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Career Self-Management and Career Capital of Mid-Level Administrators in Higher Education Who Previously Served as Professional Academic Advisors

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the prerequisites for career advancement helps to keep employees motivated and engaged. However, in the higher education (H.E.) workplace, where formalized career ladders are sparse and ambiguous for staff personnel - especially those in professional academic advising - employees who are interested in career advancement into mid-level administration (MLA) are often left to maneuver the professional, political, and social landscape unescorted. Some manage to find their way just fine, while others become frustrated or stagnant or decide to leave academia entirely. For those who create their own path and find their way to mid-level administration, what is their secret?

The purpose of this study was to learn about the career self-management behaviors of MLAs who formerly served as professional academic advisors (PAAs) and the career capital they believe was helpful for advancement into mid-level administration. This study investigated why participants believed they were successful in attaining their positions without formalized career paths into administration from academic advising and endeavored to increase the awareness of the academic advising community about an appropriate career self-management agenda for those that desire administrative positions in H. E.

This study referred to Protean Career Theory and Career Capital as its theoretical framework. A qualitative research approach and a constructivist grounded theory data analysis method were used to facilitate an examination of actions, intentions, and processes and the meaning that the fifteen participants assigned to each concept. Three primary themes were identified that facilitated an understanding of the career experiences of the participants. Comprehending Who They Are, The Career Challenges they Overcame, and The Career

Strategies they Employed provided useful insight into their career self-management tactics, and offered some possible explanations for the career advancement they experienced.

The findings are discussed within the context of the research questions and through the lens of the current literature. A model depicting the career self-management process and how it appeared to function in the lives of the participants was explained. A disclosure of the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research and recommendations for PAAs, Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals completed the research report.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family – past, present, and future.

To Teran Cole, Norvelle Gross, Escar and Tressie Benson, and Julian and Birteal Benson - the patriarchs and matriarchs who have passed on and who deposited so much into my life. I dedicate this project to you as evidence that your labor and sacrifice was not in vain. I am grateful for the impact you have had on me and the legacy of achievement you left behind.

To my parents, Eddie and the late Edrene Cole, and my husband, Henry M. Smith, Jr., I dedicate this work to you as joint heirs of the fruit of this accomplishment. I could not have done it without your support.

To my children, Xavier and Sterling Smith, my niece, Kamaree Cole, and my nephews, Brandon, Alex, and Julian Mitchell, and Courtland Smith, I dedicate this effort to you as a deposit into the great potential yet to be discovered in each of you.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Chronicle Forum in the April 20, 2008 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* hosted a question about the administrative career paths available for individuals working in academic advising. The inquirer posted a series of questions about the administrative options that were available in academia after serving as an academic advisor. Implicit in the inquirer's earnest post was a tone of confusion as he or she weighed the consequences of his or her choices and tried to make an informed decision. Seemingly, this inquirer was not alone in his or her quest for information. This online conversation has been read nearly 7,500 times in the last four years, which indicates a steady interest in understanding how one moves from professional academic advising to administration in higher education (H.E.).

Understanding the prerequisites for career advancement helps to keep employees motivated and engaged (Branham, 2005; Zhao & Zhou, 2008). Aspirant workers, those who desire career advancement and promotion, are very interested in identifying the competencies, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes that will set them apart from other applicants and get them on an upward-bound career ladder. However, in the higher education (H.E.) workplace, where formalized career ladders are sparse and ambiguous for staff personnel (Biddix, 2011; Davis, 2008), employees who are interested in career advancement are often left to maneuver the professional, political, and social landscape unescorted. Some manage to find their way just fine, while others become frustrated or stagnant or decide to leave academia entirely (Brown, 1987; Evans, 1988; Lorden, 1998).

In professional academic advising, few career ladders and career advancement opportunities exist within the advising department. In many cases, aspirant advisors who are interested in career advancement into mid-level administration must leave advising to reach their goals (Iten & Matheny, 2008). For those that create their own path and find their way to mid-level administration, what is their secret? This study identifies former professional academic advisors who have achieved career advancement into mid-level administration in H.E. and examines the career self-management behaviors and the career capital they attribute to their career mobility.

Traditional and Protean Careers – What is the Difference?

Traditional careers are described as a series of similar jobs that follow a hierarchical pattern throughout a limited number of organizations (Clarke, 2009). They rely on a reciprocal relationship between the employee and the employer that exchanges devotion and performance from the employee for long-term job security and provision from the employer (Enache, Sallan, Simo, & Fernandez , 2011). In this model, employers select and facilitate the acquisition and development of an individual's occupational skills and direct their use in response to business needs. This practice generates a pool of qualified candidates with the skills, experience, exposure, and contacts to work productively in current assignments and in future responsibilities (Adamson, Doherty, & Viney, 1998). These arrangements reflect and support the post-war industrial climate of last century's workplace (Baruch, 2006; Clarke, 2009).

Traditional hierarchical organizations have given way to flatter and more agile learning organizations (Marquardt, 2002). In this "new deal", the necessities of economic survival have dictated downsizing, reorganization, and reprioritizing, which have changed the nature of employee/employer relationships (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Psychological contracts have been renegotiated and a new protean career attitude has placed the onus of individual career management on the employee instead of on the employer (Clarke, 2009; De Vos & Soens, 2008;

Marquardt, 2002). In H.E., the absence of clear and formalized career ladders for professional staff positions have created a career development setting that mimics that of the "new deal" workplace environments seen in other industries (Marquardt, 2002). In such cases, protean career attitudes that employ deliberate career self-management behaviors to facilitate the development of career capital are essential.

Protean career attitude is a concept that is derived from Protean Career Theory. The theory describes a career type, attitude, or value system that influences an individual's approach to their work environment and career (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). The Protean career actor is self-directed and values-driven and takes responsibility for their career choices. They actively seek opportunities and are guided by a clearly defined sense of self. A protean career attitude is projected when an individual independently and proactively plans, controls, and directs their career based upon personal values and subjective success criteria. The protean career attitude sets the foundation for career self-management behaviors and their implementation (Hall, 2002; De Vos & Soens, 2008).

Professional Academic Advising Careers in Higher Education

Professional academic advising involves collaboration between a student and an academic advisor that is designed to assist the student in developing meaningful educational and life goals that are consistent with personal interests, values, and abilities (University of Arizona, 2012). The professional academic advisor (PAA) is sanctioned by the institution to endorse the student's academic program of study and to assist the student as they progress toward the appropriate degree. Crockett (1987) stated, "The advisor serves as a facilitator of communication, a coordinator of learning experiences through course and career planning and academic progress review, and an agent of referral to other campus agencies as necessary."

These services facilitate students' connections to the institution and are "an integral part of the academic mission of the institution" (Tuttle, 2000, p.16).

Kim and Feldman (2011) indicated that professional academic advising services are a strategic asset to institutions as the demand for accountability increases from governmental regulators, parents, and accrediting agencies. Quality academic advising has an impact on student satisfaction, retention, GPA, graduation rates, and future employment. It also effects the institution's reputation in the community. Because H.E. institutions benefit both academically and financially from increased retention rates, professional academic advising is a vital component for the long-term success of the institution and its student body.

Researchers have documented the career patterns and career paths of college presidents in both community colleges and four-year institutions (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001; McKenney & Cejda, 2001; Mitchell & Eddy, 2008; Walton & McDade, 2001). These reports offer a glimpse into the career mobility of the participants and provide an overview of the occupational steps that have contributed to their career attainment. While this information is valuable, the emphasis on senior level positions does not provide adequate focus on the mid-level rank positions that preceded them.

Most professional academic advising structures in the H. E. workplace are flat with few opportunities for career promotion; therefore, advisors who are interested in advancing are compelled to move into administration (Iten & Matheny, 2008). For those in entry-level positions who want to implement career self-management behavior, understanding the specific career capital and occupational competencies to acquire is very beneficial. Several studies have examined the career patterns within student affairs and academic affairs (Britt, 2011; Ceida, McKenney, & Burley, 2001; Lohenry, 2010; Stokes, 2011). Depending upon the campus, professional academic advising reports to either academic affairs or student affairs (King, 2002); therefore, it is appropriate to consult the literature on both divisions of H.E.

Quite often, research in professional academic advising surrounds its services, its impact on retention rates and student success, and its overall benefits to H.E. (Kim & Feldman, 2011; Tinto, 1999; Tuttle, 2000). Very little research, however, specifically addresses career development and management, or the paths to upward career mobility for professional academic advisors. Of the research that addresses professional development in H. E. settings, none offers insight into how to get from advising to administration (Bryant, Chagani, Endres, & Galvin, 2006; Iten & Matheny, 2008; Kuk & Hughes, 2008).

Career Self-Management

This study is concerned with the career self-management behaviors that were employed by former PAAs and the career capital they attribute to their career mobility. Career self-management refers to the proactivity an individual exhibits in managing their career. Career self-management encompasses both reflective and behavioral elements, which means that individuals must be clear about their own career goals and they must take appropriate action in order for them to be realized (De Vos & Soens, 2008). Career self-management behaviors designed to increase career competencies include the acquisition of career capital, which include human, social, and psychological career capital.

Career Capital

Career self-management achieves desirable career outcomes through the use of career capital (DiRenzo, 2010; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Career capital can be categorized into three types of career assets: Human Capital, Social Capital, and Psychological Capital. These career assets are comprised of competitive core competencies (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994, Miner, 1990). Human capital, *knowing-how*, relates to skills, knowledge, abilities, and expertise gained through education and experience. Social capital, *knowing-whom*, concerns the interpersonal relationships that an individual can access and use to reach desired outcomes. Psychological capital, *knowing-why* is the individual's motivational energy to accept and understand oneself, to consider alternate life and career possibilities, and to adapt to the fluidity of the workplace (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999). All of these assets offer the career actor a unique set of competitive skills, knowledge, and abilities that will be useful in career advancement.

Problem Statement

Career pathways toward non-faculty leadership in H.E. are ambiguous and poorly defined (Biddix, 2011; Davis, 2008). Failure to provide professional academic advisors with advancement opportunities or to clearly define the pre-requisites necessary for those opportunities leads to dissatisfaction and costly workplace turnover (Johnsrud, Heck, & Rosser, 2000). Traditionally, H.E. does not offer formalized career ladders and career/leadership development processes for PAAs. Therefore, PAAs who desire MLA positions and who are unaware of the skills and the career capital required at upper levels may not be as competitive as other applicants, and they may not advance as quickly as they would prefer. The resulting frustration may have negative repercussions on student services, institutional continuity, and the institution's bottom line (Branham, 2005).

Students and professional advising offices suffer when advisors are stagnant or frustrated because the quality of advising diminishes when advisors are not engaged (Brown, 1987; Evans, 1988; Lorden, 1998). This scenario may increase workplace turnover. When advisors leave the institution and take all of their explicit and tacit knowledge and expertise with them, the institution as a whole suffers the greatest loss. Workplace turnover is a very costly phenomenon for organizations that can derail knowledge management efforts and stifle the institution's ability to provide optimal services to students. It has been estimated that direct replacement costs are commonly 50% to 60% of an employee's annual salary (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, & Graske, 2001), with the total costs (including training, loss of productivity, etc.) soaring to as much as 90% to 200% of an annual salary (Allen, 2008).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn about the career self-management behaviors of MLAs who formerly served as PAAs and the career capital they believed was helpful for advancement into mid-level administration. Through face-to-face interviews, this study investigated why participants believed they were successful in attaining their positions without formalized career paths into administration from academic advising. Through their unique stories, this study sought to increase the awareness of the academic advising community about an appropriate career self-management agenda for those that desire administrative positions in H. E., and it hoped to provide focus and direction for advisors as they manage their careers.

Research Questions

1. Why do some MLAs in H. E. who formerly served as professional academic advisors believe that they were successful in attaining their positions without following a formalized career path from academic advising?
    a. What kind of career self-management behaviors did they employ that they believe were instrumental in their current career success?
    b. How did they choose the career self-management behaviors that they employed?
2. What career capital did some MLAs in H. E. who formerly served as professional academic advisors acquire while preparing to move into H.E. administration?

a. How did they acquire the career capital that they believe prepared them to move into H.E. administration?

b. What career capital do they recommend for current academic advisors interested in moving into H. E. administration?

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks serve as a justification for research decisions rather than an explanation for those choices (Eisenhart, 1991). They delineate the type of concepts that should be studied and substantiate a study's research choices, findings, and any interrelationships that are identified (Lester, 2005). The results of a pilot study conducted by this researcher indicated that former PAAs who currently serve as MLAs incorporated a series of interpersonal interactions into their career management strategies. For example, the participants indicated that they actively engaged in on- and off-campus committee work as advisors, which allowed them to interact with others who later recommended them for additional responsibilities or opportunities. Those interactions granted the participants access, exposure, and practice, all of which they credited for their ability to move from academic advising into mid-level administration. Based on the results of the pilot study, interactionist elements appeared to be important in moving from advising to administration. Because these interactions provided opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that had a positive impact on their careers, symbolic interactionism was selected as the conceptual framework for the current study.

Symbolic Interactionism (SI) is an approach to human behavior inquiry that is concerned with how the meaning of symbols influences human behavior and interaction (Blumer, 1969). SI assumes that humans constantly change, and appropriate research methods pursue an understanding of an individual's perspective, the process by which that perspective was cultivated, and how meaning is assigned to past events in order to explain current events. Humans are considered to be dynamic and goal-seeking individuals whose reactions to stimuli are deliberate and selective and based upon interpretation of stimuli. Individuals define and assign meaning to themselves and the symbols, interactions, and objects of their world (Reynolds, 1993). Social interaction is influenced by the meaning assigned to symbols and takes place in the context of this understanding.

The term SI was first used by Herbert Blumer, a student of George Mead, a University of Chicago professor and one of the forefathers of the concept (Tan, Wang, & Zhu, 2003). Blumer condensed Mead's teachings into three premises: 1) the meaning a human being assigns to a stimulus will determine the action the human takes in response to the stimulus; 2) the meaning a human being assigns to a stimulus is formulated through social interaction; 3) the meaning of a stimulus will be adjusted and reinterpreted by the individual (Blumer, 1969; Reynolds, 1993; (Tan, Wang, & Zhu, 2003). Many iterations of SI have been presented over the years; however, the ideas of Mead and Blumer are attributed to the Chicago school approach which is concerned with generating practical solutions to problems through a variety of methodological techniques. The SI tradition does not advocate specific procedures or research techniques; instead, it offers assumptions to guide inquiry (Benzies & Allen, 2001).

Research in the SI tradition is focused on the participant and it values the knowledge of the individual and seeks to understand what he or she deems important (Benzies & Allen, 2001). SI utilizes tools such as interviews, life histories, and case studies to understand what humans know, understand, and value and, in turn, how they interpret and behave based on their knowledge and the value they assign to a phenomena. These techniques allow for the development of theories that are grounded in the data (Benzies & Allen, 2001; Blumer, 1969).

The SI perspective lent the current study its value of past events as a means of understanding current phenomena. This research assumed the goal-seeking characteristics of individuals and endeavored to unearth the nature of the social interactions that individuals employed as a part of their professional development and career self-management strategies. Understanding what the participants knew, understood, valued, interpreted, and in turn, how they behaved based on these factors was essential to understanding their professional development choices. A parallel pursuit was the identification of the career capital and core competencies that the participants acquired and found important for academic advisors who aspire to mid-level administration in H.E. SI justified this study's use of interviews to facilitate the development of theories that are grounded in the data in an attempt to offer relevant solutions to the common problem of workplace turnover in professional academic advising (Benzies & Allen, 2001; Blumer, 1969).

Theoretical Frameworks

Lester (2005) explains that a theoretical framework sets the "programmatic research agenda outlined by advocates of the theory." It guides research activities, and the researcher agrees to "conform to the accepted conventions of argumentation and experimentation associated with the theory" (p. 459). The research questions are conceptualized to correspond with the theoretical framework selected. This study refers to Protean Career Theory (PCT) and Career Capital (CC) as its theoretical frameworks.

PCT explores the individual's self-directed, proactive, and values-driven approach to career management. Protean career actors are proactive. Those who desire career advancement and promotion, assume a proactive career management stance. Proactive individuals are those who take initiative, identify and act on opportunities, and persevere until they achieve the desired result. They are more likely to recognize the nuances of the work environment and respond to changes quickly. They "select, create, and influence the situations in which they work" (Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999, p. 417), and pursue additional information, training, experiences, and support for their career management objectives. Proactive career actors take responsibility for their own development and are motivated by internal principles to define and accomplish career success.

This behavior is consistent with the tenets of Protean Career Theory (PCT). Named for the Greek god Proteus, who possessed chameleon-like qualities when faced with potential threats (Enache, Sallan, Simo & Fernandez, 2011), a protean career is characterized by the career actor's presence along two continua: the degree of the individual's self-directedness and the extent to which the person is driven by internal values (Clarke, 2009; Segers, Inceoglu, Vloeberghs, Bartram, & Henderickx, 2008). This career behavior is distinguished by multi-directional job mobility that utilizes a wide range of portable occupational competencies in flexible arrangements with multiple employers (Baruch, 2006; Clarke, 2009). The individual exerts more control over career management processes and creates his or her own definition of career success. Work is viewed as a transactional agreement that transcends a particular employer or industry and is dependent upon lifelong learning, skills acquisition, personal interest, and adaptability. These components of employability have usurped the traditional notion of job security and reflect the rapid change required by the technological advancements and globalization of the twenty-first century.

PCT renegotiates the relationship between employees and employers and allows for the re-imagination of work, how it must be conducted, and who must execute the duties. In response to the changing work environment, protean career actors take proactive responsibility for the skills and knowledge they acquire, how they are applied, and to whom they benefit. They also pursue meaningful interactions that will facilitate future professional connections. The lifelong pursuit of learning and professional development is driven by its value in the job market and by the level of personal satisfaction derived by the actor. Additionally, because employers are no longer solely responsible for an individual's career well-being, they are free to access the global workforce to find talented human capital that will grant them a competitive edge (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Hall, 1996).

Although the workplace reality of increased individual career management responsibility and decreased institutional career management requires adjustment, it does not necessarily instigate a hostile and antagonistic work environment. Instead, it can enable agility, improvement, and the ability to maximize opportunities for both the individual and the organization. All of these elements are essential for survival in the current marketplace. In lieu of lifelong employment, workers understand that their employers add to their knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which are all necessary for a lifetime of positive employment experiences (Marquardt, 2002). Employers recognize that their investment in protean career actors ensures an updated workforce that is proactive and continuously learning; both are attributes of desirable employees. It also allows room for a broader interpretation of employability and requires a re-examination of what diverse cultures, ethnicities, physical abilities, and educational backgrounds can contribute to an employer's competitive advantage.

Because of the lack of clear career paths and career development programs inherent in most professional academic advising workplaces, PCT is an ideal theory with which to view the career management strategies of former PAAs. Proactive and deliberate professional development is an essential component of a career management behavior in the absence of institutionalized career paths. Applying this career theory to the professional academic advising workplace setting facilitates a broader understanding of career mobility in this type of environment.

Career capital (CC) is a complex construct that serves as the mechanism through which career self-management (CSM) achieves favorable career outcomes (DiRenzo, 2010; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). It can be categorized into three distinct, yet interrelated types of career assets: Human Capital, Social Capital, and Psychological Capital. These career assets are composed of multiple competitive core competencies.

Human capital includes the core competencies of “knowing-how” which relate to the skills, knowledge, abilities, and expertise that are accumulated through education, experience, and unique skill sets. This collection of resources includes both explicit and tacit knowledge and is demonstrated in how an individual does their work. Social capital includes the “knowing-whom” career assets and refers to the interpersonal relationships that an individual cultivates and is able to access in order to reach a desired goal. These relationships are viewed as a resource for collaboration, a storehouse for actualized reputation, and a wellspring for acquiring new knowledge. The individual’s motivational energy to accept and understand oneself, to consider alternate life and career possibilities, and to adapt to the fluidity of the workplace comprise psychological capital (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999). “Knowing-why” career assets attend to an individual’s identification with the institution’s culture, personal beliefs and values, and non-work circumstances.

As theoretical frameworks, PCT and CC guided the focus of the questions, the analysis of the findings, and they provided a lens through which the data was examined. The theories guided the interpretation and discussion of the findings and offered explanation and context for understanding individual career behavior. Combining the two frameworks offered a mechanism for evaluating the individual's professional development choices and helped to identify the extent of their protean career orientation, career capital accumulation, and asset activation as they related to career management behavior (Segers, et al., 2008).

PCT, CC, and SI are linked because SI assumes the goal-oriented nature of the individual and endeavors to understand the individual's perspective and how he or she interprets the connection between past events and current phenomena. The PCT actor is deliberate in fashioning the interactions that are consistent with his/her values and that will render positive career outcomes. Because the individual is proactive in the pursuit of meaningful interactions, he or she will seek out the meaning assigned to certain career self-management activities in the workplace and will selectively incorporate those that will enhance the overall career management portfolio.

CC and PCT overlap in their employment of the individual's proactivity and values-driven proclivity and CC adds function and direction to the goals of the proactive employee. The career actor achieves his or her goals through the accumulation of CC – skills, competencies, and perspectives that optimally position the individual for career advancement. Connecting SI, PCT, and CC exposed the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the participants and identified the degree of self-directedness, values-driven initiative, and career asset activation of former advisors as they incorporated career self-management interactions into a set of career management behaviors. All of these components are valuable to professional academic advisors as they create their own career management strategies.

Setting and Population

This research was conducted on the campus of a public research institution in the southern United States. According to the 2010 Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Carnegie Foundation, 2010), the institution boasts a Research University/Very High Research activity classification and has over 200 academic programs, including 81 undergraduate majors, 81 Master's degrees, 15 certificate programs, and 37 doctoral programs. The university currently serves 25,000 students and is expected to approach 28,000 students before the next fall term; 20,000 are undergraduates and 4,500 are graduate and law students. The institution educates approximately equal numbers of male and female students and is a predominately Caucasian institution (77.4%). Five percent of the students are International, while minorities make up less than 20% of the population with 5.2% African American, 5% Latino/a, 2.4% Asian, 1.3% Native American. Nearly 3% identify themselves as two or more races (Office of Institutional Research, 2012).

The university houses seven colleges and a law school and employs approximately 3,000 full-time and part-time staff members; 2,400 are Caucasian, 147 African American, 91 Latino/a, 65 Asian, 34 Native American/ Alaska Native. There are 1,130 full-time and part-time faculty members on the main campus. The student-to-faculty ratio is 18:1.

Definitions of Terms

To facilitate clarity, a list of definitions found within this research is provided below. Unless otherwise noted, the definitions were created by the author:

Attitude: "A psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1).

Career: "A pattern of work-related experiences that encompass the course of a person's life" (Robbins, 2005, p. 17).

Career Capital: (CC) A complex construct that operates as the channel through which career self-management achieves desirable career outcomes (DiRenzo, 2010; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). It can be categorized into three distinct, yet interrelated types of career assets: human capital, social capital, and psychological capital. These career assets are composed of the competitive core competencies.

Career Development: The series of occupationally related actions, behaviors, attitudes, and events that occur over an individual's lifetime. It includes the person's education, career pattern, accomplishments, and self-perception.

Career Self-Management: Career self-management (CSM) refers to the proactivity an individual exhibits in managing their career. It is a lifelong, self-monitored process of career planning and implementation that involves choosing and setting personal goals, formulating strategies for achieving them, and taking action. (Business Dictionary.com, 2012; De Vos & Soens, 2008).

Career Mobility: The presence of occupational movement (upward, downward, or lateral) over the lifetime of an individual's career.

Career Path: A defined progression of occupational experiences that are typically hierarchical in nature.

Competencies: Personal and task-specific abilities that enable effective job performance.

Higher Education: Post-secondary educational settings; typically two- or four-year colleges or universities.

Knowledge: The collection of information, abilities, and beliefs that are acquired through education or experience.

Mid-Level Administration: "Academic or nonacademic support personnel within the structure of higher education organizations. The employees may be classified as administrators, professionals, technicians, or specialists and their positions tend to be differentiated by functional specialization, skills, training, and experience." (Rosser, 2000, p. 5). Individuals in these positions serve as Directors, Associate Directors, or Assistant Directors in student services, academic support, business and administrative services, and external affairs (Rosser, 2000).

Professional Academic Advising: (PAA) Academic advising is a collaborative relationship between a student and an academic advisor. The intent of this collaboration is to assist the student in the development of meaningful educational goals that are consistent with personal interests, values and abilities. Although many individuals on campus, including academic advisors, may assist the student in making decisions and accomplishing goals, the academic advisor is granted formal authority by an academic unit (college, school, department) to approve the student's academic program of study and assist the student in progressing toward the appropriate degree (University of Arizona, 2012).

Professional Development: An intentional and on-going process of professional continuing education for the purposes of improving professional competence, practice, knowledge, and marketability (Roberts, 2007)

Skill: is "a goal-directed, well- organized behavior that is acquired through practice and performed with economy of effort." (Proctor & Dutta, 1995, p. 18).

Workplace Turnover: the voluntary departure of employees from an organization.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in the following ways:

1. It identifies the desirable components of a career management plan, which will direct the career self-management agenda for professional academic advisors interested in growth and career preparation. Armed with this knowledge, PAAs and institutions will be able to identify and create meaningful career experiences that facilitate growth. This information also expands the research currently available about the career development of PAAs.
2. The study identifies some of the career capital that is necessary for PAAs to perform in their current roles and to assume greater responsibility within the academy. This knowledge will assist PAAs as they hone their skills, develop and expand their networks, and determine personally relevant career aspirations.
3. This research provides insight that can deter job frustration and turnover in academic advising. The information will potentially lessen the negative effects of ambiguous career advancement structures in H.E. It can also be used as a strategy that PAAs can employ to cope with job frustration as it relates to this topic.
4. The research gathered in this study will be beneficial to the students in H. E. because PAAs may become more engaged in their work as they learn the behaviors and skills that are necessary for upward career mobility.

Innovative Aspects of the Study

1. This study is innovative because it approaches career self-management and career capital from the perspective of an MLA and not from that of an upper-level administrator. This

unique vantage point offers insight into the preparation needed to begin a career in administration. With this focus on mid-level career skills, practical career management techniques will be defined to determine what is necessary to move from entry-level positions to mid-level administration.

2. The next innovation is the use of symbolic interactionism as a conceptual framework for an examination of careers and professional development. The insight into how employees encounter and interpret workplace phenomena helps to understand the less obvious assumptions that drive career management choices (Rosser, 2000).
3. Using Protean Career Theory and Career Capital as theoretical frameworks for a study of professional development is innovative because it examines the degree of self-directedness and values-driven decision-making that employees apply to their career management strategies.

Limitations and Delimitations

1. Because the researcher was an "insider-researcher" (Costley, Elliott, & Gibbs, 2010, p. 1), challenges such as the perceived obligation of a colleague to participate in the study, procuring access, negotiating personal relationships and power, and balancing anonymity and confidentiality were potential limitations that could have affected the interpretation of the results.
    a. The researcher understood that both she and the participants assumed multiple roles in the study that could coalesce to produce rich and meaningful results. Although social relationships existed with many participants, the researcher understood that the intent of the interview was to gather data for the research project and governed her approach and behavior accordingly. No assumptions

were made that participants would automatically consent to be a part of the study. Friends were accorded the same professionalism that other, previously unknown participants received. All emails, phone calls, and in-person conversations related to the study were conducted in the same manner for all participants.

b. Participants were invited to participate in the study in-person, via email, or by telephone and were ensured confidentiality. The researcher was respectful of time, boundaries, relationships, and confidences and handled the research process with care. The researcher arrived ten to fifteen minutes early to each appointment to ensure timeliness. The researcher waited to be invited to be seated when she entered an office and asked permission to place items such as the recorder or her notepad on the participant's desk. The same cordial and friendly manner was extended to each participant and the researcher was conscious to establish rapport prior to beginning the interview by asking about the participant's well-being, family, work, or discussing relevant campus events. Because the advising community was small on the campus, the researcher was also careful to protect confidences by focusing solely on the participant and not referencing other participants or conversations related to this research.

c. Familiarity presents distinct challenges for researchers (Schram, 2006). The researcher's experience as a former professional academic advisor and university employee could have introduced bias to the interpretation of the data, however; constructivist grounded theory (GT) accepts the researcher's position and perspective as a co-contributor to the data alongside the participants (Charmaz, 2011). Because the researcher and the participants shared common experiences from advising, the researcher was attentive to the use of advising jargon or discussions about procedures that may have required further explanation or clarification.

2. This study used qualitative methods. While this perspective supports broad examinations of a phenomena and allows for emerging themes that are drawn from the unique experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2009), it does not offer broadly generalizable findings of quantitative methods or the strength associated with a mixed method approach. Additionally, GT acknowledges that interviews place the participants "on center stage," which can potentially "shift or distort" (Charmaz, 2011, p. 178) the perceptions of their experiences. This issue was noted, but all statements that are made by the participants were taken in good faith and served as a reasonable foundation of theory development. No indication that the participants were less than forthright was detected.
3. This study was conducted on the campus of one land-grant institution. This location was selected for convenience and financial purposes, as the researcher resided in the geographical area. The career progression of staff members from other institutions may not coincide with the findings of this study.

Summary

Through face-to-face interviews, this research explored the career self-management behaviors and the career capital acquired by former PAAs who currently served as MLAs in H.E. Using symbolic interactionism as a conceptual framework, and Protean Career Theory as a theoretical framework, this research delved into the interactions that the participants found meaningful in their pursuit of career advancement. It also identified the career capital they employed and recommend for PAAs. This information will shed light on the work life of PAAs in H.E. in an effort to reduce workplace turnover.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

This study was concerned with the career self-management (CSM) behaviors that were employed by former professional academic advisors (PAAs) and the career capital they acquired that they believed positively affected their upward career mobility into mid-level administration (MLA). Of specific interest were the interactions of the career actor, their interpretations of environmental cues, and how those interpretations affected behavior. To set the foundation for this study, it is important to understand the constructs that are being utilized. The following discussion defines professional academic advising and mid-level administration. It presents an overview of career development theory and reviews the current research about constructs such as workplace turnover, career self-management, and career capital.

Professional Academic Advising

Professional academic advising is a multi-faceted and developmental endeavor that involves collaboration between a student and a professional academic advisor. It is designed to assist the student as they identify meaningful educational and life goals that are consistent with personal interests, values and abilities. The professional academic advisor (PAA) serves as the institutional authority to endorse the student's academic program of study and to assist the student as they progress toward the appropriate degree (University of Arizona, 2012).

PAAs facilitate communication, coordinate and plan learning experiences, review academic progress, and refer students to other campus resources (Crockett, 1987). These services connect the student to the institution and effect student engagement and retention.

Consequently, the relationship between advising, student retention, and an institution's financial viability place professional academic advising high on the list of priorities for many American universities and colleges (Tuttle, 2000).

Institutional academic advising models vary and are difficult to categorize; however, most resemble one of the following configurations. In *faculty-only models*, faculty members are solely responsible for advising students. According to Habley, (2004), this model is declining in popularity as the need for more accessible student interaction has been recognized. *Split models* utilize advisors for specific populations of students, and assign a faculty advisor for all other students. Of those responding to the ACT's sixth national survey (Habley, 2004), this is the most prominent advising model. *Supplementary models* assign PAAs for general advising and referrals, and faculty advisors for mentoring and approving academic transactions. *Dual models* provide each student with both a faculty advisor for issues related to their major, and a PAA for general advising. *Total intake models* require all students to begin their advising relationship with a PAA who later facilitates the transition to a faculty advisor within their academic department. *Satellite models* enable each academic unit to manage their own academic advising, while *Self-contained models* defer all advising to a PAA in a centralized advising unit (Gordon, Habley, & Grites, 2008; Kuhn, 2008; Tuttle, 2000).

In general, faculty advisors provide professional and academic guidance and mentoring to students who have declared a major. However, because faculty is also responsible for teaching, research, and service, PAAs offer more accessibility than faculty advisors. Professional academic advising is distinguished from faculty advising by the scope of services that PAAs offer. In addition to advising students about educational requirements and maintaining progress records, PAAs may also conduct new student orientation, interpret and develop advising policies, create advising procedures and handbooks, evaluate transfer credits and graduation/degree audits, assist students as they declare and change majors, offer career counseling, and procure services to students who are at-risk, underprepared, or are making unsatisfactory progress (Tuttle, 2000).

Reporting responsibility for academic advising varies; however, the coordination of advising services that include both academic affairs and student affairs personnel is the trend. The impact of academic advising on student retention and graduation rates and the awareness of the benefits of an inter-connected approach to advising and student support services has driven a re-evaluation of how advising services are offered. Across all H.E. institutions, more advising centers report to academic affairs (42%) than to student affairs (18%), although student affairs still handles a third of advising responsibilities in two-year public colleges. Integrating services creates and fosters learning opportunities that support the students in a holistic and developmental manner (King, N., 2002; King, M., 2008).

Brief history of professional academic advising. In the 1600's when America's system of higher education was being created, there was little need for academic advising because the curriculum was limited to compulsory courses in the liberal arts, such as mathematics, Latin, and Greek. Each student took the exact same classes and the intent of the education was to "produce well-educated ministers, lawyers, and doctors for an emerging society" (Kuhn, 2008, p. 4). The institution and its small faculty were completely dedicated to and responsible for the student's holistic well-being, and the faculty was considered surrogate parents to the young students in their charge. It was common for one faculty to be responsible for teaching the entire breadth of the curriculum, which included moral training and extra-curricular activities. At that time, there was a close-knit, familial relationship between faculty and student (Kuhn, 2008).

By the mid-1800s the relationship between student and teacher had become formalized and had grown antagonistic and distant due to tight disciplinary controls and overt student rebellion. Students and teachers were no longer interested in personal interaction, and each viewed the other as an imposition. An endless cycle of food fights, disorderly conduct, and blatant disrespect for faculty and administrators led to heavy sanctions and constant discipline (Kuhn, 2008).

The implementation of the elective system in the 1870s helped to relieve tensions because it provided students with academic choices, improved the interactions between students and faculty, and led to the integration of seminars and laboratories instead of just lectures. Additional course selection led faculty to become more specialized, and the growth in the field of H.E. created more demand for faculty research and service. These new expectations, coupled with expanding student curriculum options, gave way for additional professional roles and responsibilities within the institution; academic advising was one of those new professional roles (Kuhn, 2008).

The first attempts at organized professional advising were impersonal and cursory efforts that facilitated elective selection and course approval. The intent of advising services was to improve relations between students and faculty; however, the outcomes and successes of the programs were not measured. As student support services became the focus of the American H.E. system in the early 1920s, initiatives such as freshman week, counseling and psychological services, and a chaplain were added to the campus offerings. The American Council on Education embraced a more student-centered approach to H.E. and issued the *Student Personnel Point of View (SPPOV)* in 1949. This position broadened the definition of education to include a focus on the student's physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual development. It also assigned the student with personal responsibility for their development and eschewed the traditional theory of the student as a passive learner that was bound to accept the economic, political, religious, or vocational doctrine of the institution (Kuhn, 2008).

Academic advising in American H.E. has been marked with considerable progress from 1970 to the present. Due to increases in enrollment and the growing diversity of the student body, the need for accurate and individualized advising set the backdrop for comparison and examination of the field's practices, policies, structures, and assumptions. The creation of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) signaled the beginning of academic advising as a profession in 1977; it was designed to promote quality academic advising and to provide support and professional growth to academic advisors (NACADA, 2012). The organization continues to host regional and national conferences, sponsor a peer-reviewed journal, and support a full research agenda. These developments have helped to establish professional academic advising as an important and distinct field within H.E.

Generally, research in professional academic advising draws attention to its services, its impact on retention rates and student success, and its overall benefits to H.E. (Kim & Feldman, 2011; Tinto, 1999; Tuttle, 2000). Rarely, however, does the research specifically address career development and management, or the paths to upward career mobility for professional academic advisors. Of the research that evaluates professional development in H. E. settings, none offers insight into how to get from advising to administration (Bryant, Chagani, Endres, & Galvin, 2006; Iten & Matheny, 2008; Kuk & Hughes, 2008).

Mid-Level Higher Education Administrators

According to the latest statistics from the 2009 IPEDS data of the U.S Department of Education, there is over 650,000 professional staff dedicated to performing academic support, student service, and H.E. institutional support. Mid-level college and university administrators (MLAs) make up the largest administrative portion of that group (Rosser, 2000). Mid-level administration has multiple entry points, and individuals enter these positions from within the institution and from the outside (Twombly, 1990).

MLAs are typically assistant or associate directors or directors of academic and non-academic units and have responsibility for budgets, compliance, student programs, housing, advising, judicial affairs, and orientation programs (Rosser, 2000; Young, 1990). Their jobs are important and complex and, as a group, they have been referred to as the "unsung professionals of the academy" because of the relatively small amount of attention they receive in practice and in the literature (Rosser, 2000, p. 5). MLAs serve as liaisons between university policy makers and their staff members, and are often caught in the balance as they enforce policies for which they made no contribution (Mather, Bryan, & Faulkner, 2009).

Due to their tendency to remain in their roles, MLAs are often the keepers of valuable tacit knowledge and institutional memory (Johnsrud, Sagaria, & Heck, 1992). Dedicated, professional, and skilled, they are highly valuable to their institutions, and they have a significant impact on the institution's culture, atmosphere, and relationships with faculty, students, and the public (Rosser, 2000; Scott, 1978).

Brief Overview of Career Development

Career development is the series of occupationally related actions, behaviors, attitudes, and events that occur over an individual's lifetime. It includes the person's education, career pattern, accomplishments, and self-perception. This definition asserts that career development is a life-long process, and it assumes that a career "is a manageable personalised [sic] entity; that something can be done to, for, and by the individual to improve his or her work-related lot in life" (McIlveen, 2009, p. 64).

The career development process is complex, and the large amount of competing career development theories and models reflects that complexity (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Each focuses on a particular aspect of the process and adds to the collective wisdom of the field. It is for this reason that it is appropriate to briefly summarize some of the theories that have made significant contributions to our understanding of career development.

Prominent Career Development Theories

The desire to understand the role of and the interaction between work, society, and the lives of individuals is not new. The precursors of contemporary vocational counseling and ability testing can be traced to the ancient societies of Greece, Egypt, China, England, and Spain (McIlveen, 2009). A Chinese emperor in 2200 B.C. reportedly used a form of psychological testing to either promote or terminate his employees every three years. In ancient Greece, the mental and physical ability of residents was routinely measured to ensure the development of the qualities of "the ideal Greek citizen." Being the "ideal Greek citizen" was the primary job of every Greek (Doyle, 1974, p. 202). Additionally, Juan Huarte y Navarro, a Spanish priest, author, and physician, suggested vocational counseling and ability testing in the 1600s (Plucker, 2012; Zytowski, 2008).

The modern vocational or career development movement in the U.S. evolved as a response to the economic, social, industrial, and political needs of society. The interactions of the individual with the family, the community, and the workplace have driven career development initiatives over the past century. Societal turbulence, the rise of the industrial revolution, and pervasive immigration in the U.S. created the backdrop for the early vocational guidance movement in the late 1800s as the nation moved from being a largely agrarian society to an industrial society (Arkansas State University, 2000).

Frank Parson and vocational psychology. The industrial revolution created more occupational options, which allowed workers to look beyond the family farm or local offerings for employment. The quantity of new career options proved to be frustrating to job seekers, however, as there was limited research or literature identifying career alternatives, no organized career exploration initiative in the schools, and few knowledgeable and accessible counselors to help with the employment process (Arkansas State University, 2000; Library of Congress, n.d., Pope, 2000). Frank Parsons, an engineer, attorney, educator, and social reformist, was initially interested in industrial reform but recognized the need to address these issues. He is credited with being the founder of the modern vocational guidance movement in the United States.

Parsons was the first to coin the term "vocational guidance" and developed a systematic three-step method for vocational counseling services that included self- awareness, occupational knowledge, and informed decision-making. This method was designed to identify the best vocational match between the employee and the job. This matching process was built on his belief that "(a) individuals differ in their job-related interests, needs, and values; (b) jobs differ in the amount and nature of the rewards they offer and in the kinds of demands they make of the employee; and (c) vocational adjustment (operationalized as success and satisfaction) is directly proportional to the 'match,' or 'goodness of fit,' between the characteristics of the worker and the characteristics of the environment"(Betz, Fitzgerald, & Hill, 1989, p. 27). Parson's book *Choosing a Vocation* was published posthumously in 1909 and was a major influence on the development of trait-factor theories (Arkansas State University, 2000).

Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environments. Trait-factor theories assess individual characteristics and the attributes of the workplace and measure the amount of correspondence between the two. John Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities and Work Environments (1973, 1985, 1997) expanded the trait-factor approach and utilized a typology framework to explain individual differences and career choice. Holland correlated personality with vocational choice and predicted that those with similar personalities would gravitate to similar work environments. He arranged personality and work environments into six broad categories and asserted that personality and vocational traits could be matched to increase the likelihood of congruence; the fit between personality and environment. Higher levels of congruence were said to equate to increased job satisfaction and career success. Holland's theories have been rigorously tested and have been the basis for several inventories and assessments.

Super's developmental self-concept theory. Donald Super's Developmental Self-Concept Theory (1957) linked career choice and development with the process of developing and implementing an individual's self-concept. He asserted that an individual's self-concept changes and progresses through six stages of the life span as life experience dictates. Changes in self-concept are reflected in the individual's work life through vocational choice and work adjustment. The composition of life roles that an individual assumes at any given time in their life space has a profound effect on their work life and their ability to implement their self-concept. Life and job satisfaction is dependent upon how well one's vocation, and the lifestyle that accompanies it, allows the individual to play the role in life that they would like to play (Leung, 2008; Super, 1953).

Social cognitive career theory. Alfred Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory serves as the foundation of the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) formulated by Lent, Brown, & Hackett (2002). The framework offers a means of understanding three components of career development: a) the establishment and progression of career interests, b) the selection of academic and occupational options, and c) the performance and perseverance of educational and occupational activities. It is especially concerned with the "means by which individuals exercise personal agency in the career development process, as well as extra-personal factors that enhance or constrain agency" (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994).

Career choice and development is attributed to the interaction between self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal aspirations. Perceptual inaccuracies about any of these concepts can alter career choice, development, and vocational behavior. Self-efficacy is acquired through personal performance, remote learning, social influences, and psychological processes. Individuals are attracted to tasks that they believe they can accomplish and those with which they associate positive outcomes. As the core variables of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal aspirations interact, the individual develops goals and intentions that will allow positive behaviors to be maintained (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002; Leung, 2008).

Boundaryless career theory. Michael Arthur and Denise Rousseau's Boundaryless Career Theory (1996) emphasizes the degree of physical and psychological mobility of the career actor. The concept explains a career type model as opposed to assuming a comprehensive theory of career (Inkson, 2006). It highlights the changes in traditional career arrangements where lifetime employment and ascent up the career ladder are the definitions of success, and advocates independence and personal agency as important success strategies. The theory stresses a) career mobility between employers, b) external validation (apart from the organization), c) external networks and information, d) release from traditional organizational career boundaries, e) re-prioritization of career opportunities in favor of personal or family considerations, and f) identification with a boundaryless future in spite of organizational barriers.

Boundaryless careers involve “sequences of experiences”, “inter-firm mobility” and “unpredictability” (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003, p. 690). Boundaryless behavior requires self-efficacy, self-knowledge, adaptability, and solid career competencies (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2002; Inkson, 2006). The concept of employability, a psycho-social construct that includes adaptability, career identity, and human, social, and psychological capital (McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007) , is implicit in boundaryless career behavior because skills produce the opportunities for boundary-crossing in the fluid employment setting of the “new deal” (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

Protean career theory. Like Boundaryless Career Theory, Protean Career Theory is a model of a career type (Inkson, 2006). Hall (1976) predicted the career of the future that was self-managed and driven by the individual’s desire for self-fulfillment. The theory focused on the individual’s role in career management in light of the “new career contract” that de-emphasized organizational control and the orchestration of human resources and institutionalized definitions of success (Hall, 1996). The new Protean career contract asserted a) career self-management, b) the lifelong nature of career experiences, c) continuous learning based upon self-directed, and relational work challenges, d) a reconceptualization of development to extend beyond formal training, retraining, or upward mobility, e) the emphasis on key concepts such as “learn-how”, “employability”, “protean careers”, and “whole self”(p. 26), f) the classification of the organizational responsibilities to include engaging work assignments, enriching relationships, and key resources, and, g) the identification of psychological success as the ultimate goal (Hall & Moss, 1998).

Since its introduction, researchers have attempted to define and explain the protean career model and have categorized it as a concept of self-development (Granose & Baccili, 2007; Inkson, 2006); self- and work-identification (Bridgstock, 2005; Hall & Chandler, 2005), learning and adaptation (Mirvis & Hall, 1994; Briscoe & Hall, 2006) and life and work balance (Brisco, Hall, & DeMuth, 2006; Hall, 2004; Hall & Richter, 1990). For a period of time, these inconsistencies in definition stalled the research agenda and impeded progress (DiRenzo, 2010).

In current research, a more cohesive and useful application of protean career theory has emerged and it is understood to be a psychological orientation that prompts certain career behaviors (Inkson, 2006; DiRenzo, 2010). An orientation is a construct that is attitudinal, cognitive, perceptual, behavioral, and emotional in nature. When incorporated into a framework, the elements of an orientation "influence how the individual approaches and experiences various situations and activities" (DiRenzo, 2010, p. 18). In this interpretation, protean career orientation can be applied as a career management stance that represents an individual's status along two continua: self-directedness, and the degree to which values drive career choices and behaviors. The concern for the career actor's occupational behavior takes precedence over the structure of the career (Brisco & Hall, 2006).

Protean career actors are said to be self-directed and take personal responsibility for their career management. They initiate career exploration and are in control of career decisions (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; DiRenzo, 2010). The relationship between protean career attitudes and behaviors, career competencies, and career success has been examined in the literature. Seibert, Kraimer, and Crant, 2001, found that proactive personality was positively related to career initiative and that career initiative was positively related to career progression. Kuijpers, Schyns, and Scheerens (2006) found that the career control and networking positively affected career success. Additionally, De Vos & Soens (2008) investigated protean career attitude in relationship to career self-management behaviors, career insight, and career success outcomes and found that protean career attitude is an important precursor of career success. This result, however, is mediated by the development of career insight, the degree to which the individual possesses realistic self- and organizational- perceptions and translates those perceptions into viable career goals (London, 1983). In contrast to Kijpers, Schynsm, & Scheerens (2006) and Seiber, Kraimer, & Crantm (2001), De Vos & Soens (2008) found no direct relationship between career self-management behaviors and career outcomes.

Concepts about protean career orientation emphasize the values-driven nature of the career actor. They pursue personally relevant experiences and determine their own standards for psychological career success (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Hall, 1996). The literature acknowledges, however, that a protean actor's values could parallel some of those held by the traditional organization (i.e. income and advancement). Therefore, the protean actor's desire for a traditional, organizational career is not uncommon (Briscoe, 2006).

Summary

Career Development in the U.S. is a complex and dynamic subject which is demonstrated by the plethora of theories and models available that attempt to define, explain, and justify the phenomena of the workplace. From the vocational psychology movement of Frank Parsons in the early 1900s to the contemporary models of career behavior found in protean career orientation, the field of career development has a rich tradition from which to build. As individuals and institutions continue to navigate the challenges ahead, the practical and theoretical foundations that have been laid offer solid direction and sound stability for future research.

Career Self-Management

Traditional career development has changed and the static employment models that involved clearly defined career progression, hierarchy, and stability have become more fluid and dynamic (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). Institutions are organically political in nature and employees must compete for unavoidably scarce resources. Given this contemporary employment setting, employees are to urged increase their competitive advantage by managing their careers and developing solid and transferrable competencies (Forret & Sullivan, 2003; King, 2001).

What is career self-management? Career self-management (CSM) refers to the proactivity that an individual exhibits when managing their career (De Vos & Soens, 2008). The concept has received considerable attention in the literature and has been associated with a variety of cognitions, terms, and behaviors. Greenhaus (1987) identified CSM as strategies employees use to increase the likelihood of career success. McEnrue (1989), using the term self-development, described the construct as a form of prosocial behavior that requires initiative and a sacrifice of time and resources.

King (2001) assigned a cyclical model that was dependent upon organizational politics and the implementation of employee career strategy. The model also included an individual's life-goals away from work and their mechanisms for managing the boundaries between their work and personal lives. De Vos, De Clippeleer, and Dewilde (2009) built from the proactive career behavior literature and defined CSM actions as a process of cognitive and behavioral elements, such as goal setting, planning, and intention. Verbruggen and Sels (2008) used the term career self-directedness to describe an employer-independent career action that was influenced by self-awareness and adaptability, while DiRenzo (2010) defined individual career management as a process that facilitates the clarification of career values, strengths, interests, and career goals, and the strategic planning and intentional action of the employee.

In essence, the literature indicates that CSM is comprised of two elements: a reflective component and a behavioral component. The reflective component refers to an individual's self-knowledge, career insight and career aspirations (Arthur, Inkston, & Pringle, 1999; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003; Kuijpers, Schyns, & Scheerens, 2006). The behavioral component includes an individual's actions that are designed to manage their career and achieve career goals (De Vos & Soens, 2008; King, 2004; Noe, 1996; Sturges, Guest, Conway, & Mackenzie Davey, 2002; Sturges, Guest, Mackenzie Davey, 2000).

This research is concerned with the behavioral component of CSM, which includes the proactive and explicit actions individuals take to control and influence their careers, however, it acknowledges the important role that the reflective component plays in this process. CSM is defined as a proactive, lifelong, self-monitored process of career planning and implementation that involves choosing and setting personal goals, formulating strategies for achieving them, and taking action. CSM behaviors are discussed in the following section.

The behaviors associated with career self-management. One of the goals of CSM is the accumulation of career competencies to enhance one's ability to compete in the marketplace. Determining the precise behaviors to employ has not been a simple task, yet scholars have identified many behaviors that could be included in a CSM strategy (Abele & Weise, 2008; Crant, 2000; De Vos & Soens, 2008; King, 2004; Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, & DeMarr, 1998;

Sturges, Guest, Conway, & Mackenzie Davey, 2002). Although researchers have categorized these behaviors differently, the essential elements are consistent.

Greenhaus (1987) identified seven broad strategies upon which employees rely to influence career success: a) competence in current job; b) extended work involvement; c) skill development; d) opportunity development; e) development of mentor relationships; f) image building; and g) organizational politics. King (2001) divided CSM behaviors into influencing and positioning strategies, where influencing strategies included self-promotion, ingratiation, and upward influence tactics that achieve the desired goal by creating a sense of dependency or obligation, and positioning strategies involved networking, strategic job selection, acquiring skills and/or training, job content innovation that extends current job responsibilities and increases visibility. Sturges, Guest, Conway, & Mackenzie Davey (2002) made a distinction between CSM behaviors that are intended to enhance the career within the organization and those designed to enhance the career outside of the current organization.

Inspired by the work of Quinn (1992), Intelligent Career Theory drew upon the concept of organizational core competencies as a mechanism to maintain a competitive advantage over others in the marketplace (Arthur, Claman, & DeFillippi, 1995). Translating that approach to the employee, an individual's core competencies (their competitive advantage) express different ways of knowing and an intelligent career reflects how these ways of knowing are applied. The integral units (i.e. currency) through which individuals make career investments were categorized into three interdependent ways of knowing: knowing-whom, knowing-how, and knowing-why (Arthur, Claman, & DeFillippi, 1995; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). In the knowledge economy, this knowledge is the employee's major form of capital and investing in this career capital facilitates the ability to be competitive and to trade, collaborate, and become a "joint venture partner" with current and future employers (Inkson & Arthur, 2001, p. 51).

Career Capital

A competitive advantage is recognized as such because it is unique, cumulative, interconnected, and renewable. The accumulation of career capital is a competitive advantage for employees and for the institutions for which they are employed (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Career capital is a complex construct that operates as the channel through which CSM achieves desirable career outcomes (DiRenzo, 2010; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). It can be categorized into three distinct, yet interrelated types of career assets: Human Capital, Social Capital, and Psychological Capital. These career assets are composed of multiple competitive core competencies.

Human capital. Human capital includes the core competencies of knowing-how. Knowing-how relates to the skills, knowledge, abilities, and expertise that are accumulated through education, experience, and unique skill sets. This collection of individual level resources includes both explicit and tacit knowledge and is demonstrated in how an individual does their work. This career asset also encompasses "idiosyncratic components" that support individuals pursuing and creating professional niches that capitalize on their own strengths and talents (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994, p. 309; Miner, 1990). This career asset supports the development of a broad and diverse set of skills that are transferrable and desirable to a variety of entities. Through the knowing-how competency, an individual is able to perform well, adapt quickly, and maximize opportunities (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007; Singh, Ragins, & Tharenou, 2008).

The dimensions of human capital have been investigated extensively in the literature. Education, tenure, political skill, experience, and knowledge have been linked with career success (Singh, Ragins, & Tharenou, 2009; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). Educational accomplishment has been connected to managerial promotion and salary progression (Bretz & Judge, 1994; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994; Stroh, Brett, & Reilly, 1992). Other connections to human capital include competitive advantage (Winterton & Winterton, 1996; Nordhaug, 1998), improved career planning and employability (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004; Raider & Burt; 1996; Weick, 1996), and higher performance and problem solving (Sandberg, 2000; Schroder, 1989).

Social capital. Social capital includes the knowing-whom career assets and refers to the interpersonal relationships that an individual cultivates and is able to access in order to reach a desired goal. These relationships are viewed as a resource for collaboration, a storehouse for actualized reputation, and a wellspring for acquiring new knowledge. Knowing-whom can include inter-group and inter-organizational networks, personal and community resources, social and cultural norms and dynamics, and formal and informal connections (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Luthans & Youssef, 2004).

One example of knowing-whom is networking (Wolff & Moser, 2010). Scholars have written expansively about the effects of networking on careers in the literature. For example, networking has been linked with career success (Blickle, Witzki, & Schneider, 2009; Forret & Dougherty, 2004; Wolff & Moser, 2009), securing employment, (Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997; Granovetter, 1973), and with high performance ratings (Thompson, 2005).

Social capital offers a competitive advantage because of its connection to venture capital, business prospects, and job opportunities (Forret & Sullivan, 2003). It has also been found to positively influence career success and development through mentoring relationships (Alan, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005) and is an integral ingredient in employability, marketability, and re-employment (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007; Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003).

Psychological capital. The knowing-why competencies comprise psychological capital (PsyCap) (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). They concern the motivation, personal significance, and identification of the individual (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) and various attempts to define knowing-why have been made in the literature. It has been described as the individual's ability to separate their identity from that of their employer (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003), or the capacity to understand the dynamics of the workplace and to motivate, define, and clarify career direction (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007).

This study accepts Eby, Butts, & Lockwood's (2003) definition of this career asset as the individual's motivational energy to accept and understand oneself, to consider alternate life and career possibilities, and to adapt to the fluidity of the workplace (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999). Knowing-why attends to an individual's identification with the institution's culture, personal beliefs and values, and non-work circumstances. Three variables included in this asset are career insight, proactive personality, and openness to experience.

Career insight embodies the individual's degree of realistic career- and self-knowledge, and measures how that knowledge manifests itself in career expectations, career goals, and self-assessment. This concept is similar to goal clarity, future mindedness, and social discernment (London, 1993; Noe, Noe, & Bachhuber, 1990). The variable proactive personality concerns the individual's inclination toward taking a proactive stance. This is demonstrated by the ability to identify opportunities, initiate action, and persevere through challenges. Openness to experience is displayed by the individual's curiosity, creativity, and responsiveness to new ideas (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003). PsyCap has had positive effects on personal health and welfare (Avey, Luthans, Smith & Palmer, 2010), job performance and fulfillment (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007), and organizational conduct (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008).

Summary

The new workplace dynamic requires aspirant employees to engage in career self-management behaviors. CSM includes proactive and explicit behaviors that are designed to control or influence one's career. The objectives of CSM are achieved through the use of career capital, the currency of competitive advantage in today's workplace. Knowing-how, knowing-whom, and knowing-why have garnered tangible benefits and have been shown to effect advancement (King, 2004), employability, (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011; Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004; Van der Heijden, Boon, van der Klink, & Meijs, 2009), psychological fulfillment, work-life balance, subjective career success (Hall & Mirvis, 1995; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994), and career mobility (De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011). Career capital affords employees the agility necessary to create meaningful and successful careers. The competitive advantage afforded by acquiring these competencies is unique to the individual due to how, when, and in what combination they will be applied to various situations (Luthans & Youssef, 2004).

Career Development in Higher Education for Professional Staff

Due to increases in enrollment and the retirement of older employees, positions in postsecondary education administration in the U.S. are expected to grow by 19% from 2010 to

2020, an average rate of growth that is comparable to the national average. Although this growth offers opportunities, it is often mediated by state and local government budgets (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). Higher education has received criticism for its lack of visible staff career paths and professional development. Acknowledging the abundance of career opportunities in divisions like student affairs, Betts, Uriahs, and Betts (2009) point out that explicitly defining a career path and the criteria for advancement and providing professional development are crucial for establishing a strong leadership pipeline. These components improve staff recruiting and retention rates for employees interested in moving up into administration. Davis, former chancellor of the University System of Georgia, concurs. The failure of institutions to focus on leadership from a systematic and structural standpoint hinders the institution's ability to compete (Davis, 2008). He advocates talent identification and development early in an individual's career and offering the tools with which to build successful careers.

Career development for professional academic advisors. An organizational career system shepherds individuals from entry-level positions through administrative posts. The system includes the "policies, priorities, and actions that organizations use to manage the flow of their members into, through, and out of the organizations over time" (Sonnefeld & Peiperl, 1988, p. 588). Formal and informal determinants guide career movement including entry, development, and exit. In colleges and universities, the hierarchical systems are relatively flat; which leaves less room for upward mobility, but allows for lateral movement within midlevel positions. Because of this limitation, career growth is operationalized through increases in responsibility, changes in working titles, and creating more midlevel positions with varying levels of responsibility (Twombly, 1990).

There is more than one administrative hierarchy in H.E. The academic administrative hierarchy is responsible for the primary purpose of the institution, which is teaching and research. Non-administrative career systems support these core activities and may or may not, involve their own hierarchies. In non-academic administrative career systems, the primary mechanism of mobility is job change versus promotion and these changes usually accompany increased responsibility, reward, and recognition. These factors are mediated, however, by the vacancy rate, demographics, and rate of institutional growth, which means that upward mobility may be delayed in flat organizational structures (Twombly, 1990).

Very little research is available about the career development for professional academic advisors (PAAs). Although they are highly skilled and heavily credentialed, professional academic advisors are generally considered entry-level positions and are subject to the high turnover rates associated with these roles (Rosser, 2000). Unlike faculty positions, advancement for professional staff often includes a job change and poorly defined career paths and ambiguous advancement criteria make career self-management a requirement for career mobility (Forret & Sullivan, 2003; Johnsrud, Sagaria, & Heck, 1992; King, 2001).

An essential part of a career system includes development. Professional development is an intentional and on-going process of professional continuing education for the purposes of improving professional competence, practice, knowledge, and marketability (Roberts, 2007). Professional academic advising programs have been criticized for failing to provide proficient advisor training and advancement opportunities (Habley, 1987, 1993, 2004; Habley & Morales, 1998). One study of faculty and professional advisors found that over two thirds of the respondents believed that they were insufficiently prepared and trained prior to advising students. They also indicated that the most common mechanism of training was by trial and error, and learning from colleagues that were prepared in a similar fashion. This approach to development has been found to limit the institution, the employee, and the constituents they serve (Brown, 2007).

Summary

Career development for professional staff in H.E has not received a lot of attention in the literature. Career systems, the occupational mechanisms through which institutions move employees, can potentially offer opportunities for development and career fulfillment. For PAAs, fewer prospects are available for career development on most campuses, which necessitates CSM behaviors and Career Capital accumulation.

Workplace Turnover

Turnover can be categorized into two different forms: involuntary and voluntary. Involuntary turnover is initiated by the organization, as in the case of layoffs or terminations. Voluntary turnover is employee initiated and includes instances of job changes and retirements. Voluntary turnover also includes functional and dysfunctional turnover. Functional turnover does not harm the institution and includes the departure of poor performers and those who have talents and skills that are easy to replace. Dysfunctional turnover does significant harm to the institution and includes losing high performers; those with irreplaceable skills, talents, and knowledge; or those who offer diversity to the workforce (Allen, 2008).

Dysfunctional turnover can be characterized as either unavoidable or avoidable. When an employee has poor health or decides to return to school, move closer to family, or stay home to rear children, those situations reflect unavoidable turnover; the institution had no control over those choices. Avoidable turnover could be controlled or prevented by the institution and involve instances such as employee exit due to low job satisfaction or poor working conditions.

Distinguishing between avoidable and unavoidable turnover can be difficult in cases where the institution could not prevent the actual reason for the employee leaving (i.e. pregnancy), but could control the working environment to make it more accommodating (e.g., maternity leave, daycare on premises, parent-friendly hours) (Allen, 2008).

The costs of workplace turnover. Workplace turnover is a very costly phenomenon for organizations that can derail knowledge management efforts and stifle the institution's ability to provide optimal services to students. It has been estimated that direct replacement costs are commonly 50% to 60% of an employee's annual salary (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, & Graske, 2001), with the total costs (including training, loss of productivity, etc.) climbing to as much as 90% to 200% of an annual salary (Allen, 2008).

Turnover costs can be associated with recruitment and training costs, severance pay, administrative activities, and compliance expenses related to federal regulations (Buck & Watson, 2002). The intangible costs of turnover include loss of morale among remaining staff, reductions of institutional knowledge, disruptions in essential working relationships and partnerships, and interruption in close personal ties (Kortegast & Hamrick, 2009). In fact, losing employees with exceptional social capital has been shown to have severe negative consequences for institutional performance (Shaw, Delery, Jenkins, & Gupta, 1998; Shaw, Duffy, Johnson, & Lockhart, 2005). High turnover rates have been associated with decreases in organizational performance (Alexander, Bloom, & Nuchles, 1994) as well as with organizational inefficiency and instability (Rosser, 2004). Reducing turnover has been shown to improve morale, profitability, and market value (Batt, 2002; Huselid, 1995).

Workplace turnover in academic advising. The work environments and managerial behaviors of H.E. are rarely studied in the literature, yet non-teaching professional staff is a significant segment of an institution's human resources, and they are important to its success (Rosser, 2004; Volkwein & Parmley, 2000; Volkwein & Zhou, 2003). Documentation about the turnover rates for PAAs is difficult to find. In many cases, public institutions do not track turnover in specific job groups (e.g., professional academic advising); instead, due to federal reporting standards, turnover is tracked by job categories such as "Executive, Administrative, Managerial, "Faculty, and "Other Professional" classifications. Turnover rates for PAAs are included in the "Other Professional" designation and not distinguished from the total (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2013).

As an example of the potential impact of PAA turnover at the institution where this study will be conducted, over the last decade there was an average of nearly two turnovers every year in three of the largest academic advising units. Considering that in one unit, a PAA can see well over 700 students per year, the costs of training, reassignment of workload, quality control, and departmental continuity are immeasurable.

Reasons for workplace turnover. The reasons employees leave their workplaces are numerous and varied. Tracking actual turnover is problematic because former employees are difficult to locate, and they are less likely to complete surveys and polls. Therefore, intent to leave has been used as an indicator of turnover (Johnsrud, Heck, & Rosser, 2000). When examining the intent to leave of professional staff in H.E., Johnsrud (1996) identified lack of recognition and limited career growth or advancement opportunities as two causes of frustration and low morale two antecedents of intent to leave. These findings were also supported by Johnsrud, Heck, and Rosser (2000).

Job satisfaction is another well-documented precursor of intent to leave and turnover, and intrinsic and extrinsic job context factors contribute to this construct (Herzberg, 1966). Intrinsic satisfaction includes feelings of accomplishment, creativity, and job challenge, and extrinsic satisfaction entails an individual's perspective about future income and advancement, work conditions, and relationships with others (Volkwein, Malik, & Napierski-Prancl, 1998). In H.E. many work-related factors contribute to satisfaction. Some include a supportive workplace culture, self-fulfillment, and teamwork (Berwick, 1992; Volkwein, Malik, & Napierski-Prancl, 1998), while workload stress consistently has a negative influence on job satisfaction in the literature (Volkwein & Zhou, 2003).

Psychological contracts between employers and employees have a significant impact on intent to leave. As institutions meet the employee's expectations, these psychological contracts are fortified (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). Additionally, institutions that afford career growth opportunities and reward professional development encourage occupational and organizational commitment (Thomas, 2000; Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997).

Summary

Workforce turnover is an institutional reality and eliminating it entirely is not a possibility. It is crucial, however, for institutions to make concerted efforts to minimize, voluntary workforce turnover that is dysfunctional and avoidable. Many variables contribute to workplace turnover and there are no easy management solutions. The literature identifies several human resource practices that have been shown to have a positive impact on intent to leave and workplace turnover.

Resilience and Resilience Theory

An employee's ability to adapt and bounce back from challenge is important to career management and advancement (Day & Allen, 2004; Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999). Resilience reflects the individual's ability cope with uncertainty, discomfort, and disruptions and influences the degree of risk tolerance, independence, and creativity the employee displays (London, 1983). Richardson (2002) considered resilience and resiliency to be metatheories that encompassed other psychological and educational theories. In his discussion, he described the three waves of resiliency inquiry that had been conducted up to that point. They were designed to identify 1) resilient qualities, 2) the resiliency process, and 3) innate resilience.

Wave one assigned those with the ability to survive and grow when they were faced with risk with characteristics such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, adaptive personality, achievement orientation, positive outlook, internal locus of control, and self-discipline. They were also described as individuals who were critical thinking problem-solvers who had positive support systems, "positive values (caring, honesty, responsibility, and integrity)" (p. 310), and a sense of humor.

The second wave addressed the process of acquiring resilience. Richardson (2002) explained that the resilience-acquiring process started with a disruption to the individual's biopsychospiritual homeostasis or comfort zone which conjured introspection or feelings of "loss, guilt, fear, perplexity, confusion, and bewilderment" (p. 312). In cases of positive disruptions or expected changes, such as a new position or a promotion, feelings of self-doubt or anxiety about one's ability to learn, perform, and master new duties would be evident.

The next phase of the process initiated the reintegration process and offered the individual the following choices: a) resilient reintegration, b) reintegration back to homeostasis,

c) recover with loss, or d) dysfunctional reintegration. Resilient reintegration equated to the individual's choice to grow and develop some insight as a result of the disruption and was described as an "introspective experience in identifying, accessing, and nurturing resilient qualities" (p. 312). Reintegration back to homeostasis described the individual's choice to latch on to his or her comfort zones and, in an effort to circumvent disruption, decline opportunities for growth. The person endeavored to heal and move past a disruption in this phase however in situations where there was permanent physical or emotional damage, a move, or a death, reintegration to homeostasis was not an option. In those situations, recovering with loss was the next appropriate step. Richardson (2002) stated, "Recovering with loss means that people give up some motivation, hope, or drive because of the demands from life prompts" (p. 312). When people turn to alcohol and drug abuse or any other disparaging behavior, they are in the dysfunctional reintegration phase.

The third wave of resilience inquiry dealt with the properties of innate resilience. "Resilient reintegration requires increased energy to grow, and the source of the energy, according to resiliency theory, is a spiritual source or innate resilience." (Richardson, 2002). Dunn's (1994) research on the predictors of resilient reintegration corresponded with the research on the third wave of resilience. Findings suggested that spiritual measures such as religiousness/belief in a higher power, purpose of life, and creativity were more significant than mental and physical predictors.

Summary

Career resilience has a significant effect on career self-management (Chiaburu, Baker, & Pitariu, 2006). The properties of resilience include constructs such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, independence, and positive outlook. Resilience is developed through disruptions to one's equilibrium and the individual chooses whether to grow, stagnate, or retreat in the face of difficulty. Resilient reintegration (growth) is dependent upon a spiritual or innate energy source.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the career self-management behaviors of mid-level administrators (MLAs) who formerly served as professional academic advisors (PAAs) and the career capital they believe to be helpful for advancement into mid-level administration. This qualitative, applied research study investigated why the participants believed they were successful in attaining their positions without formalized career paths into administration from academic advising. It contributes to the understanding of those in the academic advising community that aspire to administrative positions in Higher Education (H. E.) by offering information about an appropriate career management agenda. It also provides focus and direction for advisors as they manage their careers toward administrative posts. The details of the research design, selection of participants, data collection, and analysis are below. The Appendix includes supportive and supplementary information.

Research Questions

1. Why do some MLAs in H. E. who formerly served as professional academic advisors believe that they were successful in attaining their positions without following a formalized career path from academic advising?
   a. What kind of career self-management behaviors did they employ that they believe were instrumental in their current career success?
   b. How did they choose the career self-management behaviors that they employed?
2. What career capital did some MLAs in H. E. who formerly served as professional academic advisors acquire while preparing to move into H.E. administration?

a. How did they acquire the career capital that they believe prepared them to move into H.E. administration?
b. What career capital do they recommend for current academic advisors who are interested in moving into H. E. administration?

Research Design

Forty-five-to-sixty minute face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with MLAs who formerly served as PAAs were conducted to learn about the career self-management behaviors and the career capital they believed were helpful for advancement into mid-level administration. MLAs who were former PAAs were selected because they were familiar with the professional environment, the competencies, and the challenges that are associated with professional academic advising. The participants offered candid discussions about the career self-management behaviors that they employed in light of the professional setting inherent in professional academic advising. These participants were also able to identify the career capital that is desirable when moving from professional academic advising to mid-level administration.

Consistent with the conceptual framework, symbolic interactionism, this study employed a qualitative research approach because it offered the opportunity to understand why a situation exists and how a situation occurs. As a result of a pilot study, the researcher observed the potential for model or theory development. A constructivist grounded theory (GT) method was used to facilitate model development because it enables an examination of actions, intentions, and processes, and it assesses the meaning an individual assigns to each concept (Punch, 2006; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2012). Semi-structured, open-ended interviews allowed participants to expound on their perceptions of their experiences, and they allowed the researcher to go beyond understanding what happened to attempt to explain or predict what happened (Punch, 2006).

Grounded Theory – What is it?

Constructivist grounded theory (GT) is a systematic and iterative process that offers adaptable guidelines for analyzing and understanding qualitative data. It is especially useful for analyzing the complexities of the human experience and formulating theories about essential social or social psychological processes. It offers an organized approach for navigating and analyzing narrative-rich data and discovering the fundamental themes within the information (Charmaz, 2011).

According to Charmaz (2011), constructivist GT acknowledges multiple realities and the perspectives and subjectivity of the research participants and the researcher. The method understands that qualitative data is characteristically fragmented and biased. GT practitioners consider data as a mutually created entity that reflects the subjectivity of the "positions, conditions, and contingencies" (p.169) of the creation process. It corresponds with the tenets of symbolic interactionism as it strives for understanding through interpretation.

The reasoning of GT depends on the researcher's interactions with the participants, the data that is gathered, the methodical use of comparisons, the researcher's knowledge and perceptions, and how the researcher nurtures new ideas (Charmaz, 2011). The process recognizes the researcher's current knowledge and experiences but is careful not to project preconceived notions onto the participants or the research. Glaser (1978) asserted that GT methods call for existing concepts and research to earn the right to be included in the analysis instead of simply being applied to it. In essence, only those concepts that are found within the data are incorporated into the analysis. Previous literature, ideas, and theories must endure intense scrutiny to ensure that they are reflected in the data before being assimilated into the current study. The flexibility of GT allows the researcher to abandon concepts that initially framed the study if they are not found in the empirical world (Charmaz, 2011). The GT researcher approaches the study with an open mind and engages in a repetitive process of weighing a variety of theoretical explanations against empirical findings until valid explanations are found. The goal is to "discover a fundamental social or social psychological *process* about which to theorize" [emphasis mine] (Charmaz, 2011, p. 176.).

In the GT method, the researcher simultaneously collects and analyzes data and uses comparative methods to construct theories. Data analysis in GT includes coding and memo writing. A code is a descriptive label that is applied to a segment of qualitative data. As the researcher interacts with the data and observes what is happening, short active terms, or codes, are assigned to dissect and define the actions into a shorthand word or phrase. This shorthand technique is used to summarize, synthesize, and sort data, and it is a conceptual tool that breaks the data into smaller sections to be analyzed, defined, and compared (Charmaz, 2011).

Charmaz (2011) explained that those codes that represent the data best are elevated to "tentative analytic categories" (p. 165) that are interpreted and elaborated upon in written notes or memos. Memo writing allows for exploration and analytic documentation of the categories, and serves as the intermediate step between coding and writing the first draft of the study's results. The memos include insight such as, "the properties of our tentative categories, the conditions when a category is evident, how the category accounts for data and comparisons between codes and category" (p. 166). As the research continues, the categories become more abstract and theoretical, and the memos become more specific and logical. The process promotes long term and iterative examination of the emerging categories.

Memos are consistently compared to data, codes, and categories and inform new data collection. GT analysis requires constant movement between data collection and data analysis.

Examination of current data informs the selection of additional data and it influences how and when and which data that is gathered. By using tentative categories to guide the selection of subsequent data, the researcher is able to focus the inquiry and verify and refine budding theoretical categories.

Interpretation occurs throughout the GT process, but once significant or frequent categories are identified, they serve as the analytic focus and are compared against other explanations and new data collection in an effort to verify relevance and applicability. Charmaz (2011) asserted that memos define the "properties of the categories and define the category from these properties" (p. 174). As the properties of the categories are defined, the researcher can begin to identify the phases of the process and formulate theory. Memos about the processes, excerpts from participants, and discourse about the topic formulate an "analytic tale" (p. 176), and these tales are based on the connections observed (Creswell, 2009). The data analysis ends when the researcher no longer discovers new information during data collection and analysis.

Research Setting

This research was conducted on the campus of a land-grant institution in the southern United States. The university serves 25,000 students and is expected to approach 28,000 students before the 2014-2015 fall term; 20,000 are undergraduates, and 4,500 are graduate and law students. The university houses seven colleges and a law school and employs approximately 3,000 full-time and part-time staff members. There are 1,130 full-time and part-time faculty members on the main campus. The student-to-faculty ratio is 18:1.

This institution was selected because it has a large professional academic advising community. In addition, as the flagship institution for the state and a member of a statewide system of institutions, it had the potential to offer many opportunities for career growth, development, and mobility on campus for staff employees. The researcher's knowledge that several former PAAs at this institution had become MLAs on this campus made it an attractive research site as well.

Sampling and Selection of Participants

Fifteen former advisors who were serving in mid-level administrative positions were asked to participate in 45 – 60 minute in-person interviews. These participants were selected due to their unique perspective on academic advising and their ability to discuss their transition into H.E. administration. A criterion sampling technique (Patton, 2002) was employed. For convenience, MLAs from the same institution were asked to participate; which saved time and money for the researcher (Patton, 2002). All of the participants met the criteria of being MLAs on the same campus where they had served as PAAs. The researcher asked every MLA that met the criteria that she was aware of to participate in the study. This sampling method was used because the participant's rich perspectives could potentially reveal system weaknesses or areas of improvement (Patton, 2002).

A request for a query was made to the university's Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance because that office was responsible for storing employee data. The parameters for the query included current university employees who were working as MLAs and had held PAA positions on the same campus. The resulting report provided the names of 46 current MLA employees who had previously or currently held the occupational title of academic counselor. While this list provided lots of helpful information and offered a good frame of reference, it did not completely target all of the potential participants because of the range of applicable positions that could hold the academic counselor occupational title. Another challenge to this approach was that the query excluded those employees that had served as PAAs using other kinds of occupational titles.

This institution used occupational titles and working titles to classify employees. An occupational title is a state-assigned title that indicates the general responsibilities of a position. A working title is an optional descriptive moniker that indicates the specific type of work that an employee performs. For example, the occupational title of academic counselor can describe an employee who performs roles such as career counseling, professional academic advising, athletic counseling, student support services, etc. Those individuals can also hold working titles such as career advisor, student coordinator, or scholarship coordinator. Some of these positions do not necessarily have responsibilities that are solely and primarily related to professional academic advising. In some instances, an MLA can perform mid-level administrative duties while continuing to be listed in the university's computer system as an academic counselor if they still have some student advising responsibilities and their salary does not exceed the maximum allowable limit.

Of those listed in the report, 28 were eliminated because they were currently working as PAAs, and 12 were eliminated because they had not been performing professional academic advising duties as defined by the researcher even though they held the academic counselor title. Interestingly, the report also included the names of six MLAs who had previously served as PAAs but had retained their occupational title of academic counselor. The researcher knew those six MLAs, and they were added to the list of potential participants.

To identify other potential participants, university employees who had historic institutional knowledge were asked to identify individuals who met the study's criteria. Twelve people were referred but three of them did not qualify for the study; two had not served as PAAs prior to being in MLA positions, and one had been a PAA on another campus prior to earning his or her MLA position. The remaining nine referrals met the criteria, and the researcher contacted them in person, by email, or by telephone and invited them to participate in the study. Every referral was contacted; the contact script is listed in Appendix A.

Participation in the study required the participants to agree to a 45-60 minute interview, supply an updated resume, and to complete at least one journal entry about a day in the life of an administrator. The researcher knew nine of the participants already, and phone calls were used to invite their participation; all of those individuals agreed to participate immediately. Two of the remaining six participants were acquaintances, and emails were used to contact them and invite their involvement. For the remaining four participants that the researcher did not know previously, an email was used to introduce the researcher and the research topic, and to verify that the participants met the requirements before asking for their participation. All of the participants agreed to be involved quickly and enthusiastically. As soon as the participants agreed, the researcher scheduled the time and place of the interview and sent them a Microsoft Outlook® calendar invitation. An email reminder was sent the day before the appointment to remind the participant of the interview and to request their resume and journal entries. The demographic breakdown of the participants is represented in Tables 1-5.

Table 1. Gender of Participants

Total Participants	15	
Gender	**Males**	**Females**
	6	9

Table 2. Ethnicity of Participants

Ethnicity	**Caucasian**	**African - American**	**Asian**
	10	4	1

Table 3. Age of Participants

Age Group	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-50	51+
	1	2	5	4	2	1

Table 4. Education of Participants by Gender

Education by Gender	Bachelors +	Masters	Masters +	Doctorate
Males	0	0	4	2
Females	1	2	2	4

Table 5. Education of Participants by Age

Education by Age	Bachelors +	Masters	Masters +	Doctorate
25-29			1	
30-34		1	1	
35-39	1	1	3	
40-44				3
45-50			1	2
50+				1

When conducting work-based research with colleagues, issues such as negotiating access, ensuring confidentiality, and navigating power dynamics can arise. Some of those issues were addressed by obtaining written permission from the dean of the college where the researcher worked, and by seeking permission from the director of one of the campus' largest Advising Centers (See Appendices D and C). The potential for power dynamics is a concern when conducting work-based research with colleagues and the researcher was deliberate about communicating how the interview data would be used and gave detailed information about the research process in the informed consent form.

To protect the participant's identity and ensure confidentiality (Costley, Elliott & Gibbs, 2010) the researcher took specific actions. For example, one participant had specific questions about confidentiality. Therefore, this researcher chose not to provide a list of pseudonyms along with the corresponding demographic information. Another protective measure included using off-site storage for interview recordings and transcripts. Those steps were clearly communicated to participants to make them feel more comfortable about being involved in the research study and to calm any fears about their reflections about their workplace experiences being available to others.

Data Collection Procedures and Instrumentation

The interviews were conducted over the summer and fall of 2013 in either the participant's office or the researcher's office. Each participant was given the option of where he or she wanted to be interviewed. Thirteen of the interviews were conducted in the participants' offices. The general setting of these offices could be described as private with one door and outfitted with typical office furniture such as desks, chairs, and computers. In most cases, the researcher sat across the desk from the participant with the recording device placed on the desk in front of the interviewee. The researcher took written notes from a notepad in her lap and the interviews were recorded with a hand-held voice recorder. In one instance, the recorder ran out of space on the recorder during the interview and the iPad was used to record the remainder of the interview. The sound file was removed immediately from the iPad and transferred to the USB drive that stored other interview data.

One interview took place in the researcher's office, which also had a door and was furnished with a desk, a side table and chairs, and a computer. The interview took place at the side table with the participant and the interviewee seated on either side of the table. The recorder sat on the table between them and notes were taken from a notepad in the researcher's lap. One interview was conducted in a semi-private setting in the seating area of the student union food court. Although there was no door, there were no people around, and the food service had been completed for the day. The researcher and interviewee sat across from each other at a small table with the recorder between them and a notepad on the table in front of the researcher.

At the beginning of each interview, the participants were given an Informed Consent Form (Appendix E). The researcher reviewed the contents of the consent form and emphasized confidentiality; each participant signed it prior to the interview. Field notes were written immediately after each interview, documenting the researcher's impressions, the setting, and any non-verbal cues that were observed (Charmaz, 2011).

The interviews and journals were transcribed by the researcher into Microsoft Word®, using a lightly edited verbatim method, which preserved the meaning of the text but allowed for smoother reading and interpretation (Powers, 2005). Each transcript began in a standardized manner with the file number, the interviewee's pseudonym, the interviewer's name, start time, ending time, and transcription key (Appendix G). Pseudonyms were used because they protected the identity of the participants but allowed them to have a distinctive voice. Using pseudonyms also helps the reader to conceptualize the participants and their worlds (Charmaz, 2011). Each transcript included line numbers so data could be located easily.

As the goal of the transcription was to facilitate the analysis and comprehension of the interview, the verbatim transcript was reviewed, corrected, and verified by the researcher. This task included grammar corrections, removing "nonwords" (Powers, 2005, p. 61) and false starts, and adding words or comments that assisted with readability or understanding. According to Powers (2005), attending to grammar and adding editorial or contextual comments is desirable when clarification and understanding are the intent of the transcript. Member checks allowed each participant the opportunity to review their transcript and edit their words. Nine participants responded to the request to member check; none of them had significant changes, but minor grammatical or clarifying adjustments were made to four transcripts. The script inviting participants to member check is included in Appendix J.

Participant journals and resumes were used to analyze "the practical social context of everyday life within which they are constructed and used" (Miller, 1997, p. 77). These meaning-making exercises allowed the researcher to "reconstruct, sustain, contest and change our senses of social reality" (Miller, 1997, p.77). Participants were asked to submit at least one journal entry entitled "A Day in the Life of a Mid-Level Administrator." Using the university's Blackboard® system, a private "Journal" was created for each participant that allowed him or her to write about the tasks, responsibilities, interactions, skills, and competencies that he or she experienced or used throughout out the day. The journal offered a glimpse of the typical day in the life of an MLA. Reminder emails and instructions on how to complete the task were sent to the participants; a copy of the emails and instructions is included in Appendices H and I. Updated resumes were collected from all of the participants for document analysis. They substantiated the career content and the progression that the participants asserted in their interviews.

The interview questions were tested during a pilot study. As a result of that study, the interview protocol was expanded by adding four questions and sub-questions. The new questions related to the participants' emotional, psychological and personal adjustments; details about specific career self-management behaviors; and the CSM changes participants would make about their careers. The interview protocol for this study is included in Appendix F.

The interviews started with general questions such as "Please tell me about your career" which was designed to facilitate comfortable discussion and establish a conversational partnership (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Those opening questions led to more specific questions such as, “Please tell me about your job history in chronological order” and “To what do you contribute your success?” Open-ended questions that began with “tell me about” and “how” were used to draw out the participant’s perspective and facilitated conversation without imposing preconceived expectations (Charmaz, 2011).

Data Analysis

Qualitative research in applied social science is concerned with understanding humans, their behavior, and the meaning they assign to social phenomena (Patton, 2002). Because the aim of this research is to understand human behavior and to develop expository theory about humans and their behavior, an applied qualitative research design was employed (Patton, 2002; Punch, 2006). A constructivist grounded theory (GT) method of data analysis was used to facilitate the identification of a model for professional academic advisors who aspire to mid-level administration in H.E. (Dey, 1999). GT methods were appropriate for this study because they allowed for the development of substantive theories due to its ability to “demystify the conduct of qualitative inquiry” (p. 4) that can be associated with the study of human behavior (Charmaz, 2006).

Organization

Two methods of organization were employed to ensure that research materials were tracked and that a complete inventory of the documentation was maintained (Patton, 2002). A large 3-ring binder with tabbed dividers for each participant held the original copies of the informed consent document, the participant resumes, and the participant journals. As transcripts were completed, they were placed in the binder as well. Electronic copies of each item were stored on a USB drive; however, instead of being filed by participant name, this information was stored with like items. For instance, all journals were organized in one electronic folder while all transcripts were filed in a different electronic folder. The researcher deliberately checked both organization methods to ensure that the same materials were in both places.

Coding

To develop a model or theory, this study followed the guidelines of GT and used two cycles of coding that are described by Saldaña (2009) and Charmaz (2006). Initial coding or open coding was used to dismantle the data, line-by-line, into smaller parts that were examined and compared. Using the "Comment" function in Microsoft Word®, small segments of data in the interview and journal transcripts were labeled with a code, specifically, a word or short phrase that reflected what the data was about. This technique allowed the researcher to identify processes, "participant actions that have antecedents, causes, consequences, and a sense of temporality" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 84). Each code began with a data-identifier, an abbreviation for the pseudonym, and the line number where the segment was located in the document. For instance, "AB72" meant that the code described data from participant AB and was located on line 72 of the transcript). When appropriate, In Vivo coding, a method that uses the participant's actual phrases or words as codes, was used to understand the speaker's perspective, behavior, and actions through the capture of their vocabulary (Strauss, 1987). In other instances, the researcher chose a code that reflected the sentiment of the data and assigned it to the segment. Examples of initial codes are "Taking Initiative" or "Seeking Professional Growth."

After initial coding was completed on a transcript, each code was copied and pasted into another Microsoft Word® document that stored a running list of all codes. Once the codes were listed in the new document, they were compared to each other and sorted into tentative categories. Analytic memos were written to document thoughts, explanations, and preliminary conclusions about the categories and they facilitated code and category generation during data analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2009). An example of a tentative category is "Personal Attribute" or "Motivation"

The second coding cycle involved focused coding, which allowed the researcher to reorganize similar codes into clusters or categories. Once all of the transcripts were coded, the codes from the Microsoft Word® document were copied and pasted into a Microsoft Excel® document for additional sorting. The researcher felt that Excel® offered more sorting and organizing flexibility because data could be sorted by data-identifier, by code, by category, or by theme. Codes for journals were initially placed on a separate Excel® sheet to allow the researcher to concentrate on one type of data at a time. Journal codes were added to the interview codes after the interview codes were organized.

Along with reflective memos, the focused coding method created connections within the data that provided focus or direction for the data analysis and for comparison. For example, the code "Taking Initiative" was placed with other codes such as "Being Proactive" and "Self-Advocacy." When a central or core category was found in the data, it was identified by name, and the analytic memo reflected this discovery (Saldaña, 2009). To continue the example above, the codes "Taking Initiative," "Being Proactive," and "Self-Advocacy" were used to create a larger category called "Personal Attributes." As the data was repeatedly sorted and compared broader and more abstract categories emerged from the data to create overall themes. For example, the category "Personal Attributes" was grouped with other categories such as "Motivation" and "Skills" to create a larger theme called "Who They Are", which identified some of the characteristics that made the participants effective in moving from advising to administration. This "abstract, theoretical understanding of the studied experience" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 4) produced theory that was grounded in the collected data.

Interpreting

Considerable time was spent to find the "best fit" (Patton, 2002, p. 553); the researcher tried alternative patterns to help explain or interpret the data. The theme "Who They Are" crystallized early; identifying the impact of the participants' personal characteristics on the CSM process was not difficult. The researcher identified one theme labeled "What They Did" as a potential explanation for the observations; however, this explanation was not adequate because in essence, the reason *why* the participant choose a particular career self-management strategy was more important to understanding the process for selecting CSM behaviors than simply noting their overt actions. Another early theme was "What They Experienced," yet this theme did not offer the best explanation of the data because the most significant CSM processes occurred as a result of the challenges they encountered, specifically their career challenges. Therefore the "What They Experienced" theme was too broad and did not address the root of the issue. As the analysis continued, the themes evolved into "Who They Are," "The Challenges They Overcame," and "The Career Strategies They Employed." This strenuous and repetitive process demonstrated "intellectual integrity" (Patton, 2002, p. 553) and added credibility to the research findings.

Judging the Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research

Charmaz (2006) outlined criteria for credibility, originality, transferability, resonance, and usefulness of GT studies. These criteria correlate with concerns about "truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 18), and they can be addressed within the limits of naturalistic inquiry. Credibility and transferability correlate to internal validity and external validity respectively (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Triangulation or cross-checking was achieved by document analysis and resume review. The participants submitted written journals articulating the tasks, responsibilities, and experiences they encountered in their administrative roles. They also provided resumes to corroborate their stated career progression. The participants were given the opportunity to perform member checks to respond to the researcher's interpretation of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Patton (2002) stated that "rigorous methods, the credibility of the researcher, and the philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry" (p. 552) are the three required elements of credibility in qualitative research. The researcher used rigorous methods for data analysis by following the steps of grounded theory and engaging in a thorough intellectual process to identify the "best fit" (p. 553) as outlined above. Further, the researcher acknowledged her own experiences as a former professional academic advisor and the potential research biases that may arise from that perspective. Further discussion about the researcher is included in the *Role of the Researcher* section below. The researcher also believes in the philosophical value of qualitative inquiry and its merit in answering the research questions of this study.

Transferability and Resonance

Transferability was addressed through the systematic comparisons of the GT process. The researcher was conscious to ensure that the categories applied to a broad set of observations within the data and that the evidence for the claims and theories were substantial enough for readers to arrive at similar claims independently. Dense, descriptive narrative provides context and a basis of comparison for researchers to use in other applications (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

With the possibility of future extrapolation in mind, the size of the sample, the sampling technique, and research design were chosen to allow the findings to apply to similar settings and situations. Fifteen participants, a healthy number for a qualitative study, criterion sampling, and rich research design produced relevant information that enables others to selectively use the findings in other settings (Patton, 2002).

The Role of Researcher

The researcher serves as the data collection instrument in qualitative studies; therefore, it is important to disclose biases, expectations, and assumptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Patton (2002) defined a researcher with empathic neutrality as one who desires to "understand the world as it unfolds" (p. 51) and offers balanced treatment of the findings. This researcher previously served as a professional academic advisor on the campus where the research took place. Although no longer in that role, the researcher was intimately familiar with the roles, responsibilities, and perspectives of the participants, and she considered herself as an insider for this research. In some cases, the researcher knew the participants socially, and in other cases, she met them for the first time during the research process.

According to symbolic interactionism, the researcher should acquire pertinent experiences about the phenomenon under investigation and get as close to the world that is being studied as possible. First-hand knowledge enables the researcher to be able to sufficiently theorize about the experiences (Blumer, 1969). From this standpoint, this researcher's intimate knowledge about the world of a PAA wass an asset that allowed greater depth of understanding.

Familiarity presents distinct challenges for researchers (Schram, 2006). Experiential knowledge and underlying assumptions can threaten the integrity of data collection and analysis and make maintaining a "marginal social and detached intellectual stance" (p. 127) very difficult.

The researcher was conscious of these issues and was careful to formulate open-ended interview questions that created opportunities for her ideas to be challenged or discounted. For example, the researcher asked one African-American male participant if he thought his race hindered career advancement in H.E. The researcher expected to hear about some race-related frustrations and examples of negative experiences, but instead the participant stated that he believed that there were opportunities for African-American males in H.E., and while he had endured some difficulties that he attributed to race, overall he was optimistic about his career trajectory and those of other minorities in the field. The researcher's willingness to have her assumptions be challenged allowed for broader thinking and greater insight into the data and the participants (Schram, 2006).

The researcher was also watchful to monitor the use of advising jargon in language that might encourage the participants to skip familiar but potentially important information. Additionally, the researcher was attentive to ask clarifying questions about information and concepts that may have needed further explanation or clarification from the participants. For example, one participant briefly mentioned the rigors of working during orientation in the summer. Even though the participant and the researcher shared chuckles and knowing glances, the researcher asked her to describe orientation and the duties that are associated with advising and to briefly explain why the season was so rigorous. Being conscious of opportunities to expand the dialogue preserved the integrity of the data (Schram, 2006).

The researcher understood that both she and the participants assumed multiple roles in the study that could coalesce to produce rich and meaningful results. Although social and professional relationships existed with many participants, the researcher understood that the intent of the interview was to gather data for the research project, and she governed her approach and behavior accordingly. No assumptions were made that participants would automatically consent to be included in the study. Friends were accorded the same professionalism that other, previously unknown participants received. All emails, phone calls, and in-person conversations related to the study were conducted in the same manner for all participants.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to learn about the career self-management behaviors of MLAs who formerly served as PAAs and the career capital they believed was helpful for advancement into mid-level administration. Using constructivist grounded theory methods, the researcher used a qualitative, iterative process of data collection, coding, categorizing, memo-writing, and constant comparison to analyze the data and formulate relevant and applicable theory. Being mindful of the trustworthiness, limitations, and the roles of the researcher, this study utilized appropriate techniques to protect the integrity of the results.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

The purpose of this study was to learn about the career self-management (CSM) behaviors of mid-level administrators (MLAs) who formerly served as professional academic advisors (PAAs) and the career capital they believed was helpful for advancement into mid-level administration. Career self-management refers to the proactivity an individual exhibits in managing their career. It is a lifelong, self-monitored process of career planning and implementation that involves choosing and setting personal goals, formulating strategies for achieving them, and taking action (DiRenzo, 2010; De Vos & Soens, 2008). Career capital is a complex construct that operates as the channel through which career self-management achieves desirable career outcomes (DiRenzo, 2010; Luthans & Youssef, 2004).

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were used to investigate why participants believed they were successful in attaining their positions without formalized career paths into administration from academic advising. This study sought to understand the career self-management behaviors of fifteen mid-level administrators (MLAs) in higher education (H.E.) who formerly served as professional academic advisors (PAAs). A parallel pursuit was to identify the career capital they believed was helpful for advancement into mid-level administration and to provide focus and direction about an appropriate career self-management agenda for those advisors who desire administrative positions in H. E.. This chapter offers a brief description of the participants and discusses the findings of the research.

Description of the Participants

Fifteen participants, six males and nine females, were included in the study. Each participant held a mid-level administrative position, and many held Assistant Director, Associate

Director, and Director working titles. The racial/ethnic make-up of the group included ten Caucasians, four African-Americans, and one Asian participant. Their ages ranged from late twenties to upper fifties, and they all held at least a Bachelor's degree. The educational background of the participants included six with doctorates, six that had coursework beyond a Master's degree, two that had a Master's degree, and one person that had coursework beyond a Bachelor's degree.

The non-verbal communication style of each of the participants was comfortable, confident, and gracious. All of the interviews were relaxed, cordial, and involved lots of laughter; partly because of the stories the MLAs shared, and partly due to the nature of the relationships that the researcher had established previously with some of the participants. Evidence of participant engagement included comfortable yet continuous eye contact, smiling, nodding, and active participation in the interview process. Unsolicited acts of engagement such as silencing cellphones, choosing not to answer office phones, and asking administrative staff to hold their calls indicated their involvement and commitment to the project.

Investigating the career behavior of the participants revealed three primary themes:

1. Who they are;
2. The career challenges they overcame;
3. The career strategies they used.

Each theme has sub-categories that further illuminate the unique characteristics of the participants. At the end of this chapter, a section labeled *Self-Defined Opportunities for Improvement* explains behaviors, thoughts, or skills that participants wished they could have changed or acquired as they reflected back on their careers. In many cases, participants accepted previous experiences, reactions, and behaviors as necessary elements of growth and development and appreciated the lessons that accompanied their lives and the career challenges they endured. However, most were still able to identify areas of improvement, or knowledge, skills, or attitudes that would have been helpful as they navigated their career paths. Also included at the end of the chapter is a segment called What Advisors Should Know. This section offers the participant's recommendations to PAAs for personal and professional growth as they prepare to move into mid-level administration.

Theme One: Who They Are - Purpose-Driven Lives

An overwhelming commonality of the participants was their clearly defined sense of self and purpose. This self-definition guided their career decisions and the way they prioritized their lives. Characteristics of this theme can be divided into two categories: personal attributes and motivation; and education and skills.

Category 1: Personal attributes and motivation. The personal attributes and motivation of the participants significantly impacted how they approached and perceived their career progression. Characteristics such as proactive personality and assertiveness, resilience, commitment, outlook, self- knowledge, and self-confidence were especially important qualities for each participant. Motivating factors such as meaningful work, passion for helping students and others, and the pursuit of personal and professional growth served as the backdrop for their career and life philosophies.

Proactive and assertive. "I'm a go-getter and a self-starter," stated Sarah, a high energy associate director in her mid-thirties, but this sentiment could have come from many of the participants in this study. For example, when asked about her perspective on career advancement, Sharon, a newly promoted Director stated, "If you're just doing your job, you're never going to get anywhere because that's what everybody else is doing… It's definitely possible, but you have to go after it. It's not a passive experience."

This call to action was consistent with the feelings of other participants and emphasized their desire to maintain forward career movement. "I never want to become complacent," stated Don, a first-generation college graduate and newly named associate director, "I want to make sure I keep myself [focused] on Higher Ed." Sharon confirms that proactivity and initiative were crucial elements of her career advancement. After hearing about a position coming open unexpectedly, she acted promptly and described her reaction as follows:

> I ran …as soon as I heard that they were having issues, I went to [the supervisor] and said, "If you need me, I'm available." … I truly think that I would not be where I am if I had not taken that initiative and had not been listening for those opportunities.

Being poised for action and taking initiative was an important personal attribute for these participants, but this quality was not necessarily an innate trait. Alex, an Associate Director in his mid-thirties, recognized the value of being assertive later in his career, "I had to start initiating conversations with people and not waiting on them to come to [me]." This change in behavior sparked a progression of positive career-self management actions for Alex. He described his approach as follows:

> I always want to be ahead…just trying to look forward. That's something that I did not do before I got here. I'm starting to look into the future to see what I can do to make my life and my job better.

Taking the initiative to meet a hiring manager ultimately led Charles, a program director in his mid-thirties, to his first mid-level administration position. "I looked [the job] up, and I went [to the hiring manager] and said, 'I would like an opportunity to sit down and meet with you. Can I sit down and talk to you?'" Charles felt that taking initiative to arrange a face-to-face meeting would allow the hiring manager to see a more complete picture than what his paper credentials could offer. He offered the details of his strategy as follows:

> I want[ed] to know more about the job and I want[ed] her to meet me as a person and not just see my name on paper and say, okay, this is just another [applicant]… So I [thought], if she got to know me and got to know who I am, maybe I'd have a shoe in – not necessarily get the job, but she would say, "Yeah, this person deserves to at least have an interview," you know?

In the early developmental years of the program that Melanie oversees, necessity mandated that she take the initiative to learn new competencies and skills. She described her actions as follows:

> [The program] grew and I was always looking for ways to get out and do different things – we didn't have a brochure, we didn't have a website – things that people take for granted now. I had to learn how to build my own website from scratch. There was some support from our IT services with little mini-courses, but basically it was self-taught.

Resilient. Resilience, the ability to recover or bounce back, was a common characteristic for the participants, although the methods used to develop resilience varied and were unique to each individual. Participants fought back from personal and professional mistakes, negative experiences in their backgrounds, and professional disappointments. Tactics such as learning from mistakes, reframing situations, self-reflection, seeking counsel, and taking action were some of those used to help the participants to become buoyant. For example, Harold, an associate director, recalled his first introduction to student leadership as follows:

> I was in charge of 16 student orientation leaders and that was my team, man. I worked hard at molding them into a team and I made lots of mistakes. Before I took the position they had a practice of doing an evaluation of the program and one of the things they got to evaluate was me. Some of them weren't kind and I was ready to cry like a school girl. They hurt my feelings because I put so much of my time and effort in to it. But it caused me to do some reflective thinking on the things that I had done right and things that I had done wrong.

Jumping back into the ring after such a crushing blow was difficult, but Harold acknowledged the need to keep going and shared his strategy for continuing as follows:

> The only failure is not learning from your mistakes, because you're going to make mistakes. I will continue to make mistakes and I try not to be hard on people when they make mistakes. They need to learn from them. Even when I make mistakes, I'm embarrassed and frustrated and mad, but I try to reflect and figure out what I need to do to avoid that in the future.

Charles had quite a bit of practice being resilient and rallied back from negative messages communicated to him throughout his youth and professional life. He described his perspective as follows:

> I didn't even think I would go to college in the first place... you've got people that are doubters - they're going to doubt you. So you start believing in other people's perception of you rather than believing wholeheartedly in your skills and abilities. And I figured out that no matter what you do, people are going to doubt you. You can't be scared to fail and you can't be afraid of rejection. It ran through my mind a lot, "I don't want to fail, I always want to succeed," but you learn a lot from failing as well.

Melanie demonstrated resilience as she reframed back-to-back professional disappointments, "It was difficult for me because in addition to not being able to get reclassified, I wasn't even considered capable of being interim director." After years of patience, however, she ultimately got the position of her dreams, "Maybe that's the other take home: If you want the best, you have to be willing to give up some things to get others." Deciding to reframe the situation and identify the eventual positive outcome helped Melanie bounce back and remain committed.

Salita's resilience was tested when she experienced an unexpected job loss. The offered the following:

> I did that [job] for three years and then an opportunity arose for me to transition into the business side of [the organization]. I worked in that aspect of the business for about 6 months and then [there was] a merger. In a merger, the last one hired is usually the first one fired. So they gave me a severance package and said, "Ok, thanks, you've got to go find something else," unless I could find something within the company.

The transition was especially difficult with the economic conditions during that time, "Living in the inner city [with] only a certain amount of job experience and a bachelor's degree made it difficult, to say the least, to try to find something that I really wanted to do." Salita's comeback included self-reflection, taking action, and seeking spiritual counsel. "I figured the Lord was speaking to me at that point, and maybe it was time for me to do something else. I took that opportunity to do some job searching… [and] I talked to my pastor." Each of the participants displayed resilience over the course of their careers, which allowed them to gain competencies that helped them move forward in life and in their careers.

Committed, willing to help, and student-focused. The participants in this study were committed to their work and had a strong desire to help students and others. George explained the following:

> I care. I've always treated jobs as if they were all mine. What I mean is that, whomever I work for, I want to do the job they would do if they were me, you know, that kind of ownership. I'm also dependable. That's usually the first word that I use [to describe myself]. I get things done.

This type of commitment is not unusual. Many participants spoke of their connection to their work and the sense of pride they derived from their careers. Alex shared his perspective on his work and the moment he began to think differently about his role and its significance as follows:

> Back [when I was an advisor], I used to look at my job like, "I'm in at eight and I'm out of the door at four-thirty and that's it, no more, no less." [Since then], I've poured a lot into this… I have a laptop that I take home and pretty much, my work day ends when I go to sleep. It's more a part of my life and I've invested a lot of me into it. Even now when the students aren't here, I'm thinking, "What do we do next?" and I'm planning for them. Whereas in the past [my mindset was] "I just show up, do what I do, and go home and forget about it until the next day."

Taking work home and going above and beyond the expected was commonplace activity for many of the participants. "I take my computer home and work on it when my family is asleep," declared Sarah. A strong work ethic was woven through the narratives of many of the participants. When discussing the origin of her work habits, Melanie attributed them to her upbringing and described them as follows:

> It [is] just innate. You work hard, you do the right thing. It was a 'get-there-before-the-first-person-at-the-beginning-of-the-day-and-you're-the-last-person-to-leave' kind of thing. I mean, this whole notion of you go into work at 8:00 and turn off the computer at 4:30 – I haven't had that in years.

The participants made these sacrifices because of their student-focus. "How I impact students is the first thing on my mind," stated Dennis when discussing his decision-making process. For Sarah, the opportunity to teach valuable skills to the students was important to her, "I was really excited to build relationships with the students and give them some life skills during their first year [on campus]. I was advising undeclared students and I loved it because they were so worried about what they were doing and I could be [the one to say], "It's okay" and I really liked that."

The desire to help someone was significant for these participants and the participants drew strength from their contributions to others. "I always liked helping people connect to resources they wouldn't have otherwise been able to connect to," explained Ellen, "kind of evening the playing field." Seeing students grow and mature was a major bonus for the participants. Janet described her pride in her student's accomplishment as follows:

> We had one student in particular that graduated from a small, rural high school… last year she graduated with [an advanced] degree from Harvard. The scholarship enables students to come to college and grow to expand their horizons, graduate, and go on to do great things. Their successes are what keep me inspired.

Harold believed that helping students adjust is one of his main responsibilities; it is a role he took seriously. He described his viewpoint as follows:

> [I enjoy] helping and mentoring students. Student Affairs and Student Services are areas that most people at universities – especially faculty – look at as a drain on resources. But I've seen plenty of students in this office who are not prepared socially or academically to be here, but here they are. And I think Student Affairs offers that opportunity to help them adjust. It's my job to make sure they're

> taking the right classes and if I see somebody in my office that needs help, I try to help them.

Self-confident and risk takers. The participants displayed significant levels of self-confidence which, in many cases, appeared to be rooted in their self-knowledge and an awareness of their personal strengths. Alex admitted that he had some minor concerns, but overall he was sure of himself when he accepted his assistant director role, "I was very confident in my ability to work with students…I knew that learning the curriculum would come. It takes a while to learn all of that no matter where you're going."

Ellen was confident that she would do well in her new role because she knew she would be playing to her strengths. Interacting with people and making things happen were activities that she enjoyed and she excelled in those areas, "I knew I would excel because I was going to be playing to an audience. I'm not made to be sitting behind a desk all day. I need to be interacting with people…I like to see end results."

Harold anticipated little difficulty taking on his new responsibilities either. His approach to learning new things was to jump in head first. He was self-motivated, fearless, and confident in his ability to learn, "I don't know that it ever crossed my mind that I couldn't [do the job]. [When given a new task my response is], 'I don't know anything about it and I'm going to make a few mistakes, but I'm going to learn it.' I don't think there's anything I don't think I couldn't be successful at if I truly wanted to do it. And I was motivated to get in there and learn that job."

However, not everyone was as confident in their abilities right away. Some had to develop confidence along the way. Allison described her experience as follows:

> I still get challenged. [In the beginning], I got nervous every time I was given an assignment to do. I thought, "Oh my gosh! Can I do this?" Literally, I get reinforcement from other people after I do something [and they say], "Yeah, you can do this." So it's a stretching exercise.

Being stretched is a risky undertaking, but many of the participants submitted to the challenge and were willing to tolerate some degree of risk as they managed their careers. Melanie compared her career change from private industry to academia to a mid-life crisis, "But I was willing to take the chance and then I found that I just really loved it. I have no regrets."

Dennis was comfortable with the risks associated with his latest career move, "I think part of it was that I have pretty strong faith, and part of it was just that I'm okay with jumping into things and not knowing what the outcome is going to be. Personally I don't have a problem with that. I think I had enough skills and confidence to do it."

There appeared to be a certain comfort level with not knowing the outcome of situations with many of the participants. Harold has learned a lot about leadership over the years from watching others and has learned to embrace risk. "You have to make decisions, [and] you don't always know what the answer's going to be. If you know what the answer's going to be, you're just a manager, [not a leader]."

Another example of risk taking was demonstrated when Ellen accepted the opportunity to add responsibilities to her own position and increase her marketability; in doing so, she risked irritating some of her co-workers. "I was creating my own position… I saw this little hole and saw that there was a little money attached it [and I asked], "Can we add that into what I'm doing?" The risk turned out to be personally worthwhile, and her colleagues received their own benefits down the line. Risking relationships, however, can be especially difficult, but Charles believed there are times when it is worth the strain. He expounded as follows:

> There are going to be some times when we disagree, and you may or may not like me for my decisions … but that's how we build relationships. A friend doesn't always agree with you. That's the influence of diversity – diversity of opinion, diversity of views. And if I'm always going to agree with you, you're not going to be any better for that. If I can disagree with you and tell you how things really are, it helps [both of us] in the long-run, because I want that feedback too.

Open to learning and opportunity. Being open to new experiences and learning new skills, methods, and perspectives was a common trait among participants. Many mentioned a consistent need and desire to learn either for professional utility or for personal enjoyment. Ellen shared how she constantly learns new information and applies it to her job responsibilities as follows:

> I find myself involved in activities I've never done before very often. For example, yesterday I talked with an employer who was interested in developing a [new] internship. After our discussion, I realized he didn't have any of the details ready to post this position. So, I spent time researching [similar] job descriptions and salaries to put this together for him and to reach out to faculty in [that department], and staff involved with the [program]. Now I have two meetings scheduled to learn more about the [relevant student] organizations as well as put together information for the position posting.

The need to update competencies and remain current with trends in higher education required the participants to continue to learn new skills. The participants accepted the challenge to confront personal hurdles in order to make professional progress. Don indicated a desire to learn statistics because it is a personal barrier for him, “I want to overcome the fear of statistics... I don’t necessarily want a degree in statistics, but I’m a believer in life-long learning because I love to learn.”

Learning was accomplished through multiple avenues for these participants. “I’m always doing research on the internet and reading articles,” stated Sarah. Ellen, Gloria, Alex, George, Harold, and Wanda mentioned reading books, taking classes, and viewing webinars to remain current and update their skills. Learning from observation and from trying new experiences were other mechanisms mentioned by the participants. “I’ve always known that I needed to continue to experiment to see what I liked and disliked,” offered Don.

Learning was an exciting part of life for Sharon, “Once I became a college student, I think I just found my calling. I loved being on campus, I loved academe… I just loved the entire part of the student process and becoming educated. I'm a first-generation college [graduate], so I just fell in love when I hit the college campus." This passion for learning permeated every facet of life for many of these participants and they embraced the opportunities that learning new concepts and skills offered.

Motivation. The participants were motivated by their passion for their jobs, and they wanted fulfilling work that was personally meaningful. They were drawn to work that had purpose and that correlated with their personal values. Many of them discussed their spiritual connection to God as a motivating factor in their careers, and considered their work as an expression of that relationship.

Passion and fulfillment. A clear and consistent pattern with these participants was their passion, deep sense of purpose, and desire to grow and be challenged. Don explained as follows:

> Being in H.E. is something I'm passionate about. Seeing students graduate, earn internships and study abroad opportunities, go to grad school – that's a worthwhile experience and a great feeling over all.

The passion about which Don spoke was found in all of the participants' stories. The passion for their work undergirded their daily efforts and provided immense fulfillment. Ellen expressed her passion as follows:

> I've always been passionate about liberal arts and the skills that students are developing. How can they market them better? How can they understand the value [of their education]? How can faculty educate students on how these skills are useful – not just if you go to grad school, but you can do something with it as an undergraduate. So I'm really passionate about that.

These former advisors were able to sustain their passion because of the sense of fulfillment the work offers. Melanie explains as follows:

> One of the reasons that I've continued doing what I'm doing is that I get enormous gratification from doing this. I love coming to work – I know that sounds cliché but I never regret Monday. It's like, "Oh good!" By the end of the week you're tired and kind of burned out, but I've never felt happier [in another position].

Spiritual connection. When asked how they defined success, none of the participants mentioned money, titles, or material items, although many acknowledged the desire to be compensated fairly for their contributions. Instead, words like “happiness”, “fulfillment”, “making a difference”, and “helping others” were used to explain their idea of success. To describe the attributes of their success, many mentioned a range of career capital components including personal attributes, connections, and hard work. But some discussed their spiritual connection to God. Wanda responded as follows:

> Ultimately, God [is the source of my success]. My faith [is important to me] and knowing that there is someone who is guiding me [is helpful]. Ultimately it’s God that I’d have to attribute for my success.

Don also attributed his success to God, and discussed how he applies his spiritual life to his work, “[My career] is an opportunity for God to use me to be a blessing to college students and I think that’s the reason for my existence – to help others - and I’m able to do that in H.E.”

Meaningful work and growth opportunities. The desire to have meaningful work was a substantial motivator for these participants. George painted a dramatic picture of what meaningful work signified to him, “For me, it has to have some sort of student benefit. It also can’t be something where I feel like a little bit of my soul dies every day when I walk into the office [because the work is meaningless].”

Being challenged to grow personally and professionally was also a strong motivational factor for these participants. “You get to the point where you learn all of the policies and all of the rules,” explained Janet, as she discussed her readiness to move on from advising. “And I got to a point where I felt like I had it and I didn’t know if I could offer any more so I was looking for a new challenge.”

Although they enjoyed their work, the desire to conquer new challenges and accept more responsibility was appealing. Ellen stated the following:

> I still liked working with students, and I still liked the specific population I was working with, but I wanted some leadership potential. I liked the idea of being able to supervise others and I liked the idea of having more influence … and managing programs. I wanted to do those things.

Having influence and being able to contribute their ideas was important to many participants. Wanda appreciated being able to expand her responsibilities and the scope of her work while maintaining contact with students, “One of the great things about this position was that I was still able to meet with students but also have the opportunity to be a manager and have some say in the day-to-day activities of an office... and have a little more freedom to interact with faculty and staff across campus.”

Not everyone, however, was motivated by such altruistic efforts. Alex, for example, was motivated by fear. He explained, “I think fear of failure is what motivates me. I don’t want to be caught off guard.” The desire to accomplish and be his best pushed him, and the thought of not reaching his goals kept him on his toes.

Category 2: Education and Skills. Educational credentials and a wide variety of life and professional skills are important components of a well-developed career self-management strategy. In addition to educational qualifications, the participants were adept at working with and through other people to produce results. Utilizing a variety of practical and occupation-specific skills, the participants were able to implement and execute ideas, plans, and programs.

Education. Attaining educational credentials was clearly an important component in the career self-management strategy of these mid-level administrators. All but one of the fifteen participants held at least a master’s degree and six held doctorate degrees. One administrator had two master’s degrees and another was working toward his second master’s degree. The person without a master’s degree had credits toward it and one person was working on a doctorate degree. Three of the participants had credit hours towards doctoral coursework.

People skills. This group of former advisors had a broad knowledge base from which to draw efficiency and productivity skills. The ability to relate to people was a valuable skill for these participants, especially when working with a wide cross-section of constituents that included students, parents, peers, and upper administrators. "I think a lot of it is the way you carry yourself and making sure people know that you're listening," offered Dennis as he discussed his ability to move fluidly from one audience to another and remain effective. "I'm definitely not the smartest guy, it hasn't been brains that have helped me as much, but I think it has been the ability to listen, develop relationships, collaborate, and push things on."

An essential skill for advisors and administrators is working productively with people. Wanda honed her ability to work with a variety of personnel through observing the faux pas of others and explains the following:

> You can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar. To help my relationships with faculty go well, I try to treat them as experts in their field even though I may know more about the degree plan because I study it every single day. I learned that through my interactions and through watching others do a very poor job of it. I saw how aggressive and confrontational approaches really strained relationships across campus, when the same thing could have been accomplished in a different way.

Being able to relate to and empathize with others is not necessarily an instinctual ability. Janet took a class to help her understand the perspectives of others that have had different experiences than her own and explained the following:

> It helped me when I was working with students who said, "I'm bi-polar" or "My mom just died", or "I'm fighting cancer", or as in one case when a student's brother was killed in a car accident after he'd visited her on campus. Being able to relate to students with empathy was something I had to learn.

Communication skills. Being able to influence and persuade people was a helpful skill in the career self-management practices of these participants. With funding sources drying up in many state institutions, many the participants found themselves involved in donor development activities. Gloria described the types of meetings she has held recently as follows:

> I met with various directors and community contacts to establish partnerships for my area and find out how our relationship could be mutually beneficial. Almost nine months later, these partnerships have resulted in more money being donated to the department [and] solid partnerships with other units during times of need.

The ability to convey a persuasive message can mean “life or death” for an administrator’s program. As the associate director for the first program of its kind in her college, Gloria had to convince faculty and upper administration that it was a worthy investment, “Being able to talk through strategic planning and to transfer that vision to a program level and across the college has been helpful for me…we had to convince the rest of the college that we were legitimate. Now they can see [our value] and they wouldn’t go back to what it was before.”

Melanie discussed her experiences with persuading decision makers to allocate more resources to her program. She explained the process as follows:

> The thing that finally tipped the balance was that parts of our program were starting to be neglected because we were seeing too many students. So you have to at least bring it to the attention of the people who can make a difference and say, “This is what we can’t do because we don’t have the support to do this and all the other stuff that also must be done.”

Heightened communication skills are a natural by-product of working in student-focused roles such as advising. Melanie has strengthened her skills through her volunteer work in judicial affairs, “It requires a whole different skill set but it builds on what I had already learned as an advisor in terms of having good listening skills, being very cognizant of non-verbals, being very professional and non -judgmental, and giving students a voice and due process even though the odds may be stacked against them.”

Alison summed up the importance of people skills when she stated, “Everybody’s got their issues, so being able to relate and connect on some level helps. A skill set is one thing – you can be skilled, but if you can’t connect with people, you’re in bad shape.”

Performance and Execution Skills. Performance, execution, and occupational skills are incredibly important career self-management tools. Performance and execution skills comprise competencies such as leadership, organizational skills, teamwork, critical thinking, management, and understanding workforce dynamics. Occupational skills include proficiencies such as budgeting, technology, and process-management.

One of the indicators of success for Dennis included being able to execute. "I think success is not just having the ideas but getting them implemented," offered Dennis. "Having the ability to get things done, to follow through on projects, and stay with it and get it done - instead of coming up with an idea and having it waiver and waffle and never get finished." Executing initiatives and implementing plans was discussed often with these participants and making progress was an important activity. Sarah explained as follows:

> [I want] to be able to go home every day and feel like I've accomplished something. I want to be able to check things off my list, to be able to explain what I do and why I love it, and why it's important. I love telling people what I do, and [being able to] explain how it helps me and [others]. It makes me happy. We have a saying in my department – "I moved the needle" – and so I want to move that needle.

"Moving the needle" often involves multiple competencies. Creativity, tenacity, and sacrifice are often required to provide adequate customer service and to secure lasting results. Sharon described how her department made progress with inadequate resources, "[We deliver] a lot of customer service at very high levels and it doesn't stop; there's just always more. The university wants to grow and we don't get more staff to do it. So we're constantly trying to figure out how to work smarter and not harder, to implement procedures and processes that improve our functioning, and to get things done in different and better ways."

Leadership skills. The participants in this group applied leadership skills regularly, and many spoke of their collaborative and others-centered leadership styles. Sharon shared that she preferred to lead from the middle and enjoyed involving her team in decisions. Her leadership philosophy worked for her and it helped her get more buy-in and feedback.

To lead, a leader must have people that are following. Quality leadership requires the ability to relate to one's team members and the desire to foster a sense of belonging. Harold gave an example of his participative approach to leadership and building a solid team, "I try to say, 'Bill works *with* me', and I try not to say, 'Bill works *for* me'. I try to allow them to participate in decisions we make. I think if they participate in the leadership and ownership of the program [they will put more into it]."

Leading a cohesive and positive team is a pleasurable experience, but establishing positive working relationships with employees requires long-term attention to the needs of others. Gloria described her process for getting to know her team and some of the team-building effort she exerted when she accepted a former leadership role. The following explains:

> Under the prior administration, there was a clear divide between members of my leadership team. There were two camps: those who were personally close to the previous leader and the ones who weren't. I worked hard in the beginning to eliminate the gap. I met with each of the managers individually in their spaces during our one-on-one meetings. I took the time to have lunch or coffee/cocoa with each of them every month. I also hosted dinner socials at my house multiple times during the year and sponsored social times at local restaurants with the managers and their staff.

Critical thinking. Analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing data are valuable competencies for mid-level administrators. The participants in this study used these skills regularly to fulfill their occupational obligations. When Salita accepted her latest post as an associate director, she became responsible for assessing and tracking programs and practices; a task that had been neglected for several years, "This position had been open for three years and they hadn't really assessed what they'd done. So now that's a key component of what I do… It's almost like starting from the beginning because a lot of the things we would have been able to assess hadn't been tracked."

When asked about her previous assessment experience, Salita indicated that her educational background offered a sound foundation for this type of exercise. "Having a doctorate helps with that because to get this degree you have to do a lot of research and writing, and you learn to ask a lot of questions."

Analytical skills are important tools in the productivity arsenal. "Problem solving," asserted Dennis, "that's 90% of the job, it seems, which involves a whole host of skills like analytical skills … it's a daily task. Breaking down the problem and determining how to fix it or if it even needs to be fixed is a crucial component of being effective."

Management Skills. The ability to manage time, processes, programs, people, and one's self are valuable competencies for mid-level managers. The participants in this study spoke at length about their managerial responsibilities. Organization skills were cited as one of the most important tools of effectiveness. Janet described her process for staying organized while processing scholarships as follows:

> I think attention to detail and organization are key skills. When you're processing upwards of 1500 applications a year and you've got 35 chapters with scholarship programs, you have to be totally organized. That skill is crucial to this position. We've gone from 100 recipients to over 400 this coming year. It takes a lot to manage all of that information.

Time Management was mentioned as a highly desired and important skill by participants also. While some admitted challenges in this area, most mentioned strategies such as making lists, creating weekly itineraries, prioritizing tasks, and blocking out time to accomplish responsibilities. George offered the following suggestions for managing time and the inevitable interruptions that accompany the average day of mid-level administrators as follows.

> I learned how to move a conversation [with a student] forward to fit inside a thirty- minute time schedule - that took some doing, and it still does. Make a list, but realize that accomplishing things may depend on other people who have other priorities. Block out moments in your day to do 'stuff' – it's part of organization. Emails shouldn't be done at 5:30 p.m. or 7:30 p.m. Take 30 minutes out of your day to work on letters of recommendations, or reports, or administrative tasks, etc. It's ok to do that.

Most participants mentioned multi-tasking as an important competency. Managing multiple tasks at once is not easy, but Melanie drew upon her previous work experiences to help her manage her daily responsibilities and described them as follows:

> I brought skills here from working in a lab of fifteen people and managing the day-to-day operations. I had a lot of high-ability people who all had goals that they were trying to meet. I had to manage all the different personalities as they competed for resources and space. That experience has really helped in terms of juggling and managing the needs of students, being a good co-worker, and managing the needs of the committee and the faculty who devote a lot of their personal time to make sure that our program thrives.

Occupation-specific skills. Occupation-specific skills such as budgeting, technology and social media, and program management were significant with the participants. Interestingly however, most reported that they received very little training prior to accepting responsibility for these duties. The dollar amount of accountability for these participants varied from a few hundred thousand dollars to well into the millions. The individual approaches to handling these tasks varied within university regulations, but were very often dependent upon personality. Sharon was meticulous about tracking her productivity and her budget and described the process as follows:

> I have an uncommon set of traits in that I'm a people-person, but I'm also very detail-oriented and I keep accurate records. I have spreadsheets of how many applications I got, how many were completed, how many admitted, how many enrolled, what were their average test scores, what is the average GPA – none of that data was kept before I started. For me, I couldn't function without that. I know how much I spend when I recruit and I know all of my registration fees. I track all of that. Usually, people-people can't deal with all the other stuff.

Gloria had taken some classes on how to handle budgeting responsibilities, but admitted that most of her preparation was a result of on the job training, "My primary[instruction has] been very specific to the department where I've worked in terms of how they want you to keep the budget and what they want you to do. So it's been an on-the-job training."

Some participants worked in supportive environments that allowed them to be exposed to new duties and gain competencies in new areas. Harold solicited additional budgeting responsibilities after interviewing for a higher level position at another institution and describes the experience as follows:

> [The search committee chair] told me that I was one of the top two [finalists], but they chose to go with someone else. I sent him an email and asked what skills I lacked and he mentioned leadership and budget responsibility. And as soon as I got that I said to my boss, "I want to be the budget person. I don't know anything about budget, but I want it." So I've spent the last two years being the budget person and that teaches you a new world.

Regardless of the training or preparation for budget responsibilities, the participants had these duties and continued to improve their skills to manage them adequately. Managing programs and processes is another skill set that enables these participants to be effective. These roles often require inter-departmental coordination and campus- and community-wide collaboration, all of which involve multiple skills and abilities. Sarah explained some of her management responsibilities as follows:

> One of my big roles is event planning and I [manage] this big fundraising event. I facilitate, handle all social media, and I work with our membership and explain what we do and reach out to the new members. I guide our internal group on some projects. I hold a lot of different roles but the main things are on the fundraising team.

Effective supervisory skills were evident and highly valued in the participants. All of the participants acknowledged the challenges associated with managing people and expressed a desire to continue to grow and build these skills. Harold spoke at length about some of his supervisory experiences and his perspective on the skill set, “I think supervising people is one of the hardest things that you have to do because no two people are the same and you can’t just [use] cookie-cutter methods [and apply them] to people. Everybody is different and everybody has a different idea of what they should or shouldn’t be allowed to do.”

Supervisory skills are not innate, as many participants learned, but they can be taught. But supervisors do not always have solid training before they are placed in leadership roles. Harold described his school of hard knocks leadership training for supervising people, “I was naïve. I just assumed that they would respect me like they had the previous person and [they didn’t]. It was mentally and emotionally hard because there were times when I couldn’t understand why things had not gone the way that I wanted them to. So I had the school of hard knocks training in that I made a lot of mistakes and just learned from those.”

Some of the participants had experienced the precarious situation of having to supervise former peers. For most, the encounter inevitably brought uncomfortable situations, but they acknowledged how much they learned and grew through the encounters. Harold shared a humorous experience as he learned to manage his peers after being promoted to supervisor at another institution in the following:

> I didn’t have a bunch of leadership training but I had to rise up and supervise people I had been peers with. That was tough. They did not respect me as the leader because I hadn’t truly earned it. The person who’d been there before me had been there for a long time and had earned the right and the respect to do some of the things that she’d done. For example, the previous director was a single parent with a small daughter and she didn’t arrive at work until 8:30 a.m. because she had to get the child to school. Even though I had no children, as soon as I got that job I just started showing up at 8:30 a.m. and so did everybody else even though we opened at 8:00 a.m. So that became a problem and I had to readjust my thinking. I wish I had known that you have to earn those things. If you earn the respect, some of the folks you supervise will not only respect the position, but they’ll respect you also.

Supervision requires the acquisition of several competencies, including those for managing one's self. Gloria shared a few methods she used for keeping herself and her staff focused and on-task in her new role in the following:

> I have used a number of [methods for] holding people responsible and accountable. From having set agendas for meetings (versus my predecessor's method that included the staff coming up with the agenda during the meeting), and following-up with staff regarding responsibilities and deadlines. I have also realized [that I must exercise] timely follow-up with staff to ensure that the work is being accomplished.

Understanding workplace dynamics. Understanding workplace dynamics is crucial to professional effectiveness and career advancement, and the participants expressed their value of this complex concept. Being aware of and able to negotiate workplace politics and cultural norms, effectively operate within the confines of institutional policies and procedures, and exercise diplomacy are necessary competencies for administrators.

Understanding the intricacies of workplace dynamics is especially important when working in teams and with co-workers. Wanda described her some of experiences in her office, "I feel like some days, especially in an office environment, that it's a little bit of group counseling – where everyone has their own things that are going on, their own issues, struggles, triumphs – all of that [is happening] but [we're] still [able to] get the work done."

Other participants expressed the difficulties they have experienced with understanding and accepting their workplace culture. Charles discussed an encounter he had when he worked at another institution as an athletics advisor, "It is very difficult to understand the culture sometimes, because you may have a coach that may come in and start cursing at you. As a professional, I [understood] that's how [he] communicated with players on the field, but we're in an office environment so I expected [him] to respect my professional area just as I would respect [his]."

Alex was able to laugh about an early professional misstep and the valuable lesson he learned about the effective use of his chain of command and the institutional hierarchy. He explained the following:

> One thing I had to learn [early in my career] was that I wasn't a student anymore and that I represented the university. I was probably two years out of undergrad and a student was having problems and there was nothing I could do. [When I was a student] and I had a problem, I emailed the Chancellor! I told this guy to do that and somehow my name got tied to the situation. I learned real quickly that you solve your own problems and if you can't do it, go to the person above you, not to the top of the organization.

As a career self-management tactic, understanding workplace dynamics is a power-packed asset. Being aware of the decision-making processes, differences in political structure, and operational distinctions that operate in H.E. can put an employee at an advantage. Ellen shared the following:

> Understanding how the academic side works [has been very important]. It's been very useful to have a good sense of how Student Affairs works and how Academic Affairs works, and how they work together – or not. It goes back to the power structure and [understanding] how decisions get made and who are the key players. I've gotten access to a lot more key people because I did both.

Theme Two: Overcoming Career Challenges

Overcoming challenges strengthens the individual and offers valuable learning opportunities that can be used to facilitate forward movement. To understand how the mid-level administrators acquired the career capital that they included in their career self-management strategies, it is important to understand the career challenges they have overcome. The second theme found in this research, Overcoming Career Challenges, explores three Categories: Personal, Emotional, and Psychological Barriers; Professional and Institutional Barriers; and Strategies for Overcoming Career Challenges.

Category 1: Personal, Emotional, and Psychological Barriers. Many of the participants acknowledged experiencing a range of personal, emotional, and psychological barriers throughout their careers. The root of the challenges ranged from internal processes, such as self-talk, beliefs, and emotions to external tests such as dealing with change, confrontation, and communication with others.

"Sheer panic": Fear, anxiety, and being overwhelmed. A number of the participants discussed their experiences with fear and anxiety. After Alison accepted her new role as Associate Director, the magnitude of the position was crippling and her self-talk and insecurity threatened to make her impotent. She described the ordeal as follows:

> There were some times when I was just in sheer panic - it almost paralyzed me. [I asked myself] "Will I make the wrong decision? Is this the right thing to do?" I second-guessed myself often. I would read my emails over and over again before I hit send, and if I made a mistake on email, I would almost kick myself – "Oh my gosh, I can't believe I did that!" It was frustrating. I was overly critical of myself.

Dennis experienced some anxiety when he accepted his latest role, as well and discusses it in the following:

> "There was a lot of anxiety going into it. At that time, the office had a certain reputation, particularly of being resistant to change, so I knew I'd be facing that somewhat. And just the amount of things that go on in that office – almost everything that happens [on campus] goes through [it], so I just knew it'd be a lot bigger challenge than what I had before. So there was anxiety there, but I don't ever think there was a feeling that it was too big or that I was making a mistake."

Some participants described times in their careers when they were overwhelmed. Melanie discussed a situation where she had repeatedly been refused a promotion and was suffering under the weight of managing her program as follows:

> After several years of telling people, "Look we're drowning" they finally recognized that we needed help. It meant that we got help and I got a promotion. I think I was pretty patient to wait that long and not just jump ship and say, "Forget it, I'll go somewhere else." I really feel strongly about the program.

"Being terrified": Handling change. The act of changing professional roles can be the catalyst for significant personal challenges. Many descriptive words were used to describe the experience and one participant compared the process to that of a mid-life crisis. George was about to accept a role that would take him away from the university and was experiencing a range of emotions as he reflected on the decision to leave. “I never like to think I’m running *from* this job, I feel like I’m going *to* something that I really want to do or want to be. It’s terrifying to leave this university, I’ve been here [a long time], but it’s more exciting than terrifying.”

For others, the move out of advising into mid-level administrative positions evoked some feelings of loss due to the reduction in student contact. Dennis explained the following:

> I like to just get things done, so I thought I would work well in that office because there was so much *to* get done. I felt I was up to that challenge and I felt good about that. The other side of that was that I enjoyed working with students and I knew I really wouldn’t have that. So it was a transition from working with students and helping them through things to becoming more of an administrator who is working within a system to help students. So that required a lot of thought [and I had to decide] whether I wanted to make that jump or not.

Salita also acknowledged that while she still has an impact on students, she misses her former connections to them in the following:

> I miss the personal one-on-one relationships that I had established in [my previous role]. I don’t get that here. The higher up you go the less you see or can engage with students. Even though a lot of what I do is going to impact students, I just don’t have that one-on-one conversation that I used to. So I have to work through my [employees] to get a sense of what’s going on with the students.

Another change from professional academic advising to mid-level administration is task and time management. As an advisor, Sharon discussed the changes in responsibility between the two roles, “It was a great place to be, I loved it there but I just felt bound. And you know, [in this office], no one tells me how to do my job. I decide where I’m going, how to do it, and it’s all me; I get to create and that’s such a different experience.” But all of that freedom can cause some adjustment challenges for new administrators because it requires a paradigm shift. Alison commented, “People would encourage me [and tell me] that I had ideas that I could bring to the table to facilitate change. But that was odd because I was coming from a role that said, "Don't change anything, just do what I tell you to do."

Ellen was a little surprised at just how different her administrative role would be from her previous position. Even though she saw the position description, the lived experience was jarring, "It wasn't as easy as I thought it was going to be [laughs]... All of the record-keeping, and the reports … And when problems happened, all of a sudden I had to drop everything. I couldn't stay with my schedule now I had to attend to those issues."

Sharon discussed the differences between advising and some of the demands of her administrative position in the following passage:

> Well, with advising when you leave at 5:00 p.m. you're done and there's nothing else you do. I never checked email, I never took work home. *Ever*. In this position I work seven days a week, and I work all hours of the day. If I don't answer email all night long and over the weekend, when I come in on Monday, I can't do anything else. Seriously! Then you have to decide, "Do I want to make less money and be able to leave at 5:00 p.m. or do I want to make this level of money and income and have these responsibilities?" So there are often arguments with ourselves when we do get here. You don't take vacation and not take all of your equipment with you. I was on the beach last summer and every morning and every night I was answering emails before I could get started with my day. So it's much different.

Wanda's realization that she had entered a new world of responsibility came when she accepted her role as an administrator. The startling experience is described in the following:

> Up until that point I had had no real responsibility. [As an advisor] I was told what to do and I did it. I had a Director who told me to do the check sheets – and I did them. I showed up to work, I did my job, I went home. If things didn't get done, it wasn't on me. If there were problems, it was the Director's [issue]. Then all of a sudden it was like, if things don't get done, it *is* on me…. So [I had some moments when I thought], "Am I ready for this?", "Can I do it?" And ultimately I felt like I could. I had the toolbox full of past experiences and training though my degrees, so I thought, "Yeah, I can do this."

"Giving to the things that matter most": Juggling personal priorities. Personal barriers, such as juggling personal priorities and familial obligations, were significant challenges for all of the participants. For such a purpose-driven cohort, honoring personal commitments and priorities was important to their overall well-being and negotiating the added responsibilities of administrative positions and balancing personal priorities was difficult. Wanda's new role required her to gain a new perspective, which she described as follows:

> The main thing that changed was that I was always the one in the family that had the flexible job. So it was not a big deal in advising if my daughter was sick and I had to stay home with her, because we had several other people in the office to cover. Now if my daughter is sick I am the only adviser. I'm it. And so I placed a lot of pressure on myself about missing work. Then, I thought about it and began to realize that I'm allowed to have a family and sick time… So [I had] a little bit of panic, and then [I realized], "It's gonna be okay; we're talking one day here.

Managing work and family pressures can be incredibly stressful. Sarah experienced multiple life changes at once when she landed her new position, discovered she was pregnant, and her husband started a new job. The stress was incredibly difficult and managing all of those issues with a two-year old daughter and no relatives nearby was especially trying. She shared her personal story as follows:

> It was very stressful, I'll never do that again. So we had to rely on friends to watch our daughter. Even going into labor, we asked, "Who's going to watch our child?" I had to call a neighbor and say, "Can you meet me at the hospital and take her? Here's the car seat, we're having a baby." It was intense. So it's been a huge adjustment, but it's worth it. It's been a challenge… having a child, starting a new job, making mistakes, and figuring out the new personalities at work... It's been hard.

Janet felt the strain of being pulled between her two worlds as well. "That's the hardest part. Being able to give as much as I can to the thing that matters most – my family – but having so much here that if I take time off I feel like, "Oh my gosh! I'm never going to get caught up."

Melanie's children are grown adults, but she can relate to the difficulties that working parents face. She expounded on her experience in the following:

> I always had a low-level and constant sense of guilt that as a working mother I was depriving my children. I wasn't home baking cookies when they got home

> from school; they always went to some sort of after school program… always, always, always… So I always struggled with that. What's the overall effect on their childhood?
>
> My youngest is now 21 and surprisingly, they grew up to become pretty independent and having both parents working is the norm for them. I think they realized that I've always been an industrious person – I work all day and then come home and do all the stuff that moms do. But it's been a sacrifice in terms of lost time with my children, and that's not anything you can get back."

Managing personal and professional demands was not just an area of concern for the women in this study; the men expressed challenges in this subject as well. From providing financially for their families to limiting their career options to family-friendly locations, juggling personal priorities remained a challenge for everyone.

Due to low salaries in advising and other entry-level H.E. positions, providing for loved ones poses a substantial challenge. Charles was concerned about his ability to provide for his family when he and his wife received an unexpected blessing. "My wife was pregnant with our twins and I looked at the salary and thought, "There is no way, I'll be able to raise two kids off this salary." [Up to that point,] I was like, "Ok, this [position] is a great foot in the door and I can start on a new career." And then, I said, "*Whoa,* daycare is what?!"

Charles was not alone in having to make some tough decisions about his career to enable his family to live more comfortably. Referring to his career progression from his first position at the institution to advising and then on to his current role, Alex stated the following:

> "I really enjoyed working with students and started looking for other jobs to move up because that one [paid] pretty low. When I started [at the university] I was making $16,900 and my wife was really carrying us, so I knew I had to do something. I interviewed for jobs …and I got the job in advising. Then child number two came along and I figured out that I had to make more money so, when this spot became available, I interviewed … and I've been here since."

Compensation, however, was not the only personal priority of concern for men in this study. Many acknowledged that rapid and consistent upward career advancement in H.E. comes to those that are willing to relocate to other campuses; however several men in this study discussed their reticence to leave their current institution in order to ensure their family's overall well-being. Dennis shared as follows:

> There are options to move on to other schools... If I were single, I'd probably consider that because the grass is always greener somewhere else. But given that my wife and son like it here and it's a great place to live, I really don't have any aspirations to go to another campus, so I'm not actively considering that.

Harold shared a similar point of view as he discussed his family priorities as follows:

> For the first 10 years of my H.E. career, I was not married. I didn't really mind working all the time. Now I have a wife and a 5 year old and working like that requires some sacrifice. I'm less willing to work into the night or on Saturdays and Sundays because that takes time away from them. So I have had to make some sacrifices or choices. If I were still single I might not still be here. I might've pursued other places harder. If I were single, I might've moved to a large city seeking a better job, but at this point, I like this city and the atmosphere and the reasonably small town that I want my child to grow up in. I realize that your goals change as you get older – before I got married, I was all about career, and all career focused. Now that I have a little boy, I'm much more focused on him and making sure that he does well.

Family-centered decisions were not exclusive to those with spouses and children. The desire to assist family was equally as strong for un-married participants. Don shared, "Coming from a single parent home it was beneficial for me to be able to help my mom, especially when she was struggling with bills. Sometimes even now she struggles and I want to be able to help her. My brother has diabetes, so we try to help him as well."

Juggling personal priorities is exceptionally difficult when an individual's family cannot relate to their workplace realities. Sharon has attained substantial educational credentials and career status but her family is not aware of the significance of her accomplishments. Her comments are as follows:

> My husband is not academically educated so none of this has had an impact [on him]. The fact that I hold a certain level or hold a certain degree does not mean anything to my family, which is good and it's not good. If I was in a more academic family and household they would understand what I'm doing and the responsibilities [that I have] and why, at some times of the year, mom acts the way she does. But that's just not in their realm.

"Not buying into the mission": Dissonance. Some of the participants spoke about seasons in their careers where they experienced dissonance between their personal beliefs and the roles they were expected to play in their professional positions. The conflict between two perspectives is a challenge for individuals to negotiate. George elaborated on his struggle after accepting his latest post, "This role and this job have not been fulfilling for me. It has not been a fulfilling career move for me. I haven't bought into the mission that we're helping the whole state. I know that's one of the goals, but it feels like I'm helping the privileged to become more privileged, and that doesn't feel good to me inside."

Salita experienced similar discord in a position she held in banking when her role required her to encourage people to apply for unnecessary loans. The duty made her uncomfortable and the experience left her very conscious of her values and the desire to have a career that promoted issues that were important to her. After she left, she fought hard to identify her personal priorities and to use her personal strengths in her subsequent work roles.

Category 2: Professional and Institutional Barriers. The participants in this study endured several professional and institutional challenges that can be categorized as Working with and Managing People, and handling Workplace Realities. Both of these kinds of trials produced growth and maturity for the participants in this study.

Working with and managing people. Working with people can be both a joyous experience and a stretch exercise that involves lots of patience. The participants in this study had several stories to share about working with and through other people to accomplish tasks. Unprovoked attacks are often the hardest to accept when working with others. Alex shared a challenging experience with a former co-worker who gave him an unprovoked, poor peer evaluation, "I really just shut down. I didn't talk to the guy and he didn't talk to me for about six months. That was definitely a learning moment for me. You have to get beyond stuff. Along the same lines, you have to learn not to burn bridges. It's hard not to, but you never know if what you said [was misconstrued] or how somebody took it. It's just the politics…"

Melanie had to exercise forgiveness for workplace offenses and echoes Alex's advice to move beyond them. "Being able to work with people and preserve those relationships even if things were done that I didn't agree with, or that were hurtful, or that were confusing - in the end, it is better just to let go and let time take its course and be patient."

Challenges facilitate growth and expose areas for improvement in character, skill, or proficiency. Because of the unique cultural environment in H.E., working with tenured faculty can sometimes be a challenging experience for staff personnel. Charles shared a very difficult moment with a faculty member that occurred when he was in a previous position. He was called a hypocrite and an idiot after giving a presentation in front of about 80 people. The incident exposed vulnerabilities in his self-confidence that he used to grow and develop, "I was very confident about the research before that encounter, but I became very embarrassed, ashamed, and I began to doubt my research. It just showed me that I had more room for growth, because I could have handled it differently. I learned that I really had to have tolerance for other individuals and that I had to have confidence and stand up for things that affect me and my institution."

Supervising people is another trying exercise and the participants in this study had plenty of stories to tell about their experiences in this area. One of the challenges with supervising people is that on-the-job training is often the best teacher. Alison wanted to be a transformational leader, but was frustrated by her inexperience. She explains in the following:

> This was my first direct supervisory position with full-time staff and I didn't know how to do it. I've always gotten along very well with my bosses, but

> nobody's ever had the true development personality. They're very hands off-ish, but hands-off doesn't really develop you, it reflects that they trust you, but it doesn't develop you. So, I still don't think that I know the dynamics of [supervising]. I want to be helpful, but I don't know how. [I don't have any] personnel issues; I just don't know how to develop into [a transformational leader]. So I'm struggling to figure out how you do that, and to do it in a way that is supportive.

For newer administrators, learning to supervise people is often one of the most challenging responsibilities they encounter. Wanda supervised two classified staff members and shared her experiences with instituting change and supervising employees that were older than her, "I knew that I would be managing people that were much older than I was – in some cases a year older than my father – and I wondered if they would take me seriously... [I've had to] learn personality styles, how to combat "it's-been-done-this-way-for-7-years", and "I-don't-want-to-do-it-that-way" issues, and figuring out how to approach that."

Handling generational diversity in the workplace is a complex challenge, especially for new administrators. As a new supervisor Gloria had an experience with an older employee that forced her to confront poor performance, "I don't really think it was her age, but she had worked on campus for a long time and she was close to retirement so she didn't want to do anything different. But because she was our front line person, it was really important for her attitude to be positive. And because her attitude wasn't positive, I had to come in and address it. We had to have a hard conversation."

Performance management is a supervisory responsibility that requires compassion, skill and finesse; proficiencies that take time to develop. Harold learned to be flexible with good employees and was lenient on some behaviors such as occasional tardiness or requests to leave early. However, when he dealt with less productive employees, offenses were much more difficult for him to disregard, but they were even more uncomfortable to correct. His comments are as follows:

> But we have had people here who we've had to ask to leave because they didn't want to work as diligently, efficiently, or effectively as we needed them to. That's never an easy thing. When you are managing people, one of the hardest things to do is having those tough conversations that might impact their future – especially their earnings. If I have to terminate somebody - it's very hard on me.

Harold also shared how he learned to moderate his expectations of his employees and to respect their work values. As a newer supervisor he felt that his employees should have exhibited the same dedication to work that he did. He learned that some employees simply wanted a job from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and they liked being off at Christmas and on other holidays, "They didn't have the same emotional investment or the time investment in it as I did." Those hard lessons taught him the importance of understanding the perspectives of others and how that knowledge could impact the workplace.

Professional disappointment. Professional disappointment is a difficult reality that many of these participants had experienced. Janet relayed a story about her reaction to not landing a coveted position at another institution, "It was awful. I was so desperate to get out of the hospital and I knew I could do that position. I thought it was made for me. It was tough." George experienced disappointment while he served in his current role. He expected to be able to contribute to his program and utilize prized resources, but was disappointed by the realities of the position. He explains in the following:

> I was really looking forward to building on the relationships [I had] with the professors in [my former college] in a new way. And what I've been surprised to learn is that my boss wants to maintain the faculty relationships. I handle the students but all forms of faculty contact she does. So I feel sort of under-utilized. At first I thought it was a lack of trust. But I don't think that's it anymore. I think she still wants to be the face and the name recognition of this organization, so that has been tough for me. I think I could handle a lot more, and I think I could grow this program, but in some ways I'm held back. I mean, that's quite a resource I was bringing to this job, and I don't get to use it.

Feeling under-utilized and under-valued are difficult emotions to overcome, but time, as Harold described, helps to heal those wounds and adds perspective. As a young professional he wanted to assume a newly vacant director position, but the provost denied his request, “I was extremely frustrated and angry for probably six months or so. That was a big challenge, but I just stayed the course. In retrospect I was a train wreck anyway, so I really would have been a train wreck as a Director [laughs]. I would have had a different responsibility and I would have had more budgetary responsibility than I was ready to take on at that point.”

Another professional disappointment can stem from being pigeon-holed into certain roles. Being associated with certain types of programs or services for long periods of time can inhibit others from seeing an individual’s ability to assume other duties. Charles experienced that when he served as a program director, “I’ve been pigeon-holed because [I work in] diversity. As soon as I walk in the room, they say, ‘Oh, he deals with Black issues, or Latino issues’, instead of saying, “Oh, he’s a great person and he knows a little bit about career development, and [other things].” So instead of them seeing you as a person, they see you as a position.”

Melanie has been associated with the same program for over a decade and has experienced disappointment because of the perceived limitations others have placed on her abilities and interests. In a former role, changes were being implemented in her department structure that would have provided opportunity for more leadership responsibility. When she was overlooked for those opportunities, she went to the Director to inquire about the decision and was told, “Well I just always thought that you were the leader of your program and you need to do that.”

Unemployment and job seeking. Some of the participants discussed their challenges with unemployment and the job seeking process. In some cases, the participants were “trailing spouses” who were more frequently looking for employment because they were following a spouse to a new institution or geographical area. In other cases, they applied for positions that they did not get and had to handle the frustrations of rejection. Nonetheless, seeking employment can be an extremely challenging exercise, but it also can produce growth and development for the job-seeker.

Salita's husband was recruited to come to her current institution and she left her position at another institution to follow him. She applied for several positions on campus but finding employment was a challenge. Fortunately, Salita was eventually able to join her current institution and begin making career progress. Melanie's experience as a trailing spouse forced her to continue to stay open to new experiences and to accept new challenges. Her comments are as follows:

> I was used to working in a business setting. I managed a group of researchers and was the Project Leader. But, my career took a turn because my husband decided to take a job at [a different institution] and I followed him. So I left a very lucrative position to become a post-doc again at [a new university]. But the person that hired me knew that I had these management skills so, I became the second in command for her in her lab while still doing my own research.
>
> Then my husband was promoted again, and because I had been in a managerial research position so long the idea of having a tenure track faculty position was just not really realistic. It turned out that [a new position was opening up here]. I applied for the job and I drove [through five states] for the interview because I knew the value of an in-person interview.

Dennis experienced job search disappointment when he applied for a position in another college and was devastated when he was not given the job. "I think that was one of the more anxious periods in my career. When you think you've got a good shot but you don't get it and you have to come back to your current position, you go through the whole "It isn't fair", "It was fixed the whole time" sentiments [laughs]."

Prior to attaining his current position, Dennis was asked to serve in an interim capacity until an official nationwide search was held for permanent personnel. When he applied for the position, he was keenly aware of the visibility of his job search and the potential of being rejected, "It wasn't a sure thing, but… at that point I was okay either way, you know? ... Well, I think I would have been okay... No, I would have been disappointed. But I was telling myself it would be okay [laughs]. It was arranged where I could come back [to my old position] and it would have been fine if I came back, but it would have been hard [laughs]…everyone knows you didn't get picked."

When individuals emerge after overcoming challenges they are replete with skills, wisdom, and perspective that produce effectiveness and change. As they continue to encounter and prevail over challenges, this group of mid-level administrators learned many lessons about themselves, their institutions, and the valuable career self-management tactics that work for them.

Theme Three: Career Strategies Employed

Theme three reflects the career strategies that the participants utilized to move from advising to mid-level administration. Tactics within this theme are segmented into three categories: Psychological, Emotional, and Spiritual Processes; Accumulating and Capitalizing on Skills and Experiences; Forging and Developing Relationships through Affiliations and Connections.

Category 1: Psychological, Emotional, and Spiritual Processes. To varying degrees and at different points in their professional careers the participants in this study took ownership of their career management process. Throughout their careers, they incorporated several psychological, emotional, and spiritual tactics into their career self-management strategies. As they assumed ownership of the process, they engaged in self-assessment to facilitate self-knowledge, positively affirmed themselves to build self-confidence, connected to their spiritual source to remain grounded, strategically planned and prioritized to attain career success, and took action.

Self-assessment and self-knowledge. An individual's self-knowledge drives their ability to make appropriate career decisions, and self-assessment is an integral step toward the process of self-knowledge. When Melanie was offended by not being selected to serve in an interim capacity in a former department, she had a conversation with her manager to understand his decision. After presenting her case, he asked her to think about whether she really wanted to accept those responsibilities. She had to honestly assess her interests and motives in order to make a wise decision and to be able to move forward. The following explains:

> So I thought about it over the long weekend and came back and said, "I would be better off working within the context of my program and the department would be better off having an Interim that would eventually be able to take the Director role." Because [essentially] what I was asking for was [an opportunity] to take over as Interim, but I wasn't necessarily married to [the idea] of becoming a Director forever and ever. It was more of a personal sense or feeling that I had been passed over for consideration. And for continuity, if it wasn't something I really want to do [long term, I shouldn't take it]. Doing that would really mean I'd give up my program, and I didn't want to do that because I've [been instrumental in] building it, and I didn't want to give that up.

After Sarah experienced a negative work situation in a previous position, her spirits were down and she engaged in an intensive self-assessment exercise to determine her next steps. She visited the university's career center and reached out to friends for help, "I really had to do a lot of soul-searching. I really had to figure it out. [I began asking myself], "I wonder if I can get at it again?" I knew that I needed an environment where I could still be who I was and I didn't want to have to apologize for who I am."

Salita experienced employment rejection several times before attaining her current administrative post. After speaking to one of her mentors, she was prompted to do a thorough self-assessment, "I was so defeated. There were two or three jobs prior to this job that I thought I wanted and I felt like they were perfect for me and when I didn't get them [a mentor] said, 'You need to take a step back, sit down, assess where you are in your life, assess what you really want versus what you think you want and sit and wait.'" Salita went through a process she described as "picking herself apart" to really examine how she presented herself to hiring committees, "I even had to go back and tear my resume a part because there were certain things that were probably not making me as marketable on my resume."

Alison had to assess herself to identify the right career fit after she interviewed for a position on campus. After she entered the application process, she took an honest assessment of her interests and realized it would not be an advantageous career move. "It felt like a safe job in terms of advising, but I knew that it wasn't the creative job that I wanted. I knew that it didn't fit me."

Identifying the type of position she really wanted helped Alison to accept not being selected for the position. "I talked to the [hiring manager] this past year and she said that it was really hard to decide [who would get the role]; it was between me and a friend. But it was somewhat disheartening [not being selected] because I felt like, 'yeah, I can do this.'"

After unsuccessfully interviewing for the same position multiple times, Alex was finally ready to acknowledge that he needed to do some self-assessment and get help. He explains in the following:

> I interviewed for [an advising] job more than once and I couldn't figure out why [I was not selected]…That's the first [time] I thought, "How could you hire somebody else? I do this every day and they hired somebody that had been teaching English classes?!" That one *burned*, and I [started asking] "What do I do?" Then I found [a helpful co-worker] and she said, "Let me look at your resume." So she helped me a lot. I had never really talked to anybody about interviewing skills and how to get your foot in the door. I've since had a lot of people help with that, because I didn't know what I was doing. So I went back and I started thinking about how I answered things.

Positive affirmations and positive thinking. Positive affirmations and positive thinking were common tactics with the participants. When facing rejection and disappointments, many of them reframed the situation and assumed an “it-is-not-meant-to-be” stance. Sharon stated the following:

> When you want an on-campus experience and you have a master’s degree and you’ve been doing this for years and you think, “What more could they possibly want”? You finally realize – if I didn’t get it, I wasn’t meant to be there and it would have been an awful experience. It’s not the opportunity for me and it’s not where I’m meant to be. And I look at it like that. Something else is going to come along that’s better and this is a sign that I was not meant to get that position.

Positive affirmations are important tools to protect an individual’s self-confidence when faced with successive challenges. Salita explained how she used positive affirmations, “I had to re-build my self-confidence again. I tried to stop thinking about the disappointments and focus on the positive. I just tried to remember, “I am okay, and I can do this.” I can do this job and I just need to figure out the best way to verbalize that to the people that are viewing me as a candidate.”

Alison continued to use positive affirmations to stay encouraged and to boost her self-confidence. She shared, “I remind myself that if I wasn’t qualified, I wouldn’t have gotten the job. So I’m trying to develop a level of self-confidence.” Don shared his philosophy and tips for remaining positive, “Rejection is a part of the process. It’s okay for people to tell you, “No” when you apply for something. You still have to stay motivated, and remain prayerful. If something is for you, you will get it eventually. It will be yours. I definitely feel like that has occurred in my life and I value that experience.”

Spiritual processes. Several participants made reference to their reliance on God for guidance, protection, and wisdom. They considered their relationship with God foundational to their ability to perform, handle challenges, and manage their careers. Don values his spiritual life and considers his profession a calling. He strives to live out that calling by being a blessing to others and expounds in the following:

> I always pray about [my career] and I always give praise. My spiritual life has always been an important factor. I believe in helping other people; being a blessing to others is something I pride myself on. I ask that God continue to bless me with His favor and anointing in my life. I understand my purpose in life so that's a huge factor. My career and education trajectory – it's a calling and I'm walking in my calling.

When asked about why he thought he would be successful in his current role, Dennis stated, "I think part of it was that I have pretty strong faith, and part of it was just that I'm okay with jumping into things and not knowing what the outcome is going to be." He discussed how he relies on his faith and is able to set a positive tone in the office because of his ability to release stress and not worry:

> So there were times when I just felt overwhelmed – still do a lot of times – but it's a matter of being comfortable with not always knowing what you're doing, but knowing it's going to be okay. I've always had this pretty strong faith that in the big scheme of things, what we do every day is pretty small. So I just had a lot of faith and let it go and I tried not to worry about anything else. I think that's helped the office level out.

Wanda releases her worries to God as well and attributes her positive attitude to her spiritual relationship, "Because of Him I'm a happy and positive person… so just knowing that I'm not in control of [things releases pressure]." Alison uses a similar tactic when anxiety threatens to get the best of her, "[I started] praying more and saying, "God, please help me and tell me what to do, because if I try to do it on my own, I'm clueless and frustrated and I can't function." So I think I'll always have that little anxiety at first, but I'm trying to control it so it's not paralyzing.

Goal setting and establishing personal priorities. The career goals for the participants ranged from part-time work to upper administrative posts. What they shared in common was a belief that each person must establish personal and career goals and pursue them with conviction.

For Janet, a wife and mother of two toddlers, the ability to work part-time and help people were attractive elements of her administrative position. "I just know that I want something that gives me the flexibility to be present in their lives, to attend all the soccer, baseball games, participate in school visits… I want to do all of that. So anything that continues to allow me to help others but be able to do it part time is what I'm all about.

Sarah was content in her current position and saw growth opportunities within her organization, "I don't see an end in [my department] right now; I'm really happy. I feel that I can really grow in this role and I have goals to that I can contribute. It is a family and I can give it my all every single day all night long and I'm okay with it."

Salita continued to hone her skills in preparation for a dean of students position at a smaller institution, "I'd like to be Dean of Students at a smaller institution where I can get more involved in the day to day [interactions] with students." Harold had his sights set on being a dean of students for a long time, as well, but he wass open to other career possibilities, "My ultimate goal is to be a dean of students…so I've continued to move in that direction and to try to develop a skill set [that will prompt] someone to hire me as a dean of students. I hope that I get there one day. Although, if I don't get there, I'm not sure that I'll consider it failure because my career path, while certainly not linear, has moved me in other directions."

Alison, however, did not have a long-term goal she was pursuing. Instead, she was pursuing a meaningful career that she could enjoy long-term, "[I'm interested in] fulfillment. I think as long as I feel fulfilled in a role that defines success for me because I don't have a long term goal that I'm seeking. So, fulfillment and the opportunity to grow [are important to me]…as long as I can enjoy what I do, make an impact, and grow, that's the definition of success for me."

Although he has clearly defined goals for himself, Don does not believe that a person has to always have a master plan. "I would say that [a person does not] have to have a plan in place, but I think if they equip themselves with the right experiences, it makes the next step easier. They'll be better prepared."

Career exploration and planning. Career exploration and planning include activities such as assessing current and future career options and making career decisions. This process starts with being aware of career opportunities. Many of the participants in this study were deliberate in assessing the job market and identifying opportunities that complemented their skills and interests. Early in their careers, many of the participants served as interns or graduate assistants (GA), which allowed for close observation and the ability to acquire tangible practical skills. Sarah's was exposed to staff positions during through her work as a GA and was blown away by the numerous options, "Working behind the scenes I got to see what staff members do. When you see the infrastructure you're like, "holy cow! Look what goes on behind that paper trail and how the organization functions. I really appreciated … what the staff does on campus."

Don consciously selected a variety of positions to learn about the attractive career options that were available. Between his undergraduate and graduate school experiences, Don held at least twelve part-time, full-time, and/or voluntary internship or GA positions; some of those positions were held concurrently. He also served in professional develop organizations and on campus committees. "I've always known that I needed to continue to experiment to see what I liked and disliked," he explained. "I knew I wanted to make H.E. my career."

These working experiences were full of insightful career snapshots that Don used to create an impressive collage of professional exposure. For example, while interning at a community college during graduate school, he was exposed to a variety of offices and specialized roles, and learned about accrediting regulations that could potentially affect his career marketability. The following explains:

> I noticed that some of the administrators were also adjunct instructors and I thought that was a really good source of extra income. I learned more about accreditation agencies, what it takes to meet those accreditation standards, and what it takes to be an instructor. That's another reason I decided to take additional hours of courses in Social Work beyond the requirements for my graduate degree.

Some participants paid more attention to H.E. after venturing out into other fields. Being exposed to those workplaces solidified their commitment to H.E. Sharon worked in Student Support Services and really enjoyed the work, "I just loved it. I worked with people who were first generation college students, disabled, or low-income and I just really enjoyed the entire experience."

Making an effort to become aware of opportunities was not limited to pre-professional exercises. Salita, while working her full-time job and attending graduate school, also took measures to learn more about other H.E. areas. She completed an independent studies course to learn how to be a hearing officer, "I learned the policies and sanctions, outside resources, and the meeting process. I served on the judicial board last year and I got to hear cases like student appeals, and I heard testimonies of others involved in the cases. I try to put myself in situations where I can strategically do something to get exposure."

As a professional, Sharon remains careful to observe trends in H.E. and stays open to new career possibilities. She describes her approach in the following:

> [I try to] be open to opportunity and be conscious of how things are evolving in H.E. I [notice] what is changing, and I am always aware of the different directions things are heading. I think you have to keep your ears open and keep your eyes open and see what other departments are doing. What are the university and the President and the Chancellor [doing]? Just be conscious and aware of what's going on.

Timing and readiness collided to create a golden opportunity for Ellen. When she heard about an upcoming opening, she wasted little time making her superiors aware of her interest in the position. A description of her response follows:

> Well when [the incumbent employee] announced [her resignation] to the leadership team, I was like, "Ah, there's my opportunity." So [I expressed an] interest in her position. And I was not interested in it before – again, timing – last December when we were putting together the search committee, I wanted to be on the search committee, I wanted to influence the hiring decision, but I did not want to do that [job] because I [had personal things going on]. So, timing is everything – I'm ready for something different and it's a good opportunity.

Graduate assistantships, internships, and paid working experiences are not the only way to gain an awareness of opportunities. Volunteering can be significantly beneficial in understanding potential career options and establishing connections. Don stated, "You don't know what you may like until you get some insight into the career area…Think about access. You may have to volunteer – you may not always be compensated, but you're gaining experience and building network."

It is appropriate to include a short discussion about exposure and positioning within this section on awareness of opportunities. The participants became aware of opportunities, in many cases, because they had gained exposure or had been positioned for access. Ellen has had the benefit of being well positioned over her career at the university. She has served on a variety of central committees and has been able to see high-level decision-makers in action. Her positioning was due to a variety of factors. In some cases, the department had always held a seat on certain committees and it was Ellen's turn to serve. In other instances, Ellen's expertise and background made her a logical choice to represent the department for the launch of a new initiative.

Some employees resent these appointments, and fail to see the potential and maximize the opportunity. Ellen, however, relishes these front-row seats to the inner circle, and recognizes them as important career assets. "[Positioning] is crucial," she asserts. "If you're in this particular position, what kind of influence or power do you have? What type of networking [opportunities exist]? And everything's always political. I really like working on [a particular campus committee] because influential campus leaders are on it and I get to know them and work with them. ”

Category 2: Accumulating knowledge and capitalizing on skills and experiences. Throughout their careers, the participants in this study were constantly learning and acquiring new skills and credentials. Whether through formalized mechanisms such as classes, or through casual learning experiences such as observation, this group of life-long learners was continuously seeking new knowledge. They were also highly adept at drawing upon previous experiences to help them perform in their professional roles.

Accumulating knowledge. As previously stated, this group of professionals was well educated and enjoyed both formal and informal learning processes. All of the participants who were without terminal degrees had post-graduate credit hours, and had not completely ruled out the possibility of pursing doctorates. The hesitation to earn advanced degrees was largely based on time-constraints, personal priorities, and being uncertain of the long-term career value of making such a sacrifice. “I would go back to school but maybe later,” stated Sarah, “I don’t want that stress. If I need a class or something I’d take it. But when people ask me about a doctorate, I don’t think it would ever help me on this campus. That’s just my opinion.”

Taking classes that were relevant to their professional or personal interests was very common among the participants. As a testament to their life-long learning goals, many discussed taking classes that would strengthen perceived deficiencies in performance skills such as writing, Excel spreadsheets, or supervisory skills. “I want to overcome the fear of statistics,” stated Don. “I don’t necessarily want a degree in statistics, but I’m a believer in life-long learning because I love to learn. So [I’d like] to overcome [my fear of] statistics because it’s not something I’ve had a lot of experience with. Also, statistics would be beneficial [in this role] because they're data-driven here."

Other participants just enjoyed learning about new content. Alex had an active interest in turf management that he had been kindling for years, The following explains:

> Before I did my master's I started taking turf management classes because I love it. At one point I was down at the stadium with my instructor talking to the Head Groundskeeper out there trying to get on part-time. If I found time and a class to take [I'd still take one]. I look every semester to see what turf classes they're offering and if I'd be able to fit it in.

The participants did not always wait for classroom instruction and were not afraid to teach themselves new concepts and techniques. Melanie jumped in and taught herself how to create a brochure and a website for her program, while Wanda and Ellen regularly tune in to educational webinars to stay current in their fields. Reading and researching were routine activities for many of the participants and, in many cases, were required activities for efficient performance. Salita is still fairly new in her position and is still learning about her position. She offers the following:

> I'm still in a learning curve and I'm getting to know the policies and procedures that affect my [position]. As a supervisor, I need to be competent and I need to understand their roles and the procedures for ordering supplies, using purchase cards, and so on. But there are so many details that impact this operation that I need to know as an administrator. I need to do my research and understand what my supervisees will need at certain times.

Capitalizing on transferrable skills. When interviewing for new positions, the participants often recalled relevant transferrable skills to increase their marketability. Janet shared how her transferrable skills enabled her to shine even though she did not meet the preferred educational background when she applied for her advising position. Her strategy follows:

> [My skills were] a unique combination for that specific position because I was not only the advisor for undergraduate students but also for Pre-Allied Health

> students. Previously, I had worked in a hospital setting and I had been exposed to all kinds of different health fields because we had to collaborate with speech pathologists, doctors, nurses, etc. I knew I wanted to get into advising, but most require master's degrees – which I did not have. So, when I saw that position advertised I knew I had the experience and it set me apart from some of the other candidates.

When Salita saw her current position being advertised, she was reticent to apply because she was not sure how her experiences were relevant. Conversations with others and a thorough assessment of her background helped her see how to apply her unique combination of skills to the position. Her findings follow:

> I realized that the skills I had accumulated over my career would allow me to do this job. So after reading the job description and hearing what they were looking for, I felt it was perfect for me. After I started, it was amazing to me to think back to all the experiences I had, [and realize] that I really could do this job. I just wasn't thinking about it that way so I had to pull from all of my various experiences.

The participants continued to capitalize on their transferrable skills in their professional roles, which allowed them to access a repertoire of familiar events and to perform at higher levels. All of the participants mentioned how they rely on past experiences to inform actions or decisions in their current roles. "I try to think of all the resources that I got from running orientation. I think that was the best foundation I ever got," Alison asserted. "That's helped me help students and it's helped me to figure out where I need to go to get help myself."

Category 3: Forging and Developing Relationships through Affiliations and Connections. Affiliations are associations with professional, social, or community organizations that allow the individual the opportunity to make personal connections with people. Connections may include, but are not limited to, relationships with friends, other professionals, community members, or students that an individual can access to facilitate productivity.

All of the participants emphasized the importance of maintaining and growing positive connections with other people. Connecting with others through professional organizations and work arrangements was common, and considerable time was spent discussing the importance of being mentored and mentoring others. All of the participants considered themselves to be mentors to someone else, whether it was a student, a peer, or a younger professional. These relationships were important to them and they put a lot of energy into sustaining those relationships.

Affiliations with organizations. All of the participants had some level of association with professional, social, or community organizations. Many of them attended local, regional and national conferences, served on boards and committees, and volunteered their time. Several of the participants had given presentations at conferences, and served as local and state officers, as well. "Presenting at national conferences or sitting on regional and national boards for planning conferences is important for expanding your network," offered Ellen. "It's so easy to focus in on your own little world and have no idea what's going on in other areas." They valued the learning opportunities and the networking potential that membership and active participation afforded. Some of the other stated benefits to organizational affiliation included: personal growth, the ability to contribute, access help and resources, and gain exposure and access to opportunity.

The salience of reaching out beyond one's own workplace borders was emphasized by many of the participants as they encouraged advisors to branch out of institutional silos, "If you're just doing your job, you're never going to get anywhere because that's what everybody else is doing. It's very important that you build relationships on campus, and make connections, and that you network because those are the people who are on the search committees later."

Melanie valued her ability to contribute to the campus community that her involvement had afforded. She shared the following:

> I think those are really important in terms of broadening your experience and going outside the bubble of your job description. Any time you have an opportunity to be on a search committee, or a planning committee, and work with people who have common interests you always learn a lot. In a smaller academic setting, it's really important to have a sense that you're also contributing to the community at-large and the overall efforts of the university.

It is important to note that connections with others were not only important for the participant's career success, very often it was a crucial requirement for effective work accomplishment. The participants regularly collaborated with campus and community personnel to complete work responsibilities. Salita shared the process as follows:

> We have four different sectors under the same umbrella but we all have different reporting structures. We work with all of those other areas. For example, anything that goes on with the buildings has to be in compliance with Facilities Management policies. Also, we follow the policies and procedures of Business Services, when we create housing contracts for students. My role has a lot of hats and I coordinate a lot of pieces.

For some participants, however, participating in professional organizations and serving on committees were luxuries that they could not afford. Time constraints and restricted access proved to be frustrating for some participants who wanted to participate, but could not manage to do so. Sharon's work responsibilities limited the time she had available for outside activities such as committee work and professional organizations, "There's no time. There's absolutely *no* time. To be perfectly honest, I have never worked as hard as I work now ever in my life. So no, there is no time."

The scarcity of opportunities to serve on committees and the time constraints of his former position were sources of frustration for George. In a previous role he was confined to a demanding advising schedule that did not allow him to go to professional meetings or conferences. In his current role, however, the requisites for committee involvement remained a mystery, "I have never served on any campus committees because you are usually asked to be on committees. You usually don't get to call someone up and volunteer. That's always been a source of frustration for me – who gets to serve on committees on this campus? What is that based on? Some get to represent the college, some get to represent entire departments and programs. I didn't like that… I didn't fuss about it, but I didn't like it."

Connections with professionals. Connecting with peers and supervisors were important components to career self-management for this group of participants. Each administrator acknowledged the value of their personal and professional relationships to their career path. From landing jobs to establishing life-long friendships, connecting with others proved to be a worthwhile endeavor. Even though Sharon had finished her doctorate, she realized that attaining an administrative position would hinge on her connections. "It was never going to be how I looked on paper. It was going to be about who I knew, what they knew about me, and what I could do. [In the end], that's what it was."

Alex shared a similar story about why he believed he was able to edge out his competition when he applied for his current position, "I think the reason I have this job is because I hung out at conferences with [the department] – otherwise, I wouldn't have had contact with [them]. They got to know me through that and said, "Hey, he's cool"; and I wasn't actively trying to get a job over here. I think [getting to know them] really helped.

Connection to other professionals facilitates access and exposure to opportunity; the participants demonstrated this phenomenon throughout their careers. Alex, an avid football fan, was given the opportunity to participate in football recruiting due to his relationship with his co-worker and his willing attitude. When asked to help with athletic advising over the weekend, he pitched in regularly. "I got to know [the athletics staff] better after doing some recruiting and over one weekend the athletics department called and said, "Hey, can you come up here on a

Saturday morning and talk to some football recruits?" I said, "Yeah!" So I got to know some of the people over there really well, and some of the coaches and I would play golf together."

Connections with supervisors. One relationship that is crucial for employees to foster is the relationship with their supervisor. The participants in this study acknowledged the value of having supervisor support when managing their careers, and expected to receive development from their supervisor. Some of the benefits to supervisor support included being named to serve on committees, being introduced to influential people, receiving encouragement, coaching, and advocacy, being given and positioned for additional responsibilities, and being mentored. Many of the participants discussed the importance of sharing their career aspirations with their supervisors and believed that making their supportive supervisor aware of their goals helped them achieve career advancement.

Ellen benefitted greatly from the relationship she had with her supervisor and credited her support as an influential factor in being promoted, "I would definitely consider my Director one of my mentors. She's been such an advocate! I'm so appreciative of her always looking out for me and recognizing my potential even when I didn't."

Connections with students. For an administrative cohort that values student connections, it is no surprise that they considered their relationships with students important to their careers. Giving back in the form of mentoring and helping students not only helped the students, but the participants reaped benefits as well. They discussed the fulfillment they received from interacting with students and also credited them with personal and professional lessons that have enhanced their careers.

Connections in the community. Many of the participants described how relationships outside of the university benefitted them in their careers. Many had been informed about job opportunities by contacts in the community, while others were granted access to new experiences. Wanda acknowledged that previous performance and a positive reputation were helpful in landing her current job; but she also believed recognized that a community connection was an added advantage. The following offers explanation:

> I feel like I was a good advisor and that helped me get this job, and doesn't hurt that I'm very collegial, and I'm trainable and teachable, and that people across campus think of me as a good employee, so none of that hurts. But I think ultimately it's not so much about what I'd done; my current Director's wife is my sorority sister and I think it was all about who I knew.

Third-party connections can be extremely beneficial. George described how he was able to gain exposure because he had influential contacts as follows.

> Well, by chance, the Provost is a friend of a friend and we've found ourselves at social gatherings occasionally. So recently the opportunity to oversee an Internship program for a local Center came up and the Provost asked if I'd like to assume that responsibility. I don't think that opportunity would have come up if I had not had that connection.

Connections with mentors. Mentors, or the lack thereof, were a significant topic of conversation with these former advisors. For those that had mentors, those relationships were treasured and cultivated. Ellen affirmed, "I honestly can say that I couldn't have considered future possibilities without the help of my mentors." In some cases, the mentoring relationships developed organically, without deliberate or formal mechanisms. In other situations, the administrator pursued relationships with mentors that grew into fruitful associations.

Some of the advantages of being mentored included: receiving encouragement, advice, support, and help; being inspired; extending networks and establishing friendships; gaining access to opportunities; and being motivated to help others. Good mentors possessed the following qualities: self-knowledge; an appreciation of others; positive and productive life-skills; professional growth; communication skills; and an understanding of workplace dynamics, politics, and navigational skills.

Dennis had strong opinions about how mentoring relationships are formed and believed that it was not necessary to be friends with a mentor:

> You just can't force the mentoring relationship; it either happens or it doesn't. You sort of gravitate to the people who can help you. One of my mentors could be very uncomfortable at times…. She was probably my most influential mentor, both personally and professionally. She'd know you five minutes and start confronting you on things [laughs] – but she taught me a lot about communication… she was always challenging me. She was very good. And I probably would not have had that relationship with her if it had not been for our working relationship. But I think that's how you grow.

Alex found his mentors serendipitously: "I've learned so much from [my mentors]. We meet outside of the normal work hours all the time just to talk about what I should do about this or that. I think I really found mentoring when I wasn't really looking for it. I'm glad I did."

How to connect and stay connected. Connections were very important to the participants and several ways to connect with others and develop relationships were discussed. Making and maintaining connections can seem intimidating or mysterious for some people, and there is no exact formula for networking. "I go to lunch with [people in my network], I share jokes or emails with some of them, share work solutions, or drop a line or a text," shared George. "Also, I just drop by if I'm in the building – those are the main methods [for maintaining relationships]." Essentially, the mechanisms for establishing connections are the same as those for maintaining those connections.

Some of the participants were better at connecting than others and those with larger networks cultivated relationships into personally and professionally productive vehicles as they interacted with people in all aspects of their work and personal lives. Some examples of effective connecting behaviors included: Being friendly and approachable; being authentic and genuine; being coachable and a good listener; being willing to expand on work relationships; mingling socially with others; identifying potential mentors; initiating and maintaining contact in-person or through phone, email, or social media; being introduced by third-parties; capitalizing on common interests and backgrounds; and learning from virtual mentors (via video, books, internet).

Failing to connect. While all of the participants acknowledged that they had important connections to others, one - third of the participants in this study did not have mentors. In the majority of those cases, a mentoring relationship was an obvious void in their career lives. Some of the reasons for not having an identified mentor included the fact that the administrator had failed to clarify their career path and therefore had not connected with those who could provide direction, strategy, or advice; or they were content in their current roles and did not see the value in having a mentor if they did not have aspirations of upward career mobility.

"I wasn't looking at [it like] "I'm going to have a career in H.E.," stated Melanie. I really wanted to use my skill set in terms of talking to students about [specific kinds of] classes. There's a lot to know about the nuances of [graduate and professional] school admissions and what they're looking for. And once [I] started going down that path, I wasn't really looking for other opportunities."

Alison's career-mindedness had been somewhat restricted because of the geographic limitations of her family and she had been reticent to make strategic connections that could have been professionally advantageous. The following describes her perspective:

> One thing I know is that my career isn't going to move us (as a family). I don't have those kinds of aspirations where I'm going to seek out a job that would cause us to move. So I think that's hampered my thinking about going out and developing those relationships and not seeing that they still benefit me even [in my current role].

Other participants desired mentorship, but were unsure of how to go about attracting and developing those relationships. Not wanting to appear over-zealous or insincere, a few participants refrained from identifying potential mentors and developing those relationships.

When George was asked if he had pursued relationships that could have potentially been beneficial for his career, he admitted that he exerted a certain amount of effort to maintain some relationships. “I have been very strategic in maintaining some of the relationships that I’ve built, because I think those could come into play again at some point.” Overall, however, he stated that he felt “icky” about those activities. “I’m so worried about people thinking that I would be using them… I genuinely like these people and I would probably maintain those relationships anyway, but there were times when I scheduled lunch knowing I was going to ask for something. And I worry that someone would think that I have motives behind connecting with them or reaching out to them.”

Wanda also desired mentorship, but did not know how to attract or pursue that kind of relationship. Her concerns are as follows:

> I would [like to have a mentor] but I don’t even know where I would look. I would love for there to be a female mentor on campus. I think there are some men that are doing a good job, but sometimes I think it could be easier to have a female mentor that’s relatable. I’d love to have somebody that could help me navigate this stuff.

Sharon had experienced similar challenges with identifying appropriate mentors and seeking guidance. She also mentioned the challenge in finding relatable female mentors, “I’ve not found a person that I connect with that is on that next ladder step. [I’d absolutely like to have a mentor, but] it’s challenging with women, because there’s such a competition.” Sharon had also been approached by other universities to either learn from her or recruit her. “It would great to have someone to help me interpret that interest and weed through it… at this point I’m doing that on my own.”

George mentioned institutional barriers to connection, expressed his desire for guidance, and his explains his perceptions about supervisors in mentoring in the following:

> I don't believe that there's a relationship for the university to [help me with career decisions]. Nobody's prodding me along, encouraging me, or showing me where to go from here. In moments of crisis when I'm making major decisions, I don't have a mentor – whether it's been somebody like a boss or somebody that's been here longer than I have; that's always something that I've thought would be beneficial on this campus – especially for the [age] 30-something bunch. It can be a pretty lonely place to be and I don't think it's built into the university system to help with that process. Should I expect [the supervisor] to reach out to me, or am I supposed to reach out to them? [It'd be nice to have someone say, "Let's look at what a five-year plan *could* look like." Or to say, "Ok, you're in a position that doesn't have a direct ladder, but here's what's available."

Self- Defined Opportunities for Improvement

When the participants were asked what they would change about their careers or their career self-management behaviors, most accepted their previous experiences as valuable learning exercises that they would not trade. However, given the opportunity to reflect, many acknowledged gaps in their knowledge that may have been valuable had they acquired certain skills or competencies sooner.

"Changing components of self": Making personal changes. Some of the participants acknowledged personal areas of improvement that would have made a difference their career or their effectiveness. Ellen offered a suggestion made to her by a former supervisor in the following:

> A previous supervisor told me that I needed to learn how to be strategic about how I say things, because there was evidently a time when something I said was misconstrued. And I think that was good advice. I don't know how you go about changing that component of yourself, because [one of my defining characteristics] is that I act quick and think fast, but the down side of that is sometimes I say things I probably shouldn't have said. So I guess the older I get, the better I am at that – so I don't know how I would've changed it, but focusing more on that, perhaps [would have been helpful].

Some participants mentioned that pursing educational credentials sooner or finishing advanced degrees would have been advantageous, while others stated they wished they had acquired personal characteristics such as discernment and self-confidence, and gained the ability to relax. Sharon discussed her experiences with former co-workers and why she wished she had established personal and professional boundaries earlier in her career. As a younger professional, she did not distinguish between co-workers and personal friends and blurred the boundary lines between the two. “Work is work and you can have acquaintances at work but they shouldn’t really be your friends outside of work. Keep things collegial but very professional. It’s one thing if we have an event, but I don’t really need to spend my weekends hanging out with co-workers. I would not do that again.”

Charles discussed his challenges with self-confidence earlier in his career as follows:

> Sometimes you’re not privy to a lot of the same opportunities as others - and it may not be because of [other] people, it may be because [you hold yourself back]. You sit back and say, “Well, they won’t give me this opportunity because of this, or I need to be quiet because they’re going to think that.” Then you see other people make very bone-headed mistakes and you think, “I would have never done that, or I would have done it this way.” Then you think, ‘Why didn’t I just say something?’ Why sit here and let the whole organization suffer because you’ve got this preconceived notion that people won’t listen to you. So [I tell myself,] ‘say something, do something, and know when to listen.”

Ellen discussed the value of being able to balance her achievement-oriented traits during a particularly challenging time, “I take personal responsibility and ownership over tasks and when I discovered I wasn’t able to [complete a project], I was beating myself up for not being able to do it, but I did not realize that it wasn’t possible. [Once I reassessed] it was like, “Oh, I need to really chill out and release the pressure on myself.”

A few participants mentioned that they wished they had appreciated past experiences and the value that would come from what they learned. George stated the following:

> When I was a graduate student, I regretted not accepting a teaching graduate assistantship. I was in advising and it was paying for my graduate school, but I regretted not having teaching experience because all of my classmates were teaching… And I regretted it at the time, but I realize that [without the advising experience] I could have NEVER gotten [my Assistant Director role] – which remains probably the most defining part of my professional career.

"Learning to dance": Educational and professional changes. Many participants mentioned that they would have pursued advanced education sooner, or initiated career self-management strategies earlier in their career. Alex felt that he learned the CSM "dance" late and expounds in the following:

> There's kind of a dance that you have to learn to do and I think I caught on to it a little late. It was because of my age and not having any career experience other than retail. I wish I could have known the environments I was getting into sooner to advance quicker. [Or, to have] someone to say, "Hey, you need to be thinking about getting a master's now, not 3 or 4 years from now."

Harold felt like he, too, caught on late to the nuances of career self-management but values the lessons he has learned throughout his career, "I wish I had been hungrier earlier in my career. When I was younger, I was just happy to have a job, and I was having a good time. I wish I had been a little bit more focused on my end-goals earlier. Though, had I been, I'm not sure I would have learned what I know now."

Although he has experienced substantial career success, one administrator wishes he had finished his Ph.D. Dennis shared the following:

> I would have probably tried to finish my Ph.D. Looking back on it now, it may or may not have helped me professionally, but it's something I wish I'd completed at the time and pushed through and done it… I just lost the passion to finish and I took a different path… At that point, I didn't see the benefit. I knew I didn't want to teach or be a faculty member. Things were going fine, and it requires a lot of time and effort, so...

Alison would have welcomed more training in budget management prior to accepting her Associate Director role, "Budget is definitely one of the [areas in which I wish I had been better prepared]. It's a mess. I've spent tons of time on it and I wish I had had more training. It's one thing to have your own personal budget, but to think of how an operating budget works – I hadn't had a finance class like that since I was in undergrad in the '90's."

“The unspoken world”: Workplace dynamics. While many of the participants had acquired the ability to understand workplace dynamics, many wished they had been better prepared to face the realities of politics, power, and personalities. Alison expressed some discomfort with her understanding of the institution’s political culture and desired more clarity. She shared as follows:

> [I’d like to] know the political structure of things better. I can do relationships, but understanding how decisions are made above you and around you and how to navigate through that [is challenging]. You can get caught off guard. You don’t have any control and the little you did have can sometimes be overridden, so knowing how to manipulate that unspoken world would be helpful.

In Dennis’ previous role, he was used to a certain amount of autonomy. In his current, much more visible role, he wished he had had a better understanding of the impact of his actions and the politics involved in his work, “It would’ve been nice to know more about the bureaucracy, politics, and to have a better understanding of who the players were [before accepting this role]”

Several of the participants expressed that a better understanding of this tacit and implicit competency sooner in their careers would have been beneficial. For Sarah, although she was aware of gender-related differences in the workplace, she was not aware of how they would manifest on the job. “I kind of knew, but didn’t realize that [this business] was such a man’s world. If I’d have known that I need to work on my golf swing, I think that would have helped a little bit more. I knew it was a man’s world but not really. I didn’t know what that looked like.”

What Advisors Should Know

The characteristics discussed in this section described the personal attributes, motivation, knowledge, and skills that were common in this group of mid-level administrators. In preparation for career advancement, Advisors should incorporate the following personal and professional tactics into their career self-management strategies.

"Knowing your talents and how to use them": Personal tactics. The linchpin of career self-management is self-knowledge. Knowing one's strengths, preferences, motivators, and goals is vital to this process and it drives the CSM cycle. Ellen likens the process to one that she advises students to engage in when trying to select a major or future profession. "[It involves] self-awareness, knowing yourself, knowing your boundaries, knowing your talents and how to utilize them." She also stressed that self-knowledge allows advisors to avoid common pitfalls when assessing promotion opportunities. The following explains:

> I think it's important to know when you really are ready [for advancement] and [when you are] just doing it because it's more money... If you're not really good at it, you'll be disliked, you're not going to perform, you're not going to reach your goals, and you're not going to be happy. It's not going to be worth it. So knowing your own boundaries and also when to change [is important].

Wanda agreed with this sentiment and suggested that advisors really understand what attracted them to advising and try to find those qualities in future positions, "Because ultimately more money is not going to matter if you don't like what you do. So figure out what it is about what you do that you love and [identify] those same things in other positions. Just to be a mid-level manager is not enough if you need the human interaction; you won't stay."

Self-knowledge, patience, and timing were three concepts that Alex encouraged advisors to assess. He offered these suggestions:

> Be patient. I've seen some folks fly through faster, but if this is something you really want to do, be patient – it's one of the hardest things to do. There's a reason why I didn't get a lot of those jobs I applied for. It's good that I didn't. If I'd gotten any of those I wouldn't be working at this university anymore or I'd be miserable. You need to decide if this is something that fulfills you and not just pays the bills.

All of the participants suggested honing professional skills and acquiring advanced education. One way to sharpen professional skills is to accept more responsibility and to become exposed to new experiences. "The best thing you can do is to start asking to do more," shared

Alex. "Taking on things that are out of the realm of what you're doing, but within what you *can* do. I loved when I was given something to work on, and I was able to be creative and put my own touch on it."

Broadening one's scope while remaining engaged in the present can be challenging, but Gloria offered the following advice:

> [You must] really focus in on the job you currently have and do it well. You also have to think long term – what skills will you need to be a president? Or what skills do you need to be a Vice Chancellor? Figure out which skills you don't have. When you go to that interview for the next job, you need to know that it will set you up for your next position. So determine whether [you need] more supervisory experience, budget experience, teaching experience… whatever it is– [and get those skills].

Being open to new ideas and experiences was suggested by all of the participants. Sarah offered, "Be open-minded and independent. Yes, being at this institution is great, but to move up in H.E. you've got to branch out…be open minded. Try something new, volunteer, and understand all aspects of the institution. Understand what development does, what recruitment does, understand how the graduate school [functions], reach out to others, and be honest."

The list of desirable competencies and qualities that advisors who are interested in moving into mid-level administrative positions should possess seem endless. The best approach is a well-rounded and comprehensive approach that is guided by the individual's self-knowledge, personal priorities, and career goals. Table 2 identifies the personal attributes and the knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) that the participants in this study believed were important for current professional academic advisors to acquire or develop.

Summary

Three primary themes facilitated an understanding of the career experiences of the participants. Comprehending who they are, the career challenges they overcame, and the career strategies they employed provided useful insight into their career self-management tactics and offered some possible explanations for the career advancement they experienced. As self-aware and values-driven individuals, the participants were proactive about finding career experiences that were congruent with their personal priorities. Resilience, a common characteristic among the participants, allowed them to learn from previous mistakes and bounce back stronger. As committed, others-centered professionals, the participants were eager to help and passionately believed in the value of their work. The educated and self-confident risk-takers were motivated to learn, grow, and to improve their lives and their personal and professional skill sets.

The challenges that the participants overcame during their careers prompted emotional, psychological, and personal growth that yielded desirable professional fruit. Conquering fear, self-doubt, and disappointment made them stronger and resourceful. Confronting the difficulties of working with people and supervising employees made them wiser and more mature.

The strategies that these participants employed to surmount the challenges they encountered over their careers comprised their tactical toolkit for career self-management. Engaging in psychological, emotional, and spiritual processes to harness and identify perspective and strength allowed them to make purposeful strides that would ensure endurance. Accumulating knowledge and capitalizing on skills and experiences gave them advantageous practical dexterity that allowed them to flourish, while their ability to forge and develop meaningful relationships propelled them to greater positioning, exposure, and opportunity. These findings illuminate possible explanations for the CSM practices of MLAs who formerly served as PAAS and offer guidance to aspirant advisors who desire positions in administration.

CHAPTER FIVE

Career pathways toward non-faculty leadership in H.E. are ambiguous and poorly defined (Biddix, 2011; Davis, 2008). Professional academic advisors (PAAs) who aspire to mid-level administrative (MLA) positions due to the lack of opportunities in advising and who are unaware of the skills and the career capital required to advance may not be as competitive as other applicants, and they may not advance as quickly as they would prefer. The resulting frustration may have negative repercussions on student services, institutional continuity, and the institution's bottom line (Branham, 2005).

Students and professional advising offices suffer when advisors are stagnant or frustrated because the quality of advising diminishes when advisors are not engaged (Brown, 1987; Evans, 1988; Lorden, 1998). This scenario may increase workplace turnover. When advisors leave advising to take other positions within the institution because of limited advancement opportunities, advising is negatively affected. When advisors leave the institution and take all of their explicit and tacit knowledge and expertise with them, the institution as a whole suffers the greatest loss. In both scenarios advising loses. Workplace turnover is a very costly phenomenon for organizations that can derail knowledge management efforts and stifle the institution's ability to provide optimal services to students.

The purpose of this study was to learn about the career self-management behaviors of mid-level administrators (MLAs) who formerly served as professional academic advisors (PAAs) and the career capital they believe was helpful for advancement into mid-level administration. Through face-to-face interviews, this study investigated why participants believed they were successful in attaining their positions without formalized career paths into administration from academic advising. Through the participants' unique stories, this study sought to increase the academic advising community's awareness about an appropriate career self-management agenda for those who desire administrative positions in H.E., and it hoped to provide focus and direction for advisors as they manage their careers.

This chapter offers a summary of the findings presented in Chapter 4, and discusses them within the context of the research questions and through the lens of the current literature and theoretical frameworks. An explanation of a model that represents the career self-management process of PAAs that aspired to and attained MLA positions in H.E. is followed by a disclosure of the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research and recommendations for PAAs, and human resource development (HRD) professionals.

Summary of Findings

Three primary themes were identified that facilitated an understanding of the career experiences of the participants. Comprehending who they are, the career challenges they overcame, and the career strategies they employed provided useful insight into the career self-management tactics of the participants, and offered some possible explanations for the career advancement they experienced.

The first theme, Who They Are, revealed that the participants in this study lived purpose-driven lives. As a values-driven cohort, these MLAs were distinguished by their personal attributes and by the nature of their motivation. These participants were proactive, assertive, resilient, committed, and willing to help. They were deliberately student-focused and were confident in themselves and comfortable with taking risks. As life-long learners, they were open to new opportunities and were motivated by their passion and their pursuit of a self-defined status of success. As highly skilled and educated professionals, the participants were adept at working with people, understood workplace dynamics, and had solid communication skills that allowed them to perform and execute their responsibilities well.

The career challenges that the participants confronted comprised the second theme and strengthened their resilience, productivity, and ability to solve problems. They faced their own fears and feelings of inadequacy, learned to handle change, and resolved any dissonance between their personal priorities and work requirements. This group of participants unraveled many of the complexities associated with the personal, emotional, and psychological barriers of career self-management. Working with and managing people presented a series of challenges in the careers of the participants, and they learned how to productively manage personal and professional disappointments.

The Career Strategies That Were Employed, the third theme, illuminated the psychological, emotional, and spiritual tools that that the participants employed to overcome career challenges. Techniques such as self-assessment, self-knowledge, positive affirmations, positive thinking, spiritual processes, goal setting, career exploration, and career planning were used to reframe, diffuse, and overcome challenges. Acquiring and capitalizing on additional education, skills, and experiences allowed them to increase their employability and to be prepared for potential opportunities. The participants understood the importance of connections to other people and organizations, and many of them used those connections to execute their work responsibilities and to secure future career and personal growth experiences.

When the participants were given the opportunity to identify areas of personal and professional acumen that they wished they had acquired sooner, most agreed that the chain of events that had led up to the current moment included valuable lessons that were necessary for them to grow and to be proficient in their current roles. However, if they could have changed anything, many acknowledged that having more self-control, advanced education, and political awareness would have been beneficial earlier in their careers.

The participants offered PAAs an extensive list of desirable competencies, qualities, and skills that would facilitate career advancement. Personal attributes such as self-knowledge, resilience, patience, and gratefulness were mentioned as a sample of the kinds of qualities that would serve PAAs well in the future. Performance and execution capabilities such as leadership, people skills, and decision-making skills were emphasized and job-specific proficiencies such as assessment, budgeting, and technology were considered crucial components of an attractive career portfolio. In essence, a comprehensive and holistic approach to career self-management that included human capital, social capital, and psychological capital were thought to offer PAAs a balanced and long-term method for career advancement into H.E. administration.

Discussion

Research Question 1:

Why do some MLAs in H. E. who formerly served as professional academic advisors believe that they were successful in attaining their positions without following a formalized career path from academic advising?

The participants in this study cited five reasons why they believed they were successful in attaining their positions without a formalized career path. First, the participants defined success for themselves using values-driven criteria. Fulfillment, happiness, and the opportunity to help others were important components of a successful career, and they measured each opportunity against its ability to maintain these standards. Clarifying their values allowed them to be economical in their job search efforts and protected them from short-sighted missteps due to ill-defined goals and unrealistic expectations. Having clearly stated conditions by which to evaluate career choices allowed these participants to focus their strengths, talents, and energy toward endeavors that yielded personally meaningful outcomes.

For example, George insisted that his work be meaningful and that it preserve his integrity and psychological health, “It can’t be something where I feel like a little bit of my soul dies every day when I walk into the office.” Sharon’s work preferences included doing work that she loved and being compensated for her contributions. Alison wanted to experience personal growth, while she made an impact performing work that she truly enjoyed. These values-driven criteria helped them to identify work that would be satisfying as they used their personal strengths to perform work that made them feel successful.

Self-knowledge was another reason why the participants believed they were able to move from advising to administration. Because they were aware of their strengths, inherent personal attributes, and skills they were able to merge these assets with their past experiences to create a productive and marketable employment portfolio. Choosing positions that showcased their strengths increased the likelihood of accomplishment and fulfillment. Knowing how to market and apply their unique skills allowed them to perform at greater capacities.

“Get me out in front of people,” stated Sharon. “I love higher education and I want to talk to students about their opportunities, I want to tell them what they can do with their lives. I want to be an example and I thrive on it. It motivates and invigorates me. I love it.” Sharon’s personal experiences as a first-generation college student coupled with her people-oriented personal style and penchant for tracking details allowed her to carve out a unique professional niche that she marketed toward effectiveness in each successive role. Recognizing the value of their distinctive qualities and contributions enabled the participants to move beyond the boundaries of advising toward mid-level administration posts.

The third reason the participants believed they were able to travel unchartered paths from advising to administration was because of their connections to organizations and to other people. They participated in professional organizations and were involved on campus through serving on committees, attending and presenting at conferences, and networking within those structures. The participants received exposure, visibility, education, awareness of opportunity, and the ability to apply their skills and talents to worthwhile programs. Connecting with supervisors, peers, community personnel, and students provided an important exchange of ideas, support, and encouragement that propelled the participants forward.

Melanie spoke about the importance of moving outside of the "bubble of one's job description" to be active on committees and in professional organizations. The ability to contribute to the university community was meaningful for her. For Alex, a great networking idea was conceived while attending a conference that increased the effectiveness of his program and allowed him to reach out and learn from other institutions. Don's commitment to H.E. was solidified through involvement in a professional organization. After successfully spearheading a large event he stated, "I knew I wanted to be in H.E. … I was invested." The exposure that the participants gained from their networks and affiliations proved to be assets that improved their performance and increased their marketability.

The ability to perform well in their roles was another important factor in why the participants felt they were able to move into administration from advising. Being able to lead, execute, collaborate, and communicate with a wide variety of people were essential functions that allowed them to be productive and effective. Their ability to complete tasks and work with others allowed them to have positive on-campus reputations that served as assets when they were considered for other opportunities.

For Dennis talk was cheap, “Success is not having the ideas but getting them implemented.” He listed decision-making and the ability to move projects forward as important administrative qualities. Sarah spoke about her daily quest to “move the needle” toward progress and “to be able to go home every day and feel like I’ve accomplished something.” George asserted, “I get things done,” and described the methods he used for staying organized and effective.

As a function of performance and productivity all of the participants acknowledged that they relied heavily on positive collaborations with others. Harold spoke at length about learning how to set a productive team environment. The nature of Salita’s work required her to cooperate with other individuals and campus divisions to plan and execute programs. Wanda routinely joined forces with peers, faculty, and her supervisor to provide student services and programs. All of these qualities contributed to the participants’ abilities to perform well in their roles and experience career advancement.

Lastly, the participants’ understanding of workplace dynamics enabled them to maneuver through the ambiguous political environments that often exist in H.E. The individual’s ability to identify with the culture of the institution and enmesh it with his or her personal beliefs and values were important and it facilitated engagement, productivity, and contentment. Most of the participants in the study were able to thrive in their work settings because they could adapt to the inevitable workplace fluidity and uncertainty. Their ability to navigate the unspoken political climate of their professional settings was an asset that allowed them to create new paths where there were none previously.

Although most participants felt they needed more experience with and understanding of the political dynamics of their workplaces, these individuals learned to operate within their environments and thrive. Sharon referenced the competitive nature of the workplace and the importance of discernment about workplace boundaries and relationships. Dennis had to adjust to the scope and impact of his actions and what his decisions meant to the student body and the campus at large. Through learning from his mistakes, Alex enhanced his professionalism and learned how to properly maneuver the hierarchical nature of H.E. Learning the nuances of a political organization takes time and is not an easy task. The participants in this study were students of the process and used the breadth of their experiences to better position themselves for advancement.

Research Question 1(a):

What kind of career self-management behaviors did they employ that they believe were instrumental in their current career success?

Career self-management (CSM) is defined as a proactive, lifelong, self-monitored process of career planning and implementation that involves choosing and setting personal goals, formulating strategies for achieving them, and taking action (De Vos & Soens, 2008). The participants in this study believed that their current career success was due to three primary behaviors and attitudes: They owned their CSM processes and were proactive about its oversight; they were connected to people and organizations that facilitated growth, awareness of opportunities, and advantageous positioning; and they were adaptive learners who continuously renewed the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that would lead to career advancement.

The participants in this study believed that they were responsible for managing their careers and directing the pace, direction, and content of their career experiences. Through iterative self-assessment and self-analysis, they defined their personal and professional priorities, proactively chose activities and associations, and acquired skills and competencies that supported their predetermined objectives. Because they assumed ownership of the process, they were intentional about career decisions, and they determined what sacrifices and risks were appropriate. Their attentiveness to their careers lessened career blunders and facilitated career contentment.

Sarah and Salita spoke at length about the amount of "soul searching" they did to arrive at a thorough understanding of their priorities and career direction. Although at times it was painful, these participants expressed gratitude for the outlook they gained from the exercise. Janet learned to "trust her gut" when assessing her readiness for new work roles, and when looking toward future positions, Wanda evaluated and identified the fulfilling aspects of her current job duties, responsibilities, and work qualities and attempted to duplicate those effects in future roles.

Don's process for learning about his career preferences included extensive volunteer experiences in a variety of H.E. divisions. As he accumulated more career perspective, he knit together an impressive and diverse amount of skills and competencies that made him a sought-after job candidate. Melanie and Salita actively pursued affiliations and committee assignments that enhanced their current knowledge and taught them new ways to apply for their skills. Alison set aside "academic versus student affairs" biases when she opened herself up to new learning experiences. The value of having the ambidextrous skills that are developed as a result of working in both academic and student affairs set her apart from other applicants.

Connections to people and organizations were important to these participants and they recognized the value of these relationships for work productivity, career mobility, and personal satisfaction. Due to the nature of their work, collaboration with others was essential and the absence of productive people skills would have hindered their ability to function. The participants were deliberate in their level of involvement in organizations, and although some connections with some individuals were surreptitious, the significance of those relationships was not unnoticed. Through their connections and affiliations, they were made aware of opportunities, were granted access to decision-makers and power influencers, were given exposure and platforms to display their skills, and were positioned for future career advancement.

The benefits from organizational affiliations and connections could be seen in all of the participants' lives. "Positioning is crucial," stated Ellen as she described her numerous experiences on campus committees and task forces. "I really like working on [campus committees] because influential campus leaders are on it and I get to know them and work with them," she shared. When Alison accepted an invitation to serve on a campus-wide committee, her skill was noticed by members of higher administration, and she was asked to work on larger-scaled projects that had significant impact on the campus. Her willingness to serve provided access to people in higher positions and allowed her to pursue her passions and contribute to the campus in a broader capacity. Don was offered an adjunct teaching position after making a presentation at a conference. The visibility he gained from presenting his ideas and displaying his communication style positioned him to receive additional opportunities.

Adapting and learning were important competencies for the participants' ability to perform in their current roles. In many cases, the participants learned on the job and had to apply new knowledge immediately. Their openness to new experiences granted flexibility and allowed them to capitalize on past experiences while acquiring new intelligence. Being able and willing to teach themselves techniques, information, and approaches enhanced their department's ability to respond quickly and accurately to changes and service demands.

Sharon stated that she “loved the process of becoming educated” and really enjoyed learning about a variety of content. Harold and Charles spoke about the necessity of continuous learning in order to stay abreast of new trends and techniques within their fields. They chose to attend conferences and workshops to remain current on new information. Ellen enjoyed attending webinars and was an avid reader; learning through books, blogs, and listservs helped her expand her approach to her responsibilities and renew her excitement and interest in her job. Alison described many of her new work roles as “stretching exercises” and, although she acknowledged her anxiety about the amount of new information and the competencies she would have to learn, she was confident in her ability to learn and welcomed the challenges associated with assuming new roles.

The ability to learn extended beyond occupational competencies for these participants, and it equipped them to learn regardless of the subject matter or the situation. For example, if their circumstances required them to learn how to maneuver the political landscape of their department or college in order to be effective, they learned those navigational skills. If professional efficacy required learning whom to contact, where to find them, and how to adequately connect with them, the participants in this study were able to learn that information and apply it to their conditions. The ability to learn augmented the innate and acquired competencies of the participants and prompted others to project positive attributes on them and fortified their belief in the participants’ capabilities.

Over the course of time Melanie’s administrative duties evolved and she discovered that she needed to learn how to create a website. Even though it was outside of her comfort zone, she enlisted campus resources, borrowed books, and learned through trial and error. When Sarah’s duties called for her to develop relationships with community partners, she learned who the influential people were and found the best way to gain access by asking questions of her peers and colleagues and conducting internet research on their work and interests. For Harold, learning the university system was instrumental for helping students. He consistently made phone calls to other campus offices and met with other employees to ask questions and solve problems. The ability to learn and adapt helped the participants to be effective and gain new skills.

Research Question 1(b):

How did they choose the career self-management behaviors that they employed?

Selecting one mechanism for explaining how the participants chose their CSM behaviors is difficult because there could be many different explanations for observed phenomena (Martin, 1979), however this study offered some insight into a few factors that may have influenced their CSM decisions. For the three main CSM behaviors (ownership of the CSM process, meaningful connections to organizations and people, and readily adapting and learning new ideas and concepts) that were discussed in Research Question 1(a), maturity and experience appeared to significantly impact how the participants selected their CSM behaviors.

For example, the impetus for many participants to take responsibility for their own CSM was personal maturity. As they grew as individuals and professionals, the participants learned more about themselves and their personal and professional priorities and took responsibility for minimizing any dissonance that existed between these two segments of their lives. Similarly, a stimulus for maturity was experience. In some cases, experiencing the disappointment of not obtaining the desired professional opportunities that others were afforded may have forced the participants to reflect, self-assess, and make decisions about their career trajectory.

Salita and Ellen both had painful job search experiences that prompted them to conduct honest self-assessment and to identify their earnest priorities. They understood that they were solely responsible for their careers and took steps to affect desired outcomes. The process of learning about themselves and their desires helped them to land in fulfilling and meaningful positions. An uncomfortable confrontation forced Charles to control his reactionary impulse to lash back in retaliation. Instead, he channeled his energies toward a productive resolution that helped him to grow and avoided hurting his campus reputation. This display of self-control facilitated maturity, and he learned from the positive result of his professional choice and was able to build upon that growth.

Melanie was forced to cast aside emotions and confront her true interests when she felt overlooked for an opportunity. Through honest conversations with her supervisor and transparent self-assessment, she was able to acknowledge her feelings of disappointment but also take actions that were consistent with her interests and priorities. The experience matured her and solidified her commitment to her role, which facilitated the acquisition of skills and competencies that were professionally beneficial. It also helped her to select CSM behaviors that were appropriate for her career goals and priorities.

The choice to become connected to organizations and individuals hinged on several factors but was primarily dependent upon the individual's personality, experience, and self-knowledge. Some participants were naturally more outgoing and made connections to others easily. In those cases, the decision to reach out to others was an extension of their character and was second-nature. In other instances, experience and observation made it clear that connections were beneficial to professional productivity and career advancement. As they benefitted from the involvement in organizations or from knowing influential people, the value of those connections was evident. Additionally, for some participants the process of learning more about themselves allowed them to identify and learn connecting techniques that were comfortable for them to implement as they developed their networks.

Sharon and Gloria were naturally inclined to connect to other people and their mechanisms for making those connections were innate. They were friendly, open, and fun to be around so people gravitated to them easily. The ease with which they interacted granted access to committees and allowed them to be considered for additional responsibilities. Alex, on the other hand, had to work at making connections and taking the initiative to approach other people. For him, making the first move to reach out was much easier when he had a specific reason for making contact. Contacting personnel from other institutions to research best practices offered a comfortable platform to use to connect, discuss work, and to identify potential collaborations.

Ellen had an undergraduate instructor that turned into a mentor and friend. In fact, prior to the interview for this study, they had just returned from having lunch together. “We’ve been communicating for decades now and she came and visited me [when I lived in another state]. We still get together each month to catch up and when I have a major decision I call her and she does the same to me. It’s reciprocal at this point.” Sarah developed a mentoring relationship with her mentor through her volunteerism. Her willingness to help and her enthusiasm for the organization allowed her to establish rapport with people who would later prove to be influential in helping her get her current position. Well before she was looking for a change, Sarah was unintentionally displaying her skills and developing relationships that she accessed for career advancement years later. The mentor that she gained had been extremely helpful during her transition into her new role and was invested in her success.

Choosing to adapt and to learn was, to varying degrees, innate for the participants. Because they were naturally curious, they welcomed the opportunity to learn new things and to be exposed to new ideas and practices. Some, however, discovered that their professional survival depended on learning quickly and taking the initiative to learn and acquire competencies on their own. These experiences motivated the participants to learn and adapt as a part of their CSM strategy.

Research Question 2:

What career capital did some MLAs in H.E. who formerly served as PAAs acquire while preparing to move into H.E. administration?

The participants in this study acquired the entire spectrum of career capital when they were preparing to move into H.E. administration. Psychological capital encompasses constructs such as self-knowledge, motivation, proactivity, openness to experience, and career insight. The participants in this study acquired a significant amount of psychological capital to prepare for upward career mobility. As they learned about themselves over the entire span of their careers – in their present and previous roles - and gained an understanding about their preferences, priorities, and motivations, they were able to make intelligent, values-driven career decisions that enhanced their marketability. The extent of the participant's psychological capital had a direct influence on their work enjoyment and their ability to draw on their human and social capital assets.

Charles demonstrated proactivity when he set an appointment to speak to a hiring manager to introduce himself and learn about the position. His initiative made a positive impression on the manager and he continued to build on the relationship he started with that manager throughout his career. George took a very proactive approach to his work with students. He routinely sought out ways to identify those that could use the services of his department by attending student functions, reading the daily campus news headlines, and talking to faculty. Sharon's work required a proactive methodology to help students reach their goals. Timely follow-up, detailed tracking reports, and constant communication ensured student success and program effectiveness.

Dennis' openness to opportunity positioned him to take on his current role. When he was approached about accepting a new position that was beyond the experiences he had accumulated up to that point, he was open to the possibility and was willing to take the risk. Alex's willingness to help a co-worker resulted in an opportunity to forge relationships with personnel in athletics; a dream job assignment for an avid sports fan. Because he was open to those opportunities, he was granted access to social events and benefited personally and professionally from those interactions.

Human capital, the skills, experiences, education, and knowledge that allow an individual to perform in their work roles, were abundant for the participants. The majority of the participants obtained advanced education prior to receiving their current positions, although they considered themselves to be life-long learners. The participants did not shy away from informal learning and often taught themselves useful skills that allowed them to be effective. Melanie's effort to teach herself to create a web page and Alex's experience developing brochures are examples of the informal learning that the participants accomplished.

The participants pursued more work experiences and responsibilities, which not only made them more marketable but offered more challenge and kept them engaged in their work. Harold routinely asked for new work responsibilities to expand his skill set and keep his work interesting. After he received a regret letter from a potential employer, he asked what skills and experiences he lacked. As a result of that conversation, Harold took on more responsibility and helped to create opportunities for his staff to be promoted also.

Because they were familiar with their own talents and strengths, the participants were able to integrate these qualities with the skills and knowledge they acquired to create professional niches that provided a unique operational platform. Janet parlayed her medical knowledge and experience into an advising position in H.E. Her ability to demonstrate her effectiveness and value to students granted her consideration over other candidates. Because of her unique combination of skills, she carved out a specialized position that was the springboard for future career advancement.

Social capital includes interpersonal relationships that the career actor can access to be productive. Inter-group and inter-organizational networks as well as personal and community resources were heavily utilized by the participants in this study as they consistently found value in professional, social, and community organization involvement. In preparation for administrative roles, most of the participants regularly accessed their networks to complete work tasks and to enhance their career self-management efforts. George was appointed to a community post that correlated with his personal interests as a result of third-party connections to those in upper administration. Alison was given access to campus influencers and additional responsibility as a result of a positive recommendation from a peer in another college. Alex strongly believed that he was given an interview because he got to know members of the department years before his current position was advertised. These types of benefits highlight the importance of social connections.

Social capital also incorporates social and cultural norms and dynamics, and mentoring. This group of participants adhered to standard social and cultural norms and recognized the value of mentoring. If they did not have a personal mentor, they were intentional about mentoring others. Being able to work with students and pour into their lives was important to all of the participants. Connecting to others was an important component of their career capital assets as they prepared for career advancement.

Research Question 2(a):

How did some MLAs in H.E. who formerly served as PAAs acquire the career capital that they believed prepared them to move into H.E. administration?

Based on the results of this study, gathering the career capital that was necessary for career advancement was a deliberate exercise that required a synchronized and holistic effort. For example, to gain experience (human capital), the participants were aware of the kinds of competencies that they desired or needed (psychological capital), and they became connected to those with power or influence (social capital) to gain access or exposure. Acquiring the appropriate blend of career capital required the career actors to be versatile and to be able to move through each phase of the CSM process with dexterity. The discussion that follows outlines more specifically the types of actions that developed the participant's career capital.

Human capital was acquired in a variety of ways by the participants in this study. Formalized education offered a solid academic foundation and in many cases enabled them to meet the minimum qualifications for their roles. Informal learning and tacit knowledge developed from on-the-job learning, self-taught lessons, and institutional tenure provided a broad base of expertise that allowed them to be effective and productive; which enhanced their preparation for advancement. Capitalizing on past experiences and accepting new responsibilities provided a well-spring of intelligence that contributed to their career advancement.

Salita was surprised at her ability to draw upon her previous experiences in banking, office management, and student affairs to be effective in a new area of H.E. "I'm trading off of that knowledge now and who would have thought that this many years later that it would have made such an impact?" Charles took his experiences from athletics, student affairs, and the military to create a distinct student-centered niche. Capitalizing on his transferrable skills allowed him to be flexible and extremely marketable when preparing for new work responsibilities. Gloria used her experiences in the classroom and coupled them with her academic affairs and student affairs capabilities and created a unique and attractive offering of H.E. competencies.

The social capital that the participants acquired came from a variety of intentional and unintentional interactions that yielded beneficial relationships and outcomes. The participants maximized interactions with teachers, supervisors, peers, students, community, and social contacts and parlayed them into long-term, meaningful connections that produced access to opportunities, professional and personal development, and career advancement. The participants were conscious of their professional interactions and they were aware of the importance of inter- and intra-group collaboration.

Relationships with supervisors were important to career management for the participants and for many these contacts were catalysts for additional exposure, training, and advancement. Harold's supervisor invested a lot of effort into preparing him to assume future administrative roles, "She has been very good at helping me understand the competencies that I need to move up and move forward. She's been a very good mentor." Most of the participants had, at least at some point in their careers, experienced the benefit of having their supervisor's interest and support. Ellen recognized the investment that her supervisor had made in her development and considered her to be a mentor and friend. She stated, “She’s been such an advocate. I’m so appreciative of her always looking out for me and recognizing my potential even when I didn’t.” Gaining supervisor support was an important component of social capital that facilitated the participants’ ability to move forward. It offered a competitive advantage that was difficult to duplicate for those without the support of their managers.

Psychological capital was acquired through intentional self-analysis, prioritizing personal values, and learning to navigate the political workplace climate. Proactively exploring opportunities and being open to new experiences allowed the participants to identify career goals and to set career expectations that were consistent with their self-knowledge. The motivation to pursue and maintain career focus was driven by the individual’s degree of self-knowledge.

The ability to understand workplace dynamics is an on-going process and involves both explicit and tacit knowledge. The participants in this study recognized the value of political-savviness, and had varying degrees of effectiveness in this area. For this competency, the best teachers were experience and mentoring for the participants. As the participants gained professional exposure and extended themselves through interpersonal and organizational networks, they gained an awareness of and an appreciation for the political process of the workplace. Maturity and experience were also necessary for the individuals to recognize the dynamics involved in their workplaces and for them to consciously decide whether they would engage in the political process.

Having a mentor to help navigate missteps and recover from them is an important element of career capital. Ellen’s supervisor helped her learn more about the political dynamics of her workplace after she made a mistake. “I’ve made some mistakes, *big ones* – and I’m embarrassed by it, but he’s like, ‘Don’t worry about it, next time do this.’” The advice of experienced guides helps to soothe the inevitable wounds that come from encountering career challenges. "But you have to be willing to listen and coachable," Ellen added.

Dennis learned more about workplace dynamics after receiving feedback about the impact of one of his decisions. "In my new role, anything I do impacts everybody. So there were a few things I did early on that I thought were good, but then I learned how they impacted someone else and they got upset." He learned to think carefully and globally when making decisions, "Decision making is key, and accepting responsibility for those decisions is just as important." Dennis was conscious of how he communicated in light of the political climate of his workplace, "How you communicate with the public, the higher administrators, legislators, and the media is important. You have to put the right face on things. That often involves taking yourself and your personal opinions out of it. You don't want to rub the right people the wrong way. That's part of being an administrator."

One important mechanism for acquiring career capital for the participants was encountering and overcoming career challenges. Being confronted with uncomfortable career experiences produced a large amount of career capital and stretched the participants in new ways. Personal priorities, skills and knowledge deficits, personal attributes and maturity, and workplace dynamics were types of challenges that the participants had faced. The nature and intensity of the career challenges dictated the sort of career capital that was developed, but the development of resilience was the ultimate prize. Resilience enabled the participants to cope with difficulties, analyze situations, solve problems, renew their spirits, and try again. Learning from challenges produced the tangible human, social, and psychological capital that prepared them for career advancement.

Ellen and Sarah both experienced seasons of overwhelming simultaneous personal and professional challenges. Those exhausting and stressful times facilitated sharpened prioritization and organizational skills, the recommitment to personal priorities and values, and reliance on trusted members of their networks. All three elements of career capital were enhanced by the strengthening of skills (human capital), values assessment (psychological capital), and accessing help from personal and professional networks (social capital). These assets are all components of the coping skills and resilience that are necessary for the participants to experience career advancement.

Research Question 2 (b)

What career capital do some MLAs in H.E. who formerly served as PAAs recommend for current academic advisors interested in moving into H.E. administration?

The participants benefited from the entire range of career capital and recommended that current academic advisors acquire psychological capital, human capital, and social capital. Each component is equally important and they often overlap in how they operate and in the results they produce. Obtaining career capital is a life-long pursuit and there is no end point; the participants continually honed their skills and learned new approaches, techniques, and methods for achieving their career goals.

Each participant mentioned that advisors must be proactive and take ownership of their career self-management process. This was an essential quality that drove every aspect of CSM development. The participants acknowledged that nothing could have been accomplished without some level of initiative being taken to affect a productive end. Sharon emphasized, “It’s definitely possible but you have to go after it. It’s not a passive experience.”

Psychological capital includes states such as self-knowledge, openness to experience, and adaptability. The participants emphasized the significance of advisors being clear about their personal and professional priorities, preferences, and values and discussed how their own self-analysis had benefitted them in their careers. Salita encouraged PAAs to undergo a thorough self-analysis, "You must know yourself… you almost have to pick yourself apart to figure out what you need to work on."

Through their processes of identifying these core values, they became aware of opportunities and were open to those that supported their goals. Accepting new roles and opportunities required the participants to adapt and to change, which forced them to reassess previously established values, become aware of new relevant opportunities, and adapt yet again. This iterative process happened in conjunction with social and human capital, but it also operated independently of those processes.

An important component of psychological capital is gaining an understanding of the political dynamics of the workplace. The participants in this study had varying levels of development in this competency, but they all understood the importance of this tacit and tangible skill. They discussed triumphs and failures related to acquiring this expertise, and all of them wished they had learned it faster and earlier in their careers and recommended that current advisors work to acquire this competency.

Human capital includes education, experience, skills, and tacit knowledge that an individual uses to complete tasks and to distinguish themselves from others. Most of the participants had advanced education and valued the content of their education, the degree they earned, and the learning process in general. Because of the nature of the higher education environment, advanced education is encouraged and expected and the participants agreed that PAAs should pursue education as an integral part of a vibrant CSM practice.

Gathering both life and professional experiences was encouraged by the participants in this study. Collecting a variety of experiences was important to the participants and they were able to expand their competencies and have a reference point for future application. The participants relied heavily on transferrable skills and were adept at developing professional niches that capitalized on the breadth of their experiences. They encouraged current advisors to expand their repertoire of experiences. Salita was conscientious about acquiring specific skills, “I try to put myself in situations where I can get strategic exposure.”

Occupational skills were obviously important, and the participants all emphasized that PAAs must know their jobs and must perform them well. Gaining the competencies to perform as a professional takes time, but becoming proficient is essential for career advancement. The participants discussed the discomfort associated with learning new role responsibilities but acknowledged that this discomfort also prompted them to learn and adapt faster. Interestingly, political savviness and understanding workplace dynamics were elements that could have been included in human capital because knowing how to handle people and situations diplomatically is a learned skill that is not necessarily innate. The participants discussed how professional effectiveness often hinged on their ability to operate and navigate in this implicit setting. The dual nature of this competency is an example of how the components of career capital overlap and intersect each other as cohesive elements of a CSM process. In any case, each participant urged PAAs to be occupationally effective and politically astute in each professional role that they assumed.

Social capital involves interpersonal and inter-group connections that an individual can access to affect change and to produce outcomes. Connections with other people and organizations were important and the participants stressed the importance of these relationships. Throughout their careers, the participants were beneficiaries of the access, positioning, and personal development associated with being connected with others. Whether through professional, social, or community affiliations, being engaged with others was reinforced due to the important implications for PAA career self-management.

Understanding social and cultural norms is another tacit skill that runs parallel to understanding workforce dynamics. The participants stated the importance of PAAs learning the nuances of social interaction and group dynamics, and they cited meaningful relationships, favorable reputations, and personal and professional effectiveness as some of the benefits to polishing these skills. Attaining career advancement without relevant connections to others is difficult and has grave limitations toward a long-term sustainability.

Connection to Literature

Career self-management refers to the proactivity an individual exhibits in managing their career and the process used to achieve desirable career outcomes. Effective CSM requires the career actor to engage in all three elements of career capital. De Vos and Soens (2008) stated that career self-management encompasses both reflective and behavioral elements, which means that individuals must be clear about their own career goals and they must take appropriate action in order for them to be realized. Three primary themes, Who They Are, Career Challenges They Overcame, and Career Strategies They Employed, were identified to understand the career experiences of the participants. These themes provided useful insight into their career self-management tactics and offered some explanation for the career advancement they experienced.

The participants of this study used all aspects of career capital within their career self-management strategies and their efforts confirmed the necessity of both the reflective (psychological capital) and the behavioral (human and social capital) components of a comprehensive CSM exercise.   These results were consistent with current career literature.

Who They Are

Psychological capital (Psycap) involves the individual's motivational energy to accept and understand oneself, to consider alternate life and career possibilities, and to adapt to the fluidity of the workplace (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; Eby, Butts, & Lockwood's, 2003). Knowing-why attends to an individual's identification with the institution's culture, personal beliefs and values, and non-work circumstances. Psycap also includes the variables career insight, proactive personality, and openness to experience.

Career insight embodies the individual's degree of realistic career and self-knowledge and measures how that knowledge manifests itself in career expectations, career goals, and self-assessment. The variable proactive personality concerns the individual's inclination toward taking a proactive stance. This is demonstrated by the ability to identify opportunities, initiate action, and persevere through challenges. Openness to experience is displayed by the individual's curiosity, creativity, and responsiveness to new ideas (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003).

The participants in this study had a clear sense of self and had participated in psychological capital exercises enough to be aware of their personal and professional preferences, priorities, and objectives. Their values-driven motivations allowed them to focus on roles and activities that reinforced their commitment to help others and to perform meaningful work. Personal attributes, such as positivity, proactivity, and openness to opportunity influenced their outlook on life and work, their methods for achieving their goals, their approach to workplace dynamics, and their ability to capitalize on future possibilities.

All of these elements were consistent with Greenhaus' (1987) strategies that influence career success. Greenhaus (1987) identified seven broad strategies on which employees rely to influence career success: a) competence in current job; b) extended work involvement; c) skill development; d) opportunity development; e) development of mentor relationships; f) image building; and g) organizational politics. The fact that there no differences from the established literature means that PAAs who are interested in MLA positions can use current literature as a guide for acquiring psychological capital.

Overcoming Career Challenges

The career challenges that the participants encountered and eventually overcame were significant in their personal growth and their career capital development. Overcoming career challenges appeared to cultivate resilience. Resilience involves defensive advantages that help an individual survive hardship and includes a coping process that is dependent upon variables such as the individual's motivation and desire to realize their potential (Brimrose & Hearne, 2012; Flach, 1997; Richardson, 2002). The career actor's ability to adapt to change, especially in the face of disheartening or unsettling conditions is the essence of career resilience (London, 1997).

Through multiple personal and professional obstacles the participants' behavior was consistent with current research. They harnessed personal strengths and made decisions to "grow, recover, or lose in the face of disruptions" (Richardson, 2002, p. 312). The administrators chose to engage in coping strategies such as reframing and finding alternative strategies for fostering well-being, and they employed practical solutions such as acquiring additional skills and education and making helpful connections. Many discussed their dependence on God to weather tough situations and they were committed to fulfilling their life's purpose. These actions allowed them to survive disruptions when they were encountered, and they increased their ability to handle future challenges.

Because the participants' actions were similar to those discussed in the literature, when PAAs experience inevitable career challenges, they can follow the recommendations in the literature toward developing and understanding the process of resilience. According to Richardson (2002) they can choose to do the following:

1) Grow when faced with adversity;
2) Understand that the emotional distress that comes from disruptions facilitates the awareness of one's innate resilience and offers the opportunity to access it;
3) Consider anticipated disruptions as an impediment to stagnation and a segue for engaging in resilient reintegration;
4) Choose to have a positive outlook when enduring disruptions and the reintegration process;
5) Find value, purpose, and meaning from disruptive experiences.

The Strategies That They Employed

Greenhaus' (1987) strategies for career success were all employed by the participants in this study as they pursued and experienced career advancement. Their actions displayed effective human and social capital practices including acquisition and expansion of skills, performance and execution of responsibilities, campus and community involvement, connection to and affiliation with others, and exposure to and positioning for future opportunities.

The manner in which the participants managed their careers was consistent with Arthur, Claman, & DeFillippi's (1995) explanation of an intelligent career that observes the career actor as an investor in core competencies, or ways of knowing. The participants' investment in their career capital facilitated their ability to be competitive and to trade, collaborate, and become a "joint venture partner" with current and future employers (Inkson & Arthur, 2001, p. 51). In this context, the participants' expressions of their core competencies or career capital gave them competitive advantages which afforded them career advancement.

CSM is a life-long endeavor that requires proactive and deliberate action (De Vos & Soens, 2008). An interesting factor to consider in regard to CSM is the role that maturity plays in the CSM process. The results of this research confirm the long-term nature of the exercise as the participants had been accumulating career competencies over the course of their lives, and planned to continue toward personal and professional growth. As the participants engaged in the CSM process they learned about themselves, established priorities and goals, and acquired human and social capital consistent with their ambitions. Through development and maturity, they were able to recognize beneficial opportunities and they had the aptitude to capitalize on them. Their maturity often drove them to reassess their priorities and to calibrate how they applied their human and social capital in response to new findings.

Super (1957), in his developmental self-concept theory, asserted that an individual's self-concept changes and progresses through six stages of the life span as life experience dictates. Changes in self-concept are reflected in the individual's work life through vocational choice and work adjustment. The composition of life roles that individuals assume at any given time in their life space has a profound effect on their work life and their ability to implement their self-concept. The CSM behavior of participants in this study is consistent with this literature in that their self-concept, a component of psychological capital, evolved and matured through their lives, and they made professional decisions based on their status within the six stages of the life span. For example, Janet, Dennis, and Harold discussed how they adjusted their career goals and the mechanisms they used to attain those goals after the birth of their children. They re-prioritized their time, exerted some geographical limitations, and accepted the career consequences of these choices.

This behavior is also consistent with the work on the intersection of goal setting and maturity cited by Greenhaus, Callahan, and Kaplan (1995). Because maturity develops over an individual's lifetime, it makes sense that the CSM process is a life-long process. There is little dissimilarity between the participants' behavior and that documented in the career literature, which offers PAAs who are interested in moving into MLA positions guidance as they manage their careers and the acquisition of career capital.

Summary

The CSM behaviors of the participants in this study were consistent with the literature. Acquiring psychological capital to identify personal values and priorities, human capital to hone and acquire occupational skills, and social capital to establish and foster positive relationships were all strategies mentioned in career development research literature. The fact that this research found no contradictions to the literature is helpful for PAAs as they manage their careers toward administrative posts. The guidance and suggestions that are offered in current research will be applicable to PAAs and will serve as appropriate templates for a CSM agenda. This research makes its greatest contribution to the literature in that studies of this kind have not been done in professional academic advising and it offers a career self-management model for professional academic advisor who aspire to mid-level administrative positions in H.E.

Connection to Frameworks

Protean Career Theory

Protean Career Theory (PCT) explores the individual's self-directed, proactive, and values-driven approach to career management. Protean career actors are proactive. Those who desire career advancement and promotion, assume a proactive career management stance. Proactive individuals are those who take initiative, identify and act on opportunities, and persevere until they achieve desired results. They are more likely to recognize the nuances of the work environment and to respond to changes quickly. They "select, create, and influence the situations in which they work" (Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999, p. 417), and pursue additional information, training, experiences, and support for their career management objectives. Proactive career actors take responsibility for their own development and are motivated by internal principles to define and accomplish career success.

Hall (1976) predicted the career of the future that was self-managed and driven by the individual's desire for self-fulfillment (DiRenzo, 2010). The participants in this study were proactive and values-driven in their CSM and took responsibility for their career development. The desire to achieve personally relevant goals and objectives was fueled by innate qualities and attributes, but it was also spurred by personal experiences and observations that magnified the value of a proactive approach to their careers. Some participants easily identified the manner and mechanisms they wanted to use to achieve career advancement and they applied their career capital in equal proportions toward that end. For others, the exact levers to adjust in the CSM process were unclear, but they maximized the career capital they possessed to achieve career advancement. In any case, a proactive stance allowed them to capitalize on opportunities and to enjoy careers that were fruitful and meaningful.

Career Capital

A competitive advantage is recognized as such because it is unique, cumulative, interconnected, and renewable. The accumulation of career capital is a competitive advantage for employees and for the institutions for which they are employed (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Career capital (CC) is a complex construct that operates as the channel through which CSM achieves desirable career outcomes (DiRenzo, 2010; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). The participants in this study possessed and continued to develop and apply their career capital throughout their careers.

Acquiring advanced education, learning new skills and competencies, and accumulating new experiences were some of the mechanisms of human capital that the participants utilized in this study. This career asset supports the development of a broad and diverse set of skills that are transferrable and desirable to a variety of entities. The participants used this competency to perform well in their jobs and to create professional niches. They also leveraged these abilities to acquire career advancement.

The participants in the study were aware of the impact of social capital on their careers and acknowledged its effect on their ability to secure and maintain employment, become aware of and exposed to opportunities, and to enjoy meaningful personal and professional relationships. As they made connections to peers, students, community members, mentors, and organizations, they reaped the benefits of those interactions through personal well-being and career advancement. They also recognized the importance of serving as mentors to others and valued being able to contribute to the success of others.

The participants had very clearly established values and led their lives in a way that honored those priorities. They were open to new experiences but measured each option against their pre-determined, values-driven criteria. Because of their self-awareness, they had realistic career knowledge and adjusted their career expectations and career goals appropriately. This career insight, coupled with proactive personality and openness to experience allowed them to be curious, creative, and responsive to new ideas. All of those qualities afforded the participants a competitive advantage that may have helped them to achieve career advancement.

The Contributions of the Theoretical Frameworks

CC and PCT overlap in their employment of the individual's proactivity and values-driven proclivity, and CC adds function and direction to the goals of the proactive employee. The participants achieved their goals through the accumulation of CC – skills, competencies, and perspectives that optimally position the individual career advancement. As theoretical frameworks, PCT and CC guided the focus of the questions, the analysis of the findings, and they provided a lens through which the data was examined. The theories guided the interpretation and discussion of the findings and offered explanation and context for understanding individual career behavior. Combining the two frameworks offered a mechanism for evaluating the individual's professional development choices and helped to identify the extent of their protean career orientation, career capital accumulation, and asset activation as they related to career management behavior (Segers et al., 2008).

PCT was an appropriate theoretical framework because it clearly defined the parameters of the protean career actor. The continuums of proactivity and values-driven decision-making made evaluating career choices a simple process. The participants' behavior could be identified and positioned within those criteria throughout the data analysis process. CC was appropriate as a theoretical framework because it also offered a mechanism for organizing and analyzing the data. The participants' CSM behavior could easily be categorized into one of the career assets, which facilitated a better understanding of the overall CSM process.

The Contribution of the Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks serve as a justification for research decisions rather than an explanation for those choices (Eisenhart, 1991). They delineate the type of concepts that should be studied and substantiate a study's research choices, findings, and any interrelationships that are identified (Lester, 2005). Symbolic interactionism (SI) is an approach to human behavior inquiry that is concerned with how the meaning of symbols influences human behavior and interaction (Blumer, 1969). SI assumes that humans constantly change and appropriate research methods pursue an understanding of an individual's perspective, the process by which that perspective was cultivated, and how meaning is assigned to past events in order to explain current events. Humans are considered to be dynamic and goal-seeking individuals whose reactions to stimuli are deliberate and selective and based upon interpretation of stimuli. Individuals define and assign meaning to themselves and the symbols, interactions, and objects of their world (Reynolds, 1993). Social interaction is influenced by the meaning assigned to symbols and takes place in the context of this understanding.

Through the examination of the participants' CSM behaviors, the researcher sought to understand the participants' reactions to career stimuli, their interpretations of the stimuli, and the career-related interactions in which they chose to engage. The participants' shared their experiences, and their interpretations of the events that led to their career advancement from advising without the advantage of an established career path. SI was an appropriate conceptual framework because the research questions and methods corresponded with the assumptions of SI.

The SI perspective lent the current study its value of past events as a means of understanding current phenomena. Understanding what the participants knew, understood, valued, interpreted, and, in turn, how they behaved based on these factors was essential to understanding their professional development choices. SI also justified this study's use of interviews to facilitate the development of theories that are grounded in the data in an attempt to offer relevant solutions to the common problem of workplace turnover in professional academic advising (Benzies & Allen, 2001; Blumer, 1969). Grounded theory, the data analysis method used in this study, is linked to SI.

Career Self-Management Model

A major contribution of this research is a career self-management model for PAAs who aspired to and achieved MLA positions in H.E.   It is based on the responses provided by the participants in this study. A brief foundational review of the nature of reality, an explanation of concepts and constructs, and the premise of grounded theory in theory construction is followed by a detailed description of the CSM model.

The existence and nature of reality has long been debated. Jaccard and Jacoby (2010) defined the social constructionist perspective of reality as one that acknowledges that there are many possible realities, and it accepts that "any given conceptualization, and the facts that are given meaning by that conceptualization, is a function of the sociocultural time and space in which they occur" (p. 8). Blumer (1969) put forth a version of critical realism that stated that reality originates in the minds of humans, but the empirical world challenges our conceptions of reality. Hypothetical realism, a derivative of pragmatism, asserts that although the existence of reality may be questionable, humans approach and attempt to understand the world under the assumption that reality exists. The world (reality) is experienced "as a complex, dynamic flow of unique and unrepeatable phenomena and events" and comprises our external environment (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010, p. 9).

Concepts, the foundation for all thinking, allow humans to arrive at an elementary level of understanding of the world and their experienced reality. Constructs offer a mechanism for categorizing several concepts, which grants order and facilitates comprehension. Being able to comprehend offers control of events or relationships, and the ability to recognize and influence the important characteristics of an environment proffers some degree of control (Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010).

Grounded theory data analysis requires theory generation that emerges from the data. It is a method that facilitates process-oriented perspectives and it is helpful in answering questions about processes, such as the development of the process, the behavior of those engaged in the process, the conditions under which the process changes, and the consequences of the process (Charmaz, 2006; Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010).

Career self-management is a proactive, self-monitored, lifelong process of career planning and implementation that involves choosing and setting personal goals, formulating strategies for achieving them, and taking action. Career capital is a complex construct that operates as the channel through which career self-management achieves desirable career outcomes (De Vos & Soens, 2008; DiRenzo, 2010; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). It can be categorized into three distinct, yet interrelated types of career assets: psychological capital, social capital, and human capital.

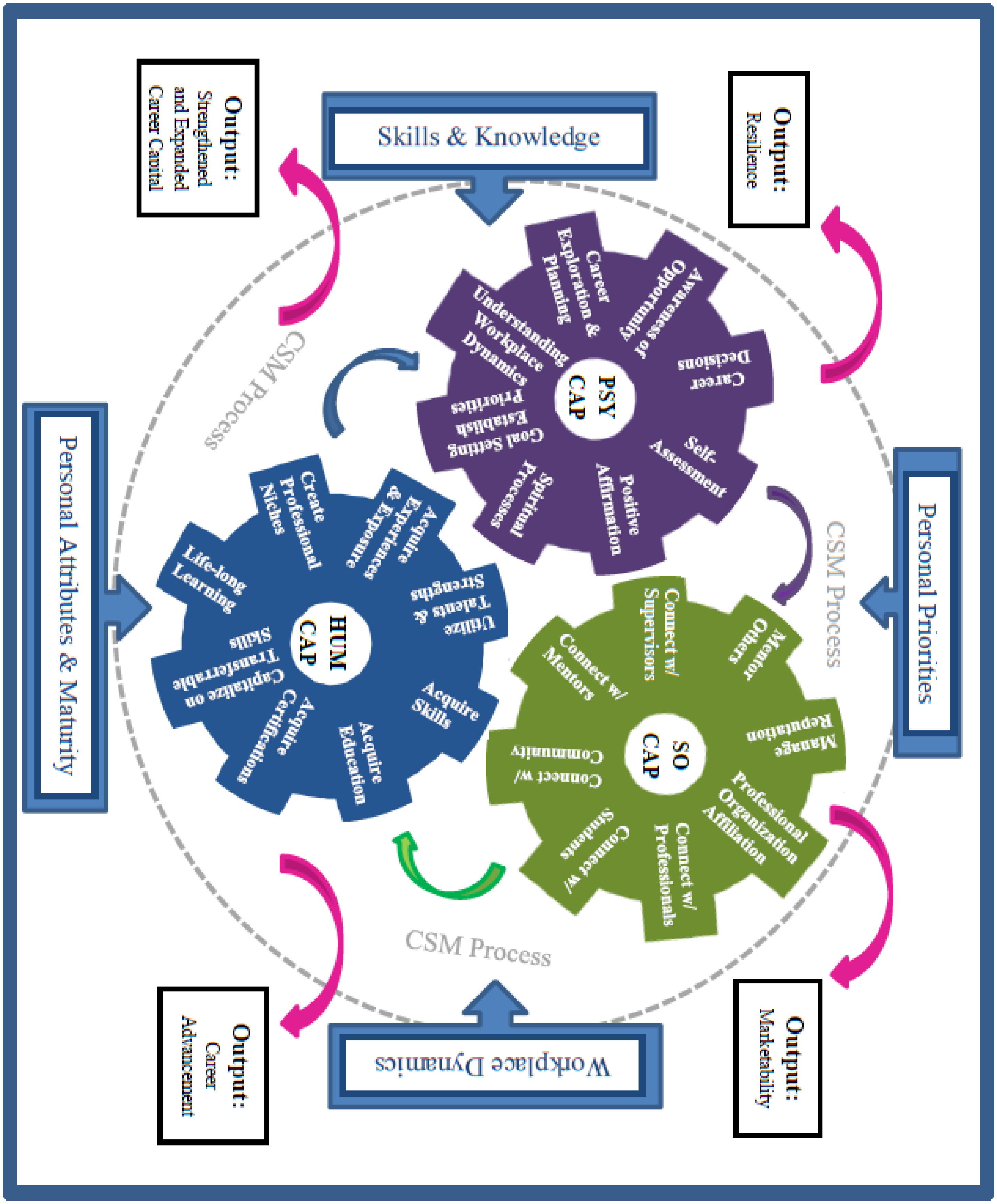
In the model depicted in Figure 1, the environment is denoted by the solid blue box around the perimeter of the diagram. The environment is influenced by four types of stressors that are depicted as blue and white boxes labeled *Personal Priorities, Workplace Dynamics*, *Personal Attributes and Maturity,* and *Skills and Knowledge*. The boxes have arrows that are piercing the gray dotted line that signifies the career self-management (CSM) process. The environmental stressors exert influence on the CSM process and initiate gear motion.

The engine for the CSM process is career capital (CC), the mechanism for achieving positive career outcomes (DiRenzo, 2010; Luthans & Youssef, 2004). Each element of CC is represented as a gear. Psychological capital (PsyCap) is the purple gear on the left, social capital (SoCap) is the green gear on the right, and human capital (HuCap) is the blue gear on the bottom. As the curved arrows within the CSM process indicate, the gears move as the individual assesses, acquires, or enhances one or all of the CC elements; as one gear moves, the others move also. This symbolizes the interconnectedness of the assets and the iterative nature of the process. The gray dotted circle represents the cyclical CSM process and indicates that the individual must engage in life-long re-evaluation and adjustment throughout his or her career.

Examples of the actions associated with the CC that were acquired and used by the participants in this study are written on each spoke of the gears. Psychological capital-enhancing behaviors included self-assessment, positive affirmation; spiritual processes, goal setting, establishing priorities, understanding workplace dynamics, career exploration and planning, awareness of opportunities, and making career decisions. Social capital-enhancing behaviors included connecting with professionals, students, community members, mentors, and supervisors; mentoring others; reputation management; and professional organization affiliation. Human capital-enhancing behaviors included acquiring skills, education, certifications, and experiences and exposure; capitalizing on transferrable skills; engaging in life-long learning; creating professional niches; and utilizing talents and strengths. The red arrows that point away from the CSM process indicate examples of the output that the participants experienced as a result of engaging in the process. Resilience, marketability, career advancement, and strengthened and expanded career capital were some of the reported results.

An example of one interpretation of the model follows. The individual chooses to get married and move to another city, which modifies his or her personal priorities. This stressor exerts pressure on the CSM process, and the person must re-examine his or her psychological capital by asking questions such as these: What professional opportunities exist in the new city? What type of professional roles do I want to assume as a married person? Where is God leading me now? This analysis causes the other gears to rotate as well and instigates social capital questions like these: Who do I know in the new city? Who do my current contacts know in the new city? Is there a local chapter of my professional organization in the new city? Human capital questions may include the following: Do I need additional education, certifications, or skills? Is this a good time to go back to school? How can I capitalize on my unique talents and strengths to create a professional niche? As the participants' engaged in the iterative process, they developed resilience and marketability while strengthening and expanding career capital and career advancement.

Figure 1. A Model of Career Self-Management for Professional Academic Advisors Who Aspire to and Achieve Mid-Level Administration Positions in Higher Education



Limitations

As is the case with all research, the results of this study have limitations, and they may not be generalizable to other populations. The findings are specific to the participants and may not apply to other individuals or groups. Additionally, reasonable caution should be used when applying broad statements of causality to dynamic phenomena. While the participants met the study's requirements of achieving a certain level of career advancement, it was not possible to identify or evaluate all of the possible reasons for the career progression they experienced. The justifications for a phenomenon can be endless, and it is unrealistic to empirically pursue every rationale (Martin, 1979); however, identifying other explanations are appropriate for future research.

The participants in this study were homogenous in that they were all former professional academic advisors; a fact that may influence some of the results. The similarities in the personalities and preferences of the participants could be because these personality types are drawn to this type of work (Holland, 1973). Another consideration is that some of the similarities noted within this group could be due to the fact that they worked on the same campus and lived in the same geographical area.

Implications and Recommendations

This research contributes to the literature on career self-management, career development, higher education, and the work and professional development of professional academic advisors and mid-level administrators. The implications for each theme are discussed below along with recommendations for future research.

Theme One: Who They Are

The strengths of the participants in this study revolved around their personal attributes, motivations, education, and skills. Their knowledge of themselves, their personal priorities, and values enabled them to perform and manage their careers with integrity, and that quality was projected upon every project, person, and initiative they touched. Their strong center of gravity makes them a dependable and firm foundation upon which to build purpose-driven H.E. departments and programs that vigorously strive to meet the needs of students and the community at-large.

Implications and recommendations for PAAs and MLAs. This research generates many important recommendations for professional academic advisors. PAAs should take responsibility for developing the full range of career capital elements in their CSM efforts. The components are equally important and should be enhanced simultaneously. Learning the most comfortable and effective methods for accomplishing these personal and professional growth tasks will be vitally important for future career progress.

This study found self-discovery and self-assessment to be extremely important exercises for the participants in this study. It also identified personal attributes such as proactivity, resilience, self-confidence, and openness to opportunities as valuable qualities that the MLAs thought contributed to their career advancement. This information implies that PAAs who aspire to MLA posts must engage in self-reflective practices to establish their personal priorities and values and use them to guide CSM choices. Once they have identified their strengths, the process of selecting meaningful opportunities is simplified and they are better positioned for advancement. Salita shared, "You have to know yourself; that means that you have to know your strengths and your limitations. You almost have to pick yourself apart to figure out how you're presenting yourself.   I had to go back and tear my resume apart and ask, 'What's going to help make me outstanding or different?'"

PAAs should engage in the CSM process and pursue the development of career capital as soon as possible, but they should be conscious of the life-long nature of the process. Maturity is a key ingredient in the CSM recipe and it is not acquired quickly or without challenge. Approaching the process as a marathon to be enjoyed over a lifetime versus a sprint to some predetermined end will allow the advisor to enjoy the experience and it will mitigate the potential frustrations associated with the failure to progress as quickly as they would like.

Capitalizing on one's personal attributes, qualities, and motivations were valuable tools for career advancement for the participants. Mid-level administrators should expand their understanding of their unique qualities, refine their possible applications, and use them to develop professional niches and productive relationships.

Implications and recommendations for H.E. and HRD.   Because the participants were values-driven, institutions must tap into the values of advisors to extract the best work. Janet stated, "I have this innate desire to help people so I always have to be doing something that will benefit others." Ensuring that workers are matched with work that is personally meaningful increases productivity and job satisfaction and it reduces an employee's intent to leave (Volkwein, Malik, & Napierski-Prancl, 1998).

Recommendations for research. Recommendations for future research within this theme include investigating emotional and psychological maturity and psychological capital within in the CSM context and understanding the connection between an individual's ability to articulate what he or she does professionally and the sense of well-being or accomplishment that is gained. Glimpses of the role of emotional and psychological maturity in the CSM process were observed during this research. It appeared that the individual's maturity was a significant catalyst in CSM, and it caused the individual to continually engage in the process over his or her career. Harold shared, "You have to learn how to be an adult, you have to learn how to do your job, and you have to learn how to be a professional. It takes time." More research about the influence that maturity exerts on the CSM process and whether CSM and emotional and psychological maturity mutually influence each other would be beneficial.

Psychological capital is a complex construct that appears to have endless nuances for further study. Although all elements of career capital are important and must be pursued with equal vigor, psychological capital appeared to bear significant influence on how and why the other career capital was acquired and applied to the individual's career decisions. For example, through Salita's self-assessment exercises, she determined a career goal to become a dean of students. This decision guided her CSM choices and the types of experiences she pursued, "I'll continue to learn about the roles of a dean of students and position myself to gain exposure to any experiences I lack…I try to put myself in strategic situations where I gain exposure." Understanding more about this career capital element and its antecedents would be helpful for career actors and HRD professionals.

A few participants discussed the value of being able to articulate the work that they do and why it is valuable to others. They spoke positively about how it made them feel to be able to tell others about their professional contributions with clarity and ease. Ellen stated, "I want to be able to explain what I do and why I love it, and why it's important. I love telling people what I do and if I can explain how it's helps me and how we're helping students every day, it makes me happy." More research on the meaning-of-work paradigm and career identity, particularly in the H.E. setting, would be interesting and beneficial to HRD professionals.

Theme Two: Overcoming Career Challenges

The career capital that was acquired by the participants was, in large part, due to the career challenges that they overcame. The skills and emotional and psychological processes that were developed as a result of their challenges made them stronger, more resilient and creative employees. Through self-assessment, trial and error, and the healing properties of time, the participants were able to build from their setbacks and move forward.

Implications and recommendations for PAAs. The findings imply that PAAs who aspire to MLA positions should choose to find a silver lining in the midst of their trials and decide to grow instead of becoming stagnate (Richardson, 2002). They must be persistent and not give up. Harold asserted, “Everybody has bad days. When you’re not playing your best, you have to keep grinding away. So learn how to grind through.”

PAAs should manage career challenges with deliberate attention to understanding the competencies, experiences, and perspectives to be learned from the encounter. Based on this research, the career challenges that the participants endured offered exponential growth and development in spite of the severe discomfort they experienced. It appeared that the former advisors developed the skills, confidence, and resilience necessary to make career advancement and professional performance possible.

Implications and recommendations for H.E. and HRD. Challenges are inevitable and institutions can simultaneously be the cause of disruptions and the beneficiary of an employee’s response to disruption. To address this issue, institutions and HRD should broaden their offering of assistance workshops and programs for employees such as coping skills and counseling. They should also equip supervisors to employ reintegration-enhancing strategies that encourage employees to make choices that facilitate growth through difficulties.

Recommendations for research. Further research on the role that resilience plays in the CSM process is encouraged would provide insight into how resilience is formed in professional settings and how it operates within the context of career development. This study suggested that career resilience emerges from career challenges; however, it also had a role in strengthening career capital. Additional insight on this function could be beneficial to professionals as they encounter challenges and develop appropriate coping skills. For human resource development (HRD) practitioners, additional research on this topic would better prepare them to shepherd professionals through difficulties and to create programs that would facilitate professional growth. For scholars, investigations of this nature would contribute to the literature by broadening the scope of career resilience research.

Another recommendation for research would be to investigate how career challenges are navigated by PAAs and MLAs. To understand if PAAs follow the resiliency process depicted in Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer's (1990) resiliency model and if the stages of reintegration apply to this population of professionals would be helpful to HRD practitioners, MLAs, and advising centers. As HRD practitioners and advising centers learned more about how resiliency is developed, they would be able to anticipate behaviors and take mitigating and developmental actions to assist the process. Through additional research, MLAs would be able to recognize the resilience-promoting options available to them as they face disruptions, and the research may emphasize the importance of selecting responses that facilitate growth.

This research used journals to examine the types of duties that the MLAs performed on any given day. Additional research into how, for example, leadership skills or communication skills are operationalized in mid-level administration would provide valuable insight and would validate the attributes that were assigned to these participants. This information would be valuable to PAAs as they construct their CSM agendas and acquire useful skills for future advancement.

Theme Three: Career Strategies

The participants in this study used the entire scope of career capital tactics to effect career advancement. Psychological capital processes such as self-assessment, positive thinking, engaging in spiritual processes, goal setting, and conducting career exploration and planning helped to guide CSM choices and facilitated career well-being (Volkwein, Malik, & Napierski-Prancl, 1998). Human capital-enhancing activities such as education, knowledge, and skills acquisition enabled effectiveness and competency, and it also allowed the participants to carve out unique, strength-based niches that offered competitive advantage. The participants' social capital-enhancing activities such as affiliations, mentor relationships, and connections to peers granted awareness and access to opportunities, and served as a lighthouse for navigating the rough waters associated with organizational dynamics.

Implications and recommendations for PAAs. This research implies that PAAs who are interested in MLA positions should pro-actively pursue the development of each component of career capital throughout their careers. Dennis stated, "Anything they can do to increase their professional development - whether that's getting the right professional degree, involving themselves in any kind of committee work or task force work, networking, learning the key players, or just trying to see themselves in a bigger role than just advisors is important."

Career development research often mentions goal setting as an important step in career advancement (Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999). In this study, all of the fifteen participants were career-oriented in that they consciously or sub-consciously used and developed career capital. Eight of them were more deliberate than the other seven in identifying an ideal job, career rank, or end result they wanted to achieve. The seven with less-defined goals had good relationships (social capital), executed their jobs well (human capital), and drew meaning and significance from their work (psychological capital). The eight participants who had established goals practiced the same CSM behaviors, but with sharper focus and with more resolve.

For example, the eight goal-specific participants strategically chose which opportunities, skills or competencies, and organizational affiliations to pursue to affect their desired end. The results for each set of participants were comparable; they all achieved positions in mid-level administration. This fact implies that, while goal setting is a desirable endeavor, the lack of a clearly defined goal or idealized position is not an encumbrance for PAAs who desire career advancement. Instead, emphasis should be placed on the acquisition of the full range of career capital while allowing the career advancement opportunities to unfold. An old adage states, “Your gifts will make room for you.” When career actors concentrate on career capital, their assets will make opportunities for them.

Implications and recommendations for H.E. and HRD. The implications for institutions are that they should provide opportunities for PAAs to develop all of these assets and encourage them to engage in a productive career self-management process. Professional academic advisors are valuable members of the H.E. workforce and investing in their professional development is worthwhile. The participants in this study all made significant contributions to their institution and many of them held positions with wide-spread impact on their campuses as administrators. Having well-developed personnel, particularly those who are on the frontlines of student engagement, retention, and success, have broad implications for students and it enhances the institution’s ability to reach its stated goals. In cases where changing the career path structure for advising positions is unlikely, advising supervisors and advising center directors should embrace the transient nature of their offices and strive to cultivate the competencies and skills that will contribute to the development of well-rounded and effective professionals. Because many advisors leave to contribute their talents in other areas of an institution, support for this type of training investment should be shared with central administration. Institutions should be deliberate about the professional development of these specialists and should partner with them to develop their career capital. Leaving the professional development of these important professionals to chance is not a wise use of important human capital.

In many cases professional academic advising is viewed as an entry-level position in many institutions. This perspective leaves PAAs out of the loop for receiving valuable resources such as training, career ladders, and salary. However, several of the participants in this study attained high-level administration positions after they left advising. Institutions would do well to treat advisors as future leaders of the institution and shuttle salient resources toward their growth and enhancement early in their careers.

Many of the participants in this study attained their career advancement without the benefit of mentors. Although formalized mentoring programs may not be appropriate, some attempt by the institution to connect professionals to each other would be beneficial to the individuals and the university at large. Creating a cultural environment that encourages and promotes inter-group connection fosters positive personal and professional growth.

Understanding the motivation of professional staff allows human resource development (HRD) professionals in H.E. to create initiatives that develop the career capital competences of professional staff. This knowledge also facilitates the creation of retention efforts that engage and maintain key professionals. HRD professionals can create awareness about career capital and the benefits of its development, and provide accessible mechanisms for career self-management in the workplace. Sponsoring mentoring-encouraging activities, creating professional development initiatives, and providing solution-based services and privileges such as flex time, work-from-home options, career services for professionals, and career –awareness fairs for staff members encourage work-life balance, and career exploration and planning.

Recommendations for research. First, expanding this research beyond one institution could help to determine if the results of this study are consistent across institutions and geographic populations. More research on PAAs is necessary to understand how to mine and develop the valuable resources which are housed within these personnel. Additionally, workplace turnover for professional roles in Admissions and Student Affairs is significant in H.E., and similar research on those personnel may create understanding and offer perspectives on how these individuals are motivated and inspired. The research findings could uncover unknown and under-utilized professional develop opportunities for these H.E. specialists that could be beneficial for those individuals and their institutions. This information could be valuable for advising centers that are constrained in their ability to create promotional opportunities for advisors but are interested in offering developmental experiences.

The participants in this study demonstrated proactive CSM qualities; however, some of them were operating instinctually instead of intentionally. The career outcome was comparable in that each participant arrived at a mid-level administrative position, but more research into why the outcomes were similar, how the instinctual behaviors were developed, and the ratio of instinctual and intentional behaviors that the participants employed could be useful for HRD researchers and practitioners as they seek broader understanding of this population and create realistic practices and meaningful programs.

Summary

The implications of this research are important for PAAs and higher education. To position themselves for career advancement, PAAs must engage in self-assessment activities and define their personal priorities and values. Using their unique strengths and talents to form the blueprint of a comprehensive CSM process provides direction for career decisions and ensures a purposeful and meaningful work experience. For H.E. and HRD, appreciating and valuing PAAs by understanding their skills, strengths, and motivation facilitates the development of strong departments and programs, and lessens the possibility of workplace turnover. Providing opportunities to grow encourages PAAs to commit to the institution and fortifies the quality of service to the students.

The research found that career challenges were instrumental in the growth and development of the MLAs. This fact implies that PAAs must approach life disruptions with an eye toward improvement. Growth is a conscious choice, especially in times of difficulty; however, PAAs must seize the opportunity to learn more about themselves, gather more skills, and reach out to others for support. For H.E and HRD, offering support, education, and training to PAAs as they maneuver their careers will aid personal and professional growth.

The career strategies the participants used spanned the entire range of career capital tactics. Psychological capital, human capital, and social capital were all found to be extremely important. PAAs must continuously pursue all of these elements throughout their careers and reassess their methods as life exerts pressure on their CSM process. H.E. and HRD must partner with PAAs to create opportunities and provide attractive career options.

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APPENDICIES

APPENDIX A - Contact Script

Potential participants were contacted in person or by telephone with the following script:

"Hello, this Elecia Smith. We have met/worked together in [explain the connection, if appropriate], and I would like to ask for your participation in a study that I am conducting about the experiences of professional academic advisors as they prepared to move into mid-level administration. I am specifically interested in the career self-management strategies you employed and the core competencies you acquired prior to accepting a promotion into administration.

Your participation would include three components, a 45-60 minute interview, at least one journal entry on a private blog, and a copy of your resume. Your identity and specific identifying characteristics will be kept confidential; however, your responses will be used in this dissertation, and may be included in conference presentations for professional organizations. I am conducting interviews during the week of ___________________, will you be available for a 45-60 minute interview during that week?"

APPENDIX B - Institutional Review Board Documentation

The Career Self-Management and Career Capital of Professional Academic Advisors Aspiring to Mid-Level Administrative Positions in Higher Education
Principal Researcher: Elecia Cole Smith
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Carsten Schmidtke

March 4, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO:	Elecia Smith Carsten Schmidtke
FROM:	IRB Coordinator
RE:	PROJECT CONTINUATION
IRB Protocol #:	12-03-614
Protocol Title:	*Identifying the Professional Development and Leadership Skills that Academic Advisors in Higher Education Should Acquire to Be Able to Move into Mid-Level Administrative Positions*
Review Type:	☒ EXEMPT ☐ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB
Previous Approval Period:	Start Date: 03/29/2012 Expiration Date: 03/28/2014
New Expiration Date:	03/28/2015

Your request to extend the referenced protocol has been approved by the IRB. If at the end of this period you wish to continue the project, you must submit a request using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. Failure to obtain approval for a continuation on or prior to this new expiration date will result in termination of the protocol and you will be required to submit a new protocol to the IRB before continuing the project. Data collected past the protocol expiration date may need to be eliminated from the dataset should you wish to publish. Only data collected under a currently approved protocol can be certified by the IRB for any purpose.

This protocol has been approved for 25 total participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me [Contact Information].

APPENDIX C – Permission from Dean

March 22, 2012

Dear Elecia Smith,

I am writing to confirm that you have permission to pursue your research project, and to approach college employees with request to participate. I look forward to learning from your results.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dean

APPENDIX D – Permission from Director of Advising

Date: March 26, 2012

To: Institutional Research Board

From: [Director of Advising]

Subject: Elecia Smith

To Whom It May Concern:

Elecia Smith has my permission to conduct her research on the professional development of former academic advisors who now serve in mid- and/or upper-level administrative positions in higher education. I believe that her topic is worthwhile and that her findings may have implications for how our office can improve its training methods for new and experienced advisors.

Cordially,

[Director of Advising]

APPENDIX E - Informed Consent Document

Title of Project: The Career Self-Management and Career Capital of Mid-Level Administrators in Higher Education Who Previously Served as Professional Academic Advisors

Investigator: Elecia Smith, Doctoral Candidate
[Title]
[Address, City, State]
Phone: ________________ Email: ______________

Purpose: You are being asked to participate as a mid-level university administrator that has formerly served as a professional academic advisor to discuss why you were successful in attaining your position in spite of the fact that there is no formalized career path for academic advisors into administration. Based on participant comments, a determination will be made about which career competencies and career self-management behaviors are recommended for academic advisors who are interested in mid- level higher education (H. E.) administration positions.

The purpose of this study is to increase the awareness of the academic advising community about the type of career capital that should be pursued, and the career self- management techniques that should be employed if H. E. administration is a career goal.

Procedures: You are invited to participate in one 45-60 minute interview to discuss your experience as a professional academic advisor. You will be asked how those experiences helped to prepare you for your current responsibilities as a mid -level university administrator. With your permission, the interview will be recorded by using a digital voice recorder, and it will be transcribed for accuracy. To verify that the information is correct, you will receive a copy of the transcript to review. The interviewer will also take written notes during the interview. You also may be asked to complete a follow-up interview, during which the interviewer will use a digital voice recorder and will take written notes.

Risks of Participation: There are no known risks associated with this project that extend beyond the minimal risk noted above.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits however the project's findings may influence the future development of professional development opportunities and a career path for Academic Advisors.

Confidentiality: All names and the names of all locations will be changed to protect the identity of participants and to maintain confidentiality. Original recordings, transcriptions, and all materials will be stored in Mrs. Smith's Ipad® and on her computer hard drive. Both are password protected.

The responses and their analysis will be used in Mrs. Smith's dissertation, may be published in scholarly journals, and may be used for presentations at conferences, workshops, and other public forums.

The original recordings will be kept for at least seven years on the hard drive and will be erased after that time. All other materials will be kept in a locked cabinet in Mrs. Smith's office until the end of seven years. After that time, all transcripts will be destroyed. All information will be kept confidential and will be maintained in accordance with University policy and the law.

Compensation: No compensation will be offered for this study.

Withdrawal: If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. Also, you may refuse to participate at any time during the study. Your job or your relationship with the University will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate.

Contacts: For questions about this research, you may contact the following persons:

For questions about this study contact Elecia C. Smith [Contact Information].

For concerns about this study, contact Dr. Carsten Schmidtke [Contact Information]

For information on subjects' rights, contact Compliance Coordinator [Contact Information]

Signatures:

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

__________________________________ _______________

Signature of Participant Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

__________________________________ _______________

Signature of Researcher Date

APPENDIX F - Interview Protocol

1. Please briefly tell me about your job history in chronological order. What types of positions have you held?
2. Do you believe that career management is solely your responsibility, a joint responsibility with the institution, or is it solely the responsibility of the institution? (PROTEAN)
3. What defines career success for you? (PROTEAN)
4. What motivated you to become a professional academic advisor (PAA)?
    a. How long were you a PAA? (PSYCAP)
5. After you became an advisor, what motivated you to pursue a career in H. E. Administration? (PSYCAP)
    a. Did you make a conscious mental decision to pursue administration or did it "just happen"? Were you performing the duties before you got the title? Please tell me about that process.
    b. What emotional or psychological adjustments did you have to make to accommodate this new objective? Where you consciously more open to opportunities? Did you think of yourself differently or reimagine your future in any way when you considered a career in administration?
    c. What personal adjustments did you have to make to accommodate this new objective? Did you renegotiate personal or family roles and expectations?
6. Why did you believe you would be successful in MLA? (PSYCAP)
    a. To what do you attribute your belief in your own abilities?
    b. What previous experiences led you to believe that MLA was feasible for you?
7. To what do you attribute your success in moving from advising to MLA (exposure, opportunity, activity, etc.)?
    a. Were you active in professional organizations, campus committees, search committees, etc. as an academic advisor? (SOCCAP)
    b. Did you further your education while serving as an academic advisor? (HUMCAP)
    c. What is your educational background? (HUMCAP)
    d. Did you take work-sponsored classes or seminars? (HUMCAP)
    e. Did you take classes or seminars sponsored by non-work entities? (HUMCAP)
        i. How did you find those seminars? (PROTEAN)

f. Did you actively pursue relationships with individuals that you felt could help you with your career? (PROTEAN) (SOCCAP)

g. Did you utilize your social network outside of the institution for work-related gains? (SOCCAP)

h. Did you have a mentor in H. E. administration that helped you with professional development and career planning? (SOCCAP)

    i. How did the mentoring relationship originate (self-initiated, assigned, etc.)?

    ii. Do you have more than one mentor?

    iii. Do you have mentors that offer mentoring in specific areas of expertise?

    iv. What type of advice did your mentor give you when you were considering a move to administration?

8. Did you apply for other positions that you did not get? (PROTEAN/PSYCAP)

    a. If so, how did you adjust your career planning strategy and approach after each rejection? (PROTEAN/PSYCAP)

    b. Can you tell me about other career challenges and how you handled them? (PSYCAP)

9. What are your future career aspirations?

10. What lessons did you learn as an academic advisor that became important in your MLA position? (HUMCAP)

    a. What impact or contribution did advising make to your current career status?

11. As an administrator, what skills/competencies are the most valuable to you as you perform on a daily basis? (HUMCAP)

12. If you could structure a leadership development program for academic advisors that are interested in moving into MLA, what core competencies would you include?

13. What career self-management changes would you make to your career that you believe would improve or enhance your current career?

    a. Why would you make these changes?

14. What advice do you offer to current advisors who are interested in pursuing careers in H. E. administration?

APPENDIX G - Transcription Key

File #:
Interviewee:
Interviewer:
Date:
Location:
Starting Time:
Ending Time:

Transcription Key:

1. Three colons ::: = lengthened sound
2. Em dash --- = false start with pause
3. Two em dashes ------ = word intentionally left out by researcher
4. En dash -- = false start without pause
5. Hyphen - = stammering, words being spelled out
6. Ellipsis points … – short pauses of three of fewer seconds
7. Square brackets [] = anything added to the original speech such as descriptive words, duration of longer pauses, indications that a word cannot be clearly heard, context comments, etc.
8. Curly braces {} = overlapping speech
9. Question mark ? = questions; in combination with square brackets, indicates words that the researcher is not sure of
10. Quotation marks “” = quoted speech by the speaker
11. Underlining = words the speaker says emphatically
12. UPPER CASE LETTERS = loud speech
13. **Boldface** = researcher’s statements
14. Non-standard pronunciation (kinda, wanna, goin’, ‘cause, etc.) is transcribed in only such cases where it is unmistakable on the recording
15. Ppl = People, Dir = Director, H.E. = Higher Ed; B/c = Because; PAA = Professional Academic Advising

APPENDIX H - Reminder for Journal Entries

PLEASE don't forget to add a journal entry about "A Day in the Life of a Higher Education Mid-level Administrator"

Here are the steps to create a journal entry:

1. Please go to [Address] using the Mozilla Firefox browser.
2. Sign in using your university login and password.
3. Click the "Organizations" tab, then look under "My Organizations Plus" and click "A Day in the Life of a Mid-Level Administrator in Higher Education".
4. Please read the Journal Instructions (should be the first page) and create a journal entry. You can type anything you would like.

If you have any trouble with this journal site, please feel free to contact me at [Contact Information]. Thank you again for participating in this study.

Best wishes,

Elecia C. Smith, HRWD Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX I - “A Day in the Life” Journal Instructions

Thank you, again, for participating in this study. This confidential journal has been established to allow you to share a glimpse of your day as a mid-level administrator in higher education. You may journal as many times as you would like, whenever you like, but please add at least one journal entry by the July 15, 2013 deadline. I am particularly interested in the professional skills, competencies, and career capital (human, social, and psychological) that your position requires. You and I are the only ones that can see your entries.

How to Create Journal Entries

1. On the left margin, click on “Journals”.
2. Scroll over the words “Personal Journals” and click on the downward arrow. Click “Open”
3. Click on “Create Journal Entry” on the action bar.
4. On the Create Journal Entry page, type a Title for the journal entry.
5. Type text in the Entry Message box. Format the text and add images, links, multimedia, mashups, and attachments using the functions in the content editor, if needed.
6. If desired, attachments can be added by using the content editor to launch a new window and have alternate text added to describe the attachment. In the Journal Entry Files section, browse for a file to attach to the journal entry.
7. Click Post Entry to submit the journal entry or click Save Entry as Draft to add the entry later.

If you have any trouble with this journal site, please feel free to contact me at [Contact Information]

Best wishes,

Elecia C. Smith, HRWD Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX J - Member Checking Email

Dear [PARTICIPANT]

Thank you very much for participating in my research on the career self-management practices you have employed throughout your career. Your participation contributed to the rich and valuable information that informed my research findings and it added to the larger body of research on career development.

To ensure that the research findings are as accurate as possible, I have attached a transcript of your interview. I request that you review the transcript at your earliest convenience and provide me with your feedback. Please mark your comments on the document itself or attach a supplemental sheet with your comments. Please note that your feedback is requested by [DATE], after which date I will assume you approve the record as it is in its current form. Please remember that key identifying information will be disguised or removed from the final research report.

I hope you will give the document your careful attention. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Elecia Cole Smith
Doctoral Candidate
Human Resources and Workforce Development Education