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Struggling to Advance Beyond Mid-Level Positions: Mentoring Women Leaders in Student Affairs

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STRUGGLING TO ADVANCE BEYOND MID-LEVEL POSITIONS: MENTORING

WOMEN LEADERS IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

by

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A THESIS

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STRUGGLING TO ADVANCE BEYOND MID-LEVEL POSITIONS: MENTORING

WOMEN LEADERS IN STUDENT AFFAIRS

Ashley L.S. Tenney, M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2014

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This qualitative study explores the mentoring relationship of women in senior student affairs officer (SSAO) positions. Five women in SSAO positions were interviewed, sharing their experiences in being mentored throughout their careers in the student affairs profession. The five participants are employed at public higher education institutions in the west and midwest regions of the United States. The literature review discusses women in higher education, the student affairs profession, and mentoring relationships. Kram (1983) detailed the four phases of mentoring relationships; which was utilized in this research to further explore mentoring relationships that women SSAO have experienced throughout their careers in student affairs.

Through a semi-structured interview protocol, qualitative interviews were conducted in the 2013 fall semester. The five participants shared stories on the mentoring relationships they have had while in entry, mid, and senior level positions in student affairs. Mentoring relationships assisted participants as they pursued various positions and opportunities in their careers. Findings indicated the mentoring relationships that women in SSAO positions have are influential in the field of student affairs as they advance in their careers.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family who always valued education. I am so thankful that we went to the library every week and I was encouraged to check out the maximum number of books that was allowed and would fit into my bag. My love for reading was encouraged and my thirst for knowledge started because of you, Mom and Dad. This whole journey to and through this graduate program started because of you two. I was a first-generation college student, but I was never alone.

I also dedicate this work to my partner, Nate. Though it was difficult sometimes being a dual-thesis household, I am so grateful that we were in this process together. I look forward to continuing on together in higher education as professionals, socially responsible/just individuals, and partners.

Acknowledgements

It would be impossible for me to give my family the appropriate amount of recognition that they deserve since they were such a significant part of this process. I want to thank my brother, Aaron, for sharing so much with me. You helped me transition from our Minnesota homeland to this "sea of red." I am glad that we were able to share another state as our home. You also understood what it meant to be a first-generation college student and I am glad that we shared that together.

I would not have been able to pick a topic about mentorship, or even found the field of student affairs, without the mentorship of a couple of extremely influential women at my undergraduate institution. Lisa, the best semester of my entire educational experience was the semester that I interned with you. You showed me what a woman in a leadership position looked like, you showed me what authenticity looked like in a student affairs position, and you saw potential in me. Thank you for sharing student affairs with me. Mary, you perfected the art of questioning with your staple phrase, "the question I would ask…" I still ask a lot of questions; and often think of you as I ask them.

Naturally, when I think of Lisa and Mary, I think of Bemidji State University; and when I think of the Beavers, I think of you, Michael. I cannot wait for you to read this work so we can talk about it. I will start answering my phone again. I promise. I know you are sick of hearing my voicemail message over and over again. Thank you for being persistent and never giving up on me, Co-President Meehlhause.

I want to thank the women who spent time with me, sharing their own stories about mentorship. This absolutely would not have happened without you, my participants. Your involvement in student affairs as leaders showed me that women can

advance beyond mid-level positions and that the vice chancellor/president desk was made for me too.

I want to acknowledge the people who impacted my graduate school experience in such a positive way. Dr. Mullen, thank you for your advice, support, and the freedom to really explore my topic. Dr. Bondi and Dr. Rumann, thank you for introducing social justice into this graduate program. I know that the process is messy, but you changed me and I look forward to working with the professionals that come out of your program that are committed to the messiness of social justice work in student affairs.

I also want to thank our SJ Fridays discussion group. You all are the reason I am excited to be on campus on a Friday afternoon. I hope the discussion surrounding social justice and student affairs continues for all of us.

Lastly, I want to thank Alicia, my co-mentor in this program. I have never met someone with such conviction and brilliance. You taught me so much. You challenged me. You supported me. You get me.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The student affairs profession is an interdisciplinary field, utilizing

"developmental or counseling psychology, sociology, history, law, and organizational

development" (Baxter Magolda & Magolda, 2011, p. 6). The field of student affairs came

into existence by providing counseling and services to help foster development for

students beyond what students were learning in the classroom (Baxter Magolda &

Magolda, 2011).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to gain understanding of how women in senior

student affairs officer (SSAO) positions have been mentored throughout their careers.

The experiences and voices of the women in the study speak to the value of mentoring

relationships. Mentors were influential in the women's careers and assisted them by

providing professional opportunities and challenges. From their insights, these women

provided an understanding of how women drew upon mentorship as a way to advance

from the mid-level positions into a SSAO positions.

Significance of Study

Many mentoring relationships developed informally, without the intent of the

mentee ever seeking a SSAO position; however, many of the participants credited their

mentors in helping them get to where they are today. Mentoring relationships can be

better utilized to help women and other underrepresented populations advance in the field

of student affairs. The current literature on mentoring relationships discusses how

traditional mentoring relationships are developed and maintained (Kram, 1983).

Mentoring relationships can be beneficial for both the mentor and mentee in providing the mentor a purpose and the mentee guidance (Kram, 1983). The women in the study have been in the field of student affairs for over 25 years and experienced being pioneers in the field, as well as being tokenized. This study is unique in researching how mentoring relationships have influenced the careers of women in SSAO positions.

Research Questions

As I examined the topic of mentorship and its role in the lives of women SSAO, the following research questions were developed:

- How are women mentored throughout their careers in student affairs?
- How do women SSAOs mentor others in the student affairs profession?

By inquiring about the mentoring relationships of the women in the study, the research questions sought to identify aspects of mentoring relationships through in-depth qualitative interviews. Through sharing experiences in their careers, the women in this research contributed to a better understanding of how mentorship is utilized to further women's advancement in student affairs.

Research Design

The methodology used for this research employed qualitative, semi-structured interviews, which allowed for an in-depth look into the participants' careers. Through utilizing a theoretical framework of how mentoring relationships are formed, the interviews conducted revealed how mentoring relationships influenced the careers of women in student affairs. The purpose of this research was to gain understanding of how women in senior student affairs officer (SSAO) positions have been mentored throughout their careers. The qualitative nature of this study helped to interpret the influence of

mentorship in the field of student affairs. The interviews were transcribed and coded for emergent themes that related to the phases of mentoring relationships (Kram, 1983).

Definition of Terms

Defining and understanding the following terms is crucial to exploring this research. For this qualitative study on mentoring and women in SSAO positions, the following terms were used.

Co-Mentoring Relationship—Co-mentoring relationships differ from traditional mentoring relationships; knowledge, skills, and resources are shared by two individuals with similar professional status (McGuire & Reger, 2005). The co-mentoring model can be more beneficial for underrepresented populations because there shared power due to the non-hierarchal nature of the relationship (McGuire & Reger, 2005).

Mentor—A mentor is, traditionally, an individual with more experience in a profession and acts as a teacher or sponsor to a less experienced individual (McGuire & Reger, 2005).

Mentee—A mentee or protégé is, traditionally, an individual with less experience and is receiving guidance from a more experienced individual in their career field (McGuire & Reger, 2005).

Traditional Mentoring Relationship—A traditional mentoring relationship provides guidance, support, and opportunities from a more experienced colleague to a less experienced one. The relationship is typically hierarchal with a power imbalance (Kram, 1983; McGuire & Reger, 2005).

Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAO)—A SSAO in this study referred to the titles of Vice-President or Vice-Chancellor of Student Affairs at an institution of higher education.

Student Affairs—Student affairs is an interdisciplinary field assisting students beyond classroom instruction (Baxter Magolda & Magolda, 2011).

Women—The term woman is used to describe an individual that self-identifies as a woman (as opposed to referring to the biological sex assigned at birth, which would be termed as female).

Delimitations

Delimitations existed in the research due to the scope of the qualitative study. The five participants self-identified as women, which was a requirement to be a participant in the study. I did not require the participants to identify as female, as examining biological sex was not in the scope of the research. Outside of the realm of my control for the study was when technology was not utilized consistently for all participants. Three out of the five interviews were conducted via Skype or Face Time. Two of the interviews were conducted by speakerphone, with no video capabilities. One participant did not have access to a webcam for the interview. Another participant and I were not able to conduct the interview via Skype due to issues with the program, which lead to the interview being conducted via speakerphone. Not being able to see two of the participants and interact with them via video placed delimitation on the research.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include a lack of generalizability. As this research is qualitative, the intent was never for the results to be generalizable, but instead

informative of individual experiences. The small sample and qualitative methodology prevented the research from being applied to larger groups, except for those that identify with the study's demographic group. Additionally, time was another limitation. I conducted this research over the course of two academic semesters to be used in a thesis as a final requirement for my master's degree. If this study had been conducted over a longer period of time, I could have recruited more participants and transcribed more interviews to include in the final report. Another potential limitation to the study is that I am a white woman just entering the field of student affairs. The participants could have chosen to sensor their own experiences since the career field is small. The field of student affairs is considered young, compared to higher education institutions and organizations as a whole. Student affairs professionals are tasked with justifying their work on college campuses and by discussing the negative aspects of the field they could put the profession at risk; therefore, responses could have been censored.

Conclusion

I found that this study on the mentoring relationships for five women in SSAO positions was both challenging and rewarding. Through this research, I have found a renewed excitement and dread for what I may face as a woman in student affairs. I have the opportunity to be mentored by many women who were pioneers in the field. I also will be challenged due to my gender and the expectations placed on my own gender roles and aspirations to reach a top leadership position in student affairs. Understanding the role of mentorship in the lives of women in SSAO positions is necessary to helping the next generation of student affairs professionals.

In Chapter 2, the literature review provides an overview of the student affairs profession, women in higher education, and different aspects of mentoring relationships. I believe the information presented in the next four chapters of this thesis provide a means of understanding the influence of the influence of mentoring relationships for women in student affairs. Research methods are provided in Chapter 3, explaining how this qualitative research was conducted. Chapter 4 introduces each of the participants involved in the study and includes direct excerpts from their individual interviews addressing their own experiences with mentorship throughout their careers. The five themes that emerged from the interviews regarding mentoring relationships will be addressed. Finally, Chapter 5 connects the findings of the research to the literature provided and recommendations for further investigation ~~will be offered~~. There is still much work to be done in advancing women and other underrepresented groups in student affairs, examining mentorship is a great place to start and continue as we look to make student affairs more gender inclusive and equitable.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Navigating a career field that many professionals do not become aware of until

they enter an institution of higher education can be daunting. The field of student affairs

is still a young and emerging profession. In 1937 after a two-day conference, the

American Council on Education published a report highlighting the administrative and

instructional functions of student personnel work:

> This philosophy imposes upon educational institutions the obligation to consider
> the student as a whole - his intellectual capacity and achievement, his emotional
> make up, his physical condition, his social relationships, his vocational aptitudes
> and skills, his moral and religious values, his economic resources, his aesthetic
> appreciations. (p. 3)

As the student populations attending higher education institutions continue to grow and

change demographically, the field of student affairs has changed as well. Since higher

education's beginning in the United States, women, students of color, LGBT, and other

underrepresented groups have changed what the campus looks like. This shift in student

demographic has lead to physical changes on campus. Institutions now have centers

devoted to traditionally underrepresented populations and staff that reflect students on

campus (though this is not always proportionate).

As the student and staff population changes on campuses across the United States,

so has the administrative leadership managing and directing those constituents. Though

not proportionate to the student population, according to the American Council on

Education's 2012 *American College President* study, women make up 26 percent of

institutional leaders, compared to only 10 percent in 1986 (Cook, 2012). Harvard, the

United State's oldest and one of the most prestigious universities, hired Drew Gilpin Faust in 2007 as its 28th president. She was the first woman to hold this position since Harvard's first president held office in 1640 (History of the Presidency, 2014). This shift is slowly changing who students and staff see at the top of the administrative hierarchy.

Synopsis of Literature Review

The literature review begins with a historical look at women in higher education. This is important to note because women make up a large portion of students attending higher education institutions across the United States. Next, women in the student affairs profession are explored. Since more women are now attending college, I believe we need to further examine the staff on college campuses that assist the various student populations to see if there is proportionate representation and resources. Different aspects of mentoring are then reviewed. Traditional mentoring is examined, as well as, co-mentoring. The four phases of mentoring relationships are explained to provide the reader with an understanding of how mentoring relationships progress and influence both the mentor and mentee. This literature seeks to provide context for the qualitative study that was conducted to examine the mentoring relationships that women in student affairs receive throughout their careers.

Women in Higher Education

Higher education has been a space where learning and growth happens for traditional and post-traditional students for centuries. Traditional students are characterized by attending a post secondary institution the summer after obtaining their high school diploma and continuing on at an institution for the next four to six years. Post-traditional is intentionally used instead of non-traditional because the latter implies

that these students are out of the norm. Education should not be promoted as non-normative for any group, particularly those who have been underrepresented.

In the United States, higher education has not always been inclusive of various underrepresented groups. The Education Amendments of 1972 included the inception of Title IX (Meyers, 2012). Commonly known for improving conditions for female athletes, Title IX did more to progress women in academia. The amendment made it illegal to hold female PhD candidates to "higher admissions standards than males or to deny them financial support in the form of scholarships and assistantships" (Meyers, 2012, p. 3).

College women now make up half of student attending institutions of higher education (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). There have been steps forward for women in higher education. According to Meyers (2012), "despite studies, policies, and mentoring programs designed to advance women, progress has been painfully slow on many fronts" (p. 3). Meyers (2012) focuses primarily on women and minority faculty, though similarities could be made for the field of student affairs and higher education administration.

Women in Student Affairs

Today women are still not "represented in leadership positions in student affairs in proportion to their numbers in the profession" (Jones & Komives, 2001, p. 231). Women are entering the field of student affairs and graduating from doctoral programs at higher rates than men, but remain "clustered in mid-level positions" as men continue to hold a larger number of senior student affairs officer positions (Jones & Komives, 2001, p. 233). Though not represented through campus leadership positions, women are

consistently enhancing the field through developing new theories and best practices

(Jones & Komives, 2001).

Change in any environment can be difficult for a variety of reasons. Meyers

(2012) asserts, "it is unlikely that those in positions of power within the academy will be

able or willing to view institutional structures as inherently discriminatory – or that they

will want to change those policies from which they have benefitted" (p. 12). Even if

structures are not set up at institutions women work at, there are other organizations

where women can find some kind of support. According to Golombisky (2012), "women

gathering to talk about women in higher education… is crucial for advancing women in

the academy" (p. 19).

NASPA. Professional student affairs organizations target issues related to women

specifically through various groups sponsored by these organizations. The National

Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) offers nearly 30 constituent

groups that are called Knowledge Communities that members can be a part of (NASPA

Knowledge Communities, 2014). There is a particular NASPA Knowledge Community

devoted to Women in Student Affairs (WISA). The purpose statement for the WISA

Knowledge Community is to "give voice to the needs of women in student affairs and to

provide professional development opportunities through both regional and national

activities designed to address gender equity and prompt personal growth" (Women in

Student Affairs, 2014, para. 1). NASPA also offers access to the *NASPA Journal About*

Women in Higher Education, where subscribed members can view articles from the

journal online or pay for a paper copy.

ACPA. American College Personnel Association (ACPA) also provides opportunities for professionals to get involved in specific topics within the organization through commissions and standing committees. ACPA's Standing Committee for Women (SCW), "supports, develops, and empowers those who identify as women and our allies through advocacy, activism, engaging community, and scholarship" (Standing Committee for Women, 2014, para. 1). A recent ACPA Publication, *Empowering Women in Higher Education and Student Affairs: Theory, Research, Narratives, and Practice from Feminist Perspectives*, includes various topics impacting women in higher education and student.

AAUW. The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is committed to "advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research" (American Association of University Women, 2014). AAUW researches gender equity issues in education and the workplace, offers leadership workshops for college women (including training and encouraging college women to run for student government), supports educational programming that promotes young girls getting involved in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) activities, funds women's research through fellowships and scholarships, and more (American Association of University Women, 2014).

Niskode-Dossett, Boney, Bullock, Cochran, and Kao (2011) wanted to share the depth of conversation that has transpired through the Sister Circle roundtable discussions at ACPA sponsored by the SCW. One participant of the roundtable discussed how she was able to connect with other professionals through ACPA and SCW (Niskode-Dossett et al., 2011). This particular participant decided to leave higher education as an

administrator, but continued to stay involved by working with AAUW because she wanted to continue giving back to education and women (Niskode-Dossett et al., 2011). Through these professional groups and organizations, women are being supported outside of their educational institutions.

Mentoring

Biddix (2013) posed the question, "how important are mentors in moving beyond middle management?" (p. 320). Higher education administrators are starting to represent more diverse groups of people than ever before. As that change is occurring, one may question what has caused this change and how to best support those coming into these administrative positions. Mentoring has been found to be beneficial for professionals as they progress through their careers (Kram, 1983). There are various approaches and literature relating to mentoring relationships and best practices.

Traditional mentoring. Schmidt and Wolfe (2009) define mentorship as, "colleagues and supervisors who actively provide guidance, support, and opportunities for the protégé" (p. 372). Terms such as mentor and protégé are used to describe this hierarchal relationship (Kram, 1983). Further, the relationship is typically one in which there is someone acting as a teacher, sage or sponsor facilitating the other person's professional and career goals (McGuire & Reger, 2003). The dynamic of these traditional mentoring relationships reinforce "power imbalances because one person in the relationship has a monopoly of knowledge skills, and resources" (McGuire & Reger, 2003, p. 57).

The mentoring relationship does not mean that the protégé needs to do and act exactly like the mentor in the relationship. Protégés will choose attributes of the mentor

that they see as compatible with their own sense of self; typically constructing this ideal self from various models (Schmidt & Wolfe, 2009). Mentors can also serve as a consultant, guiding their protégé through the political climate of a particular profession, which in this context would be student affairs (Schmidt & Wolfe, 2009). Mentors can serve as an advisor, guiding the mentee through overt and covert political powers of a higher education institution.

Co-mentoring. McGuire and Reger (2003) offer a critique of the traditional mentoring model. Co-mentoring utilizes non-hierarchal relationships for developing and challenges "masculinist values of hierarchy, competition, and objectivity" (McGuire & Reger, 2003, p. 54). The co-mentoring model is offered as valuable for all academic mentoring groups, but perhaps even more beneficial for underrepresented groups (McGuire & Reger, 2003). "White women, people of color, older academics, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people can especially benefit from this model" (McGuire & Reger, 2003, p. 54).

Co-mentoring can be an avenue for underrepresented groups to find support with each other, celebrating each other's achievements in a non-competitive structure (McGuire & Reger, 2003). Though competition may "be a motivator for some students, it poses problems for groups who are isolated and underrepresented" (McGuire & Reger, 2003, p. 62). Co-mentoring relationships are still founded upon common goals and interests, though there is the lack of vast experience in a profession that traditional mentors can bring to the relationship.

Mentoring underrepresented groups. McGuire and Reger (2003) emphasize that finding traditional mentors can be difficult because at times there can be a short of

good role models. The pressure is not only on the person seeking a mentor, but the mentor herself or himself. If there is a lack of good role models, mentors may find themselves with a large group of individuals seeking a mentoring relationship (McGuire & Reger, 2003).

Biddix (2013) pondered the importance of mentors in advancing in an organizational structure. Jones and Komives (2001) pose a problem in matching mentors with entry- and mid-level professionals:

> For those women who achieve senior-level status in student affairs, support systems and the availability of mentors are in short supply… With greater numbers of women in the leadership pipeline for senior level positions in student affairs, institutions, as well as professional associations, must create structures for mentoring women for leadership positions. (p. 239)

McGuire and Reger (2003) experienced that a limited quantity of mentors with an abundance of graduate students influence traditional mentoring relationships. Schmidt and Wolfe (2009) address the difficulties of finding a mentor and recommend that newcomers choose mentors of the same sex; however, the authors do acknowledge the difficulty historically and currently in finding a suitable female mentor.

Blackhurst (2000) asserts that mentoring has been proposed as a potential solution to address the multitude of issues facing women in student affairs. Though mentoring women has been discussed as a way to help women in the profession, only one-third of women surveyed by Blackhurst (2000) reported that they currently have a mentor, regardless of their professional management level. The problem is not exclusive to mid-level and senior-level student affairs professionals. Blackhurst (2000) finds that even women in graduate or entry-level positions are lacking mentoring relationships though

they have a greater availability of women mentors at lower organizational levels that could potentially mentor them.

Approach to the Literature

A variety of scholarly search engines were used to research the topic mentoring relationships in student affairs and higher education as it relates to women. To locate relevant literature, Academic Search Premier, Journal Storage (JSTOR), and Project MUSE databases were used. Search terms included "mentoring," "women mentors," "mentoring relationships," "women in student affairs," "women in higher education," "gender in higher education." Professional organizational websites, ACPA, AAUW, and NASPA were also used to gather information pertaining to the topic since each of these groups offer publications specifically for the higher education community. Electronic resources were used more frequently due to accessibility, though I was able to find paper text that related to the topic through the professional organization's websites and library resources. These sources proved to be extremely relevant in providing resources relating to women in student affairs and mentoring relationships.

Theoretical Framework

Psychosocial stages. Erikson (1963) describes the various stages that individuals go through in regards to their psychosocial development. Young adults, middle adulthood, and those reaching maturity can benefit from mentoring relationships in various ways. Many of the relationships that are built during this time take place where adults are employed. Young adults (ages 19 to 40 years) benefit from creating relationships with others. More experienced middle adulthood (ages 40 to 65) individuals, most likely in mid/senior career positions, are in a "period of reassessment

and reappraisal during which time past accomplishments are reviewed" (Kram, 1983, p. 609). For individuals that find themselves with little to no career advancement at this stage, life can become troublesome (Kram, 1983). A mentoring relationship can benefit individuals at the various stages. Someone at midlife can nurture a younger adult in her or his career field. Kram (1983) asserts that, "the Eriksonian polarity at this life stage, 'generativity versus stagnation,' suggest the potential value of a mentor relationship" (p. 609).

Phases of mentoring. Kram (1983) describes phases of mentoring relationships that were found in the corporate setting. Kram (1983) recognizes four distinct and predictable phases for mentoring relationships: an initiation phase, a cultivation phase, a separation phase, and a redefinition phase.

During the initiation phase, the mentoring relationship is just starting between the mentor and the mentee. Kram (1983) found that during this phase, younger managers revered their senior manager for her or his competence and ability to provide support. The mentor is seen as a very positive figure and idealized by the mentee. The senior managers saw these protégés as coachable and as someone with potential. The younger manage is seen as someone that the senior manager can advise and typically set the relationship in motion (Kram, 1983). This phase revolves around positive fantasies and expectations for both individuals.

The cultivation phase, generally lasting two to five years, the positive outlook that emerged during the initiation phase is tested (Kram, 1983). The senior manager continues to coach and challenge the younger professional as they progress in their career. The younger protégé revealed to Kram (1983), "how challenging work assignments,

coaching, role modeling, and acceptance-and-confirmation contributed to his growing sense of competence and enabled him to navigate more effectively in his immediate organizational world" (p. 616). The mentor does not only empower and open doors for their protégé, but they also transmit values and skills to the next generation of managers.

The separation phase, another period lasting from two to five years, is characterized by significant changes to the relationship (Kram, 1983). The younger manager is gaining more independence and autonomy. This causes both members of the mentoring relationship to reassess the value of the relationship. The younger member may, during this time, become structurally separated from their mentor through a promotion. This phase is crucial for development (Kram, 1983). The mentee is given an opportunity during this time to demonstrate the skills they have learned from the mentoring relationship independent from the mentor.

The final phase is the redefinition phase. During this phase, the mentoring relationship evolves into a new form or ends. Kram (1983) found that most of the relationships evolved into a type of friendship, exhibiting less of a hierarchal relationship between the two members. The mentor continues to be supportive and takes pride in their successes; while the mentee removes the mentor from the pedestal they were placed on in the beginning of the relationship.

Summary of Literature

According to Schmidt and Wolfe (2009), the lack of suitable mentors, particularly for women, is a serious limitation to the field of student affairs. As the field of student affairs grows and changes with the student population on college campuses, intentional focus should continue to concentrate on underrepresented populations' success. NASPA

and ACPA's joint publication of the Core Competencies of the student affairs profession does not explicitly state an importance of mentorship; however, core competencies do include "Advising and Helping," "Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion," and "Leadership" as integral to the profession (Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners, 2010). Professional organizations for student affairs do value research and advocacy in relation to gender.

The phases of the mentoring relationship developed by Kram (1983) highlights the progression of a mentoring relationship. Schmidt and Wolfe (2009) describe mentoring relationships as hierarchal, with one member clearly in the role of mentor while the other is the protégé. The four phases Kram (1983) illustrates prescribe to a traditional hierarchal relationship, at least until the final phase. McGuire and Reger (2003) depict a co-mentoring model, which has similar attributes to the final mentoring phase offered by Kram (1983), redefinition phase.

Chapter 3

Methods

Introduction and Study Rationale

The rationale for this research was demonstrated through the absence of research on women that hold vice chancellor/president positions in student affairs. The purpose of this qualitative research was to explore the experiences of women in senior student affairs officer (SSAO) positions at various institutions in the United States. The research is significant in attempting to understand the experiences of women as they are mentored and mentor others in the student affairs profession. There is limited research on mentorship specific to the field of student affairs. This research would be invaluable to the field as more women are seeking senior level positions in the field of student affairs.

Research Questions

The guiding research questions of this qualitative study were developed in order to further examine women in SSAO positions and how those women have been mentored throughout their professional careers in student affairs. The following research questions were used in creating the methodology for this research:

- How are women mentored throughout their careers in student affairs?
- How do women SSAOs mentor others in the student affairs profession?

Methodology Rationale

The purpose of my research was to uncover the experiences women SSAOs had throughout their career in regards to mentoring relationships. In order to do this, I chose qualitative methods. According to Maxwell (2013) "qualitative and quantitative methods are not simply different ways of doing the same thing" (p. 29). I have had experiences in

conducting quantitative measures to research and wanted to expand my own knowledge and experiences by conducting a qualitative study. Maxwell (2013) asserts that qualitative and quantitative are not in competition or opposition, but can be used to address different questions and goals for a researcher. Qualitative research utilizes the process theory approach. Process theory, "tends to see the world in terms of people, situations, events, and processes that connect these; explanation is based on an analysis of how some situations and events influence others" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 29). Further, qualitative research gives voice to populations that have not historically been allowed to share their own experiences (Reinharz, 1992).

Epistemological Perspective

The epistemological perspective that I utilized as a researcher in this particular study was a social constructivist epistemology. Social constructivists "hold the assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Maxwell, 2009, p. 8). Maxwell (2009) asserts that the more open-ended the questions the more participants can more effectively construct their own meaning to situations and experiences. The way participants make meaning are not imprinted, but "formed through interactions with others (hence social constructivism) through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (Maxwell, 2009, p. 8). In this research, I interpreted the participants' experiences and meanings as they discussed their careers and mentorship as professionals in student affairs.

Feminist Research Methods

Further, this utilized feminist action research. Feminist action research must "be oriented to social and individual change because feminism represents a repudiation of the

status quo" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 175). According to Reinharz (1992), some feminists

critique research, stating that research is a way to avoid action. I intended and attempted

to bring forth my participants' experiences as professionals in student affairs and I

wanted to further utilize the time I spent interviewing my participants to advance women

in the field of student affairs. My goal in feminist action research aligns with that asserted

by Reinharz (1992) in that "feminist action research is not a particular set of

arrangements, but the process of continual change… [and] that research alone cannot

change the conditions under which women live" (p. 178-179).

Participants

  The participants chosen for this study met criteria by identifying as a woman and

employed as a vice president/chancellor of student affairs at a higher education

institution. Snowball sampling was the main method for recruiting participants. Schutt

(2009) identifies snowball sampling useful for "hard-to-reach or hard-to-identify

populations for which there is no sampling frame, but the members of which are

somewhat interconnected (at least some members of the population know each other)" (p.

174).

  One of the participants recruited is a woman that I knew previous to the study. I

had not met the other four participants previous to the study as they were recruited

through snowball sampling. These participants were referred to me other vice

chancellor/presidents of student affairs that I knew or interviewed. I asked individuals in

these positions to refer people in similar positions that met the criteria because they had a

pre-established network of potential participants. The participants in my study identified

as women that have been in the student affairs positions for 25 years or more. Two of the

participants are currently SSAOs at higher education institutions in the Midwest region and three are at institutions in the West region of the United States.

Institutional Review Board Approval

Before the start of the study, I completed the Consortium for Institutional Review Board Training Initiative in Human Subjects Protections (CITI) for certification in human subjects research. I gained approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting any research. In the IRB application, I indicated that I would recruit five participants for the study. I was able to identify and interview the five participants I had anticipated. Once individuals that met the criteria for the study were identified, I emailed them an informed consent letter (see *Appendices A and B).*

Before each interview was conducted, participants were given the opportunity to further review the informed consent letter and verbally consented to the interview, which was recorded via an audio recorder. Confidentiality of the participants was maintained by assigning each participant a pseudonym and only describing the type of institution they worked at and the region in which the institution was located. Additionally, mentors and colleagues that the participants described were also given pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

Data Collection – Interviews

I collected data for this study through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviewing is a qualitative data-gathering technique utilized by feminist researchers (Schutt, 1992). The semi-structured interview protocol can be found in *Appendix C.* Interviews were conducted during the fall semester of 2013. A semi-structured interview protocol was utilized for conducting interviews. Semi-structured interviewing allowed me

to ask clarifying and follow-up question during the interview and to change the order of the questions based on the progression of the interview. For example, one participant only have one mentor throughout her career in student affairs; therefore, the questions regarding a mentor or mentors she had during entry, mid, and senior level positions stayed the same and she was able to speak to multiple questions at one time.

      The interviews with the five participants took place over the course of four weeks in the fall semester of the 2013-2014 academic year. Each respondent was interviewed once and the interviews average about 37 minutes each. Since the participants were from various institutions across the Midwest and West regions of the United States, interviews were conducted via video chat (Skype, Face Time) or phone. I reserved a private office space to conduct all of the interviews. The participants were all in their private offices at their respective institutions during the interviews. Video chats were used for three of the participants. One participant did not have the technology available (i.e. webcam) in her office to conduct a video chat interview. For this instance, I put the phone on speaker so the interview could be audio recorded. Another participant and I had technological difficulties with the video chat program, so we decided to continue the interview via speakerphone. All interviews were audio recorded, with the participants' permission, and later transcribed. I informed all of my participants that I might be taking brief notes during the interviews; this was predominantly done for those I video chatted with so they knew I was still attentive, even if I was not looking directly at them while they were speaking.

Data Analysis

After transcribing the interviews personally, I coded the data. According to Creswell (2009), "coding is the process of organizing the material into chucks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information" (p. 186). Through this coding process, I identified common themes discussed in the five separate interviews. While each mentoring relationship described by the participants was unique because of the individuals involved, there were similarities in how the women were mentored, how they mentor others, and characteristics of those relationships. The experiences the participants shared with me are given in later chapters by using their own words directly from the interview transcripts.

Validation Techniques

Creswell (2009) asserts that validity in qualitative research is based on determining if the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, participants, and readers. Rich, thick descriptions were utilized as a validation technique. The descriptions shared by the participants can transport the reader to that interview and give the reader a sense of a shared experience (Creswell, 2009). Another validation technique that I utilized was including my own researcher reflexivity later in this chapter. By clarifying my own role as the researcher and my biases, I attempted to create open and honest descriptions of the participants; however, my interpretations of the data could be skewed by my own experiences with mentorship, student affairs, and being a woman.

Role of Researcher

Higher education has become more accessible for underrepresented populations, though still far from being equitable. Women are now accessing and attaining degrees at

higher rates than ever before. Women are entering the field of student affairs at higher rates than men; however, women are not leading these divisions proportionately. In examining this topic of research, I wanted to know more about the women in SSAO positions, how they got there, and more specifically, who helped them get past their mid-level positions (i.e. mentors).

In this research, I wanted to discover aspects of mentorship that women SSAOs have encountered throughout their career and how they utilize mentoring relationships currently. Mentoring relationships were examined as the participants reflected on how they have been mentored; as well as, how they go about mentoring others in student affairs. My role as a researcher has allowed me to share my participants' experiences with the hope that I can unveil particular mentoring practices that have been beneficial or instances that were not exceptionally helpful.

In regards to my own privilege and power within my research, I did not feel as though power came from my role as a researcher. The participants I interviewed have been in the field of student affairs for decades, while I am just entering the field. My participants all have distinguished and powerful titles at their respective institutions. I did not perceive myself as having the power that a researcher can typically have over her participants, though that was my perception and the participants may have felt differently.

Researcher Reflexivity

In full disclosure, I am interested in this topic because I want to make better use of the mentoring relationships that I have or will seek to have in the future. I am a proponent for co-mentoring models with peers and. I had the opportunity to connect with

professionals in the student affairs field prior to even understanding what student affairs was, or that it was even a field or career option.

I am a white cisgender woman from the Midwest. I grew up in a nuclear family with one older brother. My parents both graduated from high school, but have no post-secondary education. I was expected to go to college, though, as a family unit, we did not know exactly what this meant. My brother first attended a local community college, later transferring to a university; that same year my brother transferred, I started my own collegiate career at a different university. I entered college academically prepared, but I still had little knowledge about what college was or really had any other expectations beyond that I was there to get a degree.

Like many other first-generation college students, I stumbled my way through my four years. I had experiences throughout my time at the university that preludes my career choice. I became involved in student government, a Lutheran-based student group, and was a resident assistant for a year. The best experience of my undergraduate career was interning for the vice president for student affairs. This was the first time I had truly interacted with a woman, in what I perceived as, a position of power.

I previously had women that were teachers, professors, or managers; but someone who presided over an entire division at a higher education institution was more power than I had seen a woman have. She was outgoing, brilliant, decisive, and authentic. This was someone I could look up to and continue to look up to today. I wanted to further explore mentoring of women in student affairs because I believe that without the mentorship and role modeling that vice president did with me, I would not have found my way into this field. Without mentors to support me, could I continue in this field? I

wanted to better understand how I could exhibit effective mentoring for the women entering college, graduate programs, and the student affairs field.

In my experience, student affairs leaders are not representative of the student bodies they make policies for and are not representative of the people entering the field of student affairs. Through this research, I wanted to find a way to encourage women to enter student affairs and aspire to obtain top leadership positions at various types of institutions. I also want women that are in SSAO positions to understand how their own mentoring relationships with women in the field can be influential and beneficial. I do not want to get stuck in a mid-level position, but aspire to be a SSAO someday.

Chapter 4

Findings

I do look at women in the mid-level more than anything… Helping them become

Directors and Vice-Presidents. That's really important to me. -Hillary

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to gain understanding of how women in senior

student affairs officers (SSAO) positions have been mentored throughout their careers.

Women in vice president/chancellor roles are considered to be in SSAO positions. The

five participants revealed that they received varying degrees of mentorship throughout

their careers. The following research questions were examined:

- How are women mentored throughout their careers in student affairs?

- How do women SSAOs mentor others in the student affairs profession?

The themes that emerged from the interviews divulged ways in which these women were

mentored throughout their career, how they mentored others in the field of student affairs,

and how being a woman influenced their mentoring relationships.

Introduction to Participants

The participants involved in this student were initially contacted via email. After

participants emailed me back expressing interest in being a participant, their office

assistant worked with me in setting up an interview time on the participant's calendar.

The office assistant also provided me with contact information for the day of the

interview (i.e. Skype account names, Face Time account names, and office phone

numbers). All of the participants were emailed the interview questions prior to the

interview, which allowed them to reflect upon the questions. I did this because I wanted

participants to really look back on their mentoring experiences; and I wanted to be inclusive for those individuals that preferred more time to reflect instead of answering questions on the spot.

Interviews were scheduled at the end of the fall 2013 semester. All interviews were conducted via video chat (i.e. Skype or Face Time) or speakerphone. Participants were in their own private offices, while I reserved a private office to conduct the interviews. Each participant greeted me and appeared excited about my research topic and valued the idea of mentorship. As I introduce each of the participants individually, I will share a little bit about who they are, their own personal definition of mentorship, and their ideal mentoring relationship.

Audre. Audre described herself as a white, middle-aged woman. Audre is a SSAO at a midwestern public university. She has worked at five different institutions throughout her career. The sizes and shapes of the institutions varied, but have always been public institutions. Audre has been working in the field of student affairs for the last 25 years. Another identity that Audre particularly made note of, was that she was a mother; and during beginning of her career, she was a single mother.

Audre reminisced about the various mentors that she has had throughout her career. When asked how she defined mentorship she described the relationship as a personal connection:

> How do I define mentorship? I define it as a relationship between two individuals where, um, connections are established that foster growth and development in both the mentor and the mentee; although in most circumstances the mentor is sharing a longer history of life with the mentee and more experiences with the mentee. But, um, my own experiences have been that it is a two-way street.

To Audre, the mentor and mentee both have to be committed to the relationship and a personal connection to one another. Audre went on to further emphasize the importance of human connections:

> So for me, ideally, there is a human connection that occurs at a personal level where you just, you're a match. It's about a whole lot of things that cause that match. It's shared values, it's um, shared experiences…. [and] I think you need to be present in the relationship authentically.

Audre had that connection with one mentor in particular, Norma. She described Norma as someone that is not a just a part of her life, but a presence. Progressing through the interview, Audre brought up Norma multiple times, "I'm still thinking about Norma, she's just been the constant." Norma was someone that fit Audre's definition of an ideal mentoring relationship. Norma was present, shared values, and supported Audre at different points of her career.

Audre also connected with Norma on a personal level:

> She was a mom. And I was a single mom at that point. And I just watched her be a mom and a professional. And so even beyond what she would say to me, just to see her in action, was a thing of beauty. So our relationship grew very naturally and became very close.

Norma was someone that Audre connected with on a professional level, but also on a more personal one as well. Their relationship grew to the point where Audre was able to express a strong personal connection too.

Hillary. Hillary has been in student affairs for over 30 years. She is currently the vice president at a Western university and has served in this position for over ten years. She described the institution as a public, comprehensive research university with a student population under 20,000 students.

When asked her own definition of mentorship, Hillary admitted that she had, "resisted the urge to look it up and give you some kind of professional journal answer. I got a million books over there that would have given me a nice concise definition." She did give her own definition:

> For me, I have to tell you, mentoring people and being mentored, it's about honesty. Um, it's about straightforward advice, all intended to be helpful to you as a professional and sometimes even as a person. Because I don't, in my life, I don't try to separate the two. I just live integrated as one.

Hillary also shared that her "better mentorship moments, both as a receiver and a giver, are when I'm not asking for it." The moments in which Hillary needed help, but did not necessarily ask for it, meant that her relationship was "colloquial." She noted that ideally, mentoring relationships were transparent, direct, and honest:

> I'm pretty direct anyway in my dealings. But, you know, if you need me to sugar coat it and go around the back way and all that, it's not a mentoring relationship for me... I'll admit to my mentees, you know, I got to tell you, that is not one of my strong suits, but I know somebody who is really good at that so I really want you to talk to this person. Cause I don't think you can know it all.

Hillary admitted that her directness and honesty sometimes makes her an inappropriate mentor for a particular subject or issue. Since Hillary is direct in how she mentors, she only mentors others verbally and in person. She has found it more difficult to mentor others "in writing because I think things can get misread... because the give and take and clarity is really important to me."

Hillary went on to say that she does not mentor unless she is asked, though she gravitates towards particular individuals. How she finds these particular individuals will be discussed later in the chapter. Hillary was the only participant that mentioned that she actively seeks mentors outside of the profession, which will also be further explored later in the chapter.

When discussing how she has been mentored as a woman in student affairs, Hillary shared that "most of my mentors have been men. So that was the first thing that came to mind when I was reading your questions. There were women, um, far fewer."

Gloria. Gloria described herself as a white woman and laughed while adding that she is "an old lady." She has been in the student affairs profession for over 30 years and has been actively involved in professional associations for most of those years, specifically NASPA. Gloria, like many other student affairs professionals, shared that she just "fell into student affairs, [but made the] choice to stay in it." She is currently a SSAO at a public, regionally state funded university with a student population under 9,000 students. Gloria also added that it would be important for me to note that she is part of a dual career marriage, "during that time we've mostly been fortunate enough to have jobs at the same location." Gloria has also raised two children during her career.

When first asked how she defines mentorship, Gloria found the question interesting:

> Because we throw the term around a lot. And I think people mean different things by it… I would consider a more classic definition, which would be, um; it's a personal relationship between two people. Um, and through that relationship, one person helps guide the less experienced or the less knowledgeable person in their own personal development. So it's an ongoing relationship, um, that can last many many years and can last a lifetime.

Gloria saw mentoring relationships as sustainable. In an ideal mentoring relationship, Gloria believed that there needs to be a "match between the partners in terms of what their expectations and goals are for the relationship." Gloria went on to further emphasize the role of the mentor as someone who can help the mentee develop:

> What is the mentee looking for in the relationship? What kinds, what kinds of growth and development and learning does that person want? And then, are those things that the mentor… is comfortable working with and um, talking about.

Gloria reflected further on the question of mentorship and how she has been mentored and laughed as she said, "I would say that I've probably never had that relationship." The reason that Gloria chose to mentor other professionals in student affairs, specifically younger professionals, was because "they've got the excitement. They've got the drive. And it just helps me."

Mary. Mary is a SSAO at a public, land grant, and AAU university in the midwestern region of the United States. She has been in the field of student affairs for 37 years and as she did the math she stated, "Whew, that seems like a long time!" Of those 37 years in the field, Mary has been an SSAO for the past 10 years. Mary shared that she is married and has two children. She further predicted that, "probably with a lot of women, you're not going to find that," referring to married women in senior student affairs positions with children.

Mary started by defining mentorship as someone you can look up to:

There is, uh, a mentor that I have discovered through history, maybe a person that I would like to emulate. They may not be alive; it may be a historical person… But I think the primary way I really look at mentorship is a personal experience, a one-on-one relationship with somebody who I consider more experienced, wiser; who can be looked up to and, uh, one can model themselves after.

Ideally, Mary preferred mentoring relationships that include spending time together on a regular basis, which does not always require face-to-face interactions. She viewed this communication as essential when she is being mentored and while she mentors others.

Mary saw mentors as people that can help the mentee think through various situations because they have various experiences with different perspectives to offer:

You need somebody, a mentor, that says "wait, wait, wait, before you get carried away with your righteous indignation, let's think about some other avenues." I think they helped me think through the political ramifications of my decisions. I

think they helped me think through, uh uh, any, um um uh, controversies I might be unintentionally stirring up.

Mary shared how one of her mentors was different from herself. Based off of the Myers-Briggs personality test, Mary and her mentor were opposite in all categories. The facilitator for the test told her, "You know, you and [your mentor] are not ever going to get along." Mary shared this with her mentor and they both laughed because that was far from being true for their relationship.

Rosa. Rosa is currently a SSAO at a large public institution in the western region of the United States. She has been at various types and sizes of institutions throughout her career:

> You know, most of my experience until I came to [this current institution] was really in a private environment, small. I do not define myself by that, or public for that matter. My focus is more on really truly the quality of the academic experience for the student, whether it's a public or a private.

Rosa has been in student affairs since 1980, giving her more than 30 years of experience in the field.

Mentorship, to Rosa, has been about engaging with a student or younger colleague, "or a colleague that's starting out, rather than define it by age." Rosa saw mentorship as a way to push the mentees' boundaries and helping them reach particular professional aspirations and goals. Rosa shared that she has had one, and only one, mentor throughout her career. Rosa was the only participant that has had only one mentor. She currently does not have a mentor and laughed as she stated, "Now I'm too old to be mentored. If anything, I need to be managed!"

Rosa felt that she has an obligation to mentor any chance she can because the student affairs profession is confusing, "there's just a whole lot of details... [and] I find

that when you get to a certain position, the younger people, the younger professionals…

find a great distance between the Vice-Chancellor and what they are doing." Rosa was

prepared to have tougher conversations with younger professionals because of this sense

of obligation. The tougher conversations that Rosa is willing to have usually start to blur

the line between profession and personal. These conversations usually revolved around

family and partner issues.

Rosa posed a question at the end of her interview regarding mentoring and

generational differences:

> Whatever definition I have or whatever the focus I have in the way I do
> mentoring; whether it may be missing the mark depending what the student or
> young professional… there's a bunch of people who have my position who are
> substantially younger. Um, and uh, and that's where I think it would be really
> interesting to see what their definitions and experiences [are].

Rosa was curious to find out whether the way she mentors others is effective for the

audience she is trying to reach. She truly conveyed that she wanted to be the best mentor

for students and younger professionals.

Research Themes

Following the research questions for the study, five themes emerged. These

themes were (a) finding mentors and mentees, (b) aligning values, (c) nudging and

supporting, (d) learning lessons from mentors, and (e) ending and evolving mentoring

relationships. Throughout the participants' careers, mentorship had been impactful and

these five themes describe aspects of those influential relationships.

Finding mentors and mentees. The participants found individuals to mentor

them throughout their careers through various avenues. Mentors that the participants

found were supervisors (past or current), faculty members they once had in graduate

school, SSAOs on their campuses, presidents/chancellors, individuals not in the student

affairs profession, or colleagues/peers. The participants also played the role of mentor for

younger professionals in student affairs. These relationships have been fostered by being

sought out by potential mentees, by formalized mentoring programs through professional

associations, and by acting as a supervisor.

Audre first met her most influential mentor when she was enrolled in a student

affairs graduate program. Her mentor, Norma, co-taught her very first graduate class,

which was an introduction to student affairs. Norma was an assistant Vice-President for

student affairs at the time. Audre was able to do a practicum with Norma for a semester,

further establishing their mentoring relationship.

Supervisors were common sources for mentoring relationships to develop.

However, Hillary does not mentor someone that she supervises because she viewed

mentoring as something that is more personal:

> You're their supervisor and you can help them professionally. Mentoring is a little more personal. People are sharing their flaws or their faults with you and you're pointing them out. I think when you're a supervisor doing that, it's a totally different dynamic…a power dynamic.

The mentors that Audre, Gloria, Mary, and Rosa had throughout their careers have been

supervisors. The one and only mentor that Rosa has ever had in student affairs was a

supervisor she had earlier in her career. In Audre's current position as a SSAO, her

supervisor is the chancellor of the institution. When deciding if she was going to accept

her current position, the chancellor was a deciding factor and she viewed him as a

mentor. Audre pondered, "I've often thought about asking him if he views our

relationship as a mentor-mentee one. I'll have to ask him sometime." Though Audre saw

him as a mentor, she is not exactly sure if he feels as though he is in a mentoring role.

Gloria found that having mentors in the same career field and on the same career trajectory is necessary. She viewed this as essential in order for the mentor to have a deeper understanding of the path the mentee wants to take in her or his own career. In a mid-level student affairs position, Gloria was mentored by her supervisor. He was the vice chancellor for student affairs and hired her after doing an internship in the vice chancellors office. She stayed in that office for twelve years in a variety of roles and he was her mentor throughout that time. In finding mentoring relationships with women in student affairs, Gloria had to be more intentional, "it has been largely facilitated by me, selecting some of the women I really looked up to and asking to spend some time with them. So it was more short-term relationships… [and] much more informal."

Mary described how she was fortunate to have mentors very early on in her career, "I had a dean of students who took me under her wing, and um, she seemed to recognize that I was worth spending time with and helping to sort of navigate how to grow into this job." Hillary also had individuals that would offer themselves up as mentors so she did not have to be as intentional.

Gloria took particular enjoyment in "finding or having them [mentees] find me, young professionals who are, who are really trying to figure out how their life is going to go." As Gloria further reflected on how she finds mentees to develop a relationship with she realized that most have actually found her:

> I think the majority, and maybe all of them have sought me out. Yeah. Which means I'm probably not looking as hard as I should to find out who else out there would benefit from a relationship. Because I think they all generally found me and come to me.

Hillary tended to, "gravitate toward certain people that you see that they're doing good, but they just need some, they could benefit from what you have learned from somebody." In regards to mentoring women in student affairs, Hillary felt a sense of obligation:

> I have a soft spot for women who I think are really committed and dedicated and, I, they are often overlooked… I do look at women in the mid-level more than anything… Helping them become Directors and Vice-Presidents. That's really important to me. I probably spend more time with women on that than men…

I interpreted the unintentional, "*I* [emphasis added], they are often overlooked," as something that has happened to Hillary in her career and a reason why she is committed to helping women progress in student affairs. Hillary admitted that she specifically wanted to help women become Directors and Vice-Presidents because women are being overlooked, even when they are dedicated to the field of student affairs.

A lot of the mentoring relationships described by the participants in the study were developed informally. The participants have participated in various networking opportunities where they are set up with a mentee through a professional association program. Mary shared her experiences with these formal mentoring assignments:

> I am a member of NASPA and I've tried to do the women-mentoring thing. So, you know, I'll sign up and say yes, I'll be happy to meet with a new professional or mid-level professional. And, uh, I did that for about three or four years, and only one of them took… It can't be an assigned relationship. It has to be a relationship that just develops.

Audre has also experienced formal mentoring programs, "I've had a chance to mentor a couple of NUPF [NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program] fellows… One worked, one didn't." Hillary has had potential mentees ask her to mentor them, "someone will come in and say, 'I want you to mentor me,' it feels weird."

Aligning values. Once finding a mentor or mentee, the relationship needed time to develop. In order to do this, the participants shared aspects of the mentoring

relationship that keep them connected with mentors and those that they mentor. Mary believed that, "being available to the individual. From that standpoint of being a mentor, wanting the best for them, wanting them to advance. Wanting them to reach their potential and accomplish their goals." In striving for a particular goal with a mentee, such as accomplishing a professional goal, the mentor and mentee can stay involved in the relationship. Gloria disclosed that her ideal mentoring relationships have had set guidelines for how communication would be used to stay connected:

> How often are we going to talk? How are we going to meet? How are we going to communicate? Are we doing things in writing? Are we doing them over lunch? Are we walking and talking?... So everybody is on the same page.

In finding mentors, there was a connection that brought the two people together. Finding mentors can be a challenge, but once one is identified, it can be difficult to maintain that relationship if there is not a connection keeping the mentor and mentee together. Audre believed that there is "a bit of magic to a mentoring relationship." Beyond this "magic," Audre shared that values need to be congruent between the two individuals, along with a personality match; "ideally, there's that personal connection that bonds you that is sort of beyond being put together as just a mentor and a mentee." Audre had this with her long-standing mentor, Norma. Norma and Audre both valued honesty, transparency, and authenticity:

> You know, there are some people that have a different kind of home life. They might not be the same as they are at work. But Norma is Norma; and I think, Audre is Audre. To me, that is sort of what I mean by being authentic. You are who you are, you are present in all aspects of your life in a way that is genuine to who you are, what you think, what you know, and what you believe. Yeah!

Audre and Norma not only shared values, such as authenticity, but they also shared life experiences. Both women were mothers and shared those experiences with each other in the context of work and home life.

Hillary connects with mentors through values as well. Hillary shares values of transparency, honesty, and straightforwardness with her mentors. She feels that if that is not part of the relationship, she cannot connect with her mentor/mentee. Gloria connected with her most influential mentor through their love of numbers and data. Both Gloria and her mentor had a Master's of Business Administration and "a real love of data and of making sure we understand [the data]." To Audre, both Norma and herself are a lot alike, "she's like me, but to an nth degree! Personality-wise we are similar. Similar approach to life, larger than life. Both extraverted. Both ENFP, Myers-Briggs."

Mary revealed that most of her mentors have extremely different personality types, but have all had the same values and principles that guided their work in student affairs. An example of these guiding values and principles are integrity and treating students as emerging adults that deserve respect in all situations. Rosa also found that she had a different personality from her one and only mentor that she had, "I think we're very very different, from a personality and style perspective… I think I'm warmer and more maternal."

All of the participants mentioned that being student-centered and valuing education (both public and private) was a major connecting piece in the mentors they have had in student affairs. Audre and the mentors she described were all united through their educational values:

> Our student-centeredness, our real commitment to higher education as a
> transformational part of someone's life, not only intellectually but as you think of

> well-being in a wellness wheel. It's all aspects: spiritual, emotional, career, physical health that comes along with a college education. We're all very committed to that.

Gloria and her mentor had a singular focus on "supporting student success and trying to do whatever it took to allow that to happen on a campus and not to get distracted by all the other stuff that's out there." In summary, the five participants viewed themselves as being student-centered and would not being able to connect with another mentor or mentee if that was not a value that was held by the other individual.

Nudging and supporting. The mentoring relationships described by the participants included support offered by the mentor and some challenge as well. Throughout the career of the women I interviewed, they discussed how their mentors challenged them to try new aspects of student affairs or to join a particular professional association. This nudging encouraged many of the participants into jobs and tasks that they may not have sought without this push. When defining mentorship, Rosa sees the role of the mentor as someone who pushes boundaries, "[you] help them push boundaries if they're creating some boundaries in terms of what they want to do… help them get there and look at other opportunities."

When a director position became available at an institution her mentor had worked at, Audre received a call from Norma about the position:

> She called me and said, 'this is you, you need to do this.' She backed me the whole way. When the Vice-President was choosing between me and another candidate she was the one who, I think, tipped it for me.

Norma also supported Audre as she was finishing her doctorate:

> Again, somebody who really helped me get my doctorate done. Cause… I got cancer in the middle. I was demoralized by that… Sometimes she would nag and sometimes cry with me and hold my hand and say, 'you can do it.' That was

really big. She was just really supportive and a great listener. Someone who I could take problems to and, you know, help me unpack.

Audre spoke of Norma frequently and with great enthusiasm. Norma has been a huge part of Audre's career as a mentor, supporting and challenging her when it was appropriate and necessary. Rosa found that when a mentor and mentee have made a deeper connection the challenge and support become attuned to what is best for the mentee:

> The mentor won't then ask you or suggest things that you're really not necessarily suited for. There is an important familiarity that is worthwhile building on… They [my mentors] were both supportive and again challenging. They would challenge me and would push me to rethink, uh, the point of view and that was very helpful.

> Hillary appreciated when her mentors challenged her because she was open to

critique. She was especially thankful when a mentor did this without her having to ask for advice. Hillary explained:

> I mean, we all have different people in our lives. We have 'yes' people… We have people that irritate the hell out of us but sometimes they speak the truth. I think the mentor needs to be a hybrid of all those.

Pushing and nudging were aspects of mentoring relationships that Hillary found to be the most helpful. She was pushed by a mentor:

> I think, for me, it was helpful to have someone say, 'yes, you should apply for that job,' or 'yes, you should chair that committee, don't be on the committee, ask to chair [it]… 'Here I found you the perfect job, I'm going to nominate you for it and we're going to practice your interviews.

These mentors helped nudge Hillary into positions she had never considered for herself. When she was becoming comfortable in a position, her mentors would nudge her to think about her next career step. One particular mentor encouraged her to apply for her first student affairs position in Greek Life. Without that nudge, she emphasized, "If he hadn't done that, I wouldn't have this career." This same mentor also encouraged her to try

different departments once she had been in Greek Life for a while, "they nudge you up a little bit more and up a little bit more, the mentoring was about giving me opportunities."

Gloria's mentors have also supported and challenged her by giving her new opportunities in the field of student affairs:

> He came to me and wanted me to be the director of the health center and straighten things out. I was like, whoa, I don't know anything about a health center! It gave me the opportunity to grow professionally. I ran the student health center for two years. I came out of there with, I mean, I learned huge important things from that. That helps me to this day! He provided opportunities. He provided challenges. He provided support, mentoring, professional development.

As Gloria works with her own mentees, she tries to find ways to challenge them, like she has been challenged throughout her career. When meeting with one mentee, he shared that he was starting to think about his next career move:

> I said, if you had to pick one area, skills, or experience that you'd like to have more of but haven't had an opportunity to do yet, what would that be? He immediately said assessment. I said, well, okay, how would you like to work with our assessment coordinator in student affairs?

Since her mentors gave Gloria opportunities throughout her career, she tried to do that for the individuals she mentors. Mary was also fortunate to have someone who provided professional opportunities. She described her dean of students as someone who "took her under her wing." Mary recalled a time when another staff member asked her why she was assigned particular tasks and given extra opportunities, "I vividly remember one coordinator asking me, 'why do you get to do that?' I said, oh cause the dean likes me. I was just teasing, but I guess that's probably what it was." Mentors have also helped support Mary when she did not feel like she was being recognized:

> A lot of student affairs professionals get really burnt out and disenchanted because they feel like they don't get enough credit and are valued as part of the campus. My mentors have helped me understand that there are some intrinsic

rewards and maybe they've helped me understand that the extrinsic rewards aren't going to come.

Mentors supported and challenged the participants to try new aspects of student affairs, leading them on a path that ultimately led to their current roles as SSAO.

Learning lessons from mentors. Through the relationships that were developed by the participants and their mentors, lessons were learned and applied to their own professional practice. The opportunities that Gloria's mentor provided stayed with her for the rest of her career, "he took a graduate student that he thought had potential and provided me with opportunities and challenges and support to develop into the role that I've played ever since as a senior student affairs officer." The mentoring moments that happened early in Gloria's career still influence her decisions as a SSAO currently:

> That really set the tone for a lifetime of personal fulfillment and a rewarding career… That is one of my goals when I move out of this chair, is to make sure there are a whole bunch of people better and smarter than I am waiting to move into it.

Gloria continued to share the lessons that she has learned with others because she wanted others to have the knowledge that she has gained from her own mentors.

Audre learned a valuable lesson from one of her mentors. A Vice-President of student affairs inspired Audre through his approach to leadership:

> He was able to see the world in such a way. His approach was to help people make things happen. Nothing made him happier than to put great people in the roles and get the heck out of their way. Now, this is where I learned how to not micromanage.

Hillary was taught "the basics that I've never forgotten" by her mentors. Some of those basics included: building alliances and coalitions, networking at conferences, and looking beyond the scope of the office/department in which she worked. Her mentors wanted her to go beyond how Greek Life worked with students to observing how other offices

interacted with and served students. Hillary tries to pass on these lessons to her own

mentees:

> I say, I learned this from somebody and I'm going to pass it on to you…
> Sometimes I don't remember who taught it to me, but I know I didn't come up
> with it on my own. I try to do a lot of that and acknowledge somebody taught me
> this and I'm passing it on to you.

One particular mentor taught Hillary to know her value as a professional. In discussing

salary negotiations with a mentor, he advised Hillary to ask for a high salary because she

was worth a high salary. Mary also continued to apply the lessons that she was taught by

her mentors. Her mentors helped her better understand student affairs and "the political,

uh, milieu" she found herself in, since that was something that was not covered in

graduate school. The principles that Rosa's mentor shared with her continues to influence

her work:

> I think I lived by those principles for some 30-some years, you know. The kind of
> lessons that I learned with him… I'm carrying those lessons with him today. I can
> hear myself channeling him when I talk to my people.

> Mentors were also influential in helping the participants figure out their next

career step. Mary had mentors that would talk to her about getting a PhD. Audre also had

a mentor that discussed the importance of her obtaining a PhD, "I did the PhD on his

advice, not the EdD." Rosa's mentor would work with her on how to get ready for her

next step and the competencies she would need to master in order to get to that step.

> There were also some underlying and less positive lessons that were learned

through mentoring relationships. Audre learned through her mentor, Norma, what it

meant to be a woman in student affairs:

> Imagine the world Norma lived in. Which was, she was truly a pioneer. By the
> time I rolled in, things were *way* [emphasis added] better! But there were many
> meetings in my early career where I was the only woman. I was, quite frankly,

very aware that I was a token. And you know, I kind of had to embrace that at some point. You're going to experience that less… I'd be much more apt to share those with you because it doesn't mean you won't experience those feelings at all.

Audre took a moment, a mentoring-type moment, to share with me something that I may encounter based off of her own experience in the field of student affairs. Audre saw a lot of women in support roles on campus, but not necessarily in lead roles, "and there's a message there when you're an up and coming, you know, all the leaders are men." Norma introduced Audre to the professional association, NASPA, early in her career.. At NASPA Audre saw women in leadership roles:

> If I hadn't done NASPA I don't know how I could have, cause I didn't see it on my campus. I think the messages are very clear that, uh, this is a space for you and this isn't a space for you.

These messages continued as there are still fewer women, people of color, and other underrepresented populations in student affairs leadership roles.

Audre and her mentor Norma, shared life experiences outside of the professional realm. Audre was able to see that Norma was a mother and a professional. Gloria specifically sought out women that were professionals and mothers. She was concerned how men would view her:

> It was pretty focused on being female in this world we live in. How do I become a mom and continue to have career aspirations? How do I work with a cabinet that is all male when I have, you know, when I was a mom? When I became vice president, I had a child that was two and one that was five and I did have an all male cabinet. I'm not sure if they're taking me seriously because of this kid thing over here or whatever.

This was not an uncommon experience in mentoring relationships. Many shared that women will come to them to discuss being a woman in student affairs or being a mother with career goals. Women specifically asked Gloria about partners, children, and aging parents. Gloria shared that with men the conversation has sometimes revolved around

these topics, "but with women it's almost always part of the relationship." Mary has also

found that women asked her more frequently about being a student affairs professional

and a mother: "Honestly, and I guess this could sound sexist, but I think young men just

think it's going to happen. That they're going to know how to do it [work-life balance]."

> As a mentor, Mary has particular lessons that she shares with young women:

> When I work with young women, in particular, because like it or not, we tend to be caregivers for our families. I have to say, 'hey, you know, what are your real priorities?' Because if you're not going to, if this is going to be a problem and you need to go home at 5:00, forget it! You'll reach your, uh, the top of the line pretty fast. You'll reach as far as you're going to go pretty fast.

Mary further highlighted how student affairs can be difficult for women trying to balance

work and a family: "people don't understand that you work hard. You work long hours.

You work weekend. You work nights. Um, you take phone calls all the time."

Ending and evolving mentoring relationships. One particular theme that

consistently came up with the participants was when mentoring relationships ended or

evolved. As they progressed throughout their careers, mentors remained constant, the

relationship dynamic changed, or relationships ended. When I asked Audre the final

question of the interview, if there was anything else she wanted to share about mentoring

that we had not yet covered, she responded:

> Hmm, well I think one of the challenges I haven't talked about are situations where somebody says that you're their mentor, but you're not feeling it. Haha, those have been difficult to traverse.

Audre spoke frequently about mentoring relationships being built on personal connection

and aligned values. She recalled two times where she did not feel that connection with

potential mentees. Audre did have a conversation with one of the individuals and tried to

"help that person strategize on how to find someone to [mentor them], but they actually

had a bunch of mentors so it was just weird." With the other potential mentee that she did

not feel connected to, Audre found ending the relationship challenging:

> I just don't want to wound them. You know. I just can't do it. Can't do it… Not
> that the one I could tell that I wanted to wound, but just that I was in a position
> that I felt more comfortable at least, explaining how I felt with this idea of a
> personal connection and so forth.

Hillary valued directness and honesty with her mentees, which lead to the end of a

mentoring relationship she once had. Her mentee, at the time, came to her looking for

feedback after his first year at the institution:

> You know, I thought about it and started with all the positive things. Then I gave
> him some feedback and he argued with me about it… I thought, okay, I'm done.
> After the third time around to try to give him examples I just, in my brain, I went
> like this [put her hands up in the air, palms facing out]. I'm done. I'm pretty damn
> smart and I could've given [him] a lot of useful information… He just wanted to
> hear how great he was. That really saddens me.

Hillary talked to this individual's supervisor and explained that she would no longer

mentor him. She found that he was not looking to be mentored; instead, he wanted to be

validated for his accomplishments. When giving feedback, Hillary does not expect it to

be applied in all circumstances, "he could take it in and do nothing with it. I don't know,

that's his prerogative. Plenty of people have done that, including me!"

When mentoring relationships ended, it was not always by choice. Mary had a

mentor, the one mentioned previously with the opposite Myers-Briggs personality score,

who passed away. She even did his eulogy and stayed connected with him up until that

time. Sometimes mentoring relationships ended because the participant moved to a new

higher education institution or new department and was no longer in close proximity to

their mentor and lost touch with them, "my mentors I was involved with very early in my

career, I still have contact with, for the women. For the men, probably they mentored me

as I moved under their domain." Mary had also lost touch with her own mentees because they have moved on in their career and she no longer saw them as often. Sometimes she would get an email or phone call and hear from them. Audre recently connected with a previous employer/mentor. She went over to her previous institution to see how things were going and to talk about what has changed for him and how her new position at her current institution.

Many of the participants shared that they have had mentoring relationships that have extended the length of their entire career. Hillary still regularly reconnects with mentors that she has had for more than 30 years. Hillary has found that some mentoring relationships can "sit cold for a year" but once the mentor and mentee are reconnected, the mentoring relationship continues. Gloria has maintained a mentoring relationship with her previous supervisor for close to 20 years; "over time I left and am still pretty connected to him, especially when I'm facing a career or professional challenge." Audre reconnected with her mentor, Norma, and actually had a chance to work with her at the same institution at the mid-level. She still calls Norma to talk about her work:

> She's, you know, ah, she's the one I call when I get in a pickle. I'll probably call her tonight with the day I've had… She's helped me unpack some pretty tough personnel stuff, um. Not just that, just problems. Not the stuff that's uh, not the budget stuff and some of the things that are more fact based; but the things that cause you tot think that there are human beings involved.

Audre still turns to her mentor for guidance and since they have been invested in their relationship for Audre's entire career, their relationship has evolved.

Rosa was unique in only having one mentor throughout her career. The relationship she had with her mentor evolved as she moved on and up in the profession:

> I continued to reach out to him and um, and explore, uh, things and situations, positions. In other words, it went in a different mode. But the mentoring

relationship remained. And it became more; it becomes more like a colleague. It should become a colleague. The mentor should be able to both, should be available to maintain the mentoring relationship. And should be ready to allow it to evolve… You need to make sure they should become your colleague.

As mentoring relationships evolved for many of the participants, they have found that instead of mentors, they now have colleagues and peers that they receive advice from and advise. Rosa shared that she does not have mentors anymore, "what I do have is colleagues, where, you know, you're really checking in with each other on occasion." Mentoring-type relationships that Rosa described, involved more of a give and take among peers, sharing what is happening on each other's campuses and how they are handling particular situations:

> I think what you have is mentoring snip-its, but not necessarily an ongoing mentoring relationship. Because when you're asking for a point of view, you're essentially, asking for guidance. If your mentor is your guide, then you have that for the moment. It's a different, a way more equal relationship.

Gloria could not identify a mentor that she has in her current role as a SSAO, "I certainly have professional colleagues that I will rely on when I'm wanting to talk something through or, you know, but an actual mentor? I just don't [have one]." Hillary did not have mentors in her current work environment either. Many of the mentors she did have are now retired, "the retired ones are great, they have the time!" Mary also viewed individuals that could be considered mentors as peers:

> At this level, they tend to be people who are peers. Like I said, I'm not an assistant director talking to a director. I'm a Vice-Chancellor talking to another Vice-Chancellor or another Vice-President… Mostly, at this level, it's peers.

There was consensus among the participants that the mentoring relationship should evolve as both the mentor and mentee build upon the relationship and become more like colleagues and peers.

Conclusion

The five themes that emerged in the analysis of the data illustrated how mentoring relationships influenced careers in student affairs. The next chapter will connect the research presented in the literature review in order to make recommendations for future research and best practices based on what was shared by the participants. Mentoring has been influential in the lives of the women interviewed and should be continued intentionally in student affairs to better prepare underrepresented groups for what they may face in the field and in their own careers.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

The final chapter of this study focuses on the five thematic experiences in

mentoring, connecting the themes to the literature presented in Chapter 2. The research

conducted utilized a qualitative, semi-structured interview protocol to investigate

mentoring relationships that women senior student affairs officers (SSAOs) have

developed throughout their careers.

Research in this area is necessary to explore best mentoring practices for

underrepresented groups in majority dominated career fields. Student affairs is an

emerging profession, but still a profession with systemic equity issues. The slowed

advancement of women obtaining higher administrative positions is troubling. Since the

passage of Title IX:

> The decline of deans of women and women's athletic directors in higher
> education… is also influenced by other factors. The demands of balancing family
> responsibilities…. Socially constructed barriers such as the "old boy's network"
> also offer important explanations for the underrepresentation of women leaders in
> higher education today. (Hoffman, 2011, p. 43).

Women still only make up 26 percent of institutional presidents (American Council on

Education, 2012). Women are still underrepresented in SSAO positions. At doctorate-

granting institutions, only 38.5 percent of SSOAs are women. Women SSAOs make up

36.7 percent and 38.5 percent of leadership at master's- and baccalaureate- granting

institutions (Hoffman, 2011). In student affairs, "the significant presence of women on

campus is recognizable most among mid-level administrators" (Yakaboski & Donahoo,

2011, p. 270).

The women in this study were all in SSAO positions, with some having been in those positions for over a decade. The advancement of their career was attributed to the mentoring they had received early in their career and while in mid-level positions. The mentors they found helped place them on a particular career trajectory and encouraged them to gain more competency in the field by providing opportunities to grow professionally.

Summary of Findings

The guiding research questions of the study aimed to explore the influential mentoring relationships that women in SSAO positions have had throughout their careers. Using a framework of psychosocial stages and four phases of mentoring, the following questions were examined:

- How are women mentored throughout their careers in student affairs?
- How do women SSAOs mentor others in the student affairs profession?

At the beginning of the research, I expected to find out more about the mentors that the various participants had throughout their careers and the aspects of those relationships that helped them achieve the leadership position they currently held. However, the semi-structured qualitative interviews with the five participants went further in-depth into mentoring relationships. I was able to learn more about the various mentors and attributes of those relationships and how these relationships and lessons continue to be passed down to new mentees that the participants mentor.

The findings of the study presented in Chapter 4 were organized into five central themes related to mentoring. Understanding how mentoring relationships were established and maintained for the participants provides implications on how mentoring

relationships have the potential to set women up for success in reaching senior leadership positions in student affairs. The main points covered in this chapter include how the themes relate to the literature, implications from this study for future practice (in my own practice as a new professional and systemically), and recommendations on how mentoring relationships can be utilized to advance underrepresented groups in student affairs.

Summary of Themes and Links to Literature

Five themes emerged from the research regarding mentoring relationships that the participants have had throughout their careers. Audre, Hillary, Gloria, Mary, and Rosa discussed mentors they have had and how they currently mentor others, the importance of aligned values, how being nudged and supported helped them advance, lessons they had learned from their mentors (and how they pass on those lessons to mentees), and how mentoring relationships have evolved or ended.

Finding mentors and mentees. Kram's (1983) first mentoring phase is known as the initiation phase. During this phase, a mentor has been identified. Senior managers see mentees as someone with potential, and coachable (Kram, 1983). Gloria's mentor saw potential in her when she was a graduate student and their mentoring relationship developed after that point. Gloria's mentoring relationship developed informally, without a set structure in place. There are mentoring programs available through higher education professional associations, such as NASPA, ACPA, and AAUW. The participants saw value in these programs and networking events, though sometimes the relationships felt forced and often did not move past the initiation phase.

Finding a role model in student affairs is not impossible because of various networking opportunities, both formal and informal. Only one of the participants, Rosa, had just one mentor throughout her career. The other four participants each mentioned more than one mentor that they found while working in student affairs. Interestingly, many of the mentors that were mentioned were men in higher leadership roles, either as supervisors, Vice-Chancellors/presidents, or presidents. These men mentored the participants as they progressed throughout their careers. Since there are more men in higher leadership roles at higher education institutions, it is not surprising that the participants had more men mentoring them throughout their careers.

Four out of the five women in this study identified racially as white. Blackhurst (2000) found that women of color did not benefit from mentoring in the same ways as white women. Women of color without mentors reported higher role ambiguity and sex discrimination than white women with mentors (Blackhurst, 2000). Blackhurst (2000) indicated that, "although mentoring may benefit White women to a greater extent, the absence of a mentor may be particularly disadvantageous for women of color" (p. 582). Rosa did not identify as white in this study and was also the only participant that disclosed that she had one, and only one, mentor throughout her career.

Finding women in SSAO positions that they could start a mentoring relationship with was more difficult for the participants. Women mentors were sought out with more intentionality because the participants wanted to have a woman mentor them. Audre saw a lot of women in support roles, but not in leadership roles. Gloria specifically selected women mentors that she looked up to and is intentional in finding mentees that could learn from her own experiences. Since there are fewer women in leadership positions at

higher education institutions, intentionality is critical for women entering the profession. Women are entering the field at higher rates than men, but remain stagnant in mid-level positions (Jones & Kominves, 2001). Through mentoring relationships, the participants were able to advance from mid-level positions to their current SSAO positions.

Hillary gravitated towards women that she viewed as committed and dedicated to student affairs. She felt obligated to help these women, stuck in mid-level positions, become Directors and Vice-Presidents. Hillary spent more time mentoring women in mid-level positions than men. As she discussed the importance of helping women in mid-level positions advance, she unintentionally stated, "I, they are often overlooked." This slip of placing herself into the conversation about being overlooked suggested to me that she has felt overlooked and that is why she felt so strongly about helping other women advance in the field.

Aligning values. In order to move past the initiation phase described by Kram (1983), the participants described the importance of shared values between the mentor and mentee. During the initiation phase, the values of both individuals are being shared, moving the relationship into the cultivation phase. During this time, mentors and mentees are further getting to know one another committed to continuing the relationship.

To maintain mentoring relationships, the participants described the values that they needed to share with their mentor or mentee. The participants all valued higher education and student-centered philosophies and shared these values with those they had mentoring relationships with. This philosophy mirrors that of the American Council on Education. In 1937, the American Council on Education described student personnel

work as development of the whole student (American Council on Education Studies, 1937).

Nudging and supporting. Participants gave examples of how their mentors provided them support, while also challenging them with new opportunities in the profession or by nudging them to try a new position or administrative task. This nudging and supporting also occurs during the cultivation phase. Kram (1983) found that during the cultivation phase, the mentor provides the protégé with challenging work along with support in guiding and modeling best practices for the mentee. I think that one reason why there has been a lack of women in leadership positions in student affairs is because women have not had the nudging and support structure from mentors (American Council on Education, 2012; Hoffman, 2011). The following section will discuss lessons learned from mentors that further elaborate on a lack of nudging and support of women in the student affairs profession.

Learning lessons from mentors. The lessons learned from mentors are still guiding how the participants practice student affairs in their current positions as SSAOs. During Kram's (1983) second phase, the cultivation phase, the mentor is transmitting skills and knowledge to the protégé. The experiences and knowledge being passed down to the mentee continue to guide future practice. The values and skills that are transmitted sculpt the next generation of workers (Kram, 1983). This is true for the student affairs profession. The messages that are being passed down from mentor to mentee trickle down to professionals in the field today. Many of the lessons learned from mentors were positive and uplifting; however, there were some messages that were disconcerting.

Mary's assertion about women in the profession needing to find their priorities (regarding work-life balance) did not sit well with me because these are messages that I have heard from student affairs professionals and from a faculty member in my graduate program. As I have read and re-read the quote, I can only infer that Mary received these messages throughout her career because she did share with me that she is a mom. Mary's tone was cold as she was describing how she mentors young women in the profession, specifically on work-life balance and priorities.

Audre learned lessons through her mentor and other professionals about how she was valued as a professional in student affairs. She told me that she was well-aware that she was a token during her career, especially in the beginning. She also noticed where women were present and where they were not present at the institution. There were times when she was the only women in a meeting and was asked to give her opinion on how women would react to a particular proposal. The message she received through this is that women did not belong and that she was the exception. Through the lessons that the participants have picked up throughout their career, many of those messages are being passed down. Some of the messages need to change in order for student affairs to become a gender inclusive and equitable profession.

Ending and evolving mentoring relationships. Kram (1983) described four distinct phases of mentoring relationships. The final phase is the redefinition phase. During this time, the mentor and mentee structure becomes less hierarchal. The relationship can continue, but evolves into something that resembles more of a friendship. The relationship may also end at this time. Audre and Hillary found themselves in situations where mentoring relationships needed to end because the values of the mentor

and mentee did not align. In choosing to end the mentoring relationships, Audre and Hillary knew that the relationship no longer beneficial for those involved in the mentoring relationship.

Some mentoring relationships ended because the mentor and mentee lost touch over time. Being in close proximity to each other helps the relationship continue to the redefinition phase. The participants in the study all experienced mentoring relationships evolving over time. Sometimes these relationships evolved, even when the mentor and mentee were no longer at the same institution. Audre, Hillary, Gloria, Mary, and Rosa all still have a mentor or mentors that they keep in contact with since the start of their careers in student affairs. The mentors still continue to support the participants in their current positions. Concurrent with Kram's (1983) description of the redefinition phase, the participants seemed to have removed their mentor from the pedestal they were first placed on during the initiation phase. The mentors are now peers, but still highly respected by the former mentee.

Kram's (1983) phases of mentoring apply traditional mentoring to emerging mentoring relationships. However, many of the participants still find new individuals to act as their mentors outside of the traditional realm. In their current SSAO positions, the participants described their more recently developed mentoring relationships as less hierarchal and more equal. Peers and colleagues are where mentoring relationships are developed. Co-mentoring is the model that is now utilized when creating mentoring relationships for women SSAOs. McGuire and Reger (2003) found that co-mentoring can be extremely beneficial for underrepresented groups. Since women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions in student affairs, co-mentoring has become more

significant in the lives of the participants. Characteristics of co-mentoring are described by participants as they no longer see themselves as having mentors, but instead use terms like "peers" or "colleagues" to describe the individuals that help guide them. A hierarchy no longer exists since the participants reach out to individuals who are in similar leadership roles at higher education institutions.

Implication of the Current Study for Future Practice

Mentoring was viewed as critical for all the participants in progressing their own careers. Specifically, the mentoring relationship described by the participants mirrored traditional mentoring models. Traditional mentoring is characterized by the mentor being more experienced in the career field and acting as a teacher for the protégé (Schmidt & Wolfe, 2009). The relationship is hierarchal with one individual acting as mentor and another individual acting as protégé or mentee (Kram, 1983). These traditional mentoring relationships were described by participants as they reflected on mentors they had had during their entry- and mid- level student affairs positions. As the participants moved into SSAO positions, traditional mentoring was not as common or even necessary. Co-mentoring started to occur.

Co-mentoring is a non-hierarchal relationship where there is no defined mentor or mentee; instead both individuals in the mentoring relationship have experiences that are valuable to share with each other (McGuire & Reger, 2003). Co-mentoring relationships can be more supportive for underrepresented groups. Since there are, statistically, fewer women in SSAO positions, co-mentoring can be utilized to provide support for underrepresented student affairs professionals. As I look to my own career in student affairs, I may find it difficult to find women in SSAO positions to connect with as a

mentor, either because there are few available at the institution or because our values do not align. In order to attain professional support, I may find it useful to turn to colleagues.

Recommendations for Future Research

Yakaboski and Donahoo (2011) argue that the lack of research focusing on women in student affairs administration is, "one way that this population continues to be underrepresented and pushed to the periphery within the higher education community" (p. 271). Recommendations for future research on the advancement of women in student affairs are crucial to bridge the gap that has been created by systemic institutional structures. Further, additional research should focus on women of color in student affairs administrative positions. Four of the five women in this study identified racially as white, with one woman not disclosing her race. The intersection of gender and race was not explored intentionally in this study and warrants further dialogue.

The women in this study did not mention colleagues or peers as mentors until much later in their careers, particularly in their current SSAO positions. Blackhurst (2000) found that only one-third of the women surveyed had mentors. The construct of traditional mentoring needs to be studied further for underrepresented populations in student affairs. Co-mentoring relationships were beneficial to the participants in their current positions; however, would they have benefitted from co-mentors earlier in their careers? More specifically, from co-mentors that were also women in the field of student affairs?

Throughout my own student affairs graduate program, I have had characteristics of a co-mentoring relationship with another woman in the program. Currently, the Assistant Vice-Chancellor of Student Affairs, Vice-Chancellor of Students Affairs,

Chancellor of the institution, Board of Regents, and President of the university system are all offices held by men. There are many women in entry- and mid- level positions at the institution, but like many other institutions, women in student affairs are finding it difficult to move past the mid-level (Jones & Kominves, 2001). Sader (2011) found that peer-to-peer support groups were critical for graduate student success. However, if left to students to form, "it is more likely that women and other minority groups are left out" (Sader, 2011, p. 136). How can student affairs graduate programs facilitate co-mentoring practices for underrepresented groups to provide support that is not readily available at institutions?

Final Thoughts

The topic of women in student affairs generated from my first NASPA IV-West Regional Conference in 2012. As a graduate student, I was excited to hear from other professionals and to see women gaining recognition in the field through their research and awards. Unfortunately, this excitement was short-lived as I saw many women in the crowd applauding all the men that received the graduate "Rising Star" award. More than half of the recipients receiving this award were men. The award was designed to recognize graduate students who were predicted to be great leaders in student affairs. The underrepresentation of women discouraged me.

As I look at the original cohort of graduate student that entered my graduate program in the fall of 2012, there were nine women and eight men. As of the spring semester of 2014, the semester we graduate, one woman has dropped out of the program, three men have obtained full-time employment, and one woman is employed full-time. Each of the four cohort members that are employed full-time started their full-time

positions without graduating from the program. I find it alarming that there was a lack of support for women in my student affairs graduate programs. I also find it troubling that out of the four cohort members to receive full-time employment, only one is a woman.

As a graduate student in a student affairs graduate program, I have had opportunities to be mentored by staff and faculty. Previously, I noted that there are no women SSAO at my institution. The lack of women in leadership roles was apparent to me when I first started the program. I noticed how I was mentored by a male faculty member was different than how he mentored men in the program. For example, when I told him that anticipated being a Vice-President of Student Affairs at some point in my career, he told me that I was being a little too ambitious. As I shared this experience with another classmate, a man, he said that the same faculty member encouraged him to not set his sights too low and strive to be a Vice-President someday. From my experience I think there is a lack of mentoring women in graduate programs as men are being nudged to higher roles, while women are dropping out or not being nudged or supported at the same rate as men. I would like to for readers to reflect upon how they have been mentored and how mentoring can be better utilized for advancing women and other underrepresented populations in the field of student affairs.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Participant Informed Consent Form
IRB Approval #: 20131013830EX

Title: Mentorship of Women in Student Affairs: A Qualitative Analysis From Entry to Senior Level Positions

Purpose:

The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore the experiences of women in senior student affairs officer positions at various institutions in the United States. The research is significant in that it is seeking to understand the experiences of women as they are mentored and mentor others in the student affairs profession.

Procedures:

You will be asked to participate in individual interviews. These individual interviews will be conducted using online technology (e.g. Skype). Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Individual interviews will last approximately 60 – 90 minutes and you may be asked to schedule follow-up interviews. The researcher will contact you to check the accuracy of the data collection and analysis process. Your participation in that process will take approximately 30 – 90 minutes.

Benefits:

The findings of the research will be used to report the experiences related to mentorship of women in the student affairs profession. However, there are no direct benefits or risks to you or others involved in this project.

Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no known risks that you may experience.

Confidentiality:

All records, transcripts, and audio files will be stored on a password protected computer that only the researcher will have access to during the course of the research project. Audio recordings will be erased after data analysis is completed and the research report is written. A pseudonym will be assigned by the researcher to protect your identity. Efforts will be made to protect your confidentiality by limiting the use of identifiable data. The institution you are employed with will not be identified by name, but by the enrollment size and region in which it is located.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask questions concerning this research project by contacting me directly or my thesis advisor, Dr. Deb Mullen at ███████████. If you would like to speak with

someone else, please contact the Research Compliance Services Office at ██████████ or ████████.

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researcher, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive penalty.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Participant:

_____ **Signature of Research Participant**

Date

Name and Phone Number of Primary Investigator:

Ashley Svare Tenney
Primary Investigator
██████████ or ████████

Appendix B

Recruitment Emails

Recruitment Email – Known Participant:

Dear Senior Student Affairs Officer,
I am conducting a qualitative research analysis on mentorship. The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore the experiences of women in senior student affairs officer positions at various institutions in the United States. The research is significant in that it is seeking to understand the experiences of women as they are mentored and mentor others in the student affairs profession. The findings of this research will be reported in a master's thesis.

Individual interviews will last approximately 30 - 90 minutes with follow up interviews as needed. I will also contact you to check the accuracy of the data collection and analysis process. Your participation in that process will take approximately 30 - 90 minutes.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me directly at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ by [date] or my thesis advisor, Dr. Deb Mullen at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. Further instructions will follow in a separate email. There are no known risks involved in this research.
If you have any questions, please let me know.

Ashley Svare Tenney, Primary Investigator

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Recruitment Email – Snowball Sample Nomination:

Dear Senior Student Affairs Officer,
I am conducting a qualitative research analysis on mentorship. You were nominated by [name of nominator] as a potential participant in my research study. After talking with [name of nominator], I believe that you would be an excellent participant in my research.

The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore the experiences of women in senior student affairs officer positions at various institutions in the United States. The research is significant in that it is seeking to understand the experiences of women as they are mentored and mentor others in the student affairs profession. The findings of this research will be reported in a master's thesis.

Individual interviews will last approximately 30 - 90 minutes with follow up interviews as needed. I will also contact you to check the accuracy of the data collection and analysis process. Your participation in that process will take approximately 30 - 90 minutes.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me directly at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ by [date] or my thesis advisor, Dr. Deb Mullen at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

Further instructions will follow in a separate email. There are no known risks involved in this research.
If you have any questions, please let me know.

Ashley Svare Tenney, Primary Investigator
████████████

Follow-up/Reminder Message:

Greetings [Name]:
You volunteered to participate in an assessment project regarding the experiences of women as they are mentored and mentor others in the student affairs profession. You are scheduled take part in an individual interview on [date] at [time]. The interview will be conducted via video chat (i.e. Skype).
If you have any questions, please contact me:

Ashley Svare Tenney, Primary Investigator
████████████
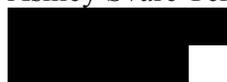
Appendix C

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

1. How do you define mentorship?

2. Describe your ideal mentoring relationship.

3. How have you been mentored as a woman in student affairs?

4. Describe mentor(s) you had in your first student affairs position?

5. Describe mentor(s) you had in a mid-level position.

6. How were your mentor(s) similar or different from yourself?

7. Describe mentors you currently have in your current student affairs position.

8. How do you mentor others?

9. How do you mentor women in student affairs?

10. How have these mentoring relationships influenced your student affairs career?

11. Is there anything else you would like me to know about your mentoring

    experiences?