hour work week, publish their writing in journals, and present at national conferences. Academic advising administrators use the added talents and experience of these scholars to advance their institution’s advising services while advancing their institution as leaders in the growing field of advising. According to Freitag (2011), “advising is not just a job for the advising scholar – it is a passion and a calling” (p. 21).

Theory of Planned Behavior

“As every student of psychology knows, explaining human behavior in all its complexity is a difficult task” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 179). This is especially true when exploring why a person might choose to attend graduate school or choose to become an academic advisor. Ajzen (1991), the author of the theory of planned behavior, chose to study human behavior by examining cognitive self-regulation’s importance to human behavior and its relationship to the prediction of

behavior. Specifically, Ajzen found through his research that “perceived behavioral control, together with behavioral intention, can be used directly to predict behavioral achievement” (p. 184).

Ajzen (1991) offered two rationales for his hypothesis. First, Ajzen argued that “holding intention constant, the effort expended to bring a course of behavior to a successful conclusion is likely to increase with perceived behavioral control” (p. 184). As an example, Ajzen noted that, for two individuals who are strongly intent on learning how to ski, when trying to learn, the person who has confidence in his or her ability to master the activity is more likely to persevere and succeed when compared to the individual who doubts his or her ability.

Ajzen offered a second hypothesis, exploring the link between perceived behavioral control and behavioral achievement. He stated that “perceived behavioral control can often be used as a substitute for a measure of actual control” (Ajzen, 1991, pp. 1984). This substitution does depend on the accuracy of the perceptions, according to Ajzen (1991). He further explained that “perceived behavioral control may not be particularly realistic when a person has relatively little information about the behavior, when requirements or available resources have changed, or when new and unfamiliar elements have entered into the situation” (Ajzen, 1991, pp. 184-185). Under these specific conditions, the measure of perceived behavioral control may not add to the accuracy of behavioral prediction, but the extent to which the perceived control is realistic, this measure may be used to predict the probability of a successful behavioral attempt (Ajzen, 1991; 1985).

The Development of the Theory

According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), the theory of planned behavior is an extension of Fishbein’s theory of reasoned action. Fishbein’s theory utilizes *intention* as the immediate

antecedent of any human behavior (Ajzen & Madden, 1985). The theory names two conceptually independent determinants of intention, *attitude toward the behavior*, which refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior in question, and *subjective norm*, which is a social factor referring to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior (Ajzen & Madden, 1985). Additionally, the theory of reasoned action “postulates that behavior is a function of salient information, or beliefs relevant to the behavior” (Ajzen & Madden, 1985, p. 454).

Although the theory of reasoned action relies on intention as the sole predictor of human behavior, the theory of planned behavior extends the original theory by incorporating perceived control over behavioral achievement as a determinant of intention and behavior (Ajzen & Madden, 1985). According to Ajzen (1991), although the importance of *actual* behavioral control is evident, more important is the *perception* of behavioral control and its impact on intentions and actions. It is this issue of *perceived* behavioral control that differentiates the two theories (Ajzen, 1991).

Effects on Career Choice and Further Education

Several studies have been conducted using the theory of planned behavior to explain career choice and the decision to pursue further education. As an example, van Hooft, Born, Taris, and van der Flier (2003) used the theory of planned behavior to investigate majority-minority group differences in job search behavior predictors in temporary employees in The Netherlands. The researchers found that ethnic minorities were more affected by their perceptions of social pressure than by their own personal attitudes when contemplating the start of a new job search. For the majority population, the opposite was found. Self-efficacy did not contribute to the prediction of job search intention, but job search behavior was significantly

related to the job search outcomes of the native-Dutch respondents. In other words, “in collectivistic cultures, behavior is guided more by social norms than by personal attitudes, whereas the opposite is true in individualistic cultures” (van Hooft et al., 2004, p. 386).

In a study by Arnold et al. (2005), the theory of planned behavior was used to “account for intentions to work for the UK’s National Health Service as a nurse, physiotherapist or radiographer” by three groups: professionally unqualified, in professional training, and professionally qualified” (p. 2). In this British study, attitude was found to be the most significant predictor of intention to work for the UK’s National Health Service, especially for the group with the appropriate credentials. Another study of Norwegian undergraduate business students found that the theory of planned behavior strongly predicted intentions regarding employment status choice, defined by Kolvereid (1997) as “the intention to enter an occupation as a wage or salaried individual or as a self-employed one (p. 47).

Summary

There is a noted lack of literature on the topic of the career experiences of professional academic advisors earning doctoral degrees in higher education administration. As a result, this chapter examined the status of academic advising in higher education, including the roles of both professional and faculty advisors. Career development theory was presented with specific attention to the theories of Holland and Super. The current standing of women in higher education administration was discussed as well as the doctoral study experience in American higher education. Finally, this literature review examined the decision to pursue a graduate degree and the role of the theory of planned behavior on this process. In the following chapter, the methodology for the study is discussed, including the philosophy and psychology of phenomenological-existential qualitative research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach, and specifically, a phenomenological existential methodology for gathering data and analysis. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived career experiences of professional academic advisors who went on to earn a doctoral degree in higher education administration. This chapter describes the research questions used in the study, the phenomenological framework, the participants studied, procedures used, and study limitations.

This study used in-depth interviews of 13 professional academic advisors with varied experiences and working with a range of student populations, who went on to earn doctoral degrees in higher education administration. This study examined participants' recollections to document the meaning behind their lived career experiences, contributing to the limited body of literature in the arena of career paths for professional academic advisors. A greater understanding of these career paths and their influencing sources informs others who might desire such a path. It also enlightens the future research agenda of NACADA, which seeks ways to assist professionals in the field.

Research Questions

According to Becker (1992), a good research question for a phenomenological study is one that “evokes memories of events that have been lived through rather than thoughts about the

phenomenon” (p. 38). According to Giorgi, Fischer, and von Eckartsberg (1971), “the method of phenomenology essentially involves the processes of intuition, reflection, and description” (p. 10). This means that the researcher should first concentrate on the *what* that is being experienced, only later asking more specific questions about the phenomenon being studied. This allows the language to naturally emerge rather than leading the questioning, a mechanism that helps to target those aspects and themes that the researcher wants to examine across the data. Hence, this broad or grand tour question approach led to the selected primary research question for the study: “What are the lived career experiences of professional academic advisors who went on to earn a doctoral degree in higher education administration?” With a grand tour question stated, more specific related questions were addressed by the participants through the process of interviewing:

1. What led to the participants’ decisions to undertake doctoral study?
2. What were the career goals of these professional advisors at the time of application for a higher education administration doctoral program?
3. How, if at all, did the career aspirations of these participants change through the doctoral experience?
4. Did they have mentors from the field and how did those mentors influence them?
5. How did their initial career aspirations compare to their actual post-doctoral degree career trajectories?

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to explore these five questions in depth (Appendix A).

Qualitative Research

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research “is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (p. 2). This means that researchers study people and things in their natural settings, making or interpreting phenomena and their meanings through the eyes of those who experience them.

As a set of interpretive practices, qualitative research has no single methodology. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) explained that qualitative research “involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in the individual’s lives” (p. 3). This study focused specifically on the personal experience of its participants with triangulation provided by supportive documents, an approach that was pursued through the use of existential phenomenology.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology has many definitions and descriptions through the years, including that of a philosophy, a psychology, and a qualitative methodology. Despite the confusion, there seems to be a fairly clear consensus that philosopher Edmund Husserl is the founder of the philosophical concept leading to the interpretation of phenomenology as a psychology, which was used as a basis for many research methods (Becker, 1992; Moran, 2000; D. Stewart & Mickunas, 1974; Thevenaz, 1962; von Eckartsberg, 1986). Influenced by Kierkegaard, Husserl was a German philosopher who developed a systematic method of study regarding human experience and consciousness which signified the birth of phenomenology (Becker, 1992). He believed that “experience of life events in the everyday world, with theoretical understandings

suspended, was an invaluable source of knowledge” (Becker, 1992, p. 10). Furthermore, Husserl, through his establishment of phenomenology, attempted to prove that philosophy could be considered a rigorous science in the sense that

it is an investigation of the most radical, fundamental, primitive, original evidences of conscious experience; it goes beneath the constructions of science and common sense towards their foundations in experience. It studies what all the particular sciences take for granted and what we in natural everyday experience take for granted. (Thevenaz, 1962, p. 18)

In other words, according to Roy (2010), “phenomenology, beginning with Edmund Husserl, urges that the world of immediate or ‘lived’ experience takes precedence over the objectified and abstract world of the ‘natural attitude’ of natural science” (p. 51). Furthermore, Valle and King (1978) described phenomenology as a method of inquiry and a philosophical paradigm that uses personal accounts of lived experiences, which exist in opposition to the traditional scientific method. von Eckartsberg (1985) wrote that

the assumption of the phenomenological attitude thus implies that we describe something not in terms of what we already know or presume to know about it, but rather that we describe that which presents itself to our awareness exactly as it presents itself. (p. 5)

Phenomenological research comes in two different types of approaches. The first is empirical. Through empirical research, participants are asked to describe an event or events in their lives. These descriptions are then used to understand the general nature or structure of the phenomenon (Becker, 1992). Additionally, empirical researchers may also choose to “use descriptive data to show the essential features of a process: reconciliation, forgiving someone, recovering from the ending of a relationship, recovering from criminal victimization” (Becker,

1992, p. 32), a methodology well suited for this research study examining the career process and career movement of academic advisors with doctoral degrees in higher education administration.

Other phenomenological researchers utilize a broader hermeneutical approach in which researchers “use such things as literary texts and works of art to understand human life. In these types of studies, researchers read texts, for example, interpretively” (Becker, 1992, p. 32). This hermeneutical approach has also been used in this research study through the collection and interpretation of participants’ documents, such as resumes, graduate school applications, job descriptions, and the like.

When studying a phenomenon, researchers generally seek to know more about what a phenomenon is rather than its causes, meaning that researchers should strive to comprehend what phenomena *are* for the participant (Becker, 1992). Beginning with the participant’s everyday experiences of a phenomenon and documenting his or her path through the experience of it allows the researcher to arrive at an overall understanding of the phenomenon ‘in its unique and essential manifestations’ (Becker, 1992, p. 33). This process results in the asking of large, structured questions, such as “What are the essential attributes of learning?” rather than more specific questions that may lead the participant down a specific path.

Existential-Phenomenology

Existential-phenomenology is considered to be developed by another German philosopher, Martin Heidegger (Becker, 1992). Heidegger continued Husserl’s phenomenological method “by undertaking a broader explication of being and time” (Becker, 1992, p. 10). According to Becker (1992), Heidegger’s work has been cited as the first uniting of phenomenology and existentialism, resulting in existential-phenomenological viewpoint, a combination of the existential philosophical foundation with the phenomenological

methodology. Much like phenomenology, there are many opinions regarding the definition of existential phenomenology and disagreements regarding the order of two parts of its name.

Some define existential-phenomenology as the reflective, qualitative investigation of the recollections of the lived experiences of research participants (Van Manen, 1990; von Eckartsberg, 1998). May (1978) wrote that “existential-phenomenology means ideally to take the human being as he exists, a living, acting, feeling, thinking phenomenon, at this moment in an organic relationship to us” (p. viii). According to Valle and King (1978), existential-phenomenology is a “philosophical discipline which seeks to understand the events of human existence in a way which is free of the presuppositions of our cultural heritage” (p. 7). Valle and King added that existential-phenomenological psychology “has become that psychological discipline which seeks to explicate the essence, structure, or form of both human experience and human behavior as revealed through essentially descriptive techniques including disciplined reflection” (p. 7).

von Eckartsberg (1985) explained existential-phenomenology in contrast to quantitative methods:

Existential-phenomenological psychology attempts to account for the fullness of human life by reconceiving psychology on a properly human grounds. The model of the natural sciences, appropriate as it is for such fields as physics or chemistry, is nevertheless of limited usefulness when it comes to the study of the meaningful character of lived experience (p. 2)

The value of existential-phenomenological research, according to Fisher (2002), “is to construct and modify theory through the dialectical movement between an abstract orienting-frame-of-reference and concrete real-life cases” (p. 183).

Study Participants

A majority, although not all, participants have been recruited from within the membership of NACADA via inquiries to association leaders and the snowball technique of referrals, with a focus on maximum variation. An attempt was also made to include those who were not currently employed in a higher education setting. Furthermore, every effort was made to seek gender, racial/ethnic, and age diversity as part of the sample. Interviews were conducted in a phone format because of my travel restrictions.

Demographic information was gathered to ensure optimal match for the goals of this study. The demographic qualifications were (a) an earned doctoral degree in higher education administration and (b) serving as a professional academic advisor at an institution of higher education at the point of application into the doctoral program. For each qualifying candidate for participation, I sought his or her willingness to be interviewed for the study as well as any follow-up questioning.

Data Collection

In general, the two major ways to access phenomenological data are through interviews and written narratives. For an in-depth interview, there are several germinal features that are incorporated into this study as informed by the work of Baldukas (2001). These include the following:

- Unstructured format asking open-ended questions at the beginning of the interview
- Subsequent questions are developed from the person's responses
- Interviews are audio taped and transcribed verbatim
- The order of events is determined by those interviewed to reflect their own everyday life

- Description rather than analysis of events is encouraged
- The interview is conducted in a private, comfortable atmosphere free from interruptions and conducive to putting words to even pre-reflective experiences
- The researcher's commitment is to the interpersonal context of the interview and the subject's lived experience of the phenomenon
- The interview process is concluded when there are no more examples, repetition of meanings occurs, and the person runs out of things to say
- If more than one person is interviewed, the researcher does similar things in each interview but each interview is a unique, creative event
- One or many persons may be interviewed one or more times depending on the researcher's purpose and resources (Baldukas, 2001, p. 88)

Also during the interview, it is the interviewer's responsibility to get the appropriate data.

Becker (1992) provided some examples of internal questions that interviewers should ask themselves during the interview process:

- Do I feel that I can summarize the essential aspects of this phenomenon for this person?
- Have I gotten enough examples and details?
- Can the person say anything else about this aspect of the phenomenon?
- Do experiences of the phenomenon exist that she or he has not mentioned yet? (p. 41)

By following these guidelines, the interviewer is able to scrutinize the breadth and depth of the data being collected during the interview. Once the researcher is satisfied that the data are "rich enough to reveal the phenomenon's essential features and constellation, interviewing stops and data analysis begins" (Becker, 1992, p. 41).

Informed by the above scholars of phenomenological research, data collection comes in two forms to achieve triangulation: interviews and artifacts (Lancy, 1993). A pilot interview was conducted on a person who met the study criteria to test the interview protocol questions as a means of informing any needed revisions prior to proceeding with the study. Interviews with actual participants included a description of the purpose and procedures for this study as well as an opportunity for them to ask questions related to the study. A signed form giving consent to participate in the study was obtained prior to the start of each interview and with the explanation that pseudonyms in the write-up would be used to ensure their confidentiality. At the time of interview scheduling, however, participants were asked if they would be willing to share archival types of information such as resumes, graduate program applications, transcripts, personal statements, position descriptions, journals, press releases, etc. These materials were emailed to me.

As an additional mechanism associated with the data collection process, field notes were taken during the interview. These field notes were kept to a minimum so as to not distract the interviewee yet to also enable notation of key points heard. Immediately after each interview, I took a few minutes alone to make notes on impressions, non-verbal meanings, points of insight, etc., as these were helpful for informing meaning making from the interview transcripts.

Data Analysis

This study used Becker's (1992) steps for using interview data, which have been adapted from the procedures created by Giorgi (1975):

1. Read through the transcripts one by one.
2. Note themes or meaning units by color coding or noting key words in the margins.

3. By cutting or pasting electronically, put everything a person says about a theme in one place.
4. Summarize and edit meanings and manifestations of each theme, still using the person's own words.
5. After looking for the interrelation of all the pieces of the phenomenon, write an overall portrait of the phenomenon for each person, still staying close to the person's own words. This portrait evokes the readers' experiences of the phenomenon.
6. Repeat steps 2-5 for all interviewees.
7. Present research results by writing a summary portrait of all interviews as in step 5 but at a higher level of generalization, focusing on the phenomenon rather than on individual life worlds and using the language of the researcher's discipline to address researcher's audience. (pp. 85-86).

Becker (1992) suggested that researchers use bracketing to document one's preconceptions so as to focus on the exact meaning and wording of each participant. According to Husserl, bracketing, also called phenomenological reduction or *epoche*, is the mechanism used by researchers to eliminate preconceived notions in order to "defend the validity or objectivity of interpretation against the self-interest of the researcher" (Koch, 1995, p. 829). Husserl believed that the epoche is a "purge or cleansing of the mind to ready it for the perception of meaning" (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 413) so as to "concentrate the attention on essences" (LeVasseur, 2003, p. 413). LeVasseur (2003) explained that the epoche consists of "bracketing lived experience by suspending assumptions about the existence of things and shifting attention to the actual phenomena in their intentionality and horizontality" (p. 413).

Two debriefers examined the transcripts and my interpretation of the data to verify accuracy and to provide an alternate lens. Peer debriefers were specifically chosen for their backgrounds and study of higher education leadership and knowledge of the college student success literature. One of the debriefers has a detachment from the NACADA community. Additionally, member checks of transcripts with participants were performed to ensure meaning and intent of comment.

Summary

This chapter detailed the methodology used in a qualitative, existential-phenomenological study of the lived experiences of professional academic advisors who went on to earn doctoral degrees in higher education administration. This study's phenomenological framework, including its phenomenological-existential processes, were also examined. Finally, a description of the participants studied, procedures used, and methods of data collection and analysis were discussed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived career experiences of professional academic advisors who went on to earn their doctoral degree in higher education administration. To help answer this question, the following sub-questions were investigated:

1. What led to the participants' decisions to undertake doctoral study?
2. What were the career goals of these professional advisors at the time of application for a higher education administration doctoral program?
3. How, if at all, did the career aspirations of these participants change through the doctoral experience?
4. Did they have mentors from the field and how did those mentors influence them?
5. How did their initial career aspirations compare to their actual post-doctoral degree career trajectories?

This study examines the stories of 13 professionals who were academic advisors at the time of application into their doctoral programs and have since completed those terminal degrees. Phone interviews were conducted that lasted 35 to 63 minutes in length. Participants were selected with the intent of maximum variation and identified through personal contacts and the snowball method, as well as via LinkedIn, a social networking site for professionals.

Participant demographics varied by race/ethnicity, time since degree attainment, career path, and

the type of students advised. This chapter summarizes the results of the study through an exploration of the personal stories of the participants.

Participant Stories

The participants were all quite open to sharing their stories and willing to describe the support that they had received through the process of earning their doctoral degrees. Each story is presented, starting with the subgroup that remained in the advising field after they earned their doctoral degree. The next group is made up of those who remained in higher education but were not directly involved with academic advising at the time of the interview. The final group of study participants is made up of those who left higher education. The stories within each set are organized into key focus areas that emerged from each interview.

As outlined in Table 1, the participants vary in regards to current institutional types, the year their doctoral degrees were earned, their current career fields, and current titles. Table 2 outlines the participants' race or ethnicity, family situation (relationship status and number of children), and means for paying for their doctoral program costs. These demographic elements help to further frame the participants and their stories and are ordered into three groups based on those who after obtaining their doctorate (a) remained in the advising field, (b) remained in higher education but not advising directly, and (c) left higher education.

Table 1

Professional Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Employed Institution Type	Year Doctorate Earned	Current Career Field	Current Title
Mike	Large Public	2011	Academic Advising	Director of the Academic Support Center

Table 1 (continued)

Pseudonym	Employed Institution Type	Year Doctorate Earned	Current Career Field	Current Title
Madilyn	Large Public	2010	Academic Advising	Director of Academic Advising and Undergraduate Student Services
Nola	Large Public	2009	Academic Advising	Student Services Manager
Marie	Midsized Private	2010	Academic Advising/ Higher Education	Director of Academic Advising and Orientation; Executive Director of Academic Resources and Student Life
Tebone	Large Public	1999	Higher Education	Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
Mastodon	Small Public	2001	Higher Education	Registrar
Cliff	Small Public	2010	Higher Education	Assistant Dean for Student Success and Retention
Sally	Midsized Public	2009	Higher Education	Director of Individual Studies
Ann	Small Private	2009	Higher Education	Assistant Dean of Students; Director of Multicultural Programs
Kaitlyn	Large Public	1995	Higher Education	Clinical Professor; Director of the Master's Degree Program in Higher Education & Student Affairs
Jo	Community College	2004	Higher Education	Chief Student Affairs Officer

Table 1 (continued)

Pseudonym	Employed Institution Type	Year Doctorate Earned	Current Career Field	Current Title
Rebecca	Midsized Public	2010	Higher Education	Special Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs
Georgia	Self-employed	2011	Consulting	Web Designer and Business Strategist

Table 2

Personal Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Family Status	Means for Paying for Doctorate
Mike	Caucasian	Male	Married, expecting second child	Employer provided two free classes per term
Madilyn	White	Female	Married, one child	Employer grants and student loans
Nola	Caucasian	Female	Divorced, no children	Employer tuition assistance and loans
Marie	White/Italian	Female	Not married, committed relationship, no children	Employee tuition waiver
Tebone	Hispanic	Male	Married, three children	Employee tuition remission
Mastodon	Caucasian	Female	Married, no children	Out of pocket

Table 2 (continued)

Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Family Status	Means for Paying for Doctorate
Cliff	White	Male	Married, three children	Employee tuition waivers
Sally	Caucasian	Female	Married, two children	Loans, small institutional grants
Ann	African-American	Female	Married, two step children, dog	Assistantships, student loans
Kaitlyn	White	Female	Married, one step child	Employee tuition waiver
Jo	Caucasian	Female	Married, three children	Employee tuition waiver
Rebecca	White	Female	Married, two children	Out of pocket
Georgia	African American	Female	Divorced, two children	Assistantship, student loans

Mike's Story

Mike is the director of the Academic Support Center at a large public institution with high research activity, and he earned his doctoral degree from that same institution in 2011, only nine years after earning his bachelor's degree. Mike's responsibilities in his current position include supervising the operations of the Academic Support Center, promoting the development and implementation of a comprehensive advising program for students without declared majors, and overseeing other first-year students in a variety of majors. He directs 12 university professionals, oversees a budget of \$560,000, and is substantively involved with NACADA. He

has been in this position since 2012 and was previously the assistant director of the same office. Mike described his race or ethnicity as Caucasian. On the day of our interview, Mike's attention was very much on his family, as his wife was due to give birth to their second child later that week.

Wise choices. Mike had been very thoughtful about his choices regarding his career. While working on his master's degree in education with a concentration in health and human performance, Mike first "got the calling" to work with college students and eventually earned a doctoral degree. When considering his options for doctoral education, he looked at advising positions at campuses with good higher education doctoral programs. He also looked for and found a campus that would pay for his education while he was an employee. The campus he ended up working at paid for two courses per semester, which left him with few out-of-pocket costs. Mike did pay for any online fees associated with some online classes. Another specific out-of-pocket expense was a doctoral study abroad course in the United Kingdom and another in Washington, DC, focusing on legal issues and policy.

"Under the provost's line." Mike believed that the higher education doctorate was the program that best fit his interests and career aspirations. Since there was no doctoral program in academic advising, no other degree programs were considered. Specifically, his career aspiration was focused on moving up the provost's line. Mike stated,

I did not want to stay as an academic advisor forever but to move up under the provost line especially. We're under academic affairs here, my office is, and you had to have the terminal degree to move up, so that was a given.

Mike remarked that his career goals did not change while in the doctoral program and that his current position is right in line with those plans. He is especially a supporter of academic advising as a career path because

even now with the big push in recruitment and retention, our advisors are heavily involved. You can always tie things back to funding and then so, if anything, the coursework made my position as an advisor even more meaningful, because I could apply it pretty much anywhere across campus.

Mike also chose to earn a doctoral degree because it would mean being more financially secure. He would be able to get positions with more responsibility and have the opportunity to have greater recognition on campus. Mike is sure that the sky is his limit and that he is not going to stay at the director level until he retires. “The more experience I gain, we’ll see where I go from here.”

Mentors. Although he did not have mentor pushing him toward doing a doctoral degree, he did have those who supported him along the way once he decided to pursue the Ph.D. Many of his mentors were seasoned advisors whom he met through his association and service to NACADA. He made sure to ask a lot of questions, and they in turn pushed him to get more involved. Specifically he had a mentor in the School of Education that was very helpful in his dissertation process. He explained their relationship:

She very much valued qualitative research, so she and I saw eye to eye on a lot of things. So she brought to the table valuable insight on research in general and in her position (she had some experience with advising in the past). She really valued my study as well.

Madilyn's Story

Madilyn's current position is that of director of Academic Advising and Undergraduate Student Services in the College of Engineering at a large public institution. She received her doctoral degree from that same institution in 2010 and paid for her degree with a combination of institutional grants and other loans. Her duties include serving as primary representative and delegate of the dean and associate dean for undergraduate academic advising and degree certification in the college. She supervises seven to 10 academic advisors plus any graduate students or interns. She was previously an academic advisor in the College of Education at the same institution and has a master's degree and a background in student affairs administration. Once her husband finished law school, and she finished her doctoral degree, they started a family. "That was the deal," according to Madilyn. She is currently married with one child. Madilyn described her race or ethnicity as White.

Earning the doctorate by accident. Madilyn chose her undergraduate major, American studies, because she liked the courses, but did not really have a career plan for after graduation. After she received her B.A. in American studies in 1997, she went straight into a master's in student affairs after determining that she liked her experience working in the residence halls while at her undergraduate institution. She explained that decision this way:

Because I had been working in housing and residence life as a student employee, I met hall directors who had master's degrees and found out that there was a master's degree in student affairs and thought hey, I'll do that. It sounds like fun. I like working in residence halls.

Her master's degree led to her first student affairs job in a law school working with student activities, but she was not sure that was what she wanted to do. Because she knew that

she did not want to live in a residence hall, she then transitioned into academic advising at the suggestion of colleague. This led to an advising position in the College of Education, where she did her master's degree. From there she, as she described it, "had sort of a mid-20s breakdown." She still did not know what she wanted to do. She considered law school and even took the LSAT but "married a lawyer instead." She also thought she wanted to be a teacher and considered a post-bachelor's teaching certificate, but did not like the job possibilities in her state. Then she "wanted to fall back on a lifelong dream of becoming a veterinarian." In preparation for this, she took two years of math and science undergraduate courses at the local community college. Then she discussed the reality with her husband:

OK, we were not getting any younger. We wanted to start a family. If I do vet school, it's going to be \$120,000. It's year around for three years. It takes me away on clerkships and stuff like that. It wasn't really what we were going for and I was really becoming frustrated with . . . what do I want to be when I grow up?

Her frustration continued until she met with her associate dean, who was, and continues to be, her mentor. She could tell that Madilyn was frustrated; she came into Madilyn's office to talk to her. She told Madilyn, "I think you are going to be a dean someday. I really think you need to consider earning your Ph.D. in higher ed." Madilyn sort of laughed it off and thought "Sure. OK. Whatever." But when Madilyn really started to think about it and looked at the program at her campus, she started to think about it seriously. "It is one of the top-ranked programs and there was some flexibility including classes. I would be able to keep working full time, which, as we were paying off my husband's law school loans, was necessary." She would have had to quit her full time job to go to veterinary school, so this was a much better option. She reflected,

I sort of fell into it in a backwards sort of way. But I am really glad I did, because once I started the program, and got an opportunity to move into my current position with a bit more responsibility, I found that I spent all this time trying to figure out what I wanted to be when I grew up, but I was doing it already. I just didn't know it.

She remarked that deciding to do the doctorate was not really a conscious decision until the last minute. The conversation with her associate dean happened in February and she was admitted to the Ph.D. program the following December.

Although Madilyn had discussed the option of doing her doctoral degree in American studies or American history, she finally decided that she liked working with undergraduate students regarding their academics. She was sure she did not want to be a faculty member, and the higher education administration degree just made sense. As she examined the roles of her colleagues at her campus and through NACADA, she was convinced that these were the types of positions she was interested in, such as an associate dean or dean of students.

Next career steps. Currently at the director level, Madilyn is still looking toward the future with the hopes of having a dean title. She describes herself as a “fish out of water,” an academic administrator in the College of Engineering having never taken a calculus or engineering course. She believes that her current position could morph into an associate dean title because she currently performs many of the duties of an associate dean. She worries, though, that her lack of an engineering background could hold her back in that regard. She believes she may need to transition to a new campus or college within her current campus to achieve the title she desires. She is currently planning on staying in her current town as moving two professionals and her husband having to take the bar exam again would be difficult.

“That was the deal.” Madilyn and her husband are both lifelong learners, and they both supported each other as they took turns completing various graduate degrees. She reports picking up the slack and having to attend family functions alone while he was in law school, and he did the same for her during her graduate work. They deliberately decided to wait to have children until all the graduate degrees were earned. She explained,

I know myself and I know there is absolutely no way I could balance being a parent and being in school and working. I would get distracted by my cats. I knew there was no way I could handle being in school and being a parent. And now on the other side, having a child, I can guarantee you I would never have finished the Ph.D. if we would have started a family before then.

She also remarked that it was important to both her and her husband that if she started her Ph.D., they would put off starting a family until she finished the degree. That turned out to be a good decision when Madilyn was then forced to put off her dissertation for a period of time while she started a new position in the College of Engineering.

Nola’s Story

Nola completed her doctoral degree in 2009 at a large public institution where she works. She was previously an advisor at a branch campus before moving to the main campus. Her current title is student services manager in one of the academic colleges where she supervises other professionals in the areas of academic advising, graduate admissions, and placement coordination. She paid for her doctoral degree through tuition assistance from her institution (one free class per semester) and loans. She described her marital status as “happy divorced” and her race or ethnicity as Caucasian.

Career aspirations. Nola first considered the Ph.D. when her then boyfriend, who already had a Ph.D., asked her why she was not taking classes. Nola admitted that some people already called her “doctor” for fun and she really liked it. Nola admitted that she did not have a specific career aspiration other than moving up to a more administrative capacity. She stated, “I don’t ever want to be a president, but maybe eventually a provost or a vice provost. Higher administrative position, but definitely something where I can still have an impact on students.” But the first line in her doctoral degree application statement of intent stated, “One day, I would like to be an associate chancellor, vice president, or president of a university.” So, the highest position at the institution had dwindled from her goals. Her personal statement also indicated that she was passionate about learning and the pursuit of education, and she believed that her passion could inspire others. At the time of application, she was still advising at the branch campus and truly felt lucky to have a job she loved. She also mentioned that there were times when she had thought about teaching or trying to be a professor in a higher ed program, so teaching the master’s and Ph.D. students, because I do like to teach. But I also like my job not depending on having to do research. For a while I was waffling. Now I think I would like to stick to a regular administrative job and just teach part time.

She indicated that she had taught several different courses, such as a University 101 at both the branch and main campuses. She also taught public speaking during the Ph.D. program, because “you had to have 18 hours in something you could teach at the undergraduate level. So I did speech.” Furthermore, her current supervisor asks her to teach in the academic college where she works and that included the topic of assessment and topics for elementary education majors. She admitted that she did not really have an expertise in the elementary education course, but she had learned a lot.

“Happily divorced.” Although Nola did not have a whole lot of information to share on the topic of her divorce, she did state that her then boyfriend and future husband was very understanding and supportive of her doctoral activities, especially during the dissertation phase, since he had also completed a dissertation. She did note, “I think I would say it did affect my marriage, but I do not think that it was a good marriage.” She believed that her marriage was not a good marriage to begin with and that it “would have failed regardless of pursuing my Ph.D.”

Switching jobs during the dissertation. Nola had made a professional move to the main campus from the branch campus during the dissertation phase of her Ph.D. She found the transition a very difficult one to manage at the time.

When contemplating a professional move, Nola was not looking for a better title or more money. She was more interested in finding a position where she could learn and be challenged while gaining some supervisory experience. She was not even really looking for a new job at the time, but she “kind of wanted to look at what was out there occasionally.” It had to be the right fit for her to apply. She really enjoyed her position at the branch campus, but she had just gotten a new boss whom she did not like, and she was “a part of the reason why I did get a new position while I was working on my dissertation, because I had just planned to stay” at the branch campus until she finished. She did not want to have the upheaval of a job change in the middle of the dissertation, but the new boss made her look a bit harder at the various positions that opened up. But she was still looking for the right fit.

Nola explained that after being in her advising position at the branch campus for five years, she already knew everything about her job and how to do it so that she did not even have to think about it. In the new job, she said, “I didn’t really have anybody to train me.” So every phone call, every email, would require that she would have to do some research and call or email

back later. There were just no other department veterans in her office to train her. Of the four people in her office, one had started in March, one in April, and Nola started in June, with the administrative support professional starting a week later. Nola remarked, “Trying to do that and go home and write was not very conducive.”

Marie’s Story

Marie earned her Ph.D. in higher education administration from a midsize private institution in 2010 where she is also currently employed. She has two titles, executive director of academic resources and student life and director of Academic advising and orientation. She has held the executive director title for a year and a half and the director title for over two years. She has also held the titles of assistant director of academic advising and academic adviser. Marie used institutional tuition waivers provided by her institution to pay for her coursework. The waivers were good for up to 20 credits per year (quarter system), and she paid for her own books. Marie indicated that she was not married but in a committed relationship, although she did mention she went through a divorce while doing the doctorate. Marie described her race as white and her ethnicity as Italian.

Two titles. After earning her doctoral degree followed by a national search process, as noted earlier, Marie was able to earn the position of director of academic advising and orientation at her current institution. This position includes undergraduate academic advising and orientation. Her concurrent position is that of executive director of academic resources and student life. This consists of working with a learning effectiveness program, which is a fee-for-service program that students who have a learning disability, ADHD, or who just need additional support in understanding the best ways that they learn. They participate in

this program and the fee for service is for one hour of academic counseling per week, meeting with an organizational specialist and subject specific tutoring.

They offer scholarships for those who are not able to pay the \$1,100 per quarter. She also oversees the disabilities services program for undergraduates and graduate students in the law school, maintaining compliance with ADA laws and amendments.

Within a year of becoming the director, the Student Life department on her campus went through a restructuring process after the retirement of one of the leaders of the program. An executive team was created, the executive director position opened up, and she was able to obtain that position as well. She noted,

When the restructuring first happened, there were two of us that had the dual roles of executive director and director. Through a vacancy last year, the executive director was able to make a case for just having the one role, so that just left me with the dual role. It was pretty unique in the way that that just happened.

Since then, she has tried to restructure, has since submitted a proposal for doing so, and is waiting to hear back on whether or not she could just keep the executive director role and have another person fill the role of director.

Mentors and support. Maria had several mentors who assisted her in her transition into and through the Ph.D. program. The associate provost of student life helped Maria understand the balance of being an administrator and teaching classes. Another mentor was the associate provost overseeing graduate programs. From her, Marie learned about working with faculty and how best to communicate to create partnerships and relationships. From her, Marie also learned how to “navigate the political terrain of higher education.” Marie stated,

I really wish there was an entire class on navigating politics because that is a very interesting experience, on-the-job training kind of thing. But I think that in order to really be successful, especially on decentralized campuses where you really have to rely on collaboration and being able to develop those relationships, it is important to you to understand the politics, the boundaries, and how to best cultivate those relationships.

Through the doctoral program, Marie relied on yet another mentor, another associate provost, who “pushed me to connect my mind and my heart—the intellectual, the political, the emotional.” At the time, Marie was going through some difficult personal experiences, including a divorce, and she found that she had “shut down a little bit.” She found that she was very good at the intellectual, political side, but her mentor kept challenging her to open her heart and connect all three. Marie explained,

and that is so critical when you are working with students. That’s what carried me through with the research because my heart was so connected. It was about my own personal journey as well... continuing to remember the intellectual, the personal, the political, and how all those pieces always play out when you are looking at policies, when you are looking at the work that you are doing with students. And one of the reasons that I love academic policy and working with policy so much, is that I see it as a social justice, inclusive excellence piece because if we need to change a policy, then we need to change it so that all students have access to that, not just those students who know how to navigate through the bureaucracy.

Finally, Marie’s two former supervisors, who were both in advising, were just finishing their doctoral degrees as well. They were both very supportive of Marie as she took on the doctoral degree. One of her former supervisors always encouraged his staff to expand their credentials,

especially the academic advisors, since they worked so closely with faculty, but also for the sake of their own personal learning. Marie explained,

I think that one of the things that I would stress to people was that it was such, the Ph.D. process, an emotional roller coaster. You have your highs, you have your lows, and it really is important to have the support of those around you. And I went through some personal transitions from the time that I started to the time that I ended, and it impacted certain relationships in a negative way, and other relationships that were always there and supportive in a very positive way. It was that balance during that time where you have to have people in your life that realize that you are going to have to spend a lot of time with your research and you will do the best that you can to balance it during that time but especially when you get into the dissertation part that becomes more prevalent and as far as the career, I had such great support from the people around me. There were times that I needed to have classes during the day, during the work day. Most of the time it was in the evening, and so I had that support. But they also knew that I wasn't going to let anything slide and so I was able to fulfill my job responsibilities. But, the flexibility of being able to attend classes when I needed to during the day was extremely helpful, and I appreciated the support of my colleagues on that.

Tebone's Story

Tebone is currently the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at a large public institution where he also earned his Ph.D. in 1999. He has been in this position since 2007. Before his current position, Tebone was the Vice President of Student Services at a community college, his alma mater. In addition to experience in academic advising, Tebone also has experience in admissions, K-12 minority scholar recruitment and support, the home loan banking

industry, the grocery industry, and the insurance industry. He has had numerous community and higher education appointments, nominations, memberships, activities, and service opportunities on his vita. Tebone was a first generation Hispanic college student, is married, and has three children. Tebone was able to use his institution's tuition remission program to help with his doctoral program costs.

Being a returning adult student. Tebone was the youngest of five brothers and has a younger sister. Neither of his parents completed high school. In fact, his mother only completed seventh grade and his father completed sixth grade, and he is one of three brothers who obtained a college degree. He is the only sibling to earn a doctoral degree.

Tebone became an assistant grocery store manager after completing an associate's degree in 1979, but because of downsizing, his store was closed, forcing him to take several short-term jobs. Eventually, he moved his family to another part of the state where he worked full time, while going to school full time, resulting in a bachelor's degree in human resource management in 1990. After several positions in higher education and an eventual master's degree in developmental counseling in 1993, he began work on a doctoral degree in 1995, finishing in 1999.

The doctoral degree. Tebone first started thinking of a doctoral degree when a colleague recommended it to him in 1992, right before he finished his master's degree. His colleague also suggested that he apply for a job at Tebone's current institution, the location of the doctoral program. "At that point, I'm not sure I was really thinking I would go that far." Further reflecting on his education and career path, Tebone remarked,

I think what we all realize is that you end up where you're supposed to end up when you take advantage of opportunities. It may be in different places, but there's a lot of jobs within student affairs that still have a light to fulfill your passions, things that drive you.

Tebone believed strongly that the support of colleagues and advisors helped him take advantage of important opportunities.

I had just an amazing advisor. In fact we are still in contact. She was just amazing and I'm not sure what her exact title was at the time. I think she was associate dean or something at the teacher's college. She was gracious enough to take me on. I'm sure that I was a major project for her. But she was just a very dear friend and she just had this way of challenging and encouraging and mentoring.

She was only one of many who encouraged Tebone to get his doctoral degree. The first was his colleague at the community college who encouraged him to pursue the doctorate.

He was the first one. There are many others afterwards, but it was really him. He was really the one who got me started on considering it. I was not even sure I had the ability to do it. As a first generation college student, that's one of those things where you don't know unless you've been there, or know somebody that's been there. It's really tough to even understand what it's about.

Valuing family. Tebone described himself as very family oriented. Throughout Tebone's career choices, his family was always at the center of his reasoning, and they were constantly in his thoughts during the doctoral process. At the time he was earning the doctorate, Tebone and his wife had small children, which added additional challenges, but they were able to keep their children first in their priorities. Tebone remarked,

It certainly challenged me to go spend time and do activities with them, but frankly I was still able to do that. I did the bulk of my work usually after 10 or 11 o'clock at night. Or on weekends, so I don't think it prohibited me or limited me from participating in any of their activities.

Tebone had colleagues who were not able to keep such a balance, but Tebone believed that it was just a matter of prioritizing. "I think you do what you have to do to make it work and [I] don't think it slowed me down in terms of interaction."

When reflecting on his wife's role during his doctoral pursuits, Tebone realized that there were times when he could not be around for "doing other more domestic activities." Tebone also shared that during the years he was pursuing his doctoral degree, his wife was pursuing her bachelor's degree at the same time. "She got a bachelor's degree the same day I got my Ph.D. from a different institution. So we couldn't attend each other's graduation, although we did have a pretty good party afterwards. I'm not sure many people could say that."

Mastodon's Story

Mastodon is a Caucasian female registrar at a small public institution. She completed her Ed.D. in 2001. She is married with no children and funded her degree out of pocket. Previously, Mastodon was an associate director of an academic advising center and an associate registrar. The most important consideration she had when finding her most recent position was the quality of the retirement benefits.

"It didn't matter what the doctorate was in." Mastodon decided about a year or two after her master's degree that she was interested in getting a doctorate. She had decided that she wanted to stay in higher education and that "in order to be promotable . . . that a [doctoral] degree would be a help." And she was looking at moving up in either academic or student

affairs, but she had no specific job or department in mind. In addition to academic advising, Mastodon also had experience in teaching for the supervision department and she knew that teaching was an option in addition to staying in higher education administration.

As she was deciding which doctoral program to pursue, “it was all about the institution.” After doing her research, she decided that it did not matter what the doctoral degree was in, or even if it was a Ph.D. or Ed.D.; “I just needed to complete it.” Because she worked full time and considered herself place bound, her institutional choices were limited. The institution she worked at did not have doctoral degrees. So she looked into online programs, but in the early 1990s, they were just in their early stages, and she eventually decided that she learned better in a classroom environment. She finally chose a campus just an hour and a half away and commuted. “For me it was an educational administration program, and the higher ed emphasis or cognate was what I got. There wasn’t really a higher ed major doctoral program anywhere that would suit me geographically.”

Choosing the registrar path. At the time she was pursuing the doctoral degree, Mastodon was in the advising field, but she was open to other areas in higher education. She admitted that she was not led to her current path through the process of earning the doctoral degree. Instead, her focus was narrowed “due to work experience and due to . . . changes at the institution that [she] worked in.” Mastodon described her journey this way:

I was in the advising field at the time. And as time passed and with the proliferation of technology in higher ed and in particular with advising, registration, degree audit, all that kind of stuff, I became more and more familiar with student information systems and technology and an opportunity in the registrar’s profession opened up in the institution where I was doing advising. I jumped at it, and it worked out. I got a taste of the

profession and found out that it really seemed to be a better fit for me. I loved advising and did it for a long time. I loved the students, loved the contact with them, but this field gave new challenges in the registrar's profession and a closer connections with technology and improving services for students in a different way.

Mastodon eventually became an associate registrar and then a registrar at two different institutions. She further described her path:

There was a point at which I thought maybe I could be a vice chancellor or a vice president of student affairs. So I considered that for a while. So along the route, after I joined the registrar's profession and liked it so much, I decided . . . I don't think I would do that because that would be the next career path to jump, either an assistant vice chancellor for enrollment management or assistant chief of student affairs from there to the vice chancellor or vice president of student affairs. I decided, you know, I really don't want to go there. I don't want to deal with judicial stuff; I don't want to deal with the side of student affairs that is not enrollment management. That's what I preferred and that's one reason that I have stayed in the registrar's profession. But as I learned more and as I was promoted, I discarded that as something that just didn't seem to fit. I wasn't as interested in it.

While a doctoral degree was not required for the positions she took after earning the degree, Mastodon indicated that "it was perceived as being positive. I think it attracted some attention. It probably made me more marketable at least for the initial interviews, at least getting that attention and getting that first interview."

A team spirit. Mastodon found support from her husband through the doctoral process. Most of Mastodon's family lived out of state, so her husband felt the brunt of the impact of her

doctoral pursuits. And “not having any children helped.” Mastodon described her husband’s support as such:

He helped with the mailings. He helped with setting aside time every Sunday when I would be studying and reading and writing and he’d be doing stuff. It created kind of a team spirit.

When Mastodon was frustrated, her husband was there to encourage her. Mastodon described this encouragement: “As I had thoughts of quitting, he was just a huge cheerleader and kept me going, making me realize, ‘Hey, you’ve already spent this much time. Don’t give up.’”

Cliff’s Story

Cliff currently works in academic affairs as the assistant dean for student success and retention at a small public institution. He is married with three children and graduated with his Ph.D. in higher education administration in 2010. Prior to his current position in the heartland, he was located in a big city where he was the director of student academic services and an assistant director, career counselor, and career advisor in a career services office. He had worked in pediatric mental health prior to his move to higher education. Although he has never been an academic advisor, he currently supervises first-year advising in addition to orientation, first year programming, and the freshman seminar. Cliff originally thought he wanted to be a psychologist after his master’s degree in community counseling, but instead found himself in a career crisis situation, which led him to student affairs and eventually to his current position.

Career crisis. After graduating college, Cliff thought he wanted to be a psychologist. That is why he had studied psychology as an undergraduate. Cliff explained his passion for counseling: “I think counseling and therapy is awesome. I really do and think honestly that it’s something everyone should be in.” More specifically, he said,

I really value the counseling education that I received and the insight it provided me in terms of human behavior and the ability to help students. And certainly I think it helps people and now in my current setting, it helps me to work with students.

Through his master's internship in a children's home, he realized that he no longer wanted to be a counselor or psychologist and he no longer wanted to work with children. Cliff explained that he is "a big believer in self-authorship and that we are responsible for our own lives." He went on to say, "And obviously, there are circumstances where mental illness is chemical, too, and I certainly believe that, and I also believe that there is a point we need to kind of pull ourselves up by the boot straps and take the bull by the horns and do it, you know?"

Cliff understood this situation personally because, as an adolescent, he went to a psychologist due to some family problems and he felt like he could have either "wallowed" in his sorrow or make some decisions to make his life better, and his psychologist helped him do that. Cliff's struggle was when he worked with teens who did not have that attitude about their lives. Cliff also found that being a good therapist was "really, really hard work" and "takes a lot of energy to fully be present in the moment and listening to what somebody is saying and to really care." He went on to add that "it makes me sound like an awful person but it did not really mesh up to my personality and also maybe my abilities." He believed that because it was hard, he was insecure because of his own therapy experience. "I had such an amazing experience from my own counseling experience that I felt like that, boy, if I could be half as good of a therapist as mine was to me, that would be great. I probably wasn't." That's when he started looking at student affairs.

While in his master's program, Cliff was involved with some career counseling research, and it was "kind of interesting," so he thought he could use his background in the career

counseling arena. This led him to an unpaid internship at a large private university in a suburb of a large city, and this turned into a full-time job. This was the position he was in when he first thought of the Ph.D. He thought that he would like to eventually be a dean of students or a vice president of student affairs. But his next position after that was in academic affairs and he felt more of a connection for the academic side of the institution, rather than the “rah rah” student affairs side of the institution:

So you know I have a great deal of appreciation and respect for people in student activities and leadership programs and residence life and all those areas where you need a lot of pep, orientation programs, etc. But I just felt like personally, my skills, were best suited on the academic side.

It was at this point that his dreams of being a dean of students diminished. He realizes that this would mean a “shorter ceiling” on where he can advance, but he currently has faculty status, although not tenure track, and will not be able to become a provost or academic dean of a school or college without getting tenure. But overall, he is comfortable with his choice to be on the academic side of the institution.

I can honestly say, and very happily say, that I am right where I want to be. And I feel very, very fortunate to be in the position that I am in, doing all the things that I enjoy as well as, you know it’s stretching me and giving me exposure to other areas I didn’t necessarily think would be available, so yeah, I feel very, very fortunate to be where I am.

Location, location, location. Cliff was based in a large city or in its suburbs for the duration of his master’s and doctoral work; he chose to leave the hustle and bustle of the city for the heartland when he made his move to his current position, a move that not only reflected a

different physical environment but also a change in the kind of students and institution. “It kind of works out that I’ve been in this position for 18 months. I moved from [Big City] to [a state in the heartland], so, it’s kind of a big deal.”

While in the big city area, Cliff had “an hour and one minute commute on three different trains,” which gave him time to work on his dissertation, but the writing was only in short spurts. He stated, “You know, on the way to work if I could write two paragraphs . . . which does not sound like a lot, but if I could get a half a page worth, it’s basically when it is done, you know, in chunks like that.”

Also while in the big city, Cliff worked with Ph.D. candidates in engineering at a very prestigious school. He felt that they could “run circles around” him intellectually, but he found it interesting that they “still didn’t know how to do a resume and they were totally socially awkward, that they were terrible in interviews,” so he felt like he was able to be helpful to them. “So that was really kind of fun.” At his other campus in the big city, Cliff worked with undergraduates at a private campus with a high academic reputation. These two experiences were quite different than at his current institution.

Cliff’s current institution, he is proud to say, “is very much an average institution.” He stated that his campus is ranked around 70th in the Midwest in the US News college rankings. “So if you are that low in the Midwest, you are really pretty average.” He states that the reason for the ranking is because of their open admissions policy, which has been in place since the campus first opened 150 years before. Cliff explained that “in many ways, we are like a community college because we allow everyone a shot to get a degree, but we are a four year institution.” This type of admission policy allows for a wide range of academic preparedness, which is where Cliff feels like he can make a difference. “If you compare our top ten percent of

students, they could match up with anyone in the country. But then we have students that come here that get a 12 on the ACT. I did not know you could get a 12 on the Act before I came here, but you can.” Cliff is involved with implementing intensive programs to increase [the students’] chance of success, but he realizes that some of his students need a conversation about whether or not college is for them, or at least not for now. Cliff believes that some students need to “grow up a bit, and then come back.” Although those are hard conversations, “the students appreciate that because they appreciate finding somebody caring and saying, you know what, you’ve been pushed along so much I think you just need to get some real world experience.” In the end, Cliff describes his change in location as a “wild ride, but it’s been really fun.”

Sally’s Story

Sally is currently the Director of Individual Studies at a midsize public institution. She is Caucasian, married with two children, and she completed her doctoral degree in 2009. Her current duties include academic advising for several degree programs within the Division of Continuing Studies and Special Programs. The individual studies department is a subunit within that division. The individual studies department serves students in the general studies program, the individual studies major where students create their own major, and the bachelor of liberal arts program. Sally also works with the National Student Exchange program, the guided independent study program (online and self-paced), and she schedules all of the campus’s off-campus courses. Sally paid for her doctoral programs costs through student loans, supplemented by a small institutional grant.

“A degree more related to my profession.” At the time she started working at her current institution, Sally had already earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in women’s studies, but she was longing for a degree more closely aligned with what she was doing

professionally in higher education. Originally, she had wanted to teach in the women's studies area, but now she was interested in learning more about student development and higher education administration. Sally was encouraged to earn the doctoral degree by her supervisor, but she was not sure exactly which degree would be most beneficial to her at the time. She had considered both the postsecondary education leadership program as well as the educational counseling program and looked at programs at her current institution as well as at another institution, which would have required a commute. She considered both the Ph.D. and the Ed.D., but in the end, she chose to complete the Ed.D. at her current institution, specifically the educational leadership administration track, which she found to be founded on a practitioner's approach.

Moving up in my department. At the time of her application into the doctoral program, Sally was the individual studies advisor and had several ideas in mind for her future career. She had considered a dean of students role, a director of advising role, or even the option of moving up in her current department within Continuing Studies and Special Programs, which is what eventually happened. She really enjoyed the advising position she had when she started the program and realized that she would be very happy remaining in that position as well. When Sally's supervisor retired, she was able to move into the Individual Studies Program Coordinator role. Since then, she was given the title of director and has taken on more responsibilities. "And I attribute a lot of that, in part, to having the doctorate."

When asked about not following in the dean of students career path, she indicated that she felt like she was still doing many things that a dean of students might be involved with. She remarked,

I serve on our student conduct committee and so I am in that. I rule as the chair on that committee. I have more direct contact with the Dean of Students and so I got to know more about the position and that role and what it entailed. And I guess I knew that it dealt with student disciplinary issues and cases, but it goes into a lot of other things that I just wasn't really that interested in doing.

Instead, Sally became more focused on advising and administration and she enjoys that and she does not see herself changing her position anytime soon. She likes her campus, where they live, their community, and she is content for now.

Mentors and support from the field. Sally found that the director of academic advising on her campus was very encouraging and supportive. Also supportive was Sally's new supervisor, the dean of continuing education. She said, "You need support, as you know." Sally was also very lucky to see other academic advisors before her go on and do the doctoral degree, although there were no other advisors in her cohort at the time. At one point, she and another advisor had discussed the possibility of commuting together to the neighboring campus to complete the doctorate, but the other advisor never pursued that or any other doctoral program.

In terms of family support, Sally felt very fortunate as well. Because she had small children at the time, her doctoral program took her six years to complete, just under the required deadline. She said,

It took me six years. But that was going part-time. I don't even know if I was part-time. I would usually just take one class per semester because I was working full time and had children. It added another layer of complexity.

Ann's Story

Ann is currently the Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Multicultural Programs at a small private liberal arts institution in the Midwest. She is African American, is married, has two stepchildren, and a dog. Ann earned her doctoral degree in 2009. Ann paid for her degree through student loans and assistantships.

Suggestions to do the Ph.D. Ann first considered the Ph.D. around 2004 while she was trying her first student affairs master's class. Her future mentor and then instructor suggested that she consider a doctoral degree because of her writing ability. "She just saw something there and she suggested it and I was kind of against it at the time. I was just trying to get a master's degree. Slow down." After Ann decided for sure to pursue a master's degree in student affairs, she enrolled at another institution on the same side of the state. While in her master's program, she developed a mentoring relationship with her advisor at that campus. After taking her first class on that campus, her advisor "suggested that I seriously consider a Ph.D." But once again, Ann was just worried about finishing her master's degree and put it out of her mind. By the next year, both of her mentors were "in [her] ear" about it. "It really would be a shame for you not to get a doctorate." Eventually, after spending some time with them and speaking with them about the possibility, she agreed to apply. "You all think that there is something there, then I'll give it a try." At the root of her decision to pursue the doctoral program was her love for learning.

Others also supported Ann through her doctoral program. Her fiancé and siblings were all very supportive but, oddly enough, not her father. Ann describes him as a "male chauvinist pig" and an "interesting character."

Love for learning. She is happy that she chose to go through the doctoral process in higher education administration because she enjoyed the research so much in her master's

program. She still does not know what her career path will be though. “I’m not one of those people [whose goal] is to be a vice president or a president. I can’t say that. I’m just kind of going with the flow.” Ann did have an idea that she may end up being a director of academic advising or something like that, but she had no specific plans. She did know that she wanted to still be working closely with students. Ann also had a passion for social justice and diversity education, so that could be a part of her future career as well. She also thought that she may need to try something different. Her doctoral assistantship was in student discipline and she enjoyed that, so that became a possibility too. Luckily for her, she is able to work with several of these interest areas in her current position as Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Multicultural Programs.

Primarily, I do multicultural programs but I also do have an opportunity to, as Assistant Dean of Students, to assist with student discipline and to help with some conduct issues and then I also still get to assist with academic advising as well. We have a program here for students who are on academic probation through our Center for Academic Success, and I am one of the mentors, so each semester I work with a student or two who are on academic probation, and I work with them through the course of the semester. So, I still get a chance to do some of the academic advising that I’ve done before.

Long distance love. Although her career path did not have a lot of focus, her studies absolutely did. Ann was able to complete her doctoral degree in three years. She was able to go to summer school each year, which was one matter. Another consideration was that her doctoral advisor was going to be going on sabbatical, so she had to defend her dissertation proposal before she left. The final reason was that she had a boyfriend in another state, two states away.

She and her boyfriend did marry while she worked on her Ph.D., and, at the time, she did not want to live apart any longer than was necessary.

At the time that she and her future husband met in 2006, she was in the process of considering the doctoral degree and was still in her master's degree program. She had actually already sent off her applications the previous fall and was set on leaving the state to get the Ph.D. She was ready for a change. When they started dating, she told him that she had already applied and was not going to be there much longer, although she did not know where she would end up yet. She went on to explain that "we could hang out and be friends and you know, and so, we were both like OK. Well, by February I was like oh hell. Yeah, this is it. This is going to be tough." But she was still glad that she applied to do her doctorate work out of state. In fact she "figured that something like that would happen." For the campus she was working on at the time, she still loved being there and hopes to go back there and work one day.

I wanted to have experienced how other institutions functioned. I wanted to live outside of the state to explore and to see some different things and so I knew at that time that if I was going to quit my job and go back to school that I wanted it to be for something that was going to be different. I didn't want to quit my job and then stay at the university. I mean, I could have, you know, stayed and went to school for free, but I knew that if I was going to do this, I was going to do this and I needed to explore some different things and I wanted to have more experiences than just the large research one, public state institution, so I was very intentional in that decision.

Once Ann moved out of state and started her program, his support would help get her through the tough times, starting with the first week of classes.

Through their engagement and the first year of their marriage, he went to see her every weekend, and when he could not make it, she went to see him. “I think because we were both so committed to making things work and to sacrificing things, it was not as hard as it probably could have been.” Ann describes her most anxious moment on the Thursday of the first week of classes:

I had gone to the majority of my classes and had gotten the syllabi and actually had two classes. I was on break in between my statistics class and my advanced quantitative research methods. I was just exhausted and remember going downstairs and going to my car and just reflecting on the week and thinking about the syllabi for my classes. And I just broke down and started crying and my husband called me. And he’s like what’s wrong and I’m sitting in my car and I said that you know I made a mistake, I made a mistake. I shouldn’t have quit my job. I don’t know what made me think I could do a Ph.D. program. . . . I let “Dr. J” and I let “Dr. E” pump my head up. And now I’ve made this life-altering decision and what in the world was I thinking? And I told him, I said, why don’t you just come pick me up this weekend. My boss said that if I ever wanted my job back I could come back. . . . I’m going to call him and see if I can get my job back. And I had just created this whole plan in like 15 minutes. . . . I have to see if I can get my rent money back and I’ll just have to give the school back their money.

Ann had come up with this whole plan to back out of her Ph.D. program, but her future husband had other plans. He said, “Listen. I’m going to come this weekend, but I’m not coming to get you.” He said, “You know it would be different if you couldn’t do the work, but I know you can do the work. So you are going to have to stick it out. . . . I’ll be there tomorrow after I get off work. . . . You know you can do this. I’m not coming to pick you up.” As Ann continued to cry,

she agreed. Her future husband paused for a minute and then said, “Besides I told everybody that my wife was going to be a doctor. You’re not going let you make a liar out of me.”

Kaitlyn’s Story

Kaitlyn is a clinical professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policies as well as the director of the master’s degree program in higher education and student affairs at a large public research institution. She went through a divorce shortly after her doctoral program experience but is now married with one stepdaughter and four stepgrandchildren. She earned her Ed.D. in higher education administration in 1995 and, as an employee of the institution where she got her degree, her tuition was free. Kaitlyn describes her ethnicity or race as White.

Doctoral degree? “Hell no.” When Kaitlyn finished her master’s degree in athletic administration, she had no intention of going on for a doctoral degree. “I would not only have said no, I would have told you ‘Hell no.’” She really enjoyed her work as an academic advisor in one of the academic departments at the large public institution she was working for at the time, but she also became aware that those who were making the high level decisions and were having a real impact on students all had doctoral degrees. That’s when she started to think about it, but she may not have moved forward with it without the encouragement and nudging from mentors.

In 1991, Kaitlyn was playing in a golf tournament and her group was having a drink after their round when one of her acquaintances (his wife was a faculty member in the physical education department where she had gotten her master’s degree and she knew his stepdaughter) made a suggestion to her. He said, “You should start working on you doctorate.” Kaitlyn said, “Yeah, I know. Thanks. I should probably do that at some point.” He went on to explain that the higher education program was under review and that there was a possibility that it would be closed down. If Kaitlyn did not apply right now, she may not be able to do it. He said, “you need

to apply now. Get in and start working on this and then if they decide to close down the program, you will be grandfathered in and you will be able to complete the degree if you so choose.” This discussion was at the end of July and classes were to start in three or four weeks. He told her to submit her application and take the Miller’s Analogy Test, and he told her that she would be admitted. So she did, and she started classes a few weeks later.

Although she did not know what her career goal would be at the time, she knew she had enjoyed her higher education classes. Others she knew had titles such as associate provost and associate vice chancellor and she liked what they were doing in their careers.

Did I think about the possibility of becoming a president or a provost? Not seriously. But did the thought enter my mind? Sure. But that wasn’t why I was getting the degree. I just knew that I wanted to be a voice for students and be at the table when decisions were being made. I knew that if I was going to be at that table, I needed to have a doctorate in order to earn the ticket to sit at the table.

One course at a time. For Kaitlyn, the thought of the dissertation was overwhelming, especially since she was working full time. So she gave herself an out. She promised herself, and she would take the coursework semester by semester with no promise of finishing the doctoral degree. At the end of each semester, she decided if she wanted to do another semester. At the end of her last semester of coursework, she had a decision to make.

I hadn’t done a master’s thesis. I didn’t know what was involved. And so I kind of pretended, pretended this is just taking classes. And then I got to the end of the classes, and I was like OK, well, now I’ve got to decide, am I going to go on and do this? And by that time I was like, I’ve already done all of these classes. I might as well just suck it up and finish this off.

Kaitlyn was fortunate to meet up with two others on her campus who had finished their coursework 20 years or so ago but were allowed to finish. Kaitlyn was sure that she did not want this happening to her, so that made for good motivation, and the three decided to team up.

Those two guys were really influential because the three of us ended up meeting on a really regular basis, like once every couple of weeks, to write and to share what we had done with each other and to give feedback to each other and I felt more of an obligation to those two gentlemen, to give them something to read and critique, than I did to anybody else, including my advisor.

Within a month of completing her doctoral degree, she secured her next position working with MD/Ph.D. students at the same campus. Kaitlyn described these students as “brilliant people who were so passionate about research and what they were doing and medicine and helping other people and I really identified with their passion.” Eventually, Kaitlyn was able to work her way up the ladder and even became an adjunct in the higher education department teaching master’s degree students and taking some on as advisees. Eventually, Kaitlyn developed and taught a class on academic advising. She found that she loved teaching more than she thought she would, but her schedule and growing responsibilities with her MD/Ph.D. students left her little time for teaching, although she continued to pursue it. Kaitlyn described the situation,

And then as I kept moving up, and I eventually became the associate dean. I was spending more and more of my time in meetings and it was really trying to suck the life out of me because sitting in meetings is not what I am passionate about. And what I am passionate about is working with directly with students, so I loved my MD/Ph.D. students, and I loved my medical students that I was now in charge of too. I loved

working with the higher ed folks, but I just had less and less time to do those things. And I realized I was becoming pretty unhappy.

A change was coming, and it came to her in a very interesting way, much like the start of her doctoral program.

While on trip to New York for a presentation, Kaitlyn became aware of a position opening that seemed to be a perfect fit for her, but the deadline was that day. She thought that there was no way she could get in her application, but she decided to give them a call to see if they “think it’s worth my time to submit my materials and so I did call on Monday, and the guy was like yeah, we would love to have your application. Please send it in.” She submitted the application, went down for an interview, and got the job, which was her current position as a clinical professor and director of the higher education and student affairs master’s degree program. Similar lucky scenarios helped Kaitlyn meet other influential people in her life, such as co-authors who would mold her future career. Although she relayed that luck played a part in her career, she also took the initiative to walk through the doors that others had opened for her. Many in similar situations choose not take advantage of such opportunities. Her career path had not always gone the way she liked and there were bumps along the way, such as a divorce, but there had been many other positive aspects too. Kaitlyn explained,

I think it’s important for people to know that sometimes I think people look at people like me who have done a lot, who have written a lot, who have made some good contributions to the field, and you think, well it’s been all sunshine and roses, and it’s not. You have to make some tough choices, and that’s just a part of life. And everybody has things, not exactly that, but like that that happen. People die, people get married, people get divorced. Life happens.

Kaitlyn further reflected,

I am so grateful to all those people. And I have mentioned some of them that have opened doors of opportunity for me. And really I have dedicated my entire career, and really my life, to paying that forward, because I was a physical education teaching major who decided when I was a senior in college that that wasn't what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. And I had a next door neighbor growing up . . . who was an associate dean in the college of liberal arts and sciences, who when he found that out said, hey Kaitlyn, why don't you come work for me and get your master's degree, and that's where I got my start in advising, became a graduate counselor in my master's degree program, through the transitions program for students who were admitted with lower high school ranks and ACT scores. I mean it literally changed my life. I have told you about three or four of these people who opened doors, but I also realized that I in turn have opened doors of opportunity for lots of people, and not everybody walks through those doors. And you can't force people to walk through those doors. Although I am completely grateful for those people who opened those doors for me, I also realized that I followed up on those doors. I walked through. And I did the hard work, and they opened the door. And when you open doors for people, people also have to do their part, and do the follow up, and that's a really key part of this.

Jo's Story

Jo is currently the chief student affairs officer at a public community college. She is married with three children. She earned her Ed.D. in 2004 and described her race or ethnicity as Caucasian. She also shared that she had just accepted a position at another institution and would

be the assistant vice president for student affairs at a much larger community college with four campuses. She paid for her tuition costs through an employee tuition waiver.

A career after children. Jo's first career was that of a full-time elementary teacher, but she resigned her position when she got pregnant with her first daughter. To supplement their income, Jo tried substitute teaching, but she found that it did not work for her. She took a part-time teaching position at a local community college. She felt very lucky to get this position with only a bachelor's degree.

During that seven- or eight-year period, Jo fell in love with higher education, and she decided that she wanted to work in higher education for her next full-time position. She attended an information session about what she needed to teach full-time, and she found out that she needed a doctoral degree to teach at a four-year institution. It was at that point Jo set her sights on a doctoral degree. She was 40 years old. In the meantime, she "went back to school and worked part time, got an assistantship, got my master's, and was very successful in getting a job immediately upon getting my master's in 1997." Her master's degree was in student personnel services. Her first position after the master's degree was the Assistant Director of Career and Academic Planning.

Jo explained that she was very happy in her assistant director position when she started the doctorate. She went on to explain, "I really got the doctorate for me because it was something I wanted to accomplish." She hoped that it would lead to career advancement, but she really wanted it just because she "wanted to accomplish that goal and that level of education." She went on to explain that she did it "for the sake of learning," which was very important to her.

The blunder. At the time she was earning her doctorate and working full time, Jo and her husband still had one daughter living at home, and Jo made the decision about what she was “NOT going to give up.” She explained,

You know how often we talk about, you know, you’re not going to be able to do this, or don’t think you’re going to be able to juggle all the balls. . . . I didn’t focus on what I had to give up. I focused on what I would not give up. And one of those things was my family.

To accomplish this, she made sure that she was there for “planning all the parties,” as she called it. “Sure, I might have had a few more things catered, and maybe I stopped cleaning before the party and started cleaning only after the party. But I was there to continue the traditions that were important to my family.” But she does admit missing one big event.

Jo’s daughter was a field hockey player, and Jo was scheduled to be at an end-of-the-season field hockey celebration. Jo did not make it on time, and as she was walking into the school, her daughter’s friends told her, “Oh, you just missed it!” Jo explained,

My daughter had done an entire speech about how her family had supported her and how much she had appreciated that, and I had missed the whole thing. . . . It was sort of like a tribute that each of the girls were doing to their families and specifically to their mom, and I missed it.

If Jo could relive any moment, that would be the day. She would have gotten there on time. Jo admits that she struggles with work-life balance, “which does not look like balance to anyone else.”

Grounded in honesty and integrity. Jo had been working at a four-year institution for 14 years when a change in leadership occurred. “The leadership was requesting that I do some

things that I did not think were ethically responsible. Nor were they grounded in honesty and integrity.” These requests started making Jo feel physically sick because she was being torn between what she was asked to do and “who I believed I was as a leader.” This situation caused Jo to look for other positions outside of her current institution where she was at the director level.

Jo saw a particularly interesting job opening at a community college before leaving to attend the NACADA summer institute, but because it was also at the director level, she thought it was not for her and she “literally threw it in the trash can.” While at the institute, the dean from that community college sought her out and said, “You do not know who I am, but I know who you are.” The dean discussed the position with Jo, but Jo let her know that it was not for her. She described the encounter:

So she hounded me the whole week and said I should apply for this position. So she said to me that she was succession planning. She was the dean; she oversaw all student affairs there. And that, you know, she would like to bring me in as a director, and she thought she would stay around two years and then she thought that I would probably be a pretty good dean. So I thought about it and thought about it. And so I did end up applying. But here’s the catch. It was a 40 thousand dollar decrease in money.

So it would be a lateral move for less money, Jo’s mentor had always encouraged her to go back to her gut. “You know, if your head and your heart and your gut think that you should do it, you should probably do it.” After much reflection, and deciding that her health was more important than the money, Jo decided to apply and took the position. Unfortunately, right after that, Jo became the primary breadwinner in her family.

The dean ended up leaving the institution in five months. Jo was a student affairs director in October and during the following February, she was named assistant dean on a trial basis.

Then the following April, Jo was named dean of student affairs and was put into the former dean's position officially in July. Jo reflected,

But it's a good story because, sometimes a position is not going to be all that you want it to be and you really have to sort it out . . . what does it offer to you. And for me, being able to be what I thought were true to my core values was more important than the money.

Jo felt very comfortable in this position overseeing all student services because she had worked collaboratively across campus in her previous positions.

Rebecca's Story

Rebecca completed her Ph.D. in higher education leadership in 2010 and is currently the Special Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs at a midsize public institution. She is a wife and mother of two children. She describes her race or ethnicity as white and she self-funded her doctoral program costs.

“God had a little intervention.” For Rebecca, “it wasn't always clear” that her Ph.D. would be in higher education. Rebecca explained,

I was actually considering a different route, but I think God had a little intervention in having that letter arrive in the mail on that particular day. I think I ended up in the right place which landed me in the career path that I am currently called to be in. So I am very thankful for that. It worked out well.

Rebecca had an interest in both higher education and health studies, and she had applied to two different Ph.D. programs, one in each area. She had been admitted to the health studies program, and in her mind, she had committed to the health studies program. As she was preparing to start her first course, a summer international health course in Germany, she planned

to purchase her plane ticket that evening. When she got home and checked the mailbox, she got an important letter. Rebecca explained, “I had a letter from my physician regarding some medical tests that I had just had and realized that it was probably was not the best time for me to leave the country.”

Shortly after the letter from her physician, she found out that she had also been admitted to the higher education program and eventually decided that it was a better choice given her family circumstances (a husband and two small children) and her health situation. Rebecca described the details regarding ending up in higher education.

I think I just realized very early on that to have either of those doors open, a tenure-track faculty position or a senior administrative position at a four year public institution, I needed to earn the Ph.D. And I knew that at that point we had a four-year-old and a one-year-old and I knew that it was going to be hard to do the program but I also knew that it would never get easier.

Balancing school, work, and children. Rebecca’s work-life balance through the Ph.D. process was a struggle and as she described it, could probably be a dissertation all on its own. Although it was an emotional struggle, she made some tough decisions that would benefit her small children.

During the summer before starting her program, Rebecca reflected on her feelings about her new adventure and her worries about how it would affect her children. To put her thoughts into words, she wrote a letter to her children, one she would put into their scrapbooks so they could read it later and understand her love and concern at this point in their lives. Below are some excerpts from that letter.

As this summer comes to a close, I am becoming increasingly nervous about my commitments this fall. I will be a full-time academic advisor as well as a full-time Ph.D. student in the higher education leadership program. I enjoy my job, and I am blessed to have a fantastic supervisor and co-workers. So, why the nerves? The work/home balance for our family right now is excellent. . . . Daddy and I have both found fulfilling careers. When classes start for Mommy this August, I suspect I will need to spend many evenings and weekend hours reading textbooks, writing papers, and doing research in the library. I am worried that I won't have time to spend with my family, and that makes my heart hurt. Daddy and I won't change much in the next three years, but [you both] will. I am very concerned that I will look at my kiddos in the audience at my graduation and realize that I don't know what has happened in their lives in the last three years. I am concerned that they will know their teachers and day care providers better than they know me.

There have been times during this summer when [my daughter] has proudly proclaimed, "When I grow up, I'm going to be a 'doctor' at college like Mommy." When I hear those words, I smile and am reassured that our family is making the right decisions. At other times though, [my daughter] will say something like "Mommy, I liked it when you used to just study in the morning and then pick me up at school after lunch." Outwardly, I try to brush off those comments and move on; inwardly, however, those comments make me question my decisions regarding work/education/family, tempt me to quit my job, and make me want to cry.

My reasons for enrolling in the Ph.D. program extend beyond the doors that the degree may open. I hope that I will be a role model for [my daughter]. As she watches me, I hope that [she] will learn that women are just as smart as men and that absolutely

any career path is open to her. I hope that she will learn to appreciate the value of serving others in one's career. The best part of my career in higher education is helping students and their families. I hope that [my son] will learn the value of hard work and determinism. I hope that he will grow to be a man who supports his wife's desires related to work and family, regardless of whether those desires lean towards staying at home or working outside the home.

I honestly don't know how demanding my work and school commitments this fall will be. Daddy and I have talked extensively about the options, and we have come to the conclusion that we will see how this semester goes and re-evaluate the situation at Christmas. If Christmas arrives, and I realize that I haven't seen my family in four months, we will re-evaluate my work commitment. We will see.

I am putting my feelings in writing and including this letter in your scrapbook because I feel that this is an important step in our family's life. . . . Please know that this has not been an easy decision for me. Daddy and I have spent many hours talking about this, and we have done a lot of praying for guidance. I feel like we are making a wise decision for the future of our family. Please know, however, that no matter how crazy things might get this fall, and how busy I might be, my family is absolutely, undoubtedly, unmistakably the number one priority in my life. I love [my daughter, my son] and Daddy with all of my heart. I could be president of Harvard, and that role would pale in comparison to my role as wife and mommy.

When she applied to her Ph.D. program, Rebecca was a full-time academic advisor with an 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. schedule. Her plan was to stay at her office after work each night, studying to at least midnight every night. She was sure that if she went home, she "would have a child on

each leg” wanting her attention. She knew that a one-year-old and a four-year-old would not understand “the concept of homework and why mommy would need to be doing something other than focusing on them.” Although it was a lot easier to get her homework done, the results were heart wrenching. Rebecca explained,

Now the consequence of that is that by midterm, I had a one-year-old who no longer said mama if he woke up in the middle of the night. And if he woke up he would cry for dada, which is tough on a mom’s heart.

Her four-year-old daughter also struggled. Her daughter, who had always loved school, “began sobbing at the door every day and begging to go to work” with her. When Rebecca asked her why, her daughter told her that she wanted to spend time with her mommy, which broke Rebecca’s heart. “And so at the end of that first semester, I resigned my job.” Rebecca explained her feelings:

I thought that I would feel a great sense of relief when I did that. I did not. It was relief to know that I could focus on my studies and also focus on my family, but when I turned those keys into my office, I also turned in my family’s health insurance. We got it through my husband’s employer, but it wasn’t nearly as good as what I had at the university. I turned in our financial security. I turned in a great, secure job that I loved with great people. And I entered a time of great uncertainty where I had no idea if or when I would be able to find a full time job again.

Luckily, Rebecca was able to secure a full-time job after she finished her coursework, although it was her intention to job search after finishing her dissertation. The position was just too good to pass up. Starting this new job delayed her graduation a bit, finishing her dissertation

in two years instead of one. “It wasn’t necessarily the plan I had in mind, or the vision that I had, but hopefully this is what I was called to do.”

Georgia’s Story

Georgia is an African American, self-employed web designer and business strategist who is also a divorced mother of two. She earned her doctoral degree in higher education administration and instructional technology in 2011. She paid for her doctoral program costs through a combination of student loans and a full time assistantship coaching faculty members as they put their courses online into the Blackboard system.

Changing career plans. Georgia left her position as the Assistant Director of Academic Advising when she started her Ph.D. full-time. She was convinced to leave her position because of an incident with a student; she had disagreed with the way it was handled, believing that the student’s interest was not served. Her original hope was to become a dean of students. While in the Ph.D. program, however, her focus was on becoming a faculty member, and she had chosen her institution because of the instructional technology focus that concentrates on the teaching the end user how to use the design tools, not the design itself. It is that training that directly informed her web design training at present. Once she graduated, her career focus shifted again and she is now in web design full time. Georgia described her shift:

In grad school, I grew up with a love for computing and went into grad school with it as a hobby. So I would always have a skill that my peers wanted to learn how to use. And the faculty members that I worked with said I really got a handle on training and teaching them how to use the technology. As I pursued the instructional technology portion of my degree, I realized that I’d rather be teaching than being purely an administrator which was my background originally. So as I moved through my program, I was looking for

more and more for opportunities to teach, to speak at conferences, to build a faculty's CV and towards the end, really enjoyed doing that and upon graduation, started the computer training center.

It was while running that business that she realized that she did not like being quite so formal. She had previously completed a stint as a faculty member where she did not have control over when she taught and she decided that she just did not like all the homework. In addition, she did not like all the other responsibilities, such as attending meetings outside of work hours and other last minute events that faculty needed to attend. As a single parent, it just did not work with her schedule. She had been teaching from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. "That's why I left faculty work to go to where I am now, which is designing and training specifically in web design. And ultimately, I fell out of love with being a faculty member."

Leaving higher education. Georgia had only occasional regrets about leaving higher education. When asked if she ever wished she was a dean of students, she indicated that sometimes she did, but only when she did not meet her monthly quota of clients. She indicated that she did not really miss higher education and did not have the desire to pursue it at this point. She was, however, glad that she got the doctoral degree. She feels that it helped her in her current business.

It's been very useful to me, both in contacts professionally as well as the actual information. Although a lot of my higher ed coursework mirrored what I got in my master's degree, the instructional technology focus has helped me and my assistantship and has helped me to be diplomatic when necessary and helped me to give me the practice that I needed to explain complex terms in very simple layman's form.

She "absolutely loved being a web designer." The schedule worked for her as a single mother.

I am happy to get out of work and get out of bed and go to work in the morning and not just because my work is in my office downstairs, ten feet from my bedroom. I really enjoy being creative and helping the small business owners that I work with to figure out what it is about this that is keeping them from making money and helping them to do that while giving them an interface that allows them to do that. I am still advising as it were, and I think that is a part of my professional background, being most important to me in working with my clients. If I hadn't been an academic advisor for that many years, I probably wouldn't be a very good web designer.

Family support. Georgia greatly enjoyed being a student on a college campus again. She especially appreciated having access to campus resources that she viewed as essential to her success. Although online programs may be right for some people, she was glad that she did not have to go that route. "Being on campus and having a peer group doing this same work that you are doing is the best way to ensure that you actually finish the degree. And building this community is very important. And I think online programs can provide that. They just haven't gotten there yet."

As a single mom, her family and, specifically, her son's father, were very supportive. While completing her Ph.D., Georgia's son was not with her. He lived with his father for those two years of coursework. Unfortunately, her son was not close by. He was in the northeast while Georgia was in the southeast part of the country. Luckily, Georgia and her son were able to Skype. "If there is a way to connect, I taught him how to do it. . . . It didn't seem like the distance was there." Georgia admits that if her son's father had not been able to take care of their son, she would have had difficulties completing the Ph.D.

The assistantship paid for my tuition but not much else. The loans that I took out paid for housing [and] paid for groceries. If I had to add childcare while I am in class, and of course I had evening classes and daytime classes, it would have been very, very challenging to manage and juggle the scheduling. Although there were other parents in the group, they were all married.

Georgia did admit that there are those in her family who suggested that she go back to higher education, especially when she has a challenging month financially. But “being on her own” and directing her own education as she did in her Ph.D. program, convinced her that she does not “honestly care to work for someone else.” She also related her choices to her experience as an advisor:

And one of the reasons why my students, my advising students, chose me over the years over the other advisors was because I would give them the background information. My loyalty was always to the students. And of course occasionally that would get me in trouble with the administration [if] it was something they didn't want the students to know. . . . But I saw my professional goal as helping the student to graduate and that means teaching them the rules that they must follow, the actions they must take. . . . As professionals and administrators, sometimes we made that difficult for them. [I was] someone to help them navigate through that. . . . And now into my life as a designer and a trainer, I still do that. I see my role as kind of a guide along the map to achieving your ultimate goal. And that unfortunately does not always lend itself well to working for an administration that's trying to protect its own interest. So I would say that if you are a person of integrity, you may be the only person that you can rely on to move forward in a way that you value, and you have to believe that about yourself.

She was very satisfied with the choices she had made despite any suggestions by her family.

Summary of Participant Stories

Thirteen Ph.D. graduates with a background in academic advising shared their stories in this study. Although several had similar experiences, all had their own unique situation. Some, like Mike, Madilyn, Nola, and Marie, ended up moving up in an academic advising field. Others, such as Marie, Tebone, Ann, Jo, Mastodon, Kaitlyn, and Rebecca, moved up within the student affairs area. Sally and Cliff ended up in academic affairs positions, and Georgia chose to work outside of higher education.

Similarly, the family situations and experiences of this group were also diverse. Some had wonderful family support through their doctoral process while others found their relationships falling apart. In terms of mentorship, the group also covered the spectrum, from multiple supportive and proactive mentors to the complete lack of mentors. Many within this group used tuition assistance to pay for their doctoral program costs, and a few chose to use their personal funds, assistantships, or student aid. The following chapter analyzes several of these themes and others, specifically the educational level required for their positions, family and financial support, career goals at the time of application, and the use of mentors.

CHAPTER 5

THEMES

This chapter examines the themes that developed through the process of analysis of the individual participant transcripts and documents. Specifically the chapter discusses the educational level required for the participants' positions, families and financial support, career goals at the time of application, and the use of mentors. These are overriding themes that transcended all of the participants' stories.

Doctorate Required or Preferred?

One of the themes transcending the interviews was the relevance of the doctoral degree to the first job they assumed following receipt of their degrees and, for those who had realized additional positions since that initial one, whether the doctoral degree was requisite to those positions. Table 3 lists each study participants' first jobs post-doctoral degree, how many years in those positions, and if those positions required or preferred the doctoral degree or had no expectation for one. The last column notes subsequent jobs, if any, for the participants and how the doctoral degree was considered for each.

Table 3

Doctoral Degree Relevance Post Degree Completion

Pseudonym	Position Post Degree	Years in Position	Doctoral Expectation for Position	Subsequent Positions and Degree Requirements
Mike	Director, Academic Support Center	1 year to present	Doctorate Preferred	n/a
Madilyn	Director of Academic Advising and Undergraduate Student Services	2 years to present	Master's Required; Doctorate Perceived as Helpful	n/a
Nola	Student Services Manager	3 years to present	Doctorate Perceived as Helpful	n/a
Marie	Executive Director, Academic Resources; Director, Academic Advising & Orientation	2 years to present	Doctorate Preferred	n/a
Tebone	Vice President of Student Services	8 years	Doctorate Preferred	Assistant Professor; Graduate Faculty Associate; Interim Director, Academic Success and Intercultural Service and the Culture Center; Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs; Doctorate preferred

Table 3 (continued)

Pseudonym	Position Post Degree	Years in Position	Doctoral Expectation for Position	Subsequent Positions and Degree Requirements
Mastodon	Associate Registrar	4 years	Doctorate Perceived as Being Positive	Registrar at several campuses; Doctorate Preferred
Cliff	Assistant Dean of Student Success and Retention	2 years to present	Doctorate Preferred	n/a
Sally	Director of Individual Studies	3 years to present	Doctorate Required	n/a
Ann	Director, Office for Diversity Initiatives and Intercultural Relations	2 years	Doctorate Perceived as Being Preferred	Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Multicultural Programs; Instructor; Master's Required, Doctorate Perceived as Being Preferred
Kaitlyn	Assistant Director, Scholars Program	6 years	Master's Required	Administrative Director, Scholars Program, Adjunct Associate Professor in Educational Organization and Leadership; Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Scholars Program; Director, Office of Specialty Advising; Clinical Professor & Director of the Master's Program in Higher Education & Student Affairs; Doctorate Required

Table 3 (continued)

Pseudonym	Position Post Degree	Years in Position	Doctoral Expectation for Position	Subsequent Positions and Degree Requirements
Rebecca	Special Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs	2 years to present	Doctorate Preferred	n/a
Georgia	Web Designer & Trainer	1 year to present	n/a	Adjunct Instructor

Only one of the 13 participants' first positions after earning the doctorate required a doctoral degree. Several participants accepted positions where the doctorate was preferred. One participant, Georgia, became self-employed. A number of the participants noted that, although not officially required or preferred, they found that getting the position, or their ability to realize success in the position, was linked at least in part to the skills they learned through earning the doctorate. Even though a great majority of the participants in this study did not initially obtain a position that required a doctoral degree, they did not seem overly concerned by that. This humble stance may be a reflection of their previous experience as academic advisors, where it is widely known that a degree is not a ticket to a job or a lofty title (Brooks & Everett, 2009; Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001). Instead, the degree (knowledge), plus the related skills and experience, are what makes a person competitive for a position.

At the time that she started her doctoral program, Sally was the individual studies program academic advisor and program coordinator within the continuing studies and special

programs department. When her supervisor retired, Sally also became the individual studies program coordinator. Once she earned her doctoral degree, she was given the title of director. Her new title came with additional responsibilities within the division. Sally described her current duties.

So individual studies is like a sub category or department within that division. And so we have several degree majors and one degree program that I work with, oversee, and advise students for. The first one is... we have a general studies major. And I am the advisor for all general studies students. Then there is the individual studies major which is where students create their own major essentially if we don't offer a major at [my campus] for example, sports marketing has been a popular one. It is possible for students to create a curriculum blending in the different departments, creating a major that is currently not being offered. And then I also work with the bachelor of liberal studies program or degree which is a regent's degree program, so all three [regents schools offer it.] And then I work with National Student Exchange. I also work to schedule all of our off campus courses and I work with our guided independent study program which are online courses, but they are self-paced. So students can take up to 9 months and work at their own pace. But they are online.

In Kaitlyn's case, she felt as though she was going to need some additional "seasoning" between earning her doctorate and moving into the positions she wanted. Additionally, she knew she would need to "look a little bit older." Kaitlyn described her situation.

And so this position at the med school where I started as the coordinator was a master's degree required. I'm not even sure if it was doctorate preferred. But it required a master's degree but certainly it did not require a doctorate, and I knew at least one person who

worked over there. I just got a sense when I went to interview that there were going to be opportunities to move up, and indeed that's what happened. So even though I would say that initial position I would have told you at the time was beneath me, it wasn't. It was great. It was a great experience.

Kaitlyn eventually moved up within her department, into the positions of Administrative Director and Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and also become an adjunct associate professor at her university. Kaitlyn then moved onto positions that required a doctoral degree, including her current position of Clinical Professor and Director of the master's degree program in higher education and student affairs. According to her curriculum vita, her current position includes these duties:

- To conduct research, write papers, teach classes, and oversee the administration of the Master's degree program;
- Responsibility for the admissions process for the program and for meeting with each Master's degree student individually at least once a year. Entering class is typically 35-45 students per year.

Within a year of earning her doctoral degree, Kaitlyn was able to use that degree to teach as an adjunct associate professor in the higher education master's degree program. Within these duties, Kaitlyn continued her advising activities, meeting regularly with her advisees to "discuss their academic plans and career opportunities." Through her adjunct position, she was also able to be one of the first in the country to develop and teach a course on academic advising in higher education. Additionally, she served on dissertation committees and eventually was promoted from assistant to associate professor.

For Nola, the doctoral degree was not required, but in her mind it was “definitely helpful in getting her next position,” which she took while finishing her dissertation. As a student services manager in an academic department, Nola found that earning the Ph.D. afforded her some respect.

I do think I wouldn't have as much respect if I didn't have my Ph.D. with the faculty that I work with. And I know for a fact that some of them would dismiss me outright because they have dismissed the people that work for me because they don't have their Ph.Ds. So it kind of gives me the clout I guess in their minds to be on their playing field.

Marie also found that having the Ph.D. was helpful. She felt that she had more of the “preferred qualifications in addition to the required ones.” Marie reflected,

It was preferred. So it was definitely helpful, especially in a competitive market with these jobs that the Ph.D. being preferred and me having it. Inclusive excellence is a core component of what they were looking for. Knowledge of that and demonstration that you could apply [that knowledge] and the different aspects of what my [doctoral] degree consisted of definitely helped me.

For Mastodon, having the doctoral degree “was perceived as being positive.” “I think it attracted some attention. It probably made me more marketable at least for the initial interviews, at least getting that attention and getting that first interview.” For Jo, the only position she has had that required a doctoral degree was the position she was about to announce as her new position, assistant vice president for student affairs at a large community college institution with four campuses. At the time of the interview for this study, her current position was chief student affairs officer, also at a community college. That position was doctorate preferred. For Ann, the first position after her doctoral degree did not require a doctoral degree and neither did her

current position. She did indicate that “they were preferring someone with a doctorate though.” In Rebecca’s case, her first position after the doctoral degree was master’s degree required, but Ph.D. preferred. The position was an interim position, which lasted for four years. “It was just last year that I went through the national search process and became the permanent person in the position.”

Financial Support and Families

The circumstances around how to finance one’s doctoral education was a second theme that transcended all of the interviews. A majority of the participants used some sort of tuition discount by their employers (colleges) to fully or partially pay for their doctoral program costs. Two participants used a combination of assistantships and student loans (Georgia and Ann). Two participants chose to pay out of pocket (Mastodon and Rebecca).

Mike purposely chose to work at a campus that provided tuition support for its employees, knowing that he wanted to enroll in a doctoral program. Mike explained,

When I was working on my master’s degree, that’s when I kind of got the calling that I wanted to work with college students, to make a career out of working with college students. But in order to move up the latter, you had to earn the terminal degree. So, one thing that I focused on when looking at advising positions was if there was a good higher education [doctoral] program at the institution and also if they pay for it and what their policy was on fee waivers, things like that.

As a result, Mike ended up at a campus that “allows faculty and staff to take two classes per semester free of charge.” Mike described his situation,

So the only out of pocket fees were if I took an online class, I had to pay an online fee.

And I did a study abroad graduate course in the UK, and I had to pay some extra out of

pocket for that. And we had to take a class that was in Washington D.C. that was on legal issues and policy and everything, and we had to pay some out of pocket things on those.

For the most part, the university covered the tuition for the majority of it.

Sally had employer support, but on a more limited basis, although it has since improved for those coming after her in the doctoral program. She described the support.

It is actually much better now than when I was a student. It's called a staff training grant, which is a tuition assistance program. And it was that they allocated a certain amount of money to this fund account and it was a first come, first served basis. You would apply for the staff training grant and you would just get a portion of that fund. So the more students who applied and needed assistance, the less one person got. So it never really amounted to a whole lot. For me, it helped cover text books or something. Anything helped, so I don't mean to sound ungrateful, but it wasn't substantial in terms of the amount it provided. We do still have it and it covers a lot more. It's not a pot of money that everyone gets a piece of, everybody gets their tuition waived except for the fees. This is really nice now, but back in the day when I was taking classes, they didn't have that of course. Yes, so there was a tuition assistance program.

Several others used assistantships to help pay for their education. Ann chose to quit her full-time position when she started her doctoral program. To help pay for her education, she was working 20 hours per week in an assistantship and also used student loans. Her assistantship helped her focus her career goals.

I also knew that I had a passion for social justice education and diversity education, and I wasn't sure if I would try something different with multicultural programs or something like that, so I really wasn't sure and then my assistantship was in student discipline and I

liked that so I thought maybe I would do something in student discipline. So those were the three areas I would say when I was finishing up that I focused on in terms of job search were those areas.

Ann's assistantship experience eventually led her to her current position, Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Multicultural Programs, at a small private liberal arts institution in the Midwest.

Georgia also used a combination of an assistantship and student loans to pay for her doctoral program, which also resulted in additional preparation for her later career. She explained,

in grad school I grew up with a love for computing and went into grad school with it as a hobby. So I would always have a skill that my peers wanted to learn how to use and the faculty members that I worked with said I really got a handle on training and teaching them how to use the technology as I pursued the instructional technology portion of my degree and realized that I'd rather be teaching than being purely an administrator which was what my background originally was. So as I moved through my program, I was looking more and more for opportunities to teach, to speak at conferences, to build a faculty's CV and towards the end, really enjoyed doing that and upon graduation, I started the computer training center.

Georgia eventually became a self-employed web designer and business strategist.

Kaitlyn was able to use her campus's tuition benefits to fully fund her doctoral program. Jo was also able to use a similar benefit. As a full-time employee, she was able to use a tuition waiver. "It was wonderful." Rebecca and Mastodon, on the other hand, were fortunate enough to be able to pay for their doctoral program costs personally, without the assistance of financial aid.

Rebecca's story of how she chose to pay for her schooling had great consequences for her family is particularly insightful. A month before Rebecca was to start her doctoral coursework, she was feeling nervous about all of her commitments. She was going to be balancing a full-time position as an academic advisor as well as a full load of classes in her doctoral program. But her biggest concern was her role as a wife and mother. In a journal entry, Rebecca wrote a letter to her two small children, explaining why she was starting the doctoral program and detailed how she and her husband were very worried about how this time commitment would affect her children. She wrote,

Dear [daughter] and [son],

As this summer comes to a close, I am becoming increasingly nervous about my commitments this fall. I will be a full-time academic advisor with the [support program], as well as a full-time Ph.D. student in the Higher Education Leadership program. When I began thinking about Ph.D. programs last winter, my plan was to enroll in a graduate program full-time this fall and wait to find a full-time position in higher education until *after* I had completed my Ph.D. After attending a video conference on [the] program last December, I quickly realized that I would have to have a full-time job to be considered for admission into the program. I considered other institutions. . . . but those programs were either *not* family friendly, significantly *longer* than [my] program, or required *a lot* of hours of driving to and from class multiple times every week. [This] program was by far the most family-friendly option. Soon after that video conference, I began meeting with directors and deans . . . to inquire about job opportunities. I was very fortunate to be hired as a temporary academic advisor with [a support program] on March 1. During the

spring semester, I went through the national search process. I was hired as a permanent advisor July 1.

Her letter to her children went on to describe her work-life balance before starting the doctoral degree and her related fears.

I enjoy my job, and I am blessed to have a fantastic supervisor and co-workers. So why the nerves? The work/home balance for our family right now is excellent. [My daughter] enjoys going to preschool, [my son] loves playing with [his friend at his sitter's], and Daddy and I have both found fulfilling careers. We work hard during the day, but we also have time to play together and enjoy time with each other during the evenings and weekends. When classes start for Mommy this August, I suspect I will need to spend many evenings and weekend hours reading textbooks, writing papers, and doing research in the library. I am worried that I won't have time to spend with my family, and that makes my heart hurt. Daddy and I won't change much in the next three years, but [you two] will. It amazes me to think that on my graduation day, I will look at my kiddos in the audience at my graduation and realize that I don't know what has happened in their lives in the last three years. I am concerned that they will know their teachers and day care providers better than they know me. There have been times during this summer when [my daughter] has proudly proclaimed "When I grow up, I'm going to be a 'doctor' at college like Mommy." When I hear those words, I smile and am reassured that our family is making the right decisions. At other times though, [my daughter] will say something like, "Mommy, I liked it when you used to just study in the morning and then pick me up at school after lunch." Outwardly, I try to brush off those comments and

move on; inwardly, however, those comments make me question my decision regarding work/education/family, tempt me to quit my job, and make me want to cry.

Rebecca also used her letter to her children to outline how she believed that earning the doctoral degree would not only be important for her career, but also for her family.

My reasons for enrolling in the Ph.D. program extend beyond the doors that the degree may open. I hope that I will be a role model for [my daughter]. As she watches me, I hope that [she] will learn that women are just as smart as men and that absolutely any career path is open to her. I hope that she will learn to appreciate the value of serving others in one's career. The best part of my career in higher education is helping students and their families. I hope that [my son] will learn the value of hard work and determination. I hope that he will grow to be a man who supports his wife's desires related to work and family, regardless of whether those desires lean towards staying at home or working outside the home.

Within a few months, Rebecca's children's needs came before their career and financial needs, and Rebecca resigned her position, which was not an easy decision. And then she adjusted her plan for when she would again find a full time position. Rebecca reflected,

I thought that I would feel a great sense of relief when I did that. I did not. It was a relief to know that I could focus on my studies and also focus on my family, but when I turned those keys into my office, I also turned in my family's health insurance. We got it through my husband's employer, but it wasn't nearly as good as what I had at the university. I turned in our financial security. I turned in a great, secure job that I loved with great people. I entered a time of great uncertainty where I had no idea if or when I would be able to find a full time job again when I was done with coursework and if I was

ready for that. What my intention when I did that was to finish the coursework, finish my dissertation in a year, and then go back into the workforce full-time again. What happened in reality was that I finished coursework and then this opening arrived or became available that I am in currently and sometimes opportunities come along that are too good to let pass.

Many of the participants in this research study felt strongly about their family members and had to make some tough choices through their doctoral program years. But as Rebecca so wisely wrote, “I could be president of Harvard, and that role would pale in comparison to my role as wife and mommy.” Study participants sought to put their families first, which for some, was also taxing to their families financially.

Career Goals

Career goals were a third transcendent theme that emerged from the participant interviews. Their desired positions and how they framed their career aspirations, however, varied by person. Some participants had specific career goals for their futures, but others, like Jo, Ann, Sally, and Tebone, were more focused on getting the degree for their own knowledge, with career goals being secondary to the plan. More specifically, Sally was not even sure she wanted to change careers at all. On the other hand, four of the participants (Georgia, Cliff, Marie, and Madilyn) started their doctoral programs with career goals in mind. They thought that they might want to be a dean of students, or in some related position. Interestingly enough, only one participant, Ann, who was more focused on “going with the flow” in terms of her career post-doctorate, has to this point achieved any version of that title. She is currently the Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Multicultural Programs. Once Marie decided to make the move away from law and toward higher education, Marie knew that she wanted to have the highest

credential in the field. She was deciding between getting her doctoral degree in higher education and intercultural communication.

After looking back, I think that I [might] have . . . done something with intercultural communication or at least had some kind of cognate in [intercultural communication] because in some ways the higher education degree [might have pigeon-holed me]. I really like the intercultural pieces and how organizations work in general. But I have no regrets. . . . At the time, [higher education] was the perfect fit. I learned a lot. Looking back on it, intercultural communication would have been another consideration.

After her doctoral degree, she ended up in positions she described as similar to a dean of students' responsibilities: Director of Academic Advising, and Orientation/Executive Director of Academic Resources and Student Life. Marie commented,

It is pretty similar. What I found is that since I am more on the academic side of it [the university organizational structure], this position would normally fall under academic affairs and I'm glad it falls under student life here, because I get the academic world which I absolutely love. I love working with faculty and the committees that I'm on. But I also stay connected to the conduct, and to the health and counseling, and to the housing and residential education which are also in line with what the dean of students would oversee, so it's the best of both worlds.

Other participants' goals were focused on positions such as vice chancellor for student affairs or assistant or associate deans in either the academic affairs or student affairs arenas. While working on his master's degree, Mike knew he wanted to make a career out of working with college students, but in order to "move up the ladder," he knew he had to get the terminal degree. "One thing that I focused on when looking at advising positions was if there was a good

higher education [doctoral] program at the institution and also if they would pay for it and what their policy on fee waivers was.” The higher education doctorate was the only one Mike considered. It was the primary degree that fit with his career interests and aspirations.

When considering his future career plans, Mike knew that he wanted to stick to the academic side of the house, specifically in administration under the provost’s line. Mike explained,

as an advisor, I knew that if I wanted to work my way up to be any kind of director or dean or any other kind of thing or provost level, you have to have the terminal degree to do that. And to be honest, I was picky. The [University] only offers the Ph.D. in higher ed and I didn’t mind the research aspect of it, but also if we would have had an Ed.D., I could have seen myself going the practitioner route. But either was fine, and since that was the only one they offered, my choice was pretty much made before I ever got here.

Mike is currently the Director of the Academic Support Center.

As discussed earlier, Madilyn had many career interests even after earning her master’s degree, including being a veterinarian and a lawyer. But through the influence of her mentor, she finally decided on student affairs as her career focus.

I had a really good relationship with my associate dean at the time. She was my mentor and still continues to be my mentor. And she came into my office and it was like she knew that I was frustrated by what I was going to do and she said, “I really think you are going to be a dean someday. I really think you need to consider earning your Ph.D. in higher ed.”

She then used her contacts in professional organization for inspiration about what direction to go from there. Madilyn described her process,

Looking around at some of the folks across campus, or some people I got to know through NACADA or other organizations, [the jobs they were in] seemed like the types of roles I wanted to get into, either an assistant dean, associate dean, dean of students, those types of things. People tended to have degrees in higher ed or something along those lines.

Madilyn's title is now the Director of Academic Advising and Undergraduate Student Services.

Nola really liked the idea of others calling her "doctor," and she focused her career aspirations on "moving up." "Some people called me doctor anyway for fun and I liked it." She discussed possibly looking at becoming a director of advising or some other administrator. She shared that she did not have a specific career aspiration, but she explained that "I had been an academic advisor my whole professional career, and I knew I wanted to stay in that realm, in that field, and to continue serving students. That is why decided to get my master's degree as well."

She went on to share that her plans were to start "moving up to a more administrative capacity." She did not "ever want to be a president, but maybe eventually a provost or a vice provost." She wanted a higher administrative position, but definitely something where she could still have an impact on students. Nola also had some additional thoughts about her aspirations.

There have been times when I have thought about teaching or trying to be a professor in a higher ed program, teaching the master's and Ph.D. students, because I do like to teach. But I also like my job not depending on having to do research. For a while I was waffling. Now I think I would like to stick to a regular administrative job and just teach part time.

Mastodon, who ended up being a registrar for several campuses, was also looking to move up.

I made the decision that I wanted to stay employed in higher education by [the time I finished my master's degree]. That would have been the early 1990s. After my first position in higher ed, I made the decision that that's where I felt comfortable. And then I realized that in order to stay in higher ed and be promotable, a doctorate would be a help. So in order to grow in any of the higher education academic or student affairs positions, I needed a doctorate.

She was looking at several different career paths throughout her doctoral degree progress. She had considered both academic affairs and student affairs, specifically that of a vice chancellor of student affairs or maybe a president. But she ultimately felt comfortable with the registrar's route. She described her thought processes.

So along the route, after I joined the registrar's profession and liked it so much, I decided, you know, I don't think I would do that [move to one of the above higher levels] because that would be the next career path to jump, either an assistant vice chancellor for enrollment management or assistant chief of student affairs from there to the vice chancellor or vice president of student affairs. I decided I really don't want to go there. I don't want to deal with judicial stuff. I don't want to deal with the side of student affairs that is not enrollment management. That's what I preferred and that's one reason that I have stayed in the registrar's profession. So I guess that [moving up in student affairs or enrollment management] was the only career aspiration at one point that was a part of the landscape for me.

Sally was not convinced that she wanted to change positions after she earned her doctorate. She wanted to earn a degree related to the position she had working with students in

the continuing studies department. Her previous degrees were not related to higher education or student affairs administration. Sally reflected on her aspirations.

I didn't necessarily think that I would change careers. I really love being an academic advisor, so I really wanted to stay in that field, but I knew that having a doctorate would open up the doors, would offer me other opportunities for advancement. I thought that if ever I wanted to be the dean of students, or to be a director, having that advanced degree would help me to achieve that. But that wasn't the primary goal, I guess. I wanted a degree that related more to my profession versus advancement or a change of career, if that makes sense.

After earning her degree, Sally ended up being able to move up to the director level within the continuing studies department.

Cliff started off as a personal counselor and then a career counselor in higher education. Cliff was also interested in a dean of students position when he started his doctorate. He explained why he chose the doctorate in higher education administration:

I felt like that was pretty standard as for where people wanted to be, vice president of student affairs, or what have you. And it just so happened that at [the campus I was interning with] the career center fell under student affairs. So what I wonder is if, like at some institutions where career services fell under enrollment management or academic affairs, would I have had different thoughts? I'm not sure. But at the time, thought that I wanted to be dean of students or eventually a vice president for student affairs. So that was what really kind of got me thinking more about [it]. . . . In order to attain that I would need to get a Ph.D.?

Cliff later applied to the Ph.D. program but did not get in after his first try. He was determined and decided to take one more class to get to know some additional faculty members, and he was then successful on his second try. “It was really legitimately to test the waters in higher ed to see if I’d enjoy it, but also it was a way to get to know the faculty in the program too.” Cliff’s career path led him to positions as Director and Manager of Student Academic Services as well as a senior advisor and career advisor. Cliff is now Associate Dean of Student Success. For his future, Cliff has considered his next steps and his best options based on his preferences.

So, my dream of being a dean of students, or vice president, provost, chancellor, whatever it is, of student affairs kind of started to diminish. . . . I probably have a shorter ceiling on where I can advance. Because I enjoy the academic side and even now I am an assistant dean in the academic world, I have faculty status, but I’m not tenure track. And so I realized that unless I become a full-fledged faculty member and get tenure, I couldn’t become a provost. Or really even a dean of a school or college. So I have kind of put in these self-imposed limitations. . . . I have transferrable skills, but I really, really like the academic side.

At the time of earning her doctorate, Ann was more fluid in her career aspirations. “I’m not one of those people [whose] goal is to be a vice president or a president. I can’t say that. I’m just kind of going with the flow.” Ann later went on to admit “I probably would want to be the director of an academic advising center or something like that. I knew that I still wanted to do something where I was working with students very closely, perhaps advising.” She also had an interest in social justice issues and multicultural programs. “So those were the three areas I would say when I was finishing up that I focused on in terms of job search.” Ann eventually

became the Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Multicultural Programs. When asked about her future career goals, Ann hopes to return to a large institution.

I miss being at a large institution. Definitely there's benefits and perks and great things about being at a small institution, but there's also benefits and things about being at a large institution. So I do know that I would eventually like to go back to [the University of Blue] or another large institution. I do know that I enjoy student contact but I feel like I need a job where I feel like there is more of a balance, that I am able to do more research, more reflecting, more policy, procedural types of things. Although I do enjoy the student contact. I may choose to leave student affairs. Other than that, I'm not really sure. It would just depend on the job and what it sounds like and how interesting it is. But I am starting to kind of get some pictures of some things. And I enjoyed being an academic advisor. When I was an academic advisor, we were housed in academic affairs and I miss some of the things about being on the academic side of the house. And so, yeah, I do miss academic affairs.

Kaitlyn had the highest hopes of all the participants. Although she was focusing on positions at the associate provost and associate chancellor level, she did admit to briefly considering the possibility of becoming a college president. Mainly, she wanted to earn a "seat at the table" where decisions were being made about students.

Did I think about the possibility of becoming a president or a provost? Not seriously. But did the thought enter my mind? Sure. But that wasn't why I was getting the degree. I just knew that I wanted to be a voice for students and be at the table when decisions were being made. I knew that if I was going to be at that table, I needed to have a doctorate in order to earn the ticket to sit at the table.

Kaitlyn eventually became a clinical professor and director of the master's degree program in higher education & student affairs.

Jo was not focused on a certain title when she started her doctoral degree. Instead, she was more focused on achieving her personal goal.

I really got the doctorate for me because it was something I wanted to accomplish and then I hoped that it would lead to career advancement. So, I don't know if that makes sense to anyone else. Certainly career advancement was going to be wonderful, but at the point I started my doctorate in 2001, it was four years after getting my masters. I really wanted it just because I wanted to accomplish that goal and that level of education.

Jo eventually became the chief student affairs officer at a community college.

Tebone also saw himself moving up within student affairs. He specifically wanted to "work in administration within some type of a college environment." He is currently Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and previously a vice chancellor at a community college. He also coordinates a program for graduate students who are going into student affairs. As he tells his students, "I think what we all realize is that you end up where you're supposed to end up when you take advantage of opportunities." As Tebone considers his future career trajectory, he is quick to mention that he will probably stay at his current institution until his daughter, who is a sophomore, graduates. He reflected,

I'm a really family kind of guy, so I don't know. So that being said, I'm probably here for at least a couple of more years until she gets out of school. And then who knows. I have had opportunities to consider, being a president of a community college which I would think would be a lot of fun. Or a vice chancellor job at another institution.

Rebecca had many ideas of what she would like to do for her next career move. She considered continuing to work in academic advising until she finished her degree. “And then I perhaps saw myself moving into a faculty position or moving up the ranks in an administrative position. I saw myself staying in academic affairs.” Eventually, Rebecca became the Special Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Georgia, planned to become a dean of students for a “small to midsize college or university.” However, she changed her mind. As described in Chapter 4, Georgia became a self-employed web designer and business strategist rather than choosing to stay in higher education. Although her family members were supportive of her decision to start her own business, there are those within her friends and family members who questioned her choice at times.

There are those within my family and friends of course, who, when it was a particularly challenging month financially, want me to fall back on leash, [to] the extensive education I have and go back to a regular job as it were. But being on my own and directing my own education as I did in the program clearly reinforced that I honestly don’t care to work for someone else. And one of the reasons why my students, my advising students, chose me over the years, over the other advisors, was because I would give them the background information.

As Ann, another professional of color, started her doctoral program, she felt much supported by her family and friends. The exception was her father.

I think in terms of, with my immediate family, in terms of like my siblings and those types of things, they were all great. They were all very supportive. With the exception of my father, and he is just a male chauvinist pig, but yeah, he’s an interesting character, but everybody else was very supportive with the exception of him.

The choices made by this study's two Black professionals, Ann and Georgia, reflect two long-held competing beliefs in the Black community, dating back to the end of the Civil War. Ann chose to reach her fullest potential through earning her doctoral degree and using that degree in higher education, a path supported by the philosophy of Booker T. Washington, who believed in the power of higher education for Blacks as a tool for former slaves in their career journeys (Washington, 1900/2008). Georgia chose to reach her fullest potential by starting and running her own business, an opposing philosophy supported by W.E.B. DuBois. DuBois supported the perspective that equality for Blacks was earned through becoming economically independent (DuBois, 1903/2008). "These dual perspectives have become a constant intellectual struggle for Black Americans attempting to become ideal citizens." (Johnson, 2006, p. 9).

Use of Mentors

The theme of mentors is a cross-cutting one as well in this study. In one form or another, the participants spoke about mentors but in nuanced ways. For instance, although several participants (Kaitlyn, Marie, Jo, Madilyn, and Rebecca) had very strong, active mentors before, during or after their doctoral journeys, most had more of a casual or occasional relationship with those they considered mentors. One participant, Cliff, is currently looking for a mentor.

Madilyn found her mentor, her associate dean in the school of education, to be especially helpful as she was deciding which doctoral degree to earn. At the time, she was considering a Ph.D. in higher education but also a Ph.D. in American studies, which was her undergraduate major. She also considered a Ph.D. in American history. Her biggest concern was whether or not she should consider a "more discipline based" degree rather than the higher education area which was more directly related to her academic advising position. Madilyn stated that her mentor was one she'd had for about the past ten years. "She continues to be [my mentor]. She's retired now,

but I still call her every now and then for a gut check or some professional advice or even personal advice. She has probably been my strongest mentor.”

Madilyn also shared that she had informal mentors throughout her undergraduate degree but not in her master’s program.

I mentioned that I worked in housing and residence life. And I had two directors of residence life that I worked under during my three or four years there, working in the office and I think now in hindsight they were probably mentors to me although I’m not sure I realized it at the time. But sort of in the informal sense, I talked to them about what it meant to be in student affairs, what types of jobs they had, what their career path was, even what schools to apply to for master’s degrees, or for master’s programs. I looked at the schools where people I knew had graduated from. So it was a really bizarre search. It was like, OK, where did you get your degree from? Did you like it? OK, I think I’ll apply there. So I had a couple of mentors at my undergraduate level. My master’s, I think I just sort of kept my head down and went through it. I don’t really remember anybody sticking out.

Madilyn was only one of the many participants who had one or more helpful mentors through the doctoral process.

Marie felt that she had several influential mentors in her experience, all at the associate provost level. The first was from the student life area. The second was from the graduate studies program, and the third was from the area of social justice. She described her mentors,

[My first mentor] was the Associate Provost of Student Life, that’s the equivalent to the Dean of Students. [She was my mentor] from the time that she came on board. It was right when I was graduating. I had a connection with her to be able to understand her

role, her journey, and she also had that hybrid position of administration but also [faculty], teaching a class here or there. Her experience balancing these two areas also influenced me.] I had another mentor who came up through the faculty ranks and is now the associate provost overseeing the graduate studies program. And the mentoring that I received from her, not only in working with faculty and the best way to communicate in all those partnerships and relationships, but also how to navigate the political terrain of higher education. I really wish there was an entire class on navigating politics because that is a very interesting experience, an on the job training kind of thing. But I think that in order to really be successful, especially on decentralized campuses where you really have to rely on collaboration and being able to develop those relationships, it is important to understand the politics, the boundaries, how to best cultivate those relationships. Then through the [doctoral] program itself, my advisor, who currently now serves as the Associate Provost for Inclusive Excellence here, really just pushed me to connect my mind and my heart, the intellectual, the political, the emotional. And you know, I was going through some personal experiences at that time, a divorce and different things, and I think the emotional piece of me kind of shut down a little bit and I was very good at the intellectual, political, but he kept challenging me to continue to open my heart and connect all three. And that is so critical when you are working with students. That's what carried me through with the research because my heart was so connected. It was about my own personal journey as well. And so I think that continuing to remember the intellectual, the personal, the political, and how all those pieces always play out when you are looking at policies, when you are looking at the work that you are doing with students, is important. One of the reasons that I love academic policy and working with

policy so much is that I see it as a social justice, inclusive excellence. If we need to change a policy, then we need to change it so that all students have access to its benefits, not just those students who know how to navigate through the bureaucracy. So those pieces always touch my heart and help me remain connected to the students, because I don't get to see students that much anymore unless they are in crisis or at the higher level of some kind of academic suspension. And so that always plays in my mind and how to keep them in the forefront.

Marie also had a mentor who encouraged her to get the doctoral degree, her supervisor. Her supervisor had been in charge of academic advising and earned her doctoral degree the year prior to Marie's start of her program. Marie also received support from another supervisor, a director of advising, from a previous institution. He was also working on a Ph.D. at the time and always encouraged others to do it as well. "Our area in academic advising works so closely with faculty. In addition to your own personal learning, it also gives additional credibility to developing those partnerships in academic affairs."

In Ann's case, she decided to pursue her doctoral degree because of the encouragement of two important mentors.

I think because I had two really strong mentors who saw something there, and because I have a love for learning. . . . I think that's why I started to really consider it as I was taking my master's program. I really enjoyed learning and I enjoyed learning about higher education and student development. [I thought that] if they think something's there and I'm really enjoying this and I really enjoy the research, maybe I'll give it a try. I think most of it was because of those two people who saw a spark and also because I just love learning.

Ann also had a mentor from the field of academic advising. Ann described this woman as her “greatest advocate.” They originally met when Ann was taking her graduate class in developmental academic advising.

When Ann was considering different institutions for her doctoral study, she decided that she loved her current campus, but she was heavily committed to experiencing something new, although she would be leaving her institution’s tuition support program. At that point, she again turned to her mentors to assist her in choosing the campus for her next step.

My original list of schools was very different than that second list and actually, my mentor . . . was the person who suggested the campus I finally chose. . . . I had never heard of it before and he asked why I didn’t consider [that campus]. And I said I don’t know what that is, and he told me about the program and he [said] it was one of the best programs in the nation. . . .[Why had I] never heard of it? . . . So, he [mentioned that it was his] alma mater and [that I] should look into it. And I said OK. I honestly applied to [that campus] because of him, not knowing anything really about [the campus]. It was just one of those things. Again, just having really good mentors, having my best interest at heart, who are really big advocates for me I think has been very instrumental in my success as a professional. And I have has some really great people that I have been blessed to have come into my life.

Kaitlyn owes so much of her career path progression to the doors that her mentors opened for her. And she dedicated her own career to paying that forward. Jo also owes much to her mentors, especially for their support regarding choosing a position that aligned with her ethics. “My good mentor said to me, and has always said to me, and this goes back to the gut, if your head and your heart and your gut think that you should do it, you should probably do it.” Another

mentor for Jo taught her about building relationships across campus. Yet another mentor encouraged her to believe in herself. “Sometimes we don’t recognize the impact that we can have and he reminded me of that. And he was instrumental and still remains instrumental, in my career.”

Tebone also had several mentors:

I had just an amazing advisor. In fact we are still in contact. She was just amazing and I’m not sure what her exact title was at the time. I think she was Associate Dean or something at the teacher’s college. She was gracious enough to take me on. I’m sure that I was a major project for her. But she was just a very dear friend and she just had this way of challenging and encouraging and mentoring.

And he still has a relationship with that advisor today. Additionally, Tebone is serving as a mentor to those coming into the field of higher education as a career. He coordinates a program of 12 graduate students who are pursuing a career in the field of student affairs.

That’s just a blast. I have the opportunity to mentor young people who are thinking that they want to go into student affairs. Plus I get to do administrative stuff on one side. . . . I also advise a couple of undergraduate student organizations. I get to do a lot in terms of whether its graduate students or undergraduate students. And also I talk about policy and procedure. It’s really a lot of fun.

Rebecca has “been blessed with some incredible mentors” at the undergraduate, master’s and doctoral levels. Rebecca described how she met one of her mentors during a doctoral internship:

During the first semester of the Ph.D. program, we had the internship experience where we shadowed three different areas. Well, I shadowed the president, the provost, and the

vice president for student affairs. And near the end of that experience, I asked each of those three if I could interview them individually. The day that I interviewed the vice president for student affairs, who is now my boss, he spent about two hours talking with me about careers in higher education and about career and family because he too had children. He has two children who are very close in age to my two children. And we spent those two hours talking and then he could have just let me go on my way and he could have carried on with what he needed to do that day, but instead he said, let me walk you over to your office. He proceeded to walk over to where my office for academic advising was and sat down in a chair in my office and talked to me some more. And before we got to my office, he stopped and talked with every single person that I worked with. And he greeted them and said hello and asked how they were doing and as we sat there in my office talking, I had no idea what I said, because I was in absolute shock that a senior administrator would care what my office environment looked like. He took the time to do that, so I was probably just blubbering nonsense, but I went home that night and I called my father who also works in student affairs on our campus, and I said someday, I want to work for him.

Rebecca has now worked for him for five years. Yet, Rebecca described someone else as her greatest mentor. “In terms of who was saying . . . go get the Ph.D., . . . that would be my father.” Rebecca’s father was a director of student affairs on her campus with about 20 years of experience. He and Rebecca’s mother also made the Ph.D. possible by helping take care of her children through the process of late nights and long weekends.

Others in the study did not have the same level of mentor support. Mike admitted that he did not have “a specific mentor per se.” Mike did explain that he relied on “more seasoned

advisors through NACADA.” He was able to ask a lot of questions and they pushed him to get more involved. He also developed a mentor-type relationship with a graduate advisor in the school of education who specialized in qualitative research, which was his methodology for his dissertation.

Nola had a similar story. She had support from an advisor in her doctoral program who provided helpful advice and also mentors through her doctoral program from those on the campus where she worked. “I think they would have been supportive of anything that I chose to do.”

Mastodon had a similar situation in her doctoral mentor support.

I don’t remember any influence from them to pursue a doctorate. But I do remember support from them once I voiced that it was something that I wanted to pursue. So in other words, none of them came to me and said, “Hey you really should do this.” But once they heard I was looking into programs and such, “That’s a great idea. We’ll help you with whatever you need.” In terms of other support beyond pursuing the doctorate, their impact was crucial in terms of shaping my understanding of not only job responsibilities, but student services, and in some ways, leadership styles and management styles.

Georgia indicated that she had several professional mentors in higher education, but they were from other disciplines. Like Nola, when asked if anyone had suggested she get the doctoral degree in higher education, Georgia said no. In her professional network, Georgia was the only person she knew of who pursued a Ph.D. program, but others decided to pursue the degree after she left her position. Her most meaningful mentorship in her program came from her peers as “there was no formal mentorship program that was set up by the school for example.”

Personality for Administration?

In 2001, an online academic advising journal, called *The Mentor*, held an academic advising writing competition. The topic of the competition was “How is academic advising different from teaching, personal counseling, and career counseling?” The journal published excerpts to share with their audience. One of those submissions belonged to Cathi Kadow, an academic counselor in the University Division at Purdue University Calumet (*The Mentor*, 2002).

Academic advising is different from teaching, personal counseling, and career counseling because it does not affect one aspect of collegial life but all aspects of it. It is holistic in its view of the students, melding together the students' personal goals, career goals, hopes, and aspirations and weeding out their fears and wasted efforts. Academic advising is the act of gardening. It plants the seeds of future actions in the minds of the students as well as watering and fertilizing those seeds so they take root. (para. 15)

This philosophy of helping others and doing what is best for the student rather than achieving one's own goals is seen in many of the stories of the participants in this research project. By way of example, when Georgia left her advising position, it was for philosophical reasons. “There was an incident with a student and I disagreed with the way it was handled. I don't believe that the student's interest was served.”

Madilyn's philosophy of advising also reflects this idea of helping students bloom rather than focusing on personal achievements. She wrote,

Our students depend on us to guide them through their years in college and much of the relationship we have with them is built on trust. From providing accurate information, to making students feel like we are invested in their future, academic advisors are engaged

in student success and are therefore ethically bound to do what is best for the student at that time, working within the framework of university policies. . . . Another critical piece of the advising formula is recognizing that each student who passes through our offices is unique and diverse in countless ways. Every single student brings with them their own set of life experiences and their own set of expectations and desires. For me, that's what keeps advising fresh and fun. I thrive on knowing that each student who walks through the door is going to offer their own set of challenges and rewards. Academic advising is not a "one size fits all" type of work. Each student deserves to have an advisor who pays attention to their individual needs at that time and helps them to stretch themselves in ways they never thought possible. It is our duty to not only help students, but to make them realize their potential and more.

Several other participants shared this student-centered approach. Nola, in her personal statement for her doctoral program wrote that being able to finish a Ph.D. would "help me reach [my] professional and personal aspirations. It would help [me] be a more effective professional, a more engaged leader, and a better advisor for [my] students."

Academic advising for these study participants was not just about serving students and helping them achieve their goals. Academic advising was about a heart for maintaining expertise on the curriculum, which included requirements for majors, course pre-requisites, careers associated with different majors, choosing classes, how to withdraw, how to transfer, etc. These issues are often why students seek out their advisor. But it is how the advisor addresses these issues and combines his or her advising expertise with the "gardening" techniques that help students reach his or her own goals. One can easily help a student drop a calculus course, but it is the excellent advisor that digs deeper, finding out that the student is struggling in their major and

may need to explore options more aligned with his or her interests, talents, and values. Academic advisors bring this philosophy and these skills with them as they earn doctoral degrees and move up in the field of higher education.

For a number of the study participants, this core orientation to their work permeated their desires for a position post-doctoral degree and what brought them into this field in the first place. There was an underlying value orientation toward students and something they generally sought to see supported through their career paths as well as doctoral study. Furthermore, the general lack of ego in their stories, and their characterization of the nobility of advising, framed how they saw their contributions both before and after the doctoral degree.

Summary

The participants shared their own stories of their career experiences as academic advisors who went on to earn a doctoral degrees in higher education administration. This chapter analyzed the themes that cut across the interviews and surfaced as noted impact elements. The themes addressed in this chapter included doctorate required or preferred, financial support and families, career goals, use of mentors, and personality for administration. Chapter 6 will analyze the themes in light of the research questions using the lens of previous research integrated into the Chapter 2 literature review.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

When undergraduate students consider various majors, they often wonder what their career options will be. This is also the case with professional academic advisors who are considering a doctoral degree in higher education administration. Unfortunately for those potential doctoral students, a lack of literature exists on potential career paths postdoctorate for this population. To help fill the void, this study seeks to document the lived career stories of a sample of 13 academic advisors who went on for doctoral degrees. More specifically, the research seeks to understand decision point processes to pursue doctoral study, career goals at that time, how those career aspirations changed over the course of their doctoral studies, the impact of mentors, and participant postdoctoral degree career trajectories. One desired outcome for the research is to make the stories accessible to professional academic advisors who are currently considering a doctoral degree in higher education administration.

Chapter 5 described in detail five themes, including doctorate required or preferred, financial support and families, career goals, use of mentors, and personality for administration. In this chapter, I discuss the meaning of the themes in light of the research questions. The discussion also integrates the literature from the field, including Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior and Stiber's (2000) enrollment process model, to help make sense of the

findings. These collective elements enable a discussion of the finding's importance, the core components of Chapter 7.

Doctorate Required or Preferred?

According to Komives (1993), "Few would argue . . . that there is a growing expectation of doctoral study for both advancement and credibility in student affairs" (p. 391). Ironically, all but one of the participants in this study took jobs that did not require a doctoral degree as their first positions after earning (or just before earning) their terminal degrees. But most participants indicated that the doctoral degree was positively viewed, if not officially preferred, for their positions. This would be in line with the writings of Komives (1993), who wrote "Most opportunities are likely to be reduced when master's degree applicants are compared to similarly experienced peers who have doctorates" (p. 391). Komives continued, "Many mid-management and upper-management positions in most institutions simply will not be available without the doctoral credential" (p. 391). Howard-Hamilton and Hyman (2009) agreed. They found that "without a doctorate, many administrators remain in entry or midlevel positions and will often make lateral moves rather than advance to positions with authority over budgets, policies, and a large staff" (p. 390).

With this literature as backdrop, evidence of this perspective was reflected in the interviews. This was especially true for Nola, a Student Services Manager for her academic college. Nola found that the doctoral degree was needed in her position to gain the respect of the faculty in her college. Mastodon decided about a year or two after her master's degree that she was interested in getting a doctorate. She had decided that she wanted to stay in higher education and that "in order to be promotable . . . that a [doctoral] degree would be a help." Although a doctoral degree was not required for the positions she took after earning the degree, Mastodon

indicated that “it was perceived as being positive. I think it attracted some attention. It probably made me more marketable at least for the initial interviews, at least getting that attention and getting that first interview.” When Sally’s supervisor retired, she was able to move into the Individual Studies Program Coordinator role. Since then, she was given the title of director and has taken on more responsibilities. “And I attribute a lot of that, in part, to having the doctorate.” Kaitlyn also felt the need to get a doctoral degree because of the career benefits.

Did I think about the possibility of becoming a president or a provost? Not seriously. But did the thought enter my mind? Sure. But that wasn’t why I was getting the degree. I just knew that I wanted to be a voice for students and be at the table when decisions were being made. I knew that if I was going to be at that table, I needed to have a doctorate in order to earn the ticket to sit at the table.

Study participant comments are also illustrative through the lens of Ajzen’s (1991) theory of planned behavior as well as well as Stiber’s (2000) enrollment process model as discussed in Chapter 2. By way of brief summary to the former, the theory of planned behavior seeks to examine cognitive self-regulation’s importance to human behavior and its relationship to the prediction of behavior. Specifically, Ajzen found through his research that “perceived behavioral control, together with behavioral intention, can be used directly to predict behavioral achievement” (p. 184). Ajzen offered two rationales for his hypothesis. First, he argued that “holding intention constant, the effort expended to bring a course of behavior to a successful conclusion is likely to increase with perceived behavioral control” (p. 184). As an example, Ajzen noted that, for two individuals who are strongly intent on learning how to ski, when trying to learn, the person who has confidence in his or her ability to master the activity is more likely to persevere and succeed when compared to the individual who doubts his or her ability. Ajzen

offered a second hypothesis, exploring the link between perceived behavioral control and behavioral achievement. He stated that “perceived behavioral control can often be used as a substitute for a measure of actual control” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 1984).

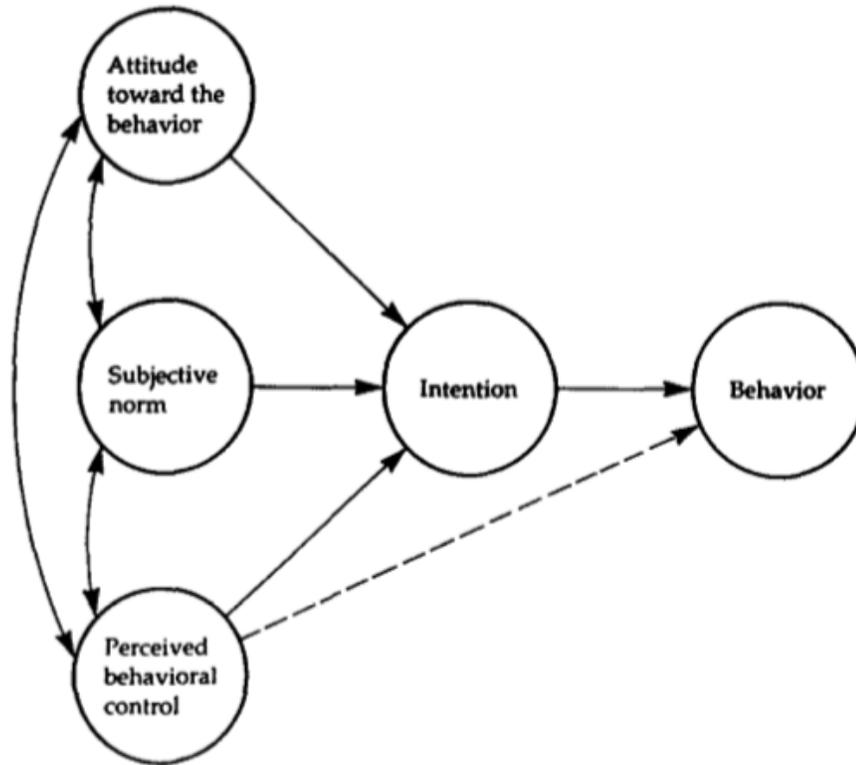


Figure 2. Ajzen's theory of planned behavior. Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior.

Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50, 179-211. Used with permission.

The beliefs of the participants in this study are supported by Ajzen's (1991) theory. Ajzen noted in his writings, “as a general rule, the stronger the intention to engage in a behavior, the more likely should be its performance” (p. 181), assuming the person has control over non-motivational factors, such as money, time, cooperation of others, and skills. In general, the participants in this study were highly motivated to complete their doctoral degree and move into

higher levels of administration, but, for the most part, they also had a firm grasp on the other factors mentioned by Ajzen. Nine of the 13 participants used tuition reimbursement programs to fund the majority of their educational costs. Additionally, a majority of participants enjoyed having easy access to their courses because of their geographic proximity to the institutions they attended. Several participants, including Tebone, Jo, and Rebecca, were able to have the deep commitment and cooperation of their families during their doctoral experience.

Stiber (2000) created a behavioral approach to study the market for business doctoral education. Through his study as described in Chapter 2, Stiber developed a model (Appendix D) that identified three main categories of variables that influence the decision making process for students as they applied to the business doctoral program. Stiber referred to the first category as individual characteristics, and includes occupation, education, age, and experience. The second category is called social influences and includes culture, family, and peers. The third category, situational influences, includes income, tuition, and aid.

Participants in Stiber's (2000) study found that personal satisfaction was the leading motivating factor for pursuing the doctorate in business on his campus, and advancement and job security were the lowest of the factors. The participants in this dissertation study clearly had a combination of both personal satisfaction and career advancement as leading motivating factors to enroll in a higher education administration doctoral program. For example, Ann and Sally knew they wanted to study higher education administration at the doctoral level and were not as much concerned with the career paths that would develop in the future. In fact, Sally really enjoyed her academic advising position and seriously considered staying in that position after the doctoral degree. For Ann, at the root of her decision to pursue the doctoral program was her love for learning. Others in the participant group reported that achieving their career goals was at the

heart of their motivation to earn the doctoral degree. Mike's career aspiration, for instance, was focused on moving up the provost's line. Mike also chose to earn a doctoral degree because it would mean being more financially secure. He would be able to get positions with more responsibility and have the opportunity to have greater recognition on campus. Mastodon also decided to get a doctoral degree due to a need to be more promotable within her chosen field of higher education.

Families and Financial Support

According to Jo's study (2008), there were three primary reasons for women administrator turnover at the collegiate institution investigated. These reasons included conflict with a supervisor, inadequate advancement opportunities, and work schedules that were incompatible with the demands of life circumstances. These were somewhat reflected in this study's one participant who decided to leave higher education, Georgia. Georgia, one of three professionals of color in this study, decided to leave her academic advising position because of philosophical differences within the administration. She then chose to pursue a career outside of higher education after earning the doctoral degree because of her children's needs and schedules, which were not compatible with that of a college administrator or faculty member, two areas she was considering post-doctorate. Instead, Georgia found a career area where she was self-employed and could organize her own work schedule to meet the needs of her family. Tebone, another professional of color, plans to base his future career decisions on his family's needs. He currently has a daughter who is a sophomore in college, and he plans to wait until she graduates before making his next career move. "And then who knows. I have had opportunities to consider, being a president of a community college, which I would think would be a lot of fun. Or a vice chancellor job at another institution."

On the topic of financial costs for advanced study, Weissmann (2014) addressed the issue of Ph.D. debt. The author reported that

doctoral programs still have a reputation for giving their students a (mostly) free ride by providing living stipends and teaching opportunities along with tuition breaks. And most of the time, the reputation holds true. But not always. In some cases, Ph.Ds. leave school with the same kind of mountainous loan bills we've come to expect for pre-professional students. (p. 1)

A report by the National Science Foundation (2013) indicated that for those who have earned a doctoral degree in an education area, 48% of respondents had no debt, although 8.5% of education doctorate holders had \$10,000 or less in graduate school debt. This reflects the minimal amount of debt that the participants in this dissertation held. They overwhelmingly used tuition waivers or other related support from the institution they worked for at the time. And for those who paid for the full cost of their doctoral degree, they did so out of pocket, without the use of loans. A few of the participants used student loans in addition to other institutional support such as assistantships.

In Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, the "availability of requisite opportunities and resources (e.g., time, money, skills, cooperation of others)" (p. 182) are factors in whether or not someone will in fact perform a behavior. This would apply to the participants in this study. Many were blessed with the ability to use institutional resources such as employer tuition reimbursement to help fund their doctoral program costs. Additionally, at least three had supportive families through their doctoral program years (i.e., Rebecca, Tebone, and Jo), but others did not or only partially. Several of the participants were able to overcome failing marriages and still complete the doctoral degree (Marie, Nola, and Kaitlyn). Others such as Ann,

a professional of color, were able to be supported by some family members (including a new long-distance partner) while being denied support by others (her father). Georgia, another professional of color, because of the support of her son's father, was able to move away for graduate school and leave the care of her son to his father during this time.

Although Stiber (2000) identified variables that influenced the decision making process for these students, the variables of family, tuition, aid, and income were not found to be significant factors. The population he studied was primarily men, and either managers/executives or faculty members. They generally had a household income between \$75,000 and \$80,000 per year and received corporate tuition reimbursement.

In contrast, 10 of the 13 participants in this dissertation study were female. Additionally, many of the former advisors were able to utilize some sort of tuition reimbursement plan provided by their employers (i.e., Mike, Madilyn, Marie, Tebone, Cliff, Kaitlyn, and Jo). Nationally, academic advisors with master's degrees earn on average \$30,000-\$39,000 per year (Lynch, 2002b).

Career Goals

This study found that although some participants had specific career goals at the time of application into their doctoral programs in higher education, many were just looking for personal satisfaction, knowing that career advancement would likely follow. Of those participants who had specific career titles in mind, the title of dean of students and vice president/vice chancellor were the most popular.

In Daddona et al. (2006), 8.9% of student affairs doctoral graduates reported that their first positions after earning doctoral degrees were at a higher level than expected, 72.3% were in positions at the level they expected, and 11.9% held positions at a lower level than they

expected. This is consistent with the experiences of this study's participants. Ironically, Ann, a professional of color and the only participant who has a dean of students' title, (i.e., Assistant Dean of Students), never had that title as a goal. "I'm not one of those people [whose] goal is to be a vice president or a president. I can't say that. I'm just kind of going with the flow." She did admit that she thought she may end up being a director of an academic advising center. She also had a passion for social justice and thought she may end up trying something different, such as a position with a multicultural programs office, a part of her current duties. Additionally, Ann's current position did not require a doctoral degree, although she did share that her current institution preferred someone with a doctoral degree.

In a study of student affairs doctoral graduates by Mason and Townsend (1988), the authors found that "obtaining a [doctoral] degree in higher education is no guarantee for advancement to the senior administrative ranks" (p. 19). This dissertation study reflects similar finding as all but two of the participants held a position other than president, chancellor, vice president, vice chancellor, or dean of students, although it is certainly possible, perhaps likely, some will achieve such a position in the future. Additionally, Mason and Townsend found that "only 12 percent of the 535 respondents currently hold a position which could be classified as senior-level administrative, while 41.5 percent currently hold positions in middle management" (p. 19). In this study's participant group, Jo held the highest title with that of chief student affairs officer at her institution. Tebone, a professional of color, had the next highest title with that of assistant vice chancellor for student affairs. Tebone, a professional of color, previously held the title of vice president of student services. Mason and Townsend's (1988) study did find a greater percentage of higher education doctoral graduates were faculty members (almost 22%), but in

this study there was only one, Kaitlyn, although others did teach as adjunct professors in addition to their regular administrative duties.

Mason and Townsend (1988) reported on career patterns for doctoral graduates in higher education. The study found that 71-78% of respondents spent their entire professional careers after graduation within higher education, either as administrators or as faculty members, with most (41.5%) at middle management levels at the time of the survey. The study also reported that less than 12% of the sample held senior administrator positions, such as dean of academic or student affairs. This finding is again congruent with the participants in this dissertation study, as most were in middle management and all but one were still employed in higher education.

Also in the Mason and Townsend (1988) study, for those graduates who had pursued careers outside of education (37.5%), most were employed as K-12 principals or teachers, or as employees of various state agencies that work with K-12 education. Others were employed in business positions within career areas such as personnel administration or financial insurance. In this dissertation study, only one participant was not working in higher education, Georgia, one of the three professionals of color in this study. In Daddona et al. (2006) study of student affairs doctoral graduates, they found that “professionals of color were more likely to indicate they might leave higher education than their White counterparts” (p. 209).

Patitu and Hinton (2003) studied the changing experiences of African American women faculty and administrators in higher education. They reported several variables that regularly affect these professionals’ job performance, retention, and promotion/tenure. These variables included institutional climate, coping strategies, and institutional ethos, all of which were obstacles for Georgia as an academic advisor (she later left her position due to an ethical conflict with the administration) and as an adjunct professor (her availability and time commitment were

not in line with her responsibilities as a single mother). Patitu and Hinton recommended that institutions, especially primarily White institutions, offer support systems, including mentoring by those who are “sensitive to the problems faced by women of color” (p. 90). Patitu and Hinton also suggested that African American female administrators and faculty may feel “they face hostile environments, prejudice, racism, and sexism in their work environments” (p. 91). To combat this, the authors also suggested that predominantly White institutions require diversity training for all administrators and faculty members.

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) also provides a helpful lens on the career goals theme that emerged in this study. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), in early work leading to the development of this theory, argued that general attitudes and personality traits are implicated in human behavior, but their influence on specific actions in specific situations may be more indirect depending on the behavior. The extent to which “a person has the required opportunities and resources, and intends to perform the behavior, he or she should succeed in doing so” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 182). For many of the participants in this study, the title of dean of students or vice president for student affairs was the goal when starting their doctoral journeys. But as noted in the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), opportunities and resources are also needed. The participants in this dissertation study formed career goals based on what they knew to be typical careers for those with a doctoral degree in higher education administration. Most did not succeed in achieving that goal or have yet to realize their goal. Perhaps their goals would have been different if they had access to career stories of other academic advisors earning doctoral degrees.

Stiber’s (2000) study found that advancement within their current organizations was only the fifth most important motivating factor in enrolling in his doctoral program. For the 13 former

advisors in this dissertation study, although their motivating goals were mainly personal satisfaction and career advancement, just over a third of the participants (Madilyn, Sally, Marie, Mike, and Rebecca) chose to stay at their current institutions and attempt to move up within those institutions rather than looking for opportunities elsewhere. One of the professionals of color in this study, Ann felt strongly about eventually returning to the campus she was employed at when she applied to her doctoral program. “I miss being at a large institution. Definitely, there’s benefits and perks and great things about being at a small institution, but there’s also benefits and things about being at a large institution. So I do know that I would eventually like to go back. . . .” Furthermore, only one of the 13 participants’ first positions after earning the doctorate required that advanced degree. Several participants accepted positions where the doctorate was only preferred. One participant, Georgia, became self-employed. A number of the participants noted that, while not officially required or preferred, they found that getting the position, or their ability to realize success in the position, was linked at least in part to the skills they learned through earning the doctorate. Even though a great majority of the participants in this study did not initially obtain a position that required a doctoral degree, they did not seem overly concerned by it. This humble stance may be a reflection of their previous experience as academic advisors where it is widely known that a degree is not a ticket to a job or a lofty title (Brooks & Everett, 2009; Kanfer et al., 2001). In the study participants’ minds, the degree (knowledge), plus skills and experience, are what makes a person competitive for a position.

Use of Mentors

“Josephine, if I were you, I wouldn’t invest time in helping Kandace secure this position. She was not one of our strongest students, and we typically only assist those students who we believe to be stellar. You should be careful!” (Hinton, 2009, p. 60). This quote represents an

actual conversation between two faculty members in a higher education doctoral program discussing one of their students. But is this the experience of the participants in this dissertation study? None mentioned this type of rejection from their faculty members, but some participants had more support from mentors than others in the doctoral program and job search process.

Although participants in this study overwhelmingly had mentors supporting them through their doctoral programs, a few have had their mentors become lifelong friends who are still playing a major role in their lives. In fact, in many cases, those who had the strongest relationships with their mentors, and multiple mentors, seemed to be the participants who had risen to the highest levels in their career ascendancy. This would be especially true for Kaitlyn and Jo, who relied heavily on their mentors' guidance. Kaitlyn and Jo eventually rose to the highest levels of higher education administration and/or became players on the national stage. Additionally, they were even both elected to serve in an executive capacity in their chosen national professional associations. This reflects the current literature regarding the potential value of the use of mentors in career development (Gibson, 2004; Quimby & DeSantis, 2006). According to Daddona et al. (2006), good mentoring in this situation should include several specific pieces of information. "As students begin the job search process, they should be reminded that the years of post-masters professional experience obtained prior to entering a doctoral program could affect the level and salary of their next position" (Daddona et al., 2006, p. 212). The authors also recommended that recent graduates understand the drastic difference between positions levels and titles at various institutions (Daddona et al., 2006).

"As every student of psychology knows, explaining human behavior in all its complexity is a difficult task" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 179). This is especially true when exploring why an academic advisor might choose to apply for and complete a doctoral program in higher education

administration. Ajzen (1991) found through his research that “perceived behavioral control, together with behavioral intention, can be used directly to predict behavioral achievement” (p. 184). But he also found that “perceived behavioral control may not be particularly realistic when a person has relatively little information about the behavior, when requirements or available resources have changed, or when new and unfamiliar elements have entered into the situation” (Ajzen, 1991, pp. 184-185). This reality reflects the benefits of having a mentor during the process of considering the doctoral degree and then being able to complete the doctoral degree. For several of the participants in this study, including Kaitlyn, Ann, and Madilyn, they had very little information about the doctorate process and never considered the option of completing the higher education doctoral degree before their mentors introduced the idea and then supported them through the process. And for Ann, she relied heavily on her mentor when choosing which institution to attend. She eventually chose a campus that she had originally never heard of because it was the alma mater of her mentor. Within a theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) framework then, this type of additional support may have increased the likelihood that they would attain their goal of the doctoral degree. Two of this study’s participants (Mike and Cliff) reported not relying on mentors through their processes, but both could have likely benefitted from the support.

In Stiber’s (2000) study, he asked students about the importance of sources of information used in selecting their doctoral program. Among the top 17 responses, mentors were never specifically mentioned. Others, who technically could be considered mentors, were mentioned several times. They include faculty outside of the department, alumni from the program, employers, friends, and parents. As explained in the stories from this dissertation study, employers were often seen as and used as mentors by the participants. They include Madilyn,

who was urged to consider the doctoral program by her mentor, the associate dean in the college of education where she worked. Marie had several mentors in her workplace, including two associate provosts and two former supervisors. Rebecca had an amazing mentor in her father who was from the student affairs field as well. Tebone reported having an “amazing advisor” who encouraged him to get his doctoral degree. He believes she was an associate dean in the teacher’s college. Tebone chooses to extend the mentoring benefits. “[It’s] just a blast. I have the opportunity to mentor young people who are thinking that they want to go into student affairs. It’s really a lot of fun.”

Personality for Administration?

Holland (1959) was the creator of the theory of vocational choice. In his research, he found that, through an interaction between individual and environment, “a person develops a preferred method of dealing with tasks in the environment, leading to different occupational orientations” (p. 35). These occupational orientations are ranked by relative strengths. This hierarchy may be determined by interest inventories addressing a person’s attitudes, values, needs, etc. These six occupational environments have since been offered as the following personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (Holland, 1997). Although it is not recommended to try to assess an individual’s personality type without the use of an official instrument, one cannot help but make some generalizations based on the literature, although each individual will be a combination of several traits, with a few being dominant over others.

One of these types, enterprising, at first glance, may be a good fit for those pursuing the highest of leadership positions within a college or university. The enterprising traits include being aggressive, popular, confident, extroverted, power-seeking, shrewd, and energetic (Brown,

2002; Holland, 1959; Weinrach, 1984). Overwhelmingly, these did not seem to be the dominant traits of the participants in this study. Instead, most of these participants were more congruent with the social or investigative types, which at first glance would be congruent with successful academic advisors. The social traits include being friendly, persuasive, sincere, trusting, warm, and capable. Characteristics include a preference for working with others in a therapeutic or teaching situation. Examples include vocational counselors, human relations, therapists, social workers, teachers, and interviewers (Holland, 1959; see also Brown, 2002; Weinrach, 1984). The investigative traits include being curious, scholarly, analytical, intellectual, and precise. Characteristics include organizing and understanding rather than persuading or dominating (Brown, 2002; Holland, 1959; Weinrach, 1984). This combination seems to be a good fit for academic advising as a career because of the need to be detail oriented (understanding course requirements, pre-requisites, processes and procedures) as well as student centered (being a willing listener and helper). Does that mean that those with the social and investigative types as dominant would not be good administrators? Holland's (1959) work would suggest that indeed they could be quite good in such a role. After all, Holland referred to "*preferred* methods for dealing with [the environment]" (p. 35) not an *inability* to deal with the environment in different ways. Although academic advisors may not look like other leaders on college campuses, they may bring qualities and expertise that are just as needed in specific, if not all, positions of leadership.

In a study by Giles and Rea (1999), the authors explored career self-efficacy as an application of the theory of planned behavior. The authors found that self-efficacy was involved in the decision-making processes of secondary school students in Ireland as they considered going into sex-atypical careers. The substantial majority of those in the academic advising field

are women, and those who choose to move into higher levels of administration often confront a male dominated landscape. For men, academic advising may be considered a sex-atypical career, but higher levels of college administration would be seen as more sex-typical. The Giles and Rea study also found that the men were significantly less confident about their ability to pursue sex-atypical careers, and in turn they were significantly less likely to pursue these careers than the women in the study. This could be why few men choose to go into academic advising as their career area of choice in the higher education field. For the participants in this dissertation, three women (Kaitlyn, Madilyn, and Ann) and one man (Tebone) seemed to need a lot of convincing before moving into a doctoral degree program. In Kaitlyn's case, she was not even sure semester by semester if she wanted to continue with the doctoral program. Even after becoming an academic advisor, Madilyn strongly considered becoming a veterinarian or a teacher before enrolling in her doctoral program. Ann repeatedly rejected suggestions from her mentors about seeking a doctoral degree before seriously considering the option. Tebone was first encouraged to get his Ph.D. as he was finishing his master's degree, but he never thought it would ever go that far.

Stiber (2000), in his enrollment process model, identified several variables which influence the decision process for those considering a doctoral degree. Those variables include individual characteristics (occupation, age, education, experience), social influences (culture, peers, family), and situational influences (tuition, income). One of the participants in this study, Jo, found that the confidence her former supervisor (peer) had in her abilities enhanced her vision of herself as an upper level administrator.

The VP then needed more of a right hand person to lead a lot of first and second year success initiatives on the campus and so he promoted me into that position which was a

brand new, newly created position on that campus. It was wonderful. It was like someone just recognized that you had some talent and pulled you up.

Marie, like many other participants in this study, found that her experience as an academic advisor, and in higher education generally, helped her realize that she wanted to expand her responsibilities. Specifically, she knew that she loved working with faculty and campus committees and that she wanted to stay connected to the health and counseling areas of the campus as well as the housing area.

Summary

Chapter 6 discussed the meaning of the themes in light of the research questions. The discussion also integrated the literature from the field with a particular focus on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Stiber's (2000) enrollment process model. These collective elements in turn inform a discussion of the study's importance, as well as recommendations, two core elements of Chapter 7. Chapter 7 also offers study limitations, opportunities for future research, and a summative reflection on the study.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived career experiences of these professional academic advisors who went on to earn a doctoral degree in higher education administration. This study examined the stories of 13thirteen professionals who were academic advisors at the time of application into their doctoral programs and have since completed those terminal degrees. Participants were selected through personal contacts and the snowball method, including LinkedIn, a social networking site for professionals. Participant demographics varied by race/ethnicity, time since degree attainment, career path, and the type of students advised. Phone interviews were conducted and served as the primary basis for data collection, although triangulated with other sources of data as described in Chapter 6.

This chapter begins with a discussion of its contribution to the knowledge base but, more specifically, its utility for informing academic advisors considering doctoral study and associated career opportunity. From there, study limitations are presented, followed by opportunities for future research. Finally, the chapter closes with an overall summary of the study and its positioning for advancing the field of academic advising and higher education administration.

Importance of the Study

According to Light (2001), “of all of the challenges that both faculty and students choose to mention, providing or obtaining good academic advising ranks number one. In fact, good

advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience” (p. 81). According to Frost (2000), although academic advising is just one component of higher education, it is central to undergraduate learning.

O’Banion (1972) has characterized the traditional approach to academic advising as a process that connects an advisor to a student in a way that places student concerns at the center. According to O’Banion (1972), the advisor serves as educator and guide in an intentional relationship that seeks student’s self-awareness and fulfillment. The fundamental purpose of academic advising in this manner is for students to develop the skills necessary to achieve their academic and developmental needs as well as life goal attainment (Chickering, 1994).

Many institutions have come to realize the importance of quality academic advising in the battle to retain students and increase graduation rates (Gordon & Habley, 2001). This realization brought about a detailed examination of academic advising on many campuses (Gordon & Habley, 2001). As a result, the academic advising center staffed with professional advisors was introduced as a vehicle for offering a more visible, centrally located resource that could be used in place of, or in addition to, regular faculty advising (Gordon & Habley, 2001). National interest in improving the experience of first-year students has also developed (Frost, 2000).

Many in the ranks of professional academic advising are interested in taking their expertise in developmental advising, first year programs, and retention initiatives and applying it to upper-level institutional administration. Assisting in this endeavor has been NACADA’s creation of the country’s first graduate certificate and master’s degree in academic advising through Kansas State University’s graduate school (NACADA, 2010b). The distance education

option of these programs allows more accessibility to academic advisors and academic advisors-to-be who are located across the nation and the world.

By focusing on the lived career experiences of current and former professional academic advisors who have chosen to go on to earn doctoral degrees in higher education administration, this phenomenological study contributes to the limited body of literature as it relates to the career paths of the professionals who do the important advising work every day. It is hoped that these personal career stories will assist current and future professional academic advisors as they contemplate the doctoral program and its resulting career pathways. Additionally, a greater understanding of career processes will serve to enlighten the NACADA membership and influence its research agenda as the profession of academic advising further evolves. Finally, the results of this study add to the body of literature regarding socialization to the profession of academic advising, student affairs, and higher education often taught in associated graduate programs.

Recommendations for the Advising Community

It is important for the academic advising community, through the leadership of NACADA, to embrace career advancement/exploration as a line of inquiry, both qualitative and quantitative. As the academic advising field grows and the work expands in complexity, it is likely that more individuals will also pursue a terminal degree, particularly higher education administration. Understanding the career stories of those who went before will enhance their ability to reach their goals with a clear expectation of what to expect along the journey. Of course, advisors will look to their professional organization, NACADA, for information concerning their professional development. This will help higher education identify and triumph

the benefits of having academic advisors with doctoral degrees in higher education administration.

Several of the participants in this study were blessed with mentors who were able to guide and advise them through the process of considering and then completing a doctoral program. Having mentors can be invaluable, but not all those considering this path have access to mentors who have completed a doctorate in higher education administration or even someone who has a completed doctoral degree. For example, Georgia and Cliff study did not have the benefit of strong mentors. Much like the first generation college students with whom many advisors meet, additional assistance to demystify the processes and related career paths of the doctoral degree in higher education administration is a significant avenue of potential support.

It is recommended that NACADA use its resources to assist in meeting this need. One way is through expanded support of the NACADA doctoral student listserv. Some ways this can be done is via an expansion of articles published in the *Academic Advising Today* newsletter and the *NACADA Journal* with doctoral study and career advancement themes. It is also suggested that NACADA create other support resources such as webinars, CDs, DVDs, a NACADA monograph, and the inclusion of a series of articles in the NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources. I recommend that NACADA conduct a survey to measure the interest of adding a doctoral degree in higher education administration with a concentration in academic advising through Kansas State University, the provider of NACADA's online graduate certificate and master's degree in academic advising. NACADA currently has a mentorship program for future leaders. A similar version of that could be offered to those considering a doctoral program in higher education. The role of the NACADA Member Career Services committee could also be

enhanced to include a charge to explore the needs of doctoral students and potential doctoral students as well as their career goals and related processes.

Recommendations for Those Seeking This Educational Path

Those academic advisors considering the doctoral degree in higher education and its related career path should have a clear understanding that the doctoral degree may not be required for the first position after earning the degree. But it will likely make a person more competitive. In this study, all but one of the participants took jobs that did not require a doctoral degree as their first position after earning (or just before earning) their terminal degree. But most participants indicated that the doctoral degree was positively viewed, if not officially preferred, for their positions. Additionally, those considering this path should be aware of positions other than that of the dean of students or the vice president of student affairs. I suggest reviewing the NACADA member career services website and other job search websites in higher education administration to have a better understanding of the types of positions that exist for those with this particular educational focus. Some key websites of this type would be *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, HigherEdJobs.com, and StudentAffairs.com.

A second recommendation for those advisors considering this path would be to pre-plan for family and financial support and to utilize tuition reimbursement options. A majority of the participants in this study were able to use their campus's tuition employee reimbursement program and were thus able to avoid taking on large amounts of student loan debt. A report by the National Science Foundation (2013), as noted earlier, reported that for those who have earned their doctoral degree in an education area, 48% had no debt, while 8.5% of education doctorate holders had \$10,000 or less in graduate school debt. This reflects the minimal amounts of debt that the participants in this study had. Nationally, academic advisors, even those with doctoral

degrees, struggle in terms of salary (Lynch, 2002a, 2002b). Relieving the burden of that debt can thus be particularly advantageous.

Finally, it is suggested that those seeking this educational path obtain mentor support and seek out additional literature to learn more about the doctoral process. Although there is a lack of literature on the career paths of academic advisors who went on to earn doctoral degrees in higher education administration, there do exist related stories of those from other career areas who completed the doctorate in higher education administration. Whether through mentors or research or a combination of both, the majority of participants in this study successfully utilized mentors or their own research to better understand what to expect during the doctoral process. Several of those who did not utilize mentors through the doctoral process felt the need for a professional mentor to assist them in their career progression and professional decision-making even after the completion of the degree.

Recommendations for Those Involved With Associated Graduate Programs

Bragg (1976) wrote that professional socialization is the “acquisition of the specialized knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, norms and interests of the profession that the individual wishes to practice” (p. 6), which results in the achievement of the professional identity or an acceptable functioning of the individual within their expected roles. The stories found in this dissertation add to the specialized knowledge of the field of academic advising, student affairs, and higher education administration. These stories can be useful for programs seeking to reach out more intentionally to academic advisors for advanced study as well as for informing curricular change that might enable such professionals to be more broadly valuable to the advising field but also to make a professional shift to other student affairs tracks. For example, intentional discussion of career paths of those with a doctoral degree in higher education

administration would be a beneficial topic to add to the curriculum of such doctoral degree programs. Similarly, the topic seems to be covered in a general way in a handful of articles in the field, but to include this topic as a specific piece of the curriculum would be of benefit to those seeking the degree because it would give them a clearer understanding of their options and thus influence their expectations for their career paths after graduation.

An additional recommendation for those in associated masters and doctoral level graduate programs would be to include in the curriculum projects that support the enrollment, retention, and advancement of administrators of color. As those currently working in or preparing to work in higher education administration, students in these programs often learn about barriers that administrators of color face. These barriers include “social barriers, organizational and institutional barriers, and internal barriers, as well as the double burden of racism and sexism for women of color” (Jackson & O’Callaghan, 2009, p. 47). To assist in the elimination of these barriers, Jackson & O’Callaghan (2009) presented an engagement, retention, and advancement model for administrators of color working in higher education. If included in a student affairs/higher education curriculum, this model or others like it could assist in increasing the retention of administrators of color in the higher education workforce.

Study Limitations

This study provides deep insight into the lived experiences of academic advisors who chose to pursue a doctoral degree. However, as is true for all research, it is not without limitations. First, this study is limited to the information collected from interviews and related documents regarding the career stories of current and former professional academic advisors who had earned a doctoral degree in higher education administration. Hence, it is not generalizable, although that was not its intention nor the purpose of qualitative inquiry.

Second, the study is retrospective such that participants reflected on experiences and decisions made at some point in the past and which may or may not fully meet the reality as they experienced or felt it at the time. Although retrospective study is a common form of qualitative inquiry, it does raise the question of how time and perspective may impact the sense making lens of an interviewee.

Additionally, there are career paths to senior leadership for academic advisors that do not lead through a terminal degree in higher education administration. However, because the higher education administration degree is the one that best aligns with the needs and issues for those that work in higher education, it is the one chosen for this study. Nevertheless, other degree fields may have led to similar or different outcomes upon completion and were not captured in this study.

Finally, my perspective is influenced by my background in the field of academic advising. Specifically, my experience working with NACADA as a member, committee chair, and student of the group's publications and educational opportunities influences my view of academic advisors and their professional development. Although this is a salient lens to the topic, it is not the only lens and one that student participants do not necessarily bring as strongly.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is important to continue this line of research on advisors and their potential career paths as they complete the doctorate in higher education administration. One way would be through a quantitative study on this topic to gain information from a wider sample of participants with the advising background. Quantitative studies could also explore the different findings in this study, namely understanding decision-point processes to pursue doctoral study, career goals at that time, how those career aspirations changed over the course of one's doctoral studies, the impact

of mentors, and participant post-doctoral degree career trajectories. It is also recommend that further qualitative studies be conducted on the leadership qualities of academic advisors who have risen to upper levels of higher education administration and their leadership qualities as viewed by senior administrators. Finally, it is recommend that qualitative studies be conducted to document the stories of advisors of color, as well as doctoral degree holders of color in higher education administration, who leave higher education because of a lack of support at the institutional level.

Conclusion

As noted in the introduction to this study, George Bernard Shaw (1893/2005) felt that “the people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they cannot find them, make them” (p. 121). Many professional academic advisor have chosen to take on the challenge of pursuing career opportunities in the upper levels of higher education administration. To assist in achieving their goals, they have earned a doctoral degree in higher education administration.

The personal career stories of the professionals in this dissertation study inform current and future professional academic advisors as they contemplate this particular career path. Additionally, a greater understanding of these career processes serve to enlighten the NACADA membership and influence its research agenda as the profession of academic advising further evolves. Finally, the results of this study add to the body of literature regarding socialization to the profession of academic advising, student affairs, and higher education often taught in associated graduate programs.

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APPENDIX A

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Demographic Data: From personal records such as resumes, position descriptions, and graduate school application materials provided by and confirmed by the participant

Name

Address

Email Address

Birthdate

Majors, degrees, years granted

Present occupation and employment status

Marital status

Children

Race/ethnicity

Means for paying for doctoral program costs

Interview Questions:

1. At what point did you decide to earn doctoral degrees in higher education administration?
 - a. Was the higher education administration doctoral degree targeted because of a specific career aspiration?
 - b. Were other doctoral programs considered? If so, which ones?

- c. How long did it take you to earn your doctorate?
2. What were your career goals at the time of your application into a higher education administration doctoral program?
 - a. What were the circumstances surrounding any changes in career aspirations or career trajectories between application and completion of the program?
3. Did your career aspirations change through your doctoral program experience? If so, how and why?
4. Did you have (a) mentor(s) from the field of higher education and/or academic advising, and how did this/these mentors influence you?
5. How did your initial career aspirations compare to your actual post-doctoral degree career trajectory?
 - a. Was a doctoral degree required for positions you eventually took after the completion of the degree for these group members? If not, was it helpful?
 - b. How did the pursuit of the doctorate affect your family? Did this affect your career path choices?
 - c. What other elements played a part in your career path from that of an academic advisor to the present?

APPENDIX B

Initial Letter to Research Participants

March 2012

Dear Dr.,

I am currently in the process of writing my doctoral dissertation in leadership in higher education administration. My topic is focused on the career experiences of professional academic advisors who went on to earn doctoral degrees in higher education administration. The purpose of my study is to explore the career paths of this same group. I am writing to request your participation in this study.

Attached is a consent form that gives specific information about my research as well as what is expected of you as a research participant. If you agree to participate in this study, please read, sign, and mail the enclosed consent form to me using the self-addressed envelope. I will be available by phone all days of the week, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. EST on all days of the week to go over the form with you. You can contact me at XXXX County Road XX, Auburn, IN 46706 (e-mail: alisonrynearson@gmail.com); or by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX, or you may contact my faculty sponsor, Dr. Joshua Powers, Bayh College of Education, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809 (e-mail: Joshua.powers.indstate.edu), or by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Should you agree to be a participant, I will contact you to coordinate a time and date for a 60-90 minute interview, to be conducted either live or via Skype. Based on the first interview, there may be a need for a follow-up interview. Also, I would also like to collect from you copies of personal and professional documents related to your career path, such as a resume or vita, position description, graduate school application documents, and graduate school transcripts. These will be collected at the time of the interview.

Your story will bring a unique voice to my study which will assist in creating a foundation for future literature on the topic of career paths of professional academic advisors earning doctoral degrees. Thank you and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Alison K. Rynearson, M.A.

APPENDIX C

Consent to Participate in Research

THE LIVED CAREER EXPERIENCES OF PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC ADVISORS WHO
WENT ON TO EARN DOCTORAL DEGREES IN HIGHER EDUCATION
ADMINISTRATION

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Alison K. Rynearson, a student in the Educational Leadership program in the School of Education at Indiana State University, and Dr. Joshua Powers, faculty member. This study is being conducted as a part of Mrs. Rynearson's dissertation. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and feel free to ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived career stories of professional academic advisors who went on to earn their doctoral degree in higher education administration. Unfortunately, no in-depth research has been published on this population to date although many questions remain.

PROCEDURES

You have been asked to participate in this study because you were a professional academic advisor at the point of application to your now completed doctoral program in higher education administration. The study will include interviews of approximately 8-10 participants. The interview will take approximately 1 to 1.5 hours to complete. A short follow-up interview may be required. The interview will be recorded only to assist the researcher with information recall.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The risks to you are considered minimal, although the questions may evoke some degree of emotion for you given that they focus on your studies and higher education career.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no known benefits to you as a study participant. This study will contribute to the limited body of literature as it relates to the career paths of professional academic advisors. It is hoped that these personal career stories will assist current and future professional academic advisors as they contemplate this particular career path. Additionally, a greater understanding of these career processes will serve to enlighten the NACADA membership and influence its research agenda as the profession of academic advising further evolves.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Your contribution will be audio recorded, not by name, but by a pseudonym in order to maintain confidentiality. The audio recording with pseudonym identification will be transcribed by a trained transcriber who will maintain the integrity and confidentiality of information. The

master list of pseudonyms and identified participants will be secured in a locked file maintained by the researcher. The audio and transcribed notes will be locked in a second file maintained by the researcher. The informed consent and validated demographic data will be secured in a third file maintained by the researcher. All interview materials will be kept for 3 years in a locked cabinet and then destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact Alison K. Rynearson at XXXX County Road XX, Auburn, IN 46706, 260-XXX-XXXX, alisonrynearson@gmail.com, or Dr. Joshua Powers at University Hall 318B, Department of Educational Leadership, Indiana State University, XXX-XXX-XXXX, Joshua.powers@indstate.edu.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or e-mail the IRB at irb@indstate.edu. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent

committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with ISU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

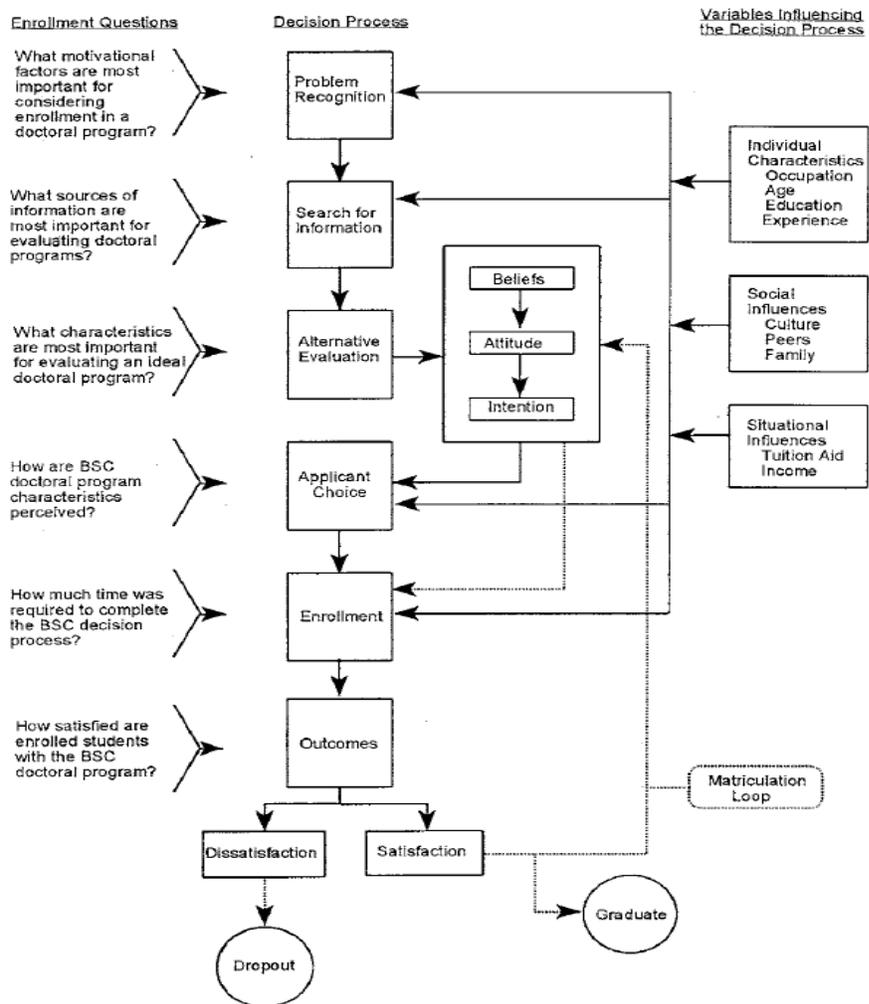
Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

APPENDIX D

Stiber's Enrollment Process Model



Stiber's Enrollment Process Model. Stiber, G. F. (2000). Characterizing the decision process leading to enrollment in doctoral programs: Theory, application, and practice. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 10(1), 13-26. Used with permission.