Women in Student Service Roles:

Self-Authorship and Early Career Experiences

by

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ABSTRACT

Most research on the experience of young women in student service roles in higher education is focused on a reflection of the early career experiences of mid and senior level professionals. Young women enter the field with a set of expectations about the work and their early career experiences need to be uncovered in order to better understand what they expect from their roles in student services. This study focused on the experience of young women in student services and the dynamics they identify as being significant to their work experience.

Six women in their mid-twenties working in student service roles participated in two dialogic interviews regarding their work experience. Findings from these women's stories suggest that women are aware of internal and external dynamics that shaped their work experience, and are engaged in their journey toward Self-Authorship along intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. Specifically, the women actively chose their career path, looked for opportunities to develop their professional cache, and were impacted by their relationships with their supervisors and colleagues. The women are interested in their professional development in student services in higher education and are active in shaping the experience to meet their expectations.

The findings suggest that to understand the experience of young women in student service roles in higher education, women should be asked to share their stories on their early career experiences, including interactions with supervisors and other professional colleagues. By representing these voices in the dialogue

on the experience of young women in student service roles, the dynamics that shaped those experiences can be better understood.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family. To my husband, Tom, for sticking with me through every up and down and allowing me every emotion, I love you. To my mom and dad, Jeannie and Jeff, thank you for never letting me quit, not when it came to viola lessons in the 4th grade and not in the last few years when I needed you most. To my grandfathers, Ted, thank you for always knowing I could be anything I wanted to be, and, Sol, thank you for leaving me with the sense of humor that got me through this process.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT i

DEDICATION iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iv

LIST OF TABLES xi

LIST OF FIGURES xii

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION 1

Purpose of the Study 1

Research Design 4

Qualitative inquiry. 4

Conceptual framework: self-authorship. 5

Study participants 7

Research method. 9

Data analysis. 11

Analysis of the participant experience. 11

The author's journey toward self-authorship. 12

Limitations 12

Significance of the Study 13

Organization of the Dissertation 14

CHAPTER

2 LITERATURE REVIEW 15

Part 1: Work Environment of Student Services in Higher Education 16

Student services. 19

Intentional career development in student services. 23

Structure of the student services workplace.....24

Expected competencies of early-career professionals in higher education.26

Expectations and advice from mid- and senior-level practitioners.....30

Women's experience in student service roles in higher education. 33

Part II: Early-Career Women's Experience in the Workplace.....36

Generational dynamics.....36

Generational constructs in the current workforce of the United States. ..37

Work ethic and generation. 39

Managing Millennials in the workplace. 41

Workplace expectations. 43

Sense of self in the workplace. 44

Workplace relationships.....46

Summary 49

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....50

Purpose of the Study and Research Question 51

Research Design.....52

Conceptual Framework 53

Self-authorship model. 54

CHAPTER

Development of the self-authorship model. 55

Utilizing self-authorship to analyze work and life experiences. 58

Context of self-authorship in the study. 62

Promoting self-authorship in student services roles in higher education. 62

Research Population 65

Data Collection 68

Participant identification. 68

Informed consent. 69

Population size. 70

Interview. 71

Data Management 74

Data Analysis 75

Data coding. 75

Self-Authorship. 77

Descriptive framing. 77

Use of self-authorship. 78

Presentation of the stories. 79

Limitations of the Study 80

Introduction to the Participants 81

Amber. 81

Lisa. 82

CHAPTER

Sarah. 83

Nancy. 83

Mary. 84

Denise. 84

Summary 86

4 THE WORK EXPERIENCE 87

Internal Dynamics at Work – Intrapersonal Journey to Self-Authorship 88

Sense of self as a student service practitioner. 88

Sense of self as a first time professional. 89

Work style as new practitioners in student services. 94

Building blocks to future positions in student services. 97

External Dynamics at Work – Interpersonal journey to Self-Authorship..100

Relationship with her supervisor. 101

Recognition for work. 108

Connection with members of the institutional community. 113

Summary 119

5 LESSONS LEARNED IN MY SELF-AUTHORSHIP JOURNEY 121

My Early Career Experience in Student Service Roles 121

My Early Career Experience: a Journey toward Self-Authorship 124

Internal Dynamics at Work – Intrapersonal Journey Toward Self-Authorship 125

Sense of self as a student service practitioner. 126

CHAPTER

Work style as a new practitioner in student services. 128
Building blocks to future positions in student services. 130
An environment that promoted self-authorship. 130
External Dynamics at Work – Interpersonal journey to Self-Authorship..135
Relationship with my supervisor. 135
Developing self-authorship in the interpersonal dimension. 136
Defining my sense of self in working with others. 140
Recognition for the work. 142
Connection with members of the institutional community. 143
Learning to be a colleague in my role as an academic advisor. 144
Creating personal and professional networks as a coordinator. 145
Lessons Learned through My Journey toward Self-Authorship 148
Application of lessons learned. 150
Setting the stage for self-authorship amongst student service staff. ..154
Summary 157
6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION 159
Discussion 160
Sense of self built through experiences at work. 160
Naïveté in expectations of workplace experience in student services. ..161
The role of workplace structure in early-career experiences. 166
Generational dynamics 168
Where the participants sit in their journey. 174

CHAPTER

Implications.....175

Scholarship.....175

Research.....178

Practice.....179

Early-career women's opportunities to build their sense of self.....179

The role of supervisors, mentors and colleagues.....180

Conclusions.....182

REFERENCES.....185

APPENDIX
A EXPLORING THE WORK-LIFE OF MILLENNIAL WOMEN IN STUDENT SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION.....197

B FIRST ROUND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....200

C SECOND ROUND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....203

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1 Overview of Participant Information.....85

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Self-Authorship Model	56
2	Dimensions of Self-Authorship	61
3	The Participants Place in their Journey Toward Self-Authorship	120
4	My place in the Journey Toward Self-Authorship at the end of my Early-Career Experiences	147
5	Place in the Journey Toward Self-Authorship at the End of the Study	175

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When I made the decision to undertake this endeavor I knew that I wanted to find a way to allow for my research to be a part of my professional development. As I began my doctoral studies, I believed I would focus my dissertation on the experience of the student populations with whom I most often worked. Yet, after conversations with colleagues I came to realize that what I wanted to learn more about was how we as professionals in student services learn to be successful in our work, in short, how we learned to be practitioners in the field. These conversations were prompted by shared stories that reflected each other's workplace experiences. I heard the voices of my colleagues, our shared excitement and frustrations, and wondered if these experiences were a product of the institution and the time in which we entered our early career stage in student services or if the experiences were common for other early career women in the field. This study is a manifestation of those conversations, a discovery of what it means to be an early-career woman in student service roles in higher education.

Purpose of the Study

The fundamental problem addressed in this study is the lack of dedicated research on the experience of early career professional women in student service roles in higher education looking at that experience from the women's perspective. Individuals serving universities and colleges in this capacity represent the future of the profession, as they will become the leaders of their institutional organization (Blackhurst, 2000a; Taub & McEwan, 2006). Women

in their early career as professionals in student service roles in higher education engage in a work environment that impacts their professional and personal goals. A push and pull exists between these spheres and the elements of their professional and personal lives directly affects their experience with work and the choices they make in pursuit of career advancement. It is important to understand who the women see themselves to be as professionals. This allows one to understand how they approach their work and what they expect from a career in student services.

Early career professionals are at a critical turning point of their lives. For the first time they are dependent upon themselves, make decisions that determine the outcome of experiences, and establish their first relationships outside the confines of school with colleagues and peers (Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Baxter-Magolda, 2001, 2007). Their career becomes the focus of their life, replacing the role that school has played for the previous twenty-two or more years. Career choice is a determinant of their post-academic identities and impacts the way in which they engage with the world. It can dictate social circles, fiscal independence, living arrangements, and out of work activities (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). Many early career professionals are overwhelmed by the experience of work as the driving force in their lives. This causes undue stress and can lead to questions if the choice of career that was made was the best option for this next stage of life (Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Baxter-Magolda, 2001, 2007).

The work environment student services in higher education is similar to that of other workplaces. Employees in these roles face similar stressors in their

transition from student to professional as their peers in other professional pathways (Baxter-Magolda, 2001, 2007; Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Morgan, 2006; Taub & McEwan, 2006). There is a period of adaptation, where the employee must learn the culture and limitations of their work. The period of adaptation causes the individual to reflect upon who they are and how they want to interact with others in the workplace (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Morgan, 2006). It is through this process of self-discovery that the individual comes to understand how connected they felt to their workplace. This process is what Baxter-Magolda (2001) describes as the journey toward Self-Authorship, or the understanding of one's sense of self and the nature of their relationships as created through the experiences of work.

This study was designed to expose the stories of the work experience of early career women in student service roles in higher education. The participant stories are intended to give the researcher and the reader examples of the experiences of these professionals to inform practice, research and management of similar populations. Additionally, this study can provide individuals who identify with the participants a chance to reflect upon their own career, and how that experience has shaped their professional sense of self in their workplace. The study specifically addresses (1) the experiences of early career women in student service roles in higher education and (2) how these experiences propel an individual through the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of their journey toward Self-Authorship (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

Research Design

Qualitative inquiry.

Qualitative inquiry allowed me to delve into the experience of the individual (e.g. each woman's work experiences) by gathering data from which to draw conclusions and provide suggestions to the reader (Erickson, 1986; Lincoln and Denzin, 2005). This form of research allowed me to begin the study with little presupposition about what I would find and allowed me to let the data speak to the direction of the findings (Lincoln and Canella, 2004). The research was not bound by specific criteria, which allows for data to come forth as authentic to the participant's experience rather than conceived by the researcher (Lincoln and Canella, 2004). This authentic emergent data was especially important in this study in order to discover salient themes from the women's stories and to use these themes to understand early career women professionals in student service roles in higher education.

Qualitative research was designed to discover the stories and thoughts of the participants, rather than quantifying particular elements of experience (Lincoln and Denzin, 2005). Validity in qualitative research is defined as showing a consistent method and practice of the research and to pursue that method to the highest standards established (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston & St. Pierre, 2007). Concepts and methods of interpretation are established through the practice of dialogic interviews as set forth by other researchers, while adapting the methodology to conduct a valid study of work

experience of early career women in student services in higher education (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Barone, 2007; Charmaz, 2008).

The voice of the researcher and the voice of the participant were defined so that the reader does not feel that the work was tainted by the biases of the researcher (Freeman, et. al., 2007). Throughout the document, the reader will discern when the voice of the researcher was presented through the use of personal pronouns I, me, mine and my. The participant's voice will be indicated through their assigned pseudonyms and the pronouns she and her. This work utilized the technique of memoing, or reflective writing designed to identify and control for researcher bias based on the duality of the researcher as a tool and a student service practitioner (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Freeman, et. al., 2007).

Conceptual framework: self-authorship.

The conceptual framework for this study was based upon Baxter-Magolda's (2004) model of Self-Authorship. Self-Authorship is the process by which the individual comes to understand himself or herself as they are as an individual, rather than whom they are crafted to be by others in their lives (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). It is a process that is based upon the experiences of the individual, causing them to question their ideas, values and interactions with others. Through the individual's diverse experiences they begin to build their sense of self: what it means to be who they are in the context of their world (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

The Self-Authorship model allowed the researcher to review how participant's understood who they are within the contexts of their life experiences (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). The model, as proposed by Baxter-Magolda (2001), is divided into three dimensions of knowing the self: *Epistemological*, *Intrapersonal* and *Interpersonal*. The *Epistemological Dimension*, or the development of "how we know or decide what to believe," is built in environments where the individual must internalize how they view and conceptualize new information (p. xix, Baxter-Magolda, 2001). For many individuals this process occurs in the college classroom environment where the individual is to provide their own interpretation of data presented by faculty or peers (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986). This dimension was not included in the study and it was assumed as a new professional in student services that their journey toward Self-Authorship in the epistemological dimension was further along than in those of the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions due to the fact that the participants had completed their undergraduate degree. However, the researcher did set out to confirm or disconfirm this assumption.

An individual's development in the *Intrapersonal Dimension* is focused on "how we view ourselves, whereas the *Interpersonal Dimension* of individual development is focused on how we construct relationships with others" (p. xix, Baxter-Magolda, 2001). The *Intrapersonal* and *Interpersonal* dimensions of the journey to Self-Authorship require the individual to challenge their beliefs about self and others in contexts where knowledge acquisition and interpretations are not the main goal of the experience. The work environment allows the individual

to undergo experiences that propel them along the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of Self-Authorship (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). Due to the use of work environment as the context of this study, the researcher chose to focus on the journey of Self-Authorship in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions.

The impact of the workplace on the experience of early career professionals in their journey toward Self-Authorship has been studied by Collay & Cooper (2008); Creamer & Laughlin (2005); Pizzolato & Ozaki (2007). Each of these studies looked at how the workplace impacts the individual's development along the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of Self-Authorship, or how that particular environment allowed the individual to come to know who they are and how they work with others (Collay & Cooper, 2008; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007). This study built on this foundation and looked specifically at the work experience of early career women professionals in student service roles in higher education.

Study participants.

The data collection in this study required a limited population size, or 'n' in order to gather a rich and in depth story of the populations experiences (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, Riessman, 2008). I used an 'n' of six, in order to spend the time needed to uncover the experience of the participants and to seek transferability in their stories through rich, thick description of the data collected (Goodson, 2006; Riessman, 2008; Saldana, 2009). The participants were selected for the study through deliberative means, as they needed to meet all of the criteria outlined for the study population (Berg, 2001). Through my professional

relationships I made contact with women in student service roles in higher education, which allowed me to choose a purposeful sample in order to control the parameters of the participant sample and the boundaries of the research (Cannella & Lincoln, 2007). I also utilized my professional network to identify other potential participants to expand the prospective sample in which participants were selected or denied based on set criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The participants all worked in student service roles in the same institutional community. In order to avoid tainting the sample, I excluded individuals with whom I had shared my study goals and those to which I have a strong personal relationship.

The research population was composed entirely of early career women who work in student service roles in higher education. This composition was a conscious choice; one which was made in order to highlight the experiences of a specific subpopulation of employees in student service roles in higher education (Belenky, et. al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Sax, 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The women selected to participate in this study were members of the Millennial generation, bound by birth years 1982 – present (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000). The participants self identified as professionals in student service roles in higher education. In this study, the higher education environment was represented by a large, research extensive institution that serves the needs of a large metropolitan area in the southwestern United States of America (gathered August, 3, 2008 from http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/). The roles the individual participants hold in their work environment were classified

within the broad category of student services. Student service work involves assisting students as they manage their collegiate experience, and can include, but is not limited to: academic advisors, residential life community coordinators, program managers and orientation directors. Student service roles can be found in traditional student affairs divisions, such as residential life or student involvement, or in academic divisions, such as colleges or learning support programs. Finally, research conducted on the higher education workplace defines the employment roles held by the individual participants as professional (Airini, et. al., 2011; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Hodge, Baxter-Magolda and Haynes, 2009; McHugh-Engstrom, 1999; Morgan, 2006; Tomas, Lavie, del Mar Duran and Guillamon, 2010; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman and Lance, 2010). The term professional was used to underscore the nature of the position as something to which the individual has a particular training or skill set required to complete the work. Professional roles also allow for the individual to expand upon their skills in order to be eligible for advanced level positions in their current organization or in alternate organizations in which the learned skills are applicable (Morgan, 2006).

Research method.

The research study was undertaken utilizing a dialogic interviewing method. This structure allows for a conversational style in the interviews, which allows the participants to direct the nature and structure of their responses (Jessop & Penny 1999; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). These interviews allow for inquiry to be pursued as it developed, as the participant answered a particular

question they were prompted for additional information, and / or the interview moved into topic areas not initially planned for by the researcher (Jessop & Penny, 1999). This type of interview needs to be conducted in environments where the participant and researcher both feel comfortable, those locations that are neutral spaces for both individuals. As such, the interviews were conducted off site from the participant's workplace, in locations that were determined to meet the researchers need for a quiet environment for the collection of data.

Dialogic interviewing allowed the researcher to gather thick, rich data on the participant stories (Charmaz, 2006; Riessman, 2008). The questions asked in the interviews were intentionally broad and open ended. This allowed the participant to provide answers that were salient to their experience (Lincoln & Cannella, 2004). Throughout the interviews I was able to follow up participant responses with prompts, such as 'can you tell me more about what you just said' or 'please go on'. As a result, a greater depth to the initial answers was exposed and the participants were encouraged to elaborate on their stories as they felt appropriate (Charmaz, 2006; Riessman, 2008). This method allowed for an environment in which the participant played a key role in determining what direction the dialogue should take.

Two rounds of interviews were conducted with the participants. The questions used in the first interview were created from my understanding of the experience of early career women in higher education as derived from literature on the subject. The second interview built upon the stories collected in the first meeting, which allowed me to clarify themes and gather additional details of the

experiences (Lincoln & Cannella, 2004). The focus of the data collection process was designed to provide insight into the experiences of the participants. The data collection process also allowed me to seek transferability in the stories through rich, thick description of the data collected, rather than to focus the experience on generalizability of the data to the greater population (Goodson, 2006; Riessman, 2008; Saldana, 2009).

Data analysis.

Analysis of the participant experience.

The stories gathered in the data collection process were coded into the themes utilizing In Vivo coding. In Vivo coding is a style in which the words of the participant are used to define the data categories (Saldana, 2009). The transcripts were mined for words, phrases and elements of the women's stories that seem to stand out from the other text. When a series of statements were articulated to a similar point, the data was gathered together under a broad heading, or code, that was then developed into an emergent theme.

Initial coding lead to almost 25 themes based upon the stories of the participants. By utilizing constant comparative analysis, the categories were distilled into new broader categories, which drew together the various experiences in more concrete ways (Saldana, 2009). In the second round of interviews, the participants assisted in the process of collapsing and confirming themes though their discussion of initial themes that emerged from the first round. Once themes salient to the entirety of the participant group were identified, I reviewed the data set to uncover further examples of these thematic areas, specifically where the

participant stories were similar or where their experiences echoed one another. This process further confirmed transferability between the stories. While the stories and data collected were specific to the participants of this study, the intent was to use the findings to inform practice and further research on the experience of early career women in student service roles in higher education.

The author's journey toward self-authorship.

This study permitted me time to reflect on my own experience as a woman who has served in entry-level roles in student services in higher education. The reflection process allowed me to further understand how the journey toward Self-Authorship in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions has impacted my own experience as a professional in the field and as a manager of a student services unit (Baxter-Magolda, 2007, 2008). My shared experiences, illustrated through the connection between the participant's stories and my story, one which has been reflected upon through the lens of time and status in the profession, provided the descriptive analysis of the data that further represented the journey toward Self-Authorship in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions (Barone, 2007; Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

Limitations

This study was limited to one research extensive institution located in a large metropolitan region of the Southwestern United States. Therefore, the findings may not be applicable to the experience of individuals working in other institutional types or institutions located in other geographic regions. The population size was small, consisting of six women, employed at the institution in

2010-2011. Some of the participant's experiences were reflective of their current role in the institution, while others reflected on experiences at other institutions during their time as an undergraduate student worker or as a new professional serving at a different institution. The findings may not be unique to women, but as of yet it has not been determined if men undergo the same influences in their professional experience working in student service roles in higher education. Finally, the biases and filters I brought to the study as the researcher impact the interpretations of the data in this study.

Significance of the Study

This qualitative study exposed the experience of early career women professionals in student services roles in higher education from their perspective as provided through their individual stories. Through dialogic interviewing I listened to the women's stories and uncovered the elements of their experience that were most salient to their work; to hear their voices and represent their viewpoints in the study (Gilligan, 1982; Belenky, et. al., 1986). In doing so, I have allowed their experience to dictate the outcomes of the research; to be authentic to the participant's lived experience with work.

The suggestions for research and practice derived from this analysis of the experience of early career women in student service roles in higher education contributes to the current research on this population and on the subject of workplace experience. Additionally, the stories of the participants helped to describe the experiences that impact their professional development and the relationships through which they came to understand who they are and how they

work with others in professional settings (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). Results from this study can assist women serving in student service roles in higher education, their managers and others interested in their work experience to understand what the lived experience in this work environment was like for early career women serving in these roles.

Organization of the Dissertation

This first chapter provided an introduction to the study, the purpose of the study, the research questions, research design and limitations. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature on the work experience of student services in higher education and the experience of early career professionals. Chapter 3 is a discussion on the Self-Authorship model and the specific methods used in the study. In Chapter 4, the findings of the study are presented through the participant's stories. In Chapter 5, I reflect and discuss my experience as a woman in student service roles and my journey toward Self-Authorship as it relates to the participants' stories. In Chapter 6, a summary of the findings, conclusion and suggestions for future practice and research are provided.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of the work experience of student service roles in higher education to date has focused on mid- and senior-level practitioners, competencies needed to be earned through graduate programs in student services, perceptions of employees new to student services by experienced career professionals and other workplace environment issues of student service work in higher education. While these elements have been extensively studied, the dynamics that shape the work experience of early-career women professionals in student service roles in higher education has not been studied from the perspective of the women themselves. The studies that have focused on this population do so through providing recommendations on the competencies that qualify an early-career professional to hold student service roles in higher education (American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, www.naspa.org, 2010; Biddix, 2010; Cuyjet, Longwell-Grace & Molina, 2009; Kinser, 1993; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Taub & McEwan, 2006). These studies have failed to expose what the experience of work in student services was like for the women, how these women perceive their abilities and how they interact with others in the workplace.

Therefore, it was important to study the workplace of student services in higher education, including the culture of the workplace and how professionals build their identities within a work construct from the employee's perspective. This study helped to establish a knowledge base of how the workplace impacts

the individual. Additionally, it shows how early-career women view their experience working in student service roles in higher education. This may range from how the individual builds their sense of self in their work to the relationships that these women identify as shaping the ways in which they work with others in the workplace.

The review of the literature for this study first uncovers the environmental factors that shape work in student service roles in higher education. This will be followed by a review of how early-career women experience the workplace. This review includes generational characteristics that impact work experience, women's expectations in work, perceptions of career development and the development of the individual's sense of self as a member of the work community.

Part 1: Work Environment of Student Services in Higher Education

Student services work in higher education was defined as support and development of students through their university or college experience (Lorden, 1998). It is a workplace that attracts employees who are interested in working in a collegiate environment and who see value in assisting others in their navigation of institutional infrastructure so that they may be successful in their academic endeavors (Airini, Collings, Conner, McPherson, Midson & Wilson, 2011; Lorden, 1998; Tomas, Lavie, del Mar Duran & Gullamon, 2010). Individuals enter the field for a variety of reasons, but most often those reasons were tied to their own experiences as students in a university (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice & Molina, 2009; Kuk & Banning, 2009; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). These

experiences help the individual to define the nature of the work in student services and the type of role they wanted to serve in the institution (Blackhurst, Brandt & Kalinowski, 1998; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Touchton, 2008).

The environment of higher education places student service practitioners in close contact with students (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, 1998; Kuk, Cobb & Forrest, 2007; Waple, 2006). This is especially true of individuals in early-career roles in the field. Early-career professionals who work in these early-career positions often provide direct assistance to students through roles such as coordinating orientation programs, providing academic advising services, or engaging student leaders (Cuyjet, et. al., 2009; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Employees in these roles are given work tasks that allow them to direct the experiences of students, and to assist in their development as young adults (Kinser, 1993; Hurtado, et. al., 1998; Waple 2006; Kuk, et. al., 2007). Yield, retention, scholarship, academic tracking, and student success have become buzzwords in student service terminology which sets the tone and culture for the field and the actions of practitioners (Maloney & Osit, 1998; Rosser & Javiar, 2003). Student services is more than helping the students; it was about having the right student enroll, helping them into the best major or course of study for their abilities, and assisting them through the process of graduation into the world of work; the tasks which early-career professionals must often dictate in their early-career positions (Maloney & Osit, 1998; Rosser & Javiar, 2003).

Practitioners in the field of student services are responsible for staying on top of trends that engage students in the institutional community. This is made difficult in that higher education environment is one in which trends shift on a regular basis and with little warning (Lorden, 1998; Kirp, 2004; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). Student's interests are often diverse and there are a lot of distractions with which student service programs must compete (Twenge, 2006). Colleges and universities are now competing with the internet, video game systems, cable television and community events which distract a student from the activities designed to engage them with their institution (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Twenge, 2006). This competition affects student service practitioners in that they must identify trends that attract students to their programs and services despite the ever-increasing distractions.

The administrative leadership of the institution at which the early-career professional works also affects the student services work environment. This leadership, such as presidents, provosts and vice presidents are responsible for creating policy, and the outcomes of those policies changes affect everyone who interacts with the institution (e.g. other administrators, early-career professionals and students enrolled at the institution) (Tarver, Canada & Lim, 1999). These policy changes impact the environment of the institution by shifting institutional priorities, which may cause a greater scrutiny of individual programs and services to determine their value to the organization (Maloney & Osit, 1998; Rosser & Javiar, 2003; Tarver, et. al., 1999). For example, funding structures may change, employees can be dismissed, there may be a sense of unease about the future of

the institution, information on policies and practices may not be disseminated in a timely manner and rumors may abound regarding where in the organization the decision making power resides (Maloney & Osit, 1998; Rosser & Javiar, 2003). Taken together, these trends impact the environment of student service work in higher education. Practitioners in this field of work must remain flexible and adapt to changes that must be implemented quickly, as often happens in the student services work environment of higher education (Maloney & Osit, 1998; Rosser & Javiar, 2003).

Student services.

Student service positions in higher education workplaces are roles in which the practitioner is to interact with students by planning programs, activities or events and working closely with individuals to assist their connection to the institution (Kinser, 1993; Taub & McEwan, 2006; Waple, 2006). Early-career professionals in student services are often drawn to the field because of their experience as an undergraduate student (Kinser, 1993; Taub & McEwan, 2006; Waple, 2006). Perspective student service professionals may not understand that the work experience in these roles is more than planning programs or advising students until they have worked in their first full-time position in higher education (Kinser, 1993; Taub & McEwan, 2006; Waple, 2006). The experience of working in student services is also about interpreting institutional policies and procedures on behalf of students (Taub & McEwan, 2006; Waple, 2006). Institutional dynamics shape the nature of student service work, as the mission and goals of a particular department are shaped by the type of college or university at which an

employee works (Waple, 2006). Student service practitioners may not be aware of the full scope of the policies that would impact the ways in which they provide services to students (Taub & McEwan, 2006; Waple, 2006). These practitioners learn about these policies through their experiences in their early-career work. As they work to assist students, they may come across policies that limit their abilities, which in turn expose them to the institutional factors that shape their work (Taub & McEwan, 2006; Waple, 2006).

The work environment of student services in higher education is an attractive professional workplace for early-career professionals as it fosters the perception that they will work in an accepting and supportive environment that allows the exploration of what it means to be a professional employee (Taub & McEwan, 2006; Waple, 2006). Unbeknownst to these individuals, there are unique factors of higher education as a career field, specifically student service roles, which make the transition from student to employee more difficult (Kinser, 1993; Taub & McEwan, 2006). Higher education is an industry that proclaims the desire to build a collegial environment that provides support to both the personal and professional development of individuals who have made the choice to work in the field (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, Goals and Mission, gathered from http://naspa.org/about/index.cfm, February 17, 2008). Early-career professionals can find their personal and personal development in conflict due to the policies that drive their work. Often entry-level positions in student services place the employee in a position where they spend much of their workday with students. This interaction often causes the

professional to feel connected to those students, becoming sensitive to their needs for support in their development as young adults (Kinser, 1993; Taub & McEwan, 2006; Waple, 2006). When institutional policy counters what they believe is best for the student, early-career employees may feel pressured to meet the expectations of their supervisors (Waple, 2006). This environment presents a push and pull of two fundamentally contrasting viewpoints, which may cause the early-career professionals to experience negative stress (Rosser & Javinar, 2003). Individuals who choose to work in higher education want a supportive environment, where they could help others to grow and become successful. Often they are shocked to find bureaucracy in higher education can stifle their ability to provide the programs and services they feel are best for the students with whom they work (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Waple, 2006). This push - pull dynamic between serving the student and the supervisor may become difficult to navigate, especially for early-career professionals, who are navigating their own personal and professional identity development (Kisner, 1993; Taub & McEwan, 2006).

Student service entry-level positions are, on many campuses, overwhelmingly held by women, with almost 75% of respondents on a student service career study identifying as women (Taub & McEwan, 2006). Men in this profession are seen as the exception. Due to their limited presence men may receive special treatment from others including managers and administrators that includes opportunities for advancement into mid-level positions (Blackhurst, 2000b). Additionally, men have been socialized to be open in sharing their ideas, to engage in critical thinking and to take a firm stand when needed - all highly

desirable qualities in a professional in any career field, including the student services work environment (Blackhust, 2000a; Blackhust, 2000b; Morgan, 2006). Women, on the other hand, have not been taught through social norms to interact at work in the same ways as men (DiSesa, 2008; Helgesen, 1990). Instead women look for groups to belong to, finding likeminded peers with whom to approach their work (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). With women representing the majority of entry level employees in student services they must find ways to buck their social norms and learn to stand out amongst their peers (DiSesa, 2008; Taub & McEwan, 2006).

In student services, the easiest way for early-career professionals to stand out is by taking on additional tasks, which may or may not be related to their job description. For example, employees may choose to volunteer to work programs or shifts that others do not want (Kinser, 1993; Taub & McEwan, 2006). In many cases this amounts to early-career professionals in student services in higher education working during the times of day when students are available to participate in programs, offering events on nights and weekends (Kisner, 1993; Taub & McEwan, 2006). Working on tasks and programs during these hours allowed these early-career professionals to stand out from their peers in similar roles and improves their image in the eyes of supervisors and other administrators (Taub & McEwan, 2006). This gave these individuals a positive reputation in the student services community of their campus, and they earned the status of being indispensible in the eyes of their employers (Taub & McEwan, 2006; Waple, 2006). Being indispensable can become a catch twenty-two for early-career

professionals in student service roles in higher education. The individual is often recognized for their hard work, but that recognition does not come with additional compensation or time off equivalencies, and may not assist the individual in earning promotions into mid-level positions in their workplace (Kinser, 1993; Maloney & Osit; 1998; Morgan, 2006). Additionally, in being willing to take on additional tasks the employee may demonstrate to their supervisor that they are always willing to take on new assignments and duties. Supervisors could then make assumptions regarding work-load distribution, providing these exceptional employees with more work without asking the employee if they were willing to engage with those assignments (Kisner, 1993; Maloney & Osit, 1998; Morgan, 2006).

Intentional career development in student services.

The higher education workplace environment would better serve early-career professionals if there was an intentional plan for their professional development (Janosik, Carpenter & Creamer, 2006). According Janosik, Carpenter & Creamer (2006) there has been little to no organization for the structure of professional development in higher education, specifically for student service work. Without a specific plan, professionals have to "rely on reading journals, consulting with their colleagues, attending conferences and workshops, and bringing speakers to campus" (p. 128, Janosik, et. al., 2006). Not all professionals have the opportunity or a network of individuals with whom to collaborate, and their professional development may be stymied without that access (Janosik, et. al., 2006).

The idea to develop a consistent professional development curriculum has strong support amongst women with 89% agreeing that an intentional professional development plan would be a benefit to all individuals who work in higher education (p. 140, Janosik, Carpenter & Creamer, 2006). Janosik, Carpenter & Creamer (2006) suggest that the national organizations for higher education, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), should collaborate to create a standard professional development curriculum. These organizations have been "too passive in the creation of this curriculum, and that to move forward they must collaborate with practitioners in order to better serve the professionals who wish to work and grow in the student success and student affairs roles in higher education" (p. 145, Janosik, et. al., 2006).

Structure of the student services workplace.

The employment structure of student services in higher education is a pyramid where there are few leaders in top-level positions who are supported by a far greater number of professionals in entry-level roles (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Morgan, 2006). Organizational factors such as competition, networking and top-down leadership are as prevalent in higher education as they are in other professional fields (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Morgan, 2006). Traditional academic structures have dictated that those in the highest leadership positions such as presidents and deans have risen to their position through the academic side of higher education rather than through student service roles (Rosser & Javinar, 2003). As a result these academic administrators may not understand

how different the needs of student service practitioners and their divisions can be from those of the academic areas (Blackhurst, Brandt & Kalinowski, 1998).

A complicating factor in the administrative structure of public higher education is the influence of state government (Kirp, 2004). As a division of the state, public universities must wait for funding approval controlled by state legislatures (Kirp, 2004). When funding availability changes, the amount of money spent on staffing and programmatic support in higher education shifts positively and negatively with these funds (Tarver, Canada & Lim, 1993; Kirp, 2004). These funding shifts are often felt most dramatically in student service areas (Tarver, Canada & Lim, 1993; Kirp, 2004). For example, when funding was low, money was shifted away from student services based on the premise they do not serve the traditional functions of the institution, generally defined by a state constitutions as academic services – faculty, course offerings and degree confirmation (Tarver, Canada & Lim, 1993; Kirp, 2004).

The pyramid structure of student services can lead to competition amongst employees at the same professional level. This competition results in the expectation that in order to earn one of the limited position in the next level of the organization, the individual must perform at a higher level of productivity than their peers in order to be eligible for those roles (Maloney & Osit, 1998; Morgan, 2006). For professionals seeking to move from entry-level to mid- and senior-level management positions, they often have to stand out, even if that means over stepping colleagues in the pursuit of the next position up the organizational ladder in their institution (Morgan, 2006).

Expected competencies of early-career professionals in higher education.

There are specific expectations of supervisors and administrators of the types of competencies needed to be successful as early-career employees in student service roles in higher education (Waple, 2006; Kuk, et. al., 2007). These expectations often include pursuit or completion of graduate-level academic work in college student personnel, higher education, or student services, and professional or paraprofessional work experience in student services in order to be eligible for entry-level work (Kinser, 1993; Kuk, et. al., 2007). These expectations may or may not be explicitly stated to the early-career professional which can lead to a guessing game as to what was required to earn an entry-level position in student services (Waple, 2006; Kuk, et. al., 2007). Additionally, the low pay of entry level student service positions often leaves the early-career professional feeling undervalued for the amount of effort and time put into their position and / or professional development (Taub & McEwan, 2006; Waple, 2006). Early-career professionals are often unhappy with the compensation package, feeling that the expected knowledge base required of their work should be of greater value than was indicated through their compensation package (Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Kuk, et. al., 2007). The difference between environment and values can cause early-career professionals negative tension and stress (Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Morgan, 2006).

Graduate programs in student services and higher education shape an early-career professional's expectations of the workplace environment. In these

programs early-career professionals are taught what their faculty perceive to be essential skills for the student services workplace, including an introduction to the profession, counseling skills, program planning skills and student development theory (Cuyjet, et. al., 2009; Kuk & Banning, 2006; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Graduate programs indicate to early-career professionals that they would be allowed to utilize these tools in the application of their work in their first positions in student service roles in higher education. Cuyjet, Longwell-Grace & Molina's (2009) study on the perceptions of early-career professionals and their supervisors regarding the applicability of what was learned in these graduate preparation programs provides insight on the expectations of the experience with the student services workplace for early-career employees. The researchers found that early-career professionals feel as though what they learned was theoretical, or useful only in management or leadership roles, and that they wanted more experiences in learning practical skills that can be applied in their first positions (Cuyjet, et. al., 2009). Supervisors and early-career professionals felt as though what the preparation program faculty felt were critical learning skills were more appropriate for later career professionals, and that early-career professionals were not learning in their academic coursework what they needed to be successful in their first positions as student service practitioners (Cuyjet, et. al., 2009).

The two leading professional organizations for student service practitioners in higher education, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), came together to create a list of professional competencies areas for

professionals (2010). The purpose for the document was to create a core list of competencies that all professionals should posses regardless of how they entered the profession (ACPA & NASPA, www.naspa.org, 2010). In creating this document the organizations reviewed competency statements from over 40 different higher education organizations and 19 documents regarding what was required of professionals in student services in higher education to be successful in their roles (ACPA & NASPA, www.naspa.org, 2010).

ACPA and NASPA identified the following areas to be necessary for student service practitioners to master a basic level of competency in order to be successful in their work; (1) Advising and Helping: providing counseling and advising support, direction, feedback, critique, referral and guidance to individuals and groups; (2) Assessment, Evaluation and Research (AER): the ability to use, design, conduct and critique qualitative and quantitative AER analyses; to manage organizations using AER processes and the results obtained from them; and to shape the political and ethical climate surround AER processes and uses on campus; (3) Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: create learning environments that were enriched with diverse views and people. It was also designed to create an institutional ethos that accepts and celebrates difference among people, helping to free them of any misconceptions and prejudices; (4) Ethical Professional Practice: to understand and apply ethical standards to one's work; (5) History, Philosophy and Values: the connection of the history, philosophy and values of the profession to one's current professional practice; (6) Human and Organizational Resources: the selection, supervision, motivation and

formal evaluation of staff; conflict resolution; management of the politics of organization discourse; and the effective application of strategies and techniques associated with financial resources; (7) Law Policy and Governance: policy development processes used in various contexts, the application of legal constructs and the understanding of governance structures; (8) Leadership: competency areas of a leader in both an individual capacity and within a process of how individuals work together effectively; and (9) Personal Foundations: emotional, physical, social, environmental, relational, spiritual and intellectual wellness; be self-directed and self-reflective; maintain excellence and integrity in work; be comfortable with ambiguity; be aware of one's own areas of strength and growth; have a passion for work; and remain curious (pp. 8-26, ACPA & NASPA, www.naspa.org, 2010). The competency areas were further subdivided into basic, intermediate and advanced levels. These levels were not intended to correlate with years of experience; rather they were to be correlated with the relative need for the particular information within one's specific area of work within student services (ACPA & NASPA, www.naspa.org, 2010).

Early-career professionals have a high attrition rate from student service roles in higher education, estimated at somewhere between 50% and 60% within the first five years of their professional career (Lorden, 1998; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). This can be attributed to a mismatch between the competency expectations set for the individual through their graduate work and the experience of their first position. Early-career professionals walk away from their graduate programs with a set of expectations of what a career in student services will be

like as a professional (Cuyjet, et. al., 2009). Often what the early-career professional has as an expectation for the work was different from that of their supervisor. In those times, there may be conflict between the early-career professional and their supervisor, and if the concerns about performance were not addressed it may result in the departure of that individual from their position (Cuyjet, et. al., 2009; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Supervisors can assist early-career professionals through these conflicts by providing clear direction, ongoing training and feedback on the skills needed to be successful in the particular role held by the individual (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Mid-level managers should see early-career practitioners as "works-in-progress", individuals who need to be shaped into the professionals they were capable of becoming (p. 114, Cuyjet, et. al., 2009).

Expectations and advice from mid- and senior-level practitioners.

While there was little research done on the experiences and perception of environment of student services work from early-career professionals in higher education themselves, studies have been conducted to elicit what mid-level and senior-level administrators feel was needed to be a successful student service practitioner (Dalton, 2002; Roper, 2002; Janosik, Carpenter & Creamer, 2006). These studies have asked for specific feedback related to relationships built between staff members, professional development opportunities, experiences which were perceived to be keys to growth as a professional and advice that senior leaders wish to leave for their early-career counterparts (Dalton, 2002; Roper, 2002; Janosik, et. al., 2006).

Experienced professionals in student service roles want to leave a legacy for those who will move into their positions when they choose to leave (Dalton, 2002). Specifically, these individuals wish to leave advice – "practical wisdom" - so those who follow can be spared some of the stressors and embarrassments associated with professional growth (p. 3, Dalton, 2002). Dalton (2002) states that all of this advice can be summed up by two aspects of competency: "sound knowledge and good judgment" (p. 3). These skill sets were learned through the formal training of graduate curriculum and by the less formal conversations, stories and reflections provided by experienced professionals to their early-career counterparts (Dalton, 2002). Early-career professionals may have a technical knowledge of student service competencies, minted in graduate studies, but should also learn from the experiences of those with a rich work history and experience in real world situations (Dalton, 2002). Participating in professional meetings allows individuals "the opportunity to interact with and learn from one's colleagues" (p. 8, Dalton, 2002). These experiences can be shared from experienced to early-career professionals as they enter the field through mentoring, which allows the experienced professionals to share their accumulated knowledge (Dalton, 2002).

The research on job satisfaction and early-career competencies was presented with reflective content from experienced professionals. Instead of asking early-career professionals what has brought them to a career in student service work in higher education, these studies ask experienced professionals to describe what assisted them to persevere in their careers to their current position

(Airini, et. al., 2011; Bender, 2009; Blackhurst 2000a, 2000b; Blackhurst, et. al., 1998; Lorden, 1998; Tomas, et. al., 2010; Touchton, 2008). These studies provide a picture of women in mid- and senior-level positions and their job satisfaction. These studies were designed to provide "lessons learned" or suggestions on how to improve department morale amongst early-career women (p. 44, Airini, et. al. 2011). The suggestions provided in the studies were often framed as what not to do rather than what to do, actions and behaviors that hinder progress in the professional career track (Airini, et. al., 2011). The participants in these studies provide early-career professionals with the advice to learn as much as they can about their department, to work hard, and to stand out from their peers by doing extra work above and beyond expectations and setting expectations for successful performance in their roles as student service professionals in higher education (Airini, et. al., 2011; Bender, 2009; Blackhurst 2000a, 2000b).

In the overview of the research on the work environment in higher education, I was able to identify two studies that looked at the experience of early-career employees in this environment from the perspective of those employees (McHugh-Engstrom, 1999; Wolf, 2010). Both of these studies were situated in academic affairs units of institutions, specifically looking at the orientation and support of new faculty members in a university setting (McHugh-Engstrom, 1999; Wolf, 2010). Both studies provide an introduction to the issues that early-career academics in higher education perceive to be roadblocks in their career (McHugh-Engstrom, 1999; Wolf 2010). Wolf (2010) found that new faculty members in academic units perceive themselves to be overworked, under-

supported by more tenured faculty and that they do not have a say in the distribution of work. This study also goes on to note that while there were lots of studies on academic work-load, she was unable to find studies from the perspective of the individual early-career professionals regarding their understanding of their place in the organization in which they work (Wolf, 2010). Similarly, I was unable to identify studies regarding the work experience of student services from the perspective of early-career practitioners.

Women's experience in student service roles in higher education.

Higher education has made a shift in its enrollment and employment practices, realizing that the environment is shaped by those who participate in it, and that there should be many different viewpoints in order to make the environment as rich as possible (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson & Allen, 1998; Williams, Berger & McClendon, 2005). Inclusion means the creation opportunities and practices that benefit the creation of this diverse society, and to allow for individuals to be exposed to a variety of viewpoints (Hurtado, et. al., 1998; Williams, et. al., 2005). Inclusiveness promotes an institutional social context to move from the limitations of token participants, the few voices charged to carry the torch for the groups they represent, to full and meaningful participation by many different groups (Hurtado, et. al., 1998; Williams, et. al., 2005).

Women have traditionally made some of the greatest and quickest gains in achieving representation and inclusion in the social context at work (Williams, et. al., 2005). In higher education, women who hold administrative posts are often

seen as having personality traits that are described as strong, assertive and independent. These viewpoints are similar to their male counterparts. Mimicking male counterparts is not enough to become a successful administrator, as women must also embrace the qualities and socialized roles they have been given in order to engage in the political games of administration (Helgesen, 1990; Blackhurst, 2000b; DiSesa, 2008). In higher education value is placed on the strong woman leader, but the possession of too many masculine qualities can cause other administrators and subordinates to describe the female leader in unflattering terms (Helgesen, 1990; Blackhurst, 2000b; DiSesa, 2008).

Representation of women as leaders who are described through traditionally socialized roles - the helper, caregiver, community organizer, relationship builder, focused on the common good – are not common in higher education administration (Helgesen, 1990; Jaschick, 2008; Touchton, 2008). Providing pathways of access for these types of female leaders provides early-career women with role models with which they can identify (Helgesen, 1990; Blackhust, 2000b). Women who represent a balance between the socialized skills of members of variant gender groups, and who are competent in their abilities, should be represented at greater rates in upper administration (Helgesen, 1990; Blachurst, 2000b; DiSesa, 2008). In doing so, these women can provide role models and mentoring to early-career female professionals, providing a pathway and network for these early-career women to become future leaders in student serviced roles in higher education (Blackhust, 2000b).

Women find student service work environment in higher education appealing due to the perceived social nature of a career in student services (Touchton, 2008). Group oriented socialization is a hallmark of women's learning, and much of the work completed in student services is based upon the individuals participation as a member of the team (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). As undergraduates, women are encouraged to work in teams, through formal course assignments, and study groups allowing them to blossom as learners and as knowledge generators (Touchton, 2008). This may be the first time where women feel that they can share their knowledge as well as their voice, and to have their voice validated by peers can provide a strong sense of independence and growth as an individual and as a member of a learning community (Belenky, et. al. 1986; Touchton, 2008).

Professionals in student services attempt to recreate this supportive group-oriented environment by allowing for a plethora of voices to be heard. To these individuals it is important for all opinions to be a valued part of the professional dialogue even if they were a solo voice in a majority dominated workplace (Hurtado, et. al., 1998; Touchton, et. al., 2008). By allowing multiple voices to be heard women are more inclined to feel included; to feel connected to their workplace experience. Openness, inclusiveness, and engagement with others in one's perceived age group, attracts women to the field of student services (Blackhurst, 2000b).

In many ways what attracts women to student services is in direct conflict with the reality of working in the field (Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Waple, 2006).

Many women desire to help the student to discover their identity as they grow over the course of the college experience, through a careful crafting of programs, events and activities which allow the individual to discover who they were and to reflect on how their identity shapes their decisions (Belenky, et. al., 1986; Hurtado, et. al., 1998; Touchton, 2008). Conversely, administrators can give early-career women professionals a differing message, providing boundaries to the work rather than allowing the professional to make decisions (Morgan, 2006; DiSesa, 2008). This conflict places a wedge between women and a career as a professional in student services, which can impact career longevity (Blackhust, Brand & Kalinowski, 1998; Rosser & Javinar, 2003).

Part II: Early-Career Women's Experience in the Workplace

Generational dynamics.

Women in student service roles in higher education are affected by their generational characteristics, which shapes their expectations of the workplace (Kezar & Lester, 2008; Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000). The individual's concept of an ideal work environment is tied closely to the experiences they have with work, school, friends, family and society as they grow from child to adult (Morgan, 2006; Rickes, 2009; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010). Some of these factors are individualized, but others, such as popular culture, tie the individuals together through a common experience (Twenge, et. al., 2010; Zemke, et. al., 2000). These common experiences form generations, groups of individuals who think or act in the same way as others in their age group (Rickes, 2009; Zemke, et. al., 2000). Generational values impact the individuals approach

to the workplace by providing a specific set of assumptions (Twenge, 2006; Twenge, et. al., 2010; Zemke, et. al., 2000). The workplace values of one generation may be different from those of another which can cause conflict between individuals from different generations (Zemke, et. al., 2000). These conflicts can become especially apparent when members of different generations are forced to work together to complete tasks. As they complete projects they find that the approaches to and assumptions of how to complete work are different from one another (Morgan 2006; Zemke, et. al., 2000). As members of different generations enter the workforce they may find areas in which their values coincide with the values of the workplace, and others where those values do not (Zemke, et. al., 2000). Generation plays a key role in the experience work for early-career professionals (Kezar & Lester, 2008; Morgan, 2006; Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Twenge, et. al. 2010; Zemke, et. al., 2000).

Generational constructs in the current workforce of the United States.

The concept of generation is based on an understanding that cohorts of individuals are linked together based upon common experiences with the world (Zemke, et. al., 2000). There are four generations with influence in the workforce in 2010-2011; Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials (Zemke, et. al., 2000). Veterans represent the oldest members of the workforce having been born between 1922 and 1943 (Zemke, et. al., 2000). These individuals lived through the Second World War, and their approach to work is often defined by intense loyalty to the organization, and a belief that you should always work hard

at what you do without asking for praise or compensation for that work (Zemke, et. al., 2000).

Baby Boomers serve as leaders in the current workforce, having been born between 1944 and 1960, and many are now approaching the end stages of their career (Zemke, et. al., 2000). These individuals were raised in an era of optimism and opportunity, rallying together to push forward progressive new ideas and opening the doors of society to be inclusive of more people (Zemke, et. al., 2000). In the workplace, Baby Boomers believe that they can do anything, that everyone has a chance at every job regardless of their social identities, and that the collective can make great progress toward bettering their situation (Zemke, et. al., 2000).

Members of Generation X, born between 1961 and 1982, were raised in the shadow of the Boomer generation (Zemke, et. al., 2000). As children they were often left alone after school waiting for both parents to return from work, filling that time with television and, for later members of the generation video games, and are more likely to be the children of divorced families than any previous generation (Zemke, et. al., 2000). As employees, members of Generation X are often fiercely independent, wanting to work in solitude rather than a part of the greater group. They pursue work for their benefit rather than for the good of the company, are on the cutting edge of technology, building the internet as workplace tool and like to multi-task, finding ways to work more efficiently rather than working harder (Zemke, et. al., 2000; Robbins & Wilner, 2001).

Millennials are the youngest members of today's workforce, having been born between 1982 and 2000 (Zemke, et. al., 2000). This generation's members are digital natives, having access to technology since birth, and utilize that technology in all aspects of their lives (Zemke, et. al., 2000). Millennials were doted upon by parents who were highly involved in their lives, encouraged them to participate in as many activities as they are interested in, taught them the value of working in groups and raised them to believe that everything that they do was special (Zemke, et. al., 2000). As employees, members of the Millennial generation prefer supervisors and environments in which their jobs allow flexibility in the tasks, the opportunity to work with others, and to earn praise for completion of tasks even if they have not gone above and beyond their job responsibilities (Zemke, et. al., 2000).

Work ethic and generation.

The differences in the approach to work by the members of the various generations can result in tensions between employees (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Arsenault, 2004). Much of the conflict comes from the various values and ethics of different generations (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Work values and ethics are defined by the attitudes of individuals about what should be expected from the workplace and how that individual should reach those expectations (Smola & Sutton, 2002). This value and ethic "is developed in an individual during the years between 6 and 16 and is brought about by the experience and expectations that the individual had during that period" (p. 366, Smola & Sutton, 2002). Some of the areas leading to the greatest conflict between workers of various

generations are loyalty to the company and the importance of work in one's life (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Older generations, Veterans and Baby Boomers, often believe that loyalty to the organization is the most important component of the individual's responsibility to the workplace (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Comparably, members of younger generations, Generation X and the Millennials, tend to be focused on themselves rather than the company and feel that work should be a part, but not the most important element of their lives (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Members of younger generations want to be treated as valued members of the organization rather than assets (Smola & Sutton, 2002). They expect opportunities to balance work and personal commitments and not to have to choose one over the other (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Employers must ease the tension between the generations and create a workplace environment in which all members of the community have their needs met. This allows employees to work collaboratively rather than to be in conflict with one another (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

In Arsenault's (2004) article, *Validating generational differences: a legitimate diversity and leadership issue,* she outlined the importance of understanding generational differences for workplace leadership. Generational cohorts not only identify with common experiences related to their personal lives, but also to specific individuals as influential leaders (Arsenault, 2004). Being a leader for someone who respects the style of Martin Luther King, Jr., like Baby Boomers, was different than providing leadership for someone who respects the style of Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, like Millennials (Arsenault,

2004). Leaders need to be flexible in talking with and motivating their employees through the methods that work best with that particular individual (Arsenault, 2004). Workers are also motivated by leaders who were honest and trustworthy, signs of which may be demonstrated differently to different generations but is equally as important to each one (Arsenault, 2004). For the youngest members of the workforce, leaders must be aware of their desire to work in teams. These employees prefer to learn via hands on methods and that they want quick and constant feedback on how to improve and succeed in the workplace (Arsenault, 2004). Generational difference is a legitimate leadership and diversity issue, something that must be recognized by managers in order to create a functional work environment for their employees (Arsenault, 2004).

Managing Millennials in the workplace.

The study presented in this dissertation focused on the workplace experiences of members of the Millennial generation in student service roles in higher education. Individuals from this generation often feel as though they should achieve success at a faster pace than the workplace allows (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). They have heard stories of peers who have created marketable products, become CEOs or achieved some other high level success at a young age and feel that they should be able to do the same (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). Millennials pressure themselves to be the best, to stand out amongst the pack, while also trying to fit in with peers and to make friends (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). Additionally, members of the Millennial generation build friendships that transcend work and personal lives; having friends in their workplace and building

relationships with colleagues that create personal friendships (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). They place value in employment, doing something was better than doing nothing, and certain types of positions have different values in social setting (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). Members of this generation see themselves as a part of a movement of change, bringing forth a new society in the twenty-first century (Sax, 2003). They want to make a positive impact in their local communities through their professional work and via social activities (Sax, 2003). Workplaces that allow Millennials to pursue both their personal and professional interests will find a workforce more apt to productivity and to continue to work for a particular company as it meets their developmental needs (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Sax, 2003; Tulgan, 2009; Twenge, 2006).

Managing Millennials is a new challenge for employers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Orrell, 2008; Pew Research Center, http/pewreserach.org, 2010; Tulgan, 2009; Twenge, 2006). Millennials, by nature of their generational characteristics, are used to being presented with a variety of options, they had their voices heard by having parents and other adults actively engage with them in their activities, being given a lot of direction, and having constant supervision and feedback (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). Supervisors need to be conscious of these factors when working with Millennial employees. Managing members of the Millennial generation requires active engagement with the employee from the supervisor, by providing more direction and spending more time developing their skills as employees (Hill, 2002; Orrell, 2008; Rickes, 2009).

Workplace expectations.

An individual's career choice emanates from an understanding of what it means to work, as learned in youth – garnished by watching television, through training curriculum, leadership opportunities, internships, or paraprofessional student employment (Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Sax & Arms, 2008). College graduates believe that they have been fully prepared for their first job; that college classroom knowledge readies one for full-time employment (Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Sax & Arms, 2008). The reality of the first professional position is often different from what the individual expected (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). For example, the position may not meet individual's perception for the field and may expose sides of the industry to which they were unaware (Kinser, 1993; Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Taub & McEwan, 2006). The mismatch between expectations and reality often results in the individual questioning career choice, professional goals, and abilities or competencies (Taub & McEwan, 2006). Depending on the strength of the reaction the individual may engage in a self-defeating mindset, lose the drive to work, or leave their position and change careers to something that reignites their passions and interests (Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Morgan, 2006; Taub & McEwan, 2006).

Interest in a discipline plays a role in the academic and occupational choices made by women (Morgan, Isaac & Sansone, 2001). To define interest, Morgan, Isaac & Sansone (2001) looked to the concept of competence and control of a discipline arising from mastery of that environment. If an individual struggles to develop subject area mastery in a discipline, they are less likely to

choose that discipline for study or career (Morgan, et. al., 2001). Interest is also defined as the level of match between an individual's expectations and the reality of the field (Morgan, et. al., 2001). Women are more likely to have interpersonal goals and values, and look for work environments which match these values (Morgan, et. al., 2001; Sax & Arms, 2008). Work environments in education, psychology and the health professions, where the practitioner is engaged with the client may be more appealing to more women than fields like engineering, math and laboratory science where practitioners work alone for long periods of time (Morgan, et. al., 2001; Sax & Arms, 2008). In Morgan, et. al. (2001) the correlation between gender and the perceived interestingness of a discipline was strong. Gender plays are role in the educational and occupational choice of the individual (Morgan, et. al., 2001; Sax & Arms, 2008).

Sense of self in the workplace.

The profession one chooses becomes a part of an individual's adult identity in American culture (Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Morgan, 2006). Work is more than something to occupy one's time and a method to earn a living; it is a definition of social status, educational background and can even confirm or challenge gender roles, providing a glimpse into who the person sees themselves to be (Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Morgan, 2006; DiSesa, 2008). Initial interpersonal interactions between those unfamiliar with one another often begins with a question related to work: "what do you do?" – meaning 'what is your occupation' or 'how are you employed' - which is asked to start a conversation (Robbins & Wilner, 2001). Early-career professionals are often challenged by

this – should they answer with their current job or their future goals? What is the motivation behind the individual asking question? Will the answer impact their current job or was it providing an opportunity to advance? – to decipher what the best answer may be (Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Morgan, 2006). Early-career professionals often do not realize the implications of their answers and when they answer honestly they fear being judged by the individual posing the question (Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Morgan, 2006).

Individuals learn a lot about who they are through their early-career experiences (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Collay & Cooper, 2008; Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007). The process of Self-Authorship opens the individual to understanding their sense of self as it relates to how they act in the workplace and how they interact with their colleagues (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005). It is through their experiences in the workplace that they learn who they are and who they want to be. Their daily interactions and experiences allow them to internalize the information they are learning about themselves and connect it with the work that they conduct (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005). Self-Authorship can also serve to assist in the development of leaders in the workplace (Collay & Cooper, 2008). As individuals learn more about themselves and about how they work with others, they can learn how to manage, supervise and delegate their work so that they can be more effective employees (Collay & Cooper, 2008; Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007). Early-career professionals need coaching and advice on how to learn who they are in the workplace. Additionally, they need to be provided with challenges that promote their professional growth. These experiences allow them to react to

situations that push them to take actions which are outside of their comfort zone, as those experiences are helpful in their professional development (Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007). By learning about one's self in the context of others and within the context of the professional spaces they occupy, an individual can connect with their work in more meaningful ways (Collay & Cooper, 2008; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005).

Workplace relationships.

Relationships between professionals in higher education, and in other professional disciplines, can form a building block to a successful career (Roper, 2002). Experienced professionals indicate that early-career professionals do not, for the most part, grasp the importance of building relationships and instead dismiss it as "playing politics" in order to get ahead of their peers (p. 11, Roper, 2002). Early-career professionals believe that they should advance based on merits alone, and often sabotage their careers because they lack the interpersonal relationships to move up the career ladder (Roper, 2002). Relationship tools can be taught to early-career professionals as a set of skills or guiding principles specific to a given institution (Roper, 2002). Roper's (2002) proposed skills or guiding principles are:

- Don't start a conversation unless you are committed to the other person
- Listen generously
- Be on each other's side
- Speak your truth

- Take care of the other person
- Stay focused in the conversation and stay in the conversation until it is complete
- Treat the conversation and each person as important
- Be clear about the value that you are producing
- Manage each other's reputation (p. 13)

These guiding principles assist early-career professionals through conversations of how and with whom they engage their time (Roper, 2002). Roper (2002) suggests professionals pay particular attention to the nature of their conversations. Roper (2002) also points out that early-career professionals must be weary of "leaders who are not secure enough to create space for the talents of others to emerge" (p.19). Leaders who do not have confidence in their position in the organization may limit the exposure of others to those with whom they may build beneficial relationships for professional development (Roper, 2002). Ultimately, early-career professionals must learn how to manage their relationships with other professionals in their field in order to aid their professional development (Roper, 2002).

Workplace relationships shape the experience of work for early-career professionals (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Orrell, 2008; Pew Research Center, http/pewreserach.org, 2010; Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Tulgan, 2009; Twenge, 2006). Millennials by nature are team players and like to associate with others in their work (Twenge, et. al., 2010). Members of this generation are uncomfortable with playing workplace politics and like to share credit for success with those

they feel participated in a particular endeavor (Twenge, et. al., 2010). They make conscious choices in their workspaces and work styles to incorporate others by asking for opinions and choosing to work in collaborative spaces (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Tulgan, 2009). Work for these employees is not just about taking home a paycheck; it is also about finding an environment to which they feel personally connected. Much of that connection comes from the people with whom they work (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Orrell, 2008; Pew Research Center, http/pewreserach.org, 2010; Tulgan, 2009; Twenge, 2006). These relationships blend the boundaries of personal and professional lives, by building friendships with colleagues and to choose work environments that include friends (Twenge, et. al., 2010).

Early-career professionals also strive for collegial relationships with their supervisors, ones that feel more like friendships than supervisor to employee relationships (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). Members of the Millennial generation are used to working closely with older adults who validated and value their ideas and opinions, such as teachers and parents (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Orrell, 2008; Pew Research Center, http/pewreserach.org, 2010; Tulgan, 2009; Twenge, 2006). For these individuals their workplaces and their interactions with supervisors should be no different. Millennials want to feel a part of the processes that dictate how and where they work, and look for opportunities to build relationships with supervisors that allow them those chances (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Orrell, 2008; Pew Research Center, http/pewreserach.org, 2010; Tulgan, 2009; Twenge, 2006).

Summary

The literature on the workplace experience of student service work in higher education has focused on the experience of mid- and senior-level practitioners, graduate preparation programs, competencies and other workplace issues in student service roles in higher education. The first part of the review focused on the dynamics shaping the culture of the work environment in student services work in higher education. These dynamics include higher education and student services workplace, structure of student services in higher education, expectations of competencies of student service practitioners and women's experience in student service roles in higher education.

The second part of the review focused on the dynamics of the individual in the workplace. This included generational dynamics, workplace expectations, perceptions of career development, sense of self in the workplace and workplace relationships

In chapters 4 and 5 the dynamics that shape the work environment for early-career women professionals in student service roles in higher education will be explored. The study hopes to add to this literature, focusing on the experience of a population that has not yet been fully studied in the context of this particular work environment.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to provide a greater understanding of the experiences of early career women in student service roles in higher education and the impact of those experiences on their journey toward Self-Authorship. An individual's experience at work shapes their personal and professional lives by dictating how they spend their time and the individuals with whom they come in contact (Morgan, 2006; Robbins & Wilner, 2001). The particulars of the work environment inform each person's ability to make sense of who they are as individuals and the ways in which they engage with others (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Morgan, 2006; Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Weik, 1995). This chapter provides the research methods used in this study to analyze the work experiences of early career women in student services roles in higher education, data collection and management and an introduction to the participants.

The study was written with a heavy use of the pronouns I, me, my and myself, each used to represent the researcher (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston & St. Pierre, 2007; Riessman, 2008). I have used the pronouns in order to create a dialogic environment in the written report, a back and forth exchange with the reader so that they may make a personal connection with the data (Barone, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Riessman, 2008). Personalized language in the research emphasizes my place in the study, providing an authentic presence to the work that illustrates a conscious construction of the research environment and of the researcher's pedagogical framework (Freeman, et. al., 2007). The

dialogic environment in which the data is presented builds validity in the assertions of the findings by providing the reader with insight on the decisions made in the data collection process (Freeman, et. al., 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

This study was formulated to understand the experiences of early career women in student service roles in higher education. Specifically, I utilized the research to uncover (1) the experiences of the women's work and (2) how these experiences influence their growth along the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions in their journey toward Self-Authorship – their discovery of sense of self in the workplace (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). I crafted the research question to uncover the subtleties of the participant's work experience as early career women in student service roles in higher education: What were the salient experiences and relationships which impact the work experience of early career women in student service roles in higher education?

The research question was explored through gathering the stories of the participants work experience (participant selection will be discussed later in this chapter). Those stories were gathered through the dialogic interview process that allowed for the collection of information in a conversational style, a description of which will be found later in this chapter (Jessop & Penny, 1999; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005).

Research Design

My study was conducted using qualitative research methodologies. Qualitative research is a form of research often utilized in the understanding of educational practice and is based in the discovery of the human experience that cannot be coded into numbers and statistics (Erickson, 1986; Fine and Weis, 2005; Freeman, et. al., 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, 1998; Denin & Lincoln, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Qualitative methodologies add to the research pedagogy as a way of further explaining the world through the shared and lived experience, rather than through statistical analysis (Lincoln & Cannella, 2002).

Qualitative analysis has allowed me to meet the goals of the study by uncovering the stories of the participant's daily lived experience as early career women in student service roles in higher education (Barone, 2007; Erickson, 1986). As a methodological perspective, qualitative analysis allowed for the discovery of participant's voices and enabled me to extrapolate their experience, as presented in the research, into themes to be shared with the reader (Riessman, 2008). The qualitative research framework allowed for the establishment of a coded system to define research outcomes (Clark & Sharf, 2007; Lincoln & Cannella, 2002; Phillips, 1994). Through qualitative research I have provided a framework for future research by uncovering salient themes that can be further explored, coded and used in other qualitative research studies on the experiences of early career women in student services roles in higher education (Berg, 2001; Barone & Eisner, 2006; Cannella & Lincoln, 2007; Riessman, 2008).

The emphasis of qualitative research is placed on uncovering themes that are applicable to the population represented by the participants in the study (Barone & Eisner, 2006). The specific elements to be uncovered through qualitative analysis are themes derived through the process of data collection, rather than outlined by the researcher before data collection begins (Barone & Eisner, 2006, Riessman, 2008). This process allowed me as the researcher to uncover rich data from the participants based upon their own experiences, rather than themes guided or influenced by my biases. I encouraged honest and open dialogue between the participant and researcher. This in turn, created a shared responsibility and ownership of the data that centered the research product on the participant experience (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Riessman, 2008).

Conceptual Framework

The study design illustrates how the participants viewed their work and life choices, specifically, how they defined and spoke to their experiences as early career women in student service roles in higher education. The data collected in the study was analyzed through an adaptation of Baxter-Magolda's (2001) Self-Authorship model. This analysis allowed me to better understand how the dynamics of the work environment impacted aspects of the women's experience in their professional and personal lives.

The Self-Authorship model was used to focus on the journey of the participants and how they became independent from the structures that have guided their life through emergent adulthood (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). Specifically, I used the to model focus on the experiences of participants in their

work environment, how they developed their own sense of self, how they chose to interact with the structures and people in that environment and how they define their development as an adult (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

The Self Authorship model provided a lens for the analysis of the work and life experiences of the participants in this study. The women selected to participate in the study were in their twenties and have recently started their post-college professional careers. The dimensions of the Self-Authorship model allowed me to analyze the experiences of the participants' as new student service professionals and how they interact within the context of their work (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice & Molina, 2009).

Self-authorship model.

The Self-Authorship model provided a way for me to discover how the participant has come to understand who they are within the contexts of her life experiences (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). The model, as proposed by Baxter-Magolda (2001), speaks of the three dimensions of knowing the self: *Epistemological, Intrapersonal* and *Interpersonal*.

In the Self-Authorship model, the *Epistemological Dimension*, or the development of "how we know or decide what to believe", is propelled by experiences in environments where the individual is required to assess how they view and internalize new information (p. xix, Baxter-Magolda, 2001). The individual in this dimension develops tools to interpret and respond to challenges to their ways of knowing based upon their past experiences and new information. In this new way of knowing, the individual learns how to place himself or herself

in the center of the data interpretation process. For many individuals this process occurs in the college classroom and/or in a different environment where the individual is asked to provide their own interpretation of data presented by others (Belenky, Cilinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Baxter-Magolda, 2001). An individual's development in the *Intrapersonal Dimension* is focused on "how we view ourselves", whereas the *Interpersonal Dimension* of individual development is focused on "how we construct relationships with others" (p. xix, Baxter-Magolda, 2001). The *Intrapersonal* and *Interpersonal* dimension's of the journey to Self-Authorship require the individual to challenge their beliefs about self and others in contexts where knowledge acquisition and interpretations are not the main focus of the environment, commonly found in settings outside of academic classrooms (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). For example, a new employee in the workplace will need to apply past knowledge in daily interactions with colleagues, supervisors and clientele to dictate their actions as they define themselves (E.g. Self-Author) within their new work environment.

Development of the self-authorship model.

The Self-Authorship model was developed as a result of a series of longitudinal interviews with individuals from the beginning of their undergraduate career as an eighteen-year-old first-year college student through their twenties as they entered early workplace experiences (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). Through the study, Baxter-Magolda (2001) was able to view the varied stages of personal development as it relates to how and what one knows about knowledge, self and others. Self-Authorship is a process by which the individual

gains their own definition of who they are in context of their life experiences and how they interact with the people they with whom they engaged in those contexts (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

The three dimensions (e.g. Epistemological, Intrapersonal and Interpersonal) of Self-Authorship are further divided into phases of development (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). These phases are salient points in time during which the individual experiences events that help them define who they are along the dimensions. It is within the context of these salient experiences that individuals become capable of defining what they know, how they view themselves and how they construct relationships with others (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). Particular societal contexts frame the salient experiences that in turn prompt the individual to use past experiences to move through the stages of development, advancing in the journey toward Self-Authorship in each of the dimensions. Figure 1 below illustrates the direction by which the stages toward the development of Self-Authorship progress across the dimensions.

Stages of Development in the Dimensions in the Journey toward Self-Authorship see below

Dimension of Self-Authorship (Epistemological, Intrapersonal, Interpersonal)	Following Formulas	Crossroads	Becoming the Author of One's Life	Internal Foundation
	→		→	

Figure 1. Self-Authorship Model (adapted from p. 40 Baxter-Magolda, 2001)

The first phase of development through the various dimensions of Self-Authorship is *following external formulas* (p. xviii, Baxter-Magolda, 2001). In this stage the individual internalizes messages from those around them, utilizing that information to define their view on the world. Said differently, the individual follows a path laid before them by others, similar to following a formula to solve their problem(s) (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). The second phase of development is *the crossroads*; at this point the individual realizes that they have not been heeding their own voice in the decision making process, rather using formulas provided by others to define who they are and how they interact in the world (p. xviii, Baxter-Magolda, 2001). As a result, the individual begins to question whether or not the formulas are congruent with their view on various matters. The third phase, is *becoming the author of one's life*; this is the phase in which the individual defines for themselves "what to believe, one's identity and how to interact with others" (p. xix, Baxter-Magolda, 2001). It is at this point that the individual sees that they are in control of their own decisions and they choose who they want to be and how they shape the relationships in their lives. The final phase in the journey toward Self-Authorship in each of the dimensions is developing an *internal foundation* (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). This phase is reached when the individual is able to continually refocus on their definition of self within the context of their interactions in society further defining the specific characteristics that make the individual unique.

Utilizing self-authorship to analyze work and life experiences.

I used two of the three dimensions of Self-Authorship; *Intrapersonal* and *Interpersonal* to understand the work experiences of early career women in student service roles in higher education (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). The third dimension, epistemological, was not used as a part of the analysis. The journey toward Self-Authorship in the epistemological dimension takes place when individuals are learning how to interpret and share their knowledge (e.g. during the college experience). The concentration of experiences exposing an individual to the opportunity to challenge what they know and how they share that information in college often allows the individual to progress through the stages of development in the epistemological dimension of Self-Authorship before they begin their professional career (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). The study focused on the work experience of the participants as entry-level roles in student services. The work requires at minimum a bachelor's degree, so I made the assumption that they have made progression toward the later stages of Self-Authorship in the epistemological dimension. However, I did not set out to confirm or disconfirm this assumption in the research.

The study focused on the individual and how they experienced the dynamics of the work environment as it impacted the journey toward Self-Authorship in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. The intrapersonal dimension of Self-Authorship is defined as the experiences that assist an individual to define their sense of self in the context of their environment (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). Self-Authorship in the interpersonal dimension provides the

individual perspective on their sense of self when interacting with other individuals in their lives (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

The intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of Self-Authorship are developed through experience in environments where the individual has reflected upon their sense of self and how they choose to interact with others. The post-collegiate work environment provides experiences for the individual to reflect on both their sense of self and who they are in the context of working with others (Collay & Cooper, 2008; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007). Creamer and Laughlin (2005) assert that the work environment allows for development along the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions in that the individual selects their professional career based upon what and how one knows. More specifically, workplace choice is defined by academic, leadership and paraprofessional experiences in college that provide necessary knowledge for early career roles in specific fields. Compiling the experiences that allow an individual to be ready for their first professional career step is done by following external formulas provided to the individual by mentors, supervisors and advisors - the first stage in their development toward Self-Authorship in their career experience (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005). The experiences provide the individual technical knowledge needed to be successful in their early career, which allows for greater reflection upon who they are and how they wish to interact with others, the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of Self-Authorship (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005). Baxter-Magolda's (2001) work also spoke to how the work

environment shaped the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of the journey toward Self-Authorship in her participants:

> My longitudinal participants… were often expected to work independently, to initiate their own work and problem-solving strategies, to cope with change, and to participate in the creation of their company's practice. Ambiguity was a common dynamic in their work… Thus the questions of how to know, self-identity and relations with others were central to these complex work settings. (p. 12)

In the context of my study, the stories of the participants were utilized to illustrate how an early career woman in a student service role in higher education moves through the phases of development of the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimension toward Self-Authorship. The stories I collected highlight the women's experiences in the workplace that prompted growth in their journey toward Self-Authorship. Specifically, Baxter-Magolda's (2001) model for assessing these moments in time was used to analyze how the participant's experiences prompted growth in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of Self-Authorship.

	Following Formulas	Crossroads	Becoming the Author of One's Life	Internal Foundation
Intrapersonal dimension	Define self through external others	Realize dilemma of external definition; see need for internal identity	Choose own values, identity in context of external forces	Grounded in internal coherent sense of self
Interpersonal dimension	Act in relationships to acquire approval	Realize dilemma of focusing on external approval; see need to bring self to relationship	Act in relationships to be true to self, mutually negotiating how needs are met	Grounded in mutuality

Figure 2. Dimensions of Self-Authorship (adapted from p. 40 Baxter-Magolda, 2001)

Through the Self-Authorship model, I framed the experiences of early career women working in student service roles in higher education within the context of the development of their sense of self and how they wanted to be perceived when working with others (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). By understanding the participant's sense of self I uncovered the women's perception of their strengths and weaknesses, how they assessed their abilities (e.g. defining self in their work and finding challenge in tasks assigned) and how they come to rely upon their relationships and external dynamics (e.g. their relationship with their supervisor and other members of the institutional community) that impacted their work.

Context of self-authorship in the study.

This study further illustrates how early career women professionals understood who they are in their workplace and how they related with others with whom they work. In chapter four, the stories of the participants were presented to describe the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions that impacted their work as early career women in student service roles in higher education. The language utilized in the analysis will come from the voices and stories of the participants, and while aligned with the context of Self-Authorship provided above, will be reflective of the experience in the particular context of student service work in higher education (Barone, 2007; Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Belenkey et. al., 1986).

Promoting self-authorship in student services roles in higher education.

My personal journey was a primary reason for undertaking this study on the work experiences of early career women in student service roles in higher education, and provides an insight into how, now as a student services manager, I can promote Self-Authorship within a work context. As such, I have utilized what I have learned from my experiences to discuss how I have situated space for my staff to have a voice in the processes and practices in our work environment. My journey would not only provide insight to the early career experience of a student services professional, but would show how the journey toward Self-Authorship has shaped me as a manager. This component of the study will be presented in chapter 5 as a reflection of my experiences and an audit of my plans as a supervisor and mentor in the field of student services.

The study was inspired by my early career experiences; what I have learned about myself as a professional, and the dynamic experiences that have propelled me to my current role, managing a student services unit in higher education. I have worked in student services through the eight years of my professional career. In my various student service positions I have acquired a myriad of professional experiences ranging from graduate assistantships in academic services to campus based student service programming. All of these experiences propelled my journey through the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of Self-Authorship.

Finally, in chapter five, I review my plans for continued and sustained support of new professionals as they begin their journey of Self-Authorship in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of student service roles in higher education. For example, one of the complaints from both supervisors of new professionals, and the new professionals themselves, is that workers new to student services were not prepared for the political nature (e.g. the unsaid rules of the work environment) of professional work in higher education (Cuyjet, et.al., 2009). More often than not early career professionals are surprised to find that there are political elements to work in student services, as the experiences in student leader and paraprofessional roles which lead them to pursue careers in student services did not show them this component of the work experience in the field (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008).

As an aspiring senior level administrator in student services one of the important roles I will undertake is the promotion and sustainability of the

professional development of new and current staff. Early career student service professionals need support, and need to feel that they have a voice in the processes that affect their work (Cuyjet, et. al., 2009). In order to provide support of the individual's voice in the process I must work to provide spaces in which my staff, and also those with whom I work in non-supervisory roles, can learn about who they are and how they can work with others to promote their own development. The journey toward Self-Authorship is complex and personalized; each individual must have experiences that promote growth along the model's dimensions (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). Baxter-Magolda (2001) provided a framework for promoting Self-Authorship, which can be adapted for use in student service settings in higher education. In the model she focused on how learning environments, especially those in higher education can promote Self-Authorship, speaking of the "three principles with connect assumptions to learners' development" (p. 188, Baxter-Magolda, 2001). These principles, which propel the learner through the phases of development toward Self-Authorship across the dimensions - to *validate learners as knower's, situate learning in learners' experience* and *define learning as mutually constructing meaning* – can be adapted from a context in the classroom, with the individual as the learner, to the work place, with the individual as the employee (p. 188, Baxter-Magolda, 2001). In chapter 5, I used the Self-Authorship model to describe my own journey as an early career woman in student service roles in higher education. Additionally, I provided the reader with an example of how the individual can utilize their journey as a means by which to provide others with the tools needed

to move toward Self-Authorship in the interpersonal and intrapersonal dimension. In chapter 5, examples of how my journey toward Self-Authorship has shaped my management practice has been provided.

Research Population

My research population was composed entirely of women. This composition was a conscious choice; one which was made in order to highlight the experiences of a specific subpopulation of employees in student service roles in higher education (Belenky, et. al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Sax, 2007; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In choosing to focus on the women's experience in student services in higher education, I have distilled the population group of all individuals who work in that environment to a particular experience of working in a student service role in higher education, and how that experience impacts the individual in their professional and personal interactions (Sax, 2007; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The women selected to participate in this study were amongst the youngest professionals in their institution's student service community. All the women were under the age of 29 years old and as such they are all members of the Millennial Generation, bound by birth years 1982 – the present (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000). Millennial employees purposefully overlap work and personal lives at greater rates than previous generations of employees by building personal friendships at work and by choosing workplaces in which their friends were employed (Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000). Early career women working in student services, like their generational peers,

may not be able to compartmentalize their work and personal lives, and many may not have distinct and different social groups (Aresenault, 2004; Blustein, Kenna, Murphy, DeVoy, & DeWine, 2005). These compounding work and personal interactions (e.g. working on weekends, spending time with coworkers outside of the office, developing close personal relationships with coworkers, utilizing a personal cell phone as a work phone or a work phone as a personal number) change the ways in which employees engage with their work (Arsenault, 2003; Blustein, et. al., 2005; Robbins & Wilner, 2001).

Members of the study population self identified as professionals in student service roles in higher education. Higher education was defined by the researcher as the pursuit of education past the twelfth grade level, conducted in a college or university setting. In this study, the higher education environment was represented by a large, research extensive institution, which serves the needs of a large metropolitan area in the southwestern United States of America (gathered August, 3, 2008 from http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/classifications/).

The category of student service role was the least specifically defined of the population parameters. In student service roles, practitioners assist students to adjust and move through their college experience. Student service positions can include, but are not limited to: academic advisors, residential life community coordinators, program managers and orientation directors. Individuals in these roles have a high volume of contact with students, in the form of in-person consultation, email correspondence or telephone conversations. These positions should be considered full-time, averaging forty or more hours per week and be

contracted employees of the institution (from ACPA / NASPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners, gathered February 14, 2011 from http://www.naspa.org/about/boarddocs/710/comptenencies.pdf).

Student service roles can be found in traditional student affairs divisions, such as residential life or student involvement, or can be found in academic divisions, such as colleges and learning support programs. The latter is a new definition of student service personnel described by Michael Crow, president of Arizona State University, in his *Changing Directions* paper (2002, gathered from www.abor.asu.edu, July 16, 2009). This paper outlined Crow's (2002) vision of the ideal of a 'New American University', one in which student services are situated throughout an institution with many of those positions situated in academic schools and colleges. This school-centric model has re-configured student service roles higher education (Crow, 2002).

Finally, the term 'student services' connotes that the employment roles held by the individual participants were by definition professional (Airini, Collings, Conner, McPherson, Midson & Wilson, 2011; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Hodge, Baxter-Magolda & Haynes, 2009; McHugh-Engstrom, 1999; Morgan, 2006; Tomas, Lavie, del Mar Duran & Guillamon, 2010; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010). The term professional was used to underscore the nature of the position as something to which the individual has the opportunity to expand upon, and to move through, in order to be eligible for advanced level positions in their current organizational structure or in outside organizations in which the learned skills are applicable (Morgan, 2006).

Professional will also be used to indicate positions which require an advanced skill set, developed through master's level education or experience in other positions, which were then utilized at increasing intervals, such as program or personnel management (Morgan, 2006).

Data Collection

Participant identification.

Data collection in qualitative research begins with the selection of the participants (Denizin & Lincoln, 2005). Individuals have different experiences, which shape research outcomes; hence, the selection of the participants must be a deliberate process, with the individuals selected meeting all criteria outlined for the study population (Berg, 2001). Through my professional relationships I was able to make contact with early career women working in student service roles in higher education. This allowed me to choose a purposeful sample in order to control the parameters of the participant sample and boundaries of the research (Cannella & Lincoln, 2007). My criteria were bound whereby the women shared the student service professional community in the same institution. I excluded individuals with whom I have shared my study goals and those to which I have a strong personal relationship. I made this decision to avoid tainting my sample with individuals who may have provided answers that they believed I wanted, rather than answering openly as they would with a researcher whom they did not know (Cannella & Lincoln, 2007). I also utilized my professional network to identify other potential participants to expand the prospective sample in which participants were selected or denied based on set criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Informed consent.

I discussed the basic structure and topic of the research with all prospective participants (Cannella & Lincoln 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). I allowed the women to make a conscious decision about their participation by providing this information up front. Some women self-selected out while others agreed to participate. For the six women who agreed to participate, I provided the Institutional Review Board (IRB) informed consent form (See Appendix A). The IRB form conveyed to the participants their role in the study and my role as the researcher. The IRB form explicitly informed the participant that I would gather stories about the participants' workplace experiences and use these stories to illustrate behaviors or ideas which may potentially put at risk their positions in the institution (Cannella & Lincoln, 2007; Freeman, et. al., 2007; Riessman, 2008).

The participants were provided with an informed consent letter that introduced my dissertation chair and me as primary investigators to the study. Additionally the document addressed the overarching topic of the research and informed the participants of the various levels in which they could take part in the process. The informed consent letter provided the participants information on the expectation of confidentiality to be maintained during the research process, and the means by which data would be recorded (e.g. digital recording device, notes, and transcripts) for the study.

Initially, the research design had intended to include a focus group in addition to individual interviews. Since a focus group would have required the participants to come together in a single location and their identities to be shared

with one another, confidentiality could not be guaranteed, which was indicated in the informed consent document (Cannella & Lincoln, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). Participants could sign the form to indicate they were willing to participate only in the individual interviews or in both the individual interview and the focus group. Participants were told that they would be able to be included in the study if they only indicated they were willing to participate in individual interviews. All participants in the study indicated a willingness to take part in both stages of the study. After meeting with my dissertation committee, it was determined a focus group was not in the best interest of the participants and researcher based on the fragile economic climate, job safety and other potential conflicts of interest.

Population size.

The interview process drove the data collection in this study and thus required a limited population size, or 'n' in order to gather a rich and in depth story of the participant's experiences (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, Riessman, 2008). I utilized an 'n' of six, which allowed me to spend the time to listen and collect details of the individual's experience (Goodson, 2006; Riessman, 2008). The use of a small 'n' was appropriate for the study in that the focus of the data collection was not to use the information for generalizability to the larger population group. The goal of the research was to provide insight into the experiences of the participants and to seek transferability in their stories through rich, thick description of the data collected (Goodson, 2006; Riessman, 2008; Saldana, 2009).

Interview.

I utilized an interview technique common to many forms of qualitative research to gather the participant's stories (Goodson, 2001, 2006; Barone & Eisner, 2007). In the interviews, I asked the participant broad questions on their work experience followed up with focused questions and prompts to clarify a point they made and/or to further understand their experience (Jessop & Penny, 1999; Goodson, 2006; Barone, 2007). The interviews were conducted in a three-month period. The timeframe was intentional in order to control outside events that could shape the participant's work experiences, such as new institutional policies, job changes or significant non-work events (Goodson, 2001; Riessman, 2008).

The structure of the interviews was dialogical, a conversational style which allowed a back and forth interchange between the participant and the author (Jessop & Penny, 1999; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). Dialogical interviews are loosely structured and allow for inquiry to be pursued as it developed over the course of the conversation (Jessop & Penny, 1999). In order to promote a dialogic environment, the interviews were conducted at a time at which and in a location where the participant and I mutually agreed. (Riessman, 2008). These spaces were neutral environments; places where the participants had less of an opportunity to be identified by outside observers. I suggested locations in an area where the participant was a minimum of four miles from the institution where they were employed (Charmaz, 2006; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Riessman, 2008). The locations were shared with the

participants during the screening process to aid their informed decisions regarding their participation. The interview location was used for the first and second interview to provide a consistency of experience with the interview process. By providing location information to the participants at the beginning of the study, I created a research environment where the participant: (1) felt a commitment to knowledge creation in the study, (2) acts as a participant in the data collection process, and (3) felt safe to share their stories (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Pomerantz, 1997).

The initial questions in the first interview were written in a grand tour or guided high-level style (Charmaz, 2006). Grand tour questions were thematic, focused on the overall research topic without driving individuals to a particular answer (Charmaz, 2006; Lincoln & Cannella, 2004; Riessman, 2008). High-level questions were more focused than grand tour questions but continue to allow for the participants to elaborate as they wish on the topic (Lincoln & Cannella, 2004). As the researcher, and primary research tool, it was my responsibility to serve as an interviewer rather than a facilitator. As an interviewer the responsibility was to the data collection, to gather the participant story without interjecting personal opinions or stories. A facilitator engages with the participant by sharing relevant examples from their own experience. I engaged the participants as an interviewer, asked the questions but remained neutral to the participants' answers, which created an environment where the women were free to elaborate on their stories however they felt was appropriate for the inquiry (Charmaz, 2006; Riessman,

2008). The interview questions from the first and second round of data collection are available for review in Appendix B and C respectively.

My questions were intentionally broad and open ended, which allowed the participant to provide an answer that was salient to their experience as early career women in student service roles in higher education (Lincoln & Cannella, 2004). The questions were followed up with clarifying prompts, such as "please elaborate on the point" or "tell me more about your experience" (Lincoln & Cannella, 2004; Riessman, 2008). When one question was exhausted through the participant story, the researcher moved on to other grand tour or guided high-level questions (Lincoln & Cannella, 2004; Charmaz, 2006). This open ended style of questioning allowed for me to gather a detailed story of the participant's experience; one which highlighted the most salient points of their experience as early career women in student service roles in higher education (Goodson, 2006; Riessman, 2008).

I conducted two rounds of interviews with the women during the study. The questions used in the first interview were created from my understanding of the experience of early career women in higher education as derived from literature on the subject. These questions allowed me to create a baseline to see how and if the participant's experience was similar or different to what has been observed in previous studies (Lincoln & Cannella, 2004). The second interview built upon the stories collected in the first meeting (Lincoln & Cannella, 2004). These questions allowed me to clarify emergent themes and to hone in on more specific details of the participant experiences (Riessman, 2008).

The interviews were recorded using a digital audio-recorder and hand written notes I made during the interview process. I asked the participants to begin the interview by telling me about themselves or to describe any changes since the previous interview. This allowed the participants to ease into the interview and to become comfortable with the recording equipment (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Barone, 2007). Each of the interviews lasted between forty-five minutes to two hours dependent upon how much each participant elaborated on the questions presented. At the conclusion of each interview I used hand written memoing as a technique to gather my thoughts on the interview (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). In doing so I was able to collect and organize my thoughts and impressions immediately following the interview with each participant. This process allowed me to compare my initial reactions and recollections of the interviews to the actual data in the transcripts, in order to identify my own biases in the data collection (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Riessman, 2008).

Data Management

I managed the data collected in the study and I was the only person with access to the full transcripts, digital recordings and other forms of discourse. The digital recordings were sent to a transcription service hired to create the written transcripts. Since the transcription service turned data around in 72 hours I was able to spend more time with the final transcript, to identify emerging themes and develop questions for the second interview. Once I received the transcript, I initially checked the written and recorded transcripts to look for inaccuracies.

This initial step ensured that the research was accurate and that the analysis correctly cites the individual stories of the participants (Barone, 2007; Riessman, 2008). In working with the data in this manner I had an opportunity to relive the experience of the interview and to reassess my initial thoughts on the stories (Riessman, 2008). This hands-on process follows in the tradition of other qualitative researchers and further confirms my research methods (Barone, 2007; Riessman, 2008).

All recordings and transcripts containing the true names of my study participants were kept in a secure location. Digital files were recorded onto memory drives which were locked into a file cabinet in my home office. All written records, including copies of the transcripts were also kept in this file system. At no time was the original data set left in public access or uploaded to a shared internet server. The data will be securely stored for as long as needed by the researcher and then destroyed.

Data Analysis

Data coding.

The stories gathered in the data collection process were coded into the themes utilizing In Vivo coding. In Vivo coding is a style in which the words of the participant are used to define the data categories (Saldana, 2009). In the transcripts I looked for words, phrases and elements of the women's stories that seemed to stand out from the other text (Saldana, 2009). These components were brought out of the transcript text and placed side by side with similar components from other participant stories in separate documents. When a series of statements

that were brought together articulated a similar point, the data was gathered together under a broad heading, or code, that was then developed into an emergent theme (Barone, 2007; Riessman, 2008; Saldana, 2009).

Initially I identified 25 themes based upon the stories of the participants. By comparing and contrasting the content of these themes I realized they could be distilled into larger themes, moving from items such as negative supervisor relationships, positive supervisor relationships, and friendships into a larger category of the importance of relationships (Freeman, Anderson & Scotti, 2000; Riessman, 2008; Saldana, 2009). The stories of the participants provided rich data on their experience, but through constant review of the information presented I was able to see broader and shared themes emerge.

Initial themes were confirmed through the stories provided in the second round of interviews. During the transcript coding in the first round I saw large, but divergent, categories into which the stories of the participants fell. In order to collapse or confirm that these areas were important, I returned to the participants to ask for their thoughts on the broad categories through a second round of interviews. It was in that additional information that I was able to decipher relevant themes across the stories of the six participants and which were relevant only to a particular individual.

Once I had identified the themes that were salient to the entire participant group, I reviewed the data set to uncover further examples of these thematic areas. By constant comparative review between the stories of the participants I was able to confirm which of these themes were in fact robust and which could be

collapsed together (Freeman, et. al., 2000; Riessman, 2008; Saldana, 2009). I continually reviewed the transcripts, memos and interview notes to see which pieces of data were most relevant to each theme. Upon feeling that the data was saturated along the themes I was able to bring forth examples from each of the participant that was reflective of the elements presented in the study.

The stories were mined for transferability (Barone, 2007; Saldana, 2009). In looking at the data, I looked for places where the participant stories were similar, where their experiences echoed one another. I was not looking for themes that were generalizable to all women in the age group, just for the places in the stories that were similar to one another and were collectively emphasized by the participants. The participant's stories were transferable to others with a similar experience, but were not reflective of the whole population's experience. By continually reviewing the transcripts I found elements of the stories that were shared amongst the women. Those components were used to refine the themes into the categories presented in chapter 4.

Self-Authorship.

Descriptive framing.

I used the basic underpinning of descriptive analysis to bring the reader into the data, allowing for an integrated experience with the story, an understanding of the experiences of the participants (Freeman, et. al., 2000). Descriptive analysis added a component of context, which embedded the stories into their social and environmental locations. Further, through descriptive analysis, I recognized that the dialogue, while created for the purpose of this

study, was a piece of the greater social network of women in student service roles in higher education (Barone, 2007; Riessman, 2008).

Use of self-authorship.

In addition to presenting the data of the participants, I provide a reflection on my journey toward Self-Authorship, comparing and contrasting my experiences as a woman professional in student services to that of the participants (Baxter-Magolda, 2007; 2008). The process of my own Self-Authorship allowed me to further explore the themes brought forth by the participants in their stories, and it permitted me to reflect with a keen perspective on how and where those experiences can lead (Baxter-Magolda, 2008).

Self-Authorship is an iterative process that requires experiences that push the individual to understand his or her place in the organization that is under study (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). I no longer sit in the same place organizationally as the study participant; as such, I utilized the separation from the population to explore and critique my experiences and professional development (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). Baxter-Magolda (2001; 2007) suggested that to critique one's own experience, an individual must progress past a stage in their life so that they can reflect back upon the experience without blurring the lines between reality and fantasy pictures of that experience. For example, an individual who has not yet left a workplace in which they feel their boss was unsupportive and provides them with no professional development, may not be able to internalize that the time given by that supervisor to complete academic work in fact assisted in their professional development by providing them with tools, context, and goals to take

their next professional step. At this point in my life I can reflect back upon my earlier work experience in student services and integrate Self-Authorship as a tool to describe intrapersonal and interpersonal similarities and differences between my experiences and those of the participants (Baxter-Magolda, 2007).

I described my stories as a woman who has worked through the early career stages of a professional in student services in higher education and now supervising women in their early career stages. Through Self-Authorship, I connected the participant's stories to another work-life experience (e.g. the researcher's story), which has been reflected upon through the lens of time and status in the career field. This comparison of stories, offered additional heft in the data analysis and presentation of the stories (Barone, 2007; Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

Presentation of the stories.

The stories of the participants guided the process of discovering themes, which were presented in chapters 4 and 5, as salient to their experience as early career women professionals in student service roles in higher education. As each story was presented in the text of the transcripts, I focused upon the items that were emphasized in the responses to the prompts. Each participant had her own way of emphasizing a point, either through repeating a story or a portion of a story, referring to an individual situation, person or relationship through different component stories, or by overtly saying that they found a particular component to be important to sense of self as an employee.

These individual stories began to be woven together through both the language that the participants used and the context in which they placed their stories. These shared experiences became the components that were examined to create the emergent themes that are presented in chapter 4 and 5. It was through the presentation of the intra-examined stories of the women that the themes were discovered. The addition of my own stories and experiences as an early career woman in student service roles in higher education in chapter 5 adds an inter-examination of the emergent themes, and an additional dynamic in the understanding of the work place experience of the participants.

Limitations of the Study

This study was bound by the dynamics that shape the participant population. It represents the experience of early career women in student service roles in higher education at one public research extensive institution in a large metropolitan area of the southwestern United States. The experience of individuals at institutions of a different size or type may be different, and therefore the findings may not be applicable to employees at those institutions. The population size was also kept intentionally small, consisting of six women employed at the institution in 2010-2011. Some of the participant's stories were reflective of their experiences in their current role, while others reflected upon stories of their work as undergraduate student workers or as professionals in other organizations. This study does not necessarily reflect the experience of men working in student service roles in higher education, even though the findings

may not be unique to women. Finally, the biases and filters I bring to the study as the researcher impact the interpretations I present in this study.

Introduction to the Participants

It is important for the reader to have a brief understanding of the participants in this study. This introduction to the participants provides the relevant information regarding the individuals as it impacts the study, but does not provide a full profile of the participants. The limited profile was intentional as it serves to protect the women as a thick, rich narrative would expose too many details and may allow the reader to identify the individual participants.

The six women selected for the study represent a range of professional experiences in student service roles in higher education, but all work in the same institution, a large public institution in the American southwest. The departments where the women work include international studies, financial assistance, enrollment management and academic programs and support. Their ages range from 23 to 27 and years of experience range from less than one year in a student service role to five years of experience in student services.

Amber.

Amber was the oldest of the participants in the study at 27. She is married, but other than her partner she has no family in the metro area of her employer. Amber's undergraduate degree was earned at a small private institution in a different state.

Her professional experience includes work at her undergraduate institution, a career in the private business finance sector and her current work in

student services at the participant's employing institution. Amber's experiences with international studies as an undergraduate lead to her current work, providing guidance and support to undergraduate students participating in international programs.

Amber has completed an advanced degree through the institution she works for as a student service professional. Unlike many individuals in student services, Amber's master's degree was a Master's of Business Administration. She chose this path due to her interest in the private business sector, specifically in the financial management of the organization.

Lisa.

Lisa was 26 and is in a long-term and long-distance relationship with her partner. She has no family in the metro area of the institution for which she was employed. She earned her undergraduate degree from a large public state institution similar to her employing institution, but located in a small community.

Lisa's four years of professional experience have been in higher education. Her first professional position was in an academic department at her undergraduate institution, which she left after a year for a position at the participant's employing institution. Her experience in the subject institution has been marked with a rapid rise in professional status, having been promoted twice within her academic department from an entry-level administrative support role to an academic coordinator position where she supervises paraprofessional staff and participates in event planning.

Lisa has also completed a Master's of Education in Higher Education at her employing institution.

Sarah.

Sarah was one of the youngest study participants at age 23. She is married and has extended family that she sees on a monthly basis in a neighboring metro area to the one in which she is employed. She an undergraduate alumnae of the institution for which she now works, and was involved in leadership programs and worked as paraprofessional administrative support for the central administration of student services on the campus.

In Sarah's short professional career she has held two positions in her employing institution. Her first position worked in program planning in the enrollment services division of the institution which she held for a little less than one year. Her employer for her second role was the financial services division of the institution.

Sarah was working toward a Master's in Higher Education from her employing institution.

Nancy.

Nancy was 25 but recently began her career in higher education after havening engaged in a post-undergraduate academic research program. She is in a long-term relationship with her partner. Her extended family resides in a region of the United States different from the one in which the employing institution is located.

Nancy's career in higher education was influenced by her experience as a national scholar at the institution at which she is now employed. As an alumna she is highly connected to administrators throughout the institution. Her professional career in higher education was influenced by her undergraduate academic experience in public affairs. She was employed in her first professional position as an event planner for the enrollment services division.

Nancy was working on a master's degree in public affairs, and has taken coursework with the institutional president as a part of her program of study.

Mary.

Mary was amongst the younger members of the study group at age 24. She is single and her family resides in a metro area in the same state as her employing institution, but she only sees them on major holidays and events.

Mary was in her first professional position, working in the recruitment of prospective students to the institution. Mary was an alumnae of the institution for which she works and also worked for the university as an undergraduate. Her paraprofessional employment shaped her undergraduate experience. She entered student service as an extension of the positive work experiences that shaped her undergraduate career.

She was near the completion of a Master's degree in Higher Education from her employing institution.

Denise.

Denise was 25, single and does not have family in the state in which she resides for work. She is not an alumnae of the institution for which she works,

having earned her bachelor's and master's degrees at a medium sized public institution in a neighboring state.

Denise began her work in student services at the institution in which she completed her bachelors. The experience was unusual in that she was hired as a full time staff member before completing her undergraduate degree, which requires a special hiring status from the institution. She was employed in that role at the institution for 2 years.

She has been working in her current role at the subject institution for a one year, as a member of the first year student recruitment team in the enrollment management area of the subject institution.

Table 1. *Overview of participant information.*

	Amber	Lisa	Sarah	Nancy	Mary	Denise
Age	27	26	24	25	24	25
Relationship Status	Married	Long term / long distance	Married	Long term	Single	Single
Alumnae of subject institution	Yes – Masters only	Yes – Masters only	Yes – Bachelors	Yes – Bachelors	Yes – Bachelors	No
Master's Degree	MBA Complete	M.Ed. Complete	M.Ed. in progress	M.A. in progress	M.Ed. in progress	M.A. complete
Years of Experience	5	4	2	Less than 1	2	3
Number of professional positions since undergraduate gradation	3 – 2 in student services at 2 different institutions 1 in the private sector	4 – all in student services, 3 in the same department	2 – all in student services, 2 different departments of the same institution	Less than 1 – in student services	1 – in student services	2 – in student services at 2 different institutions

Summary

The research conducted in this study exposes the work experience of early career women in student service roles in higher education. The methods used to uncover these stories were based in qualitative research, specifically utilizing the framework of the Self-Authorship model to come to understand how the women make sense of their self and their relationships with others in the workplace (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). Through dialogic interviews data was collected as stories of the women's experience in student services (Kamberelis & Demetrius, 2005). The data was coded utilizing In Vivo methods and the analyzed using descriptive framing and the framework of the Self-Authorship model (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Tan, 2009).

Chapters 4 and 5 will present the findings of this study. In Chapter 4, the themes uncovered will be presented in context of the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of Self-Authorship as identified as themes from participants stories. This provides the reader with an opportunity to hear the women's voices through their stories as presented and to see the dynamics they have identified as impacting their work experience in higher education. Chapter 5 provides the reader with examples of the author's own stories of work in student service roles in higher education, providing a reflective view on the themes developed from the dynamics of the author's journey. This was presented as both a story of building toward Self-Authorship along the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions along and a reflection on how those experiences were utilized by the author in my role as a manager in student services.

CHAPTER 4

THE WORK EXPERIENCE

The participants in this study provided through their responses to interview questions a picture of the work experience of early career women in student service roles in higher education. The women described in their stories the internal and external workplace dynamics that impact their day-to-day experience in student service roles. Throughout their stories, emergent evidence was presented that the women were conscious of how these dynamics shaped their work experience. The participants were aware of who they were in their work role and defined how they chose to work with others as demonstrated in the stories provided in the interviews.

The workplace dynamics that impacted the experiences of the participants are conceptualized in two broad categories, *Internal* and *External Dynamics at Work*. *Internal Dynamics at Work* are items to which the participants recognized that they had an immediate control over, and responsibility for, how these items shaped their work experience. *External Dynamics at Work* are items for which the participants felt others were the genesis for the direction of their work experience, and/or those to which they needed to work with others to achieve workplace outcomes.

These two broad categories align with the *Intrapersonal* and *Interpersonal* dimension of Baxter-Magolda's (2001) model of Self-Authorship. The category derived as internal dynamics at work are items which spoke to the participants understanding of self in the workplace; the intrapersonal dimension of their

journey toward Self-Authorship (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). Similarly, the category presented as external dynamics at work are those themes that describe the impact others have on shaping the individual's identity in the workplace, the interpersonal dimension of Self-Authorship (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). The participants further defined *Internal Dynamics at Work* as defining self through work and being challenged by tasks. *External Dynamics at Work* are evident in the participants' stories in their description of the relationship they had with their supervisors and connection with members of the institutional community.

Internal Dynamics at Work – Intrapersonal Journey to Self-Authorship

The participant stories spoke to the day-to-day experience of working in a student service role in higher education. Specifically, participants spoke to how they were responsible for creating their work, and how they participated in shaping their career path. The themes presented in the category *Internal Dynamics at Work* illustrate the women's role in building their sense of self in their journey toward Self-Authorship in the intrapersonal dimension.

Sense of self as a student service practitioner.

The women in the study spoke to their perceived connection to their work environment. Across the stories, the participants talked about how they felt that they were shaped through their experience of becoming a student service practitioner and through the tasks that challenged their skills. Many of the participants described their feelings toward their work as love for what they do based upon the passion they felt for their work. The women's connection to the

tasks and assignments of their work environment allowed for them to uncover their professional sense of self.

Sense of self as a first time professional.

The workplace of student services in higher education was an environment purposefully selected by the women in this study. Amber, Lisa, Sarah, Nancy, Mary and Denise, each found their way into their roles as student service practitioners because they felt a connection to the work. They held positions as undergraduate student workers in student service departments, like Amber, who worked for international studies, Lisa who worked as an office assistant in a faculty support center, Sarah, who worked for the vice president of student service's office, Nancy, who worked as a part of an undergraduate entrepreneurship program, Mary, who worked as an peer to peer recruiter, and Denise, who worked with students through their transition to college, positions which exposed them to the professional options available to them in student services. This exposure to student services as undergraduate students influenced the women to pursue careers in higher education upon graduation.

All of the women began their professional career working at their undergraduate institution. For Amber, Lisa and Denise these first professional positions were in roles similar to those they held as undergraduate college student workers, but with greater responsibility for the associated outcomes expected from a professional employee. Sarah, Nancy and Mary also began their professional careers working for their undergraduate institutions, but not in the departments for which they worked as students.

The women saw their first positions as a chance to learn professional competencies, such as event programming, counseling student organizations and working with individuals to help them navigate institutional processes. Amber, Lisa, Sarah and Denise chose to begin their career in student services at their undergraduate institution because they felt they would be able to build their professional competencies quickly in an environment in which they were comfortable. Nancy and Mary also entered student services at their undergraduate institution, because they felt comfortable in the role, but they also saw that the work environment would support them through the completion of their graduate coursework. Lisa expressed how the experience in her first role showed her what to expect from work from the student services. In the position she found herself working "at the school of nursing at [my undergraduate institution], which kind of gave me an idea of what it would be like to work in higher education. And so when I made the decision to move to [the state of her current employer], I knew I only wanted to work in higher education". Denise was brought into her first position by her undergraduate student worker supervisor due to a need to fill a particular role that was vacant in the department "I was a transfer orientation coordinator at [my undergraduate institution]. I did that temporarily to help out – kind of to help out my old boss, [since] [t]hey had lost their transfer coordinator".

The women learned that they gained a sense of personal fulfillment through work experiences in student service roles. Amber articulated this sense of fulfillment in the work: "I have to feel like I'm making a difference, and I have to feel like I'm contributing, so being able to decide what those needs are and then

fill them directly makes me feel like I'm being useful". This was a personal connection to the work that was echoed in Lisa, Sarah, Nancy, Mary and Denise's stories. For Lisa, the personal connection was about loving what she does at work; "I do really enjoy the work that I do. I never thought that I wanted to [serve in my current role in higher education] but now doing [the work] and kind of like being within higher education, I feel connected [to the work] because I love it". The work became a part of the women's sense of self and through it they author their experience as an employee who feels connected to the work of student services in higher education.

Their first positions showed them that there were many ways to engage in professional development. Amber, Lisa, Sarah, and Denise have all held multiple positions in student services. Nancy and Mary were in their first positions in the field, but Nancy was looking for other positions and Mary has begun to consider her professional options and what her next steps would be. Amber talked about how she left her first position to take on a new challenge in her work,

> Going to work at the place that I had just completed my undergraduate; while I think it was great experience for me, I kind of wanted to get out of that [position] and do a departure from [the work], because I felt like maybe I wasn't challenging myself enough, and… [it was] kind of an easy fit, versus me taking a risk and doing something differently.

This next step in Amber's professional experience gave her a chance to explore the direction her career could take. Mary had thought about a career change as well, but had concerns and asked

> Am I going to like [a new position] as much [as my current position] if I have more challenges in it? … I want to move up, but I don't know how I want to move up… it's more about how do I get a broad skills experience so I can be more adaptable.

Her first position has showed her that she wanted to be engaged in her career and wants to advance as a professional in student services.

A future career in student services roles in higher education was important to Amber, Lisa, Sarah, Nancy, Mary and Denise. They want to explore what other positions were available to them as a professional in student services to see how they could make an impact in their work. For Amber, to make the transition to a new position was about applying her skills to her work place; "I have a really unique skill set, but I don't know how that fits within the context of what's out there". Amber expressed her desire to make an impact on her department by evaluating opportunities to make operational changes, "people become so bogged down in what it is that they have to do every day that there isn't someone there to do the big picture, and I think that's the role that I fill is to come in and go, you know, we could do be doing this better". Lisa feels that while her current job was a good fit, she "want[s] to do more; and I don't know what that looks like. I don't know what I want to do, and so I kind of figure by kind of testing the waters, I can definitely see what else is out there". Amber and Lisa have a strong assessment

of their skills, and want the work that they do to reflect that sense of self. Sarah sees her chance to make an impact in her department by assisting her supervisor. "I always try and offer to assist with anything that I can to try and take some off of her load." This assistance also provided Sarah with experience, "that will give me a broader depth of what I can expect if I ever want to move up within the office." For these women, making an impact was about giving back to their department, making changes, and building skills. Nancy shared this sentiment and stated that; "I am an innovative thinker… I want to apply my complex systems thinking to my job. I want to optimize our resources. I want to think critically about what I'm doing on a day to day basis". Nancy has applied to a new position that "would be a more intellectually stimulating job, because I'd be researching; it's not prescribed. I'd be drawing from a different skill set. One that's … drawing from more [of my] knowledge".

Mary and Denise described their connection to work in student services and how they wanted to apply that work to their future career. Both women felt that work needed to be a place you loved to go to, a place where you use your skills and you care about the perception of your abilities by others. For Mary, "You want to go to work because you love it, and therefore it has to be something that you're good at and that you generally care about how people think you do that job". Denise saw student service work was a reflection of who she was, and the effort put into work as a direct reflection of how she wants to be viewed by others in the field. Denise derived her sense of self from her work

> You set the way and tone that you want your work to represent. You're clearly reflected in your work because if you aren't meeting those goals then what about you do you need to change in order to do so? How do you need to change the variables that are in your environment in order to meet the goal that you set for yourself? … I don't want to fail. I don't want to not do the best that I can do. … It also comes from if you don't have pride in your work, and you don't care about your work or what you're doing, you're not going to have the same results as if you were to treat it if it was your own. I mean yes, work is work, life is life. But at the same time you have to be willing to go the extra mile.

Work style as new practitioners in student services.

The women chose their career in student services because they felt a personal commitment and connection to the work. Due to this commitment, Amber, Lisa, Sarah, Nancy, Mary and Denise hold themselves to a self-imposed standard for their performance on assigned tasks. In doing so they felt better equipped to contribute to their departments. This made the women feel more satisfied in the outcomes of their work. Amber discussed how her commitment to her work made her feel good about her professional role; "It makes me happy when things go well… I think that helps me in my sense of fulfillment, that when that goes well, then I'm doing a good job and I'm contributing". Lisa sets standards to demonstrate her abilities to others. She talked about how she has felt like she has "something to prove because I want to do more. Like I want to take

on more responsibilities… I want to grow and see what else is out there. I want to take on as much as I can".

Setting standards highlighted the ways in which the women perform their work tasks. Sarah exceeded the expectations of her supervisor through self-imposed standard of her work. She stated, "I try to achieve whatever is put on my plate. … You have to do your best and you cannot do anything but your best; that has always stuck with me." Sarah, like Amber, Lisa, Nancy, Mary and Denise, knows that her standards assisted her in reaching the outcomes of her work. When Sarah does not met her expected standards she felt disappointment in herself.

> I always want to be the best that I can. I always want to succeed and I do take into account how other people view me and my work and that really affects me. If someone comes to me and they have some sort of complaint or they see that I am not doing a great job in maybe managing my staff then I take the comments personally [as a reflection of my work]

Nancy, Mary and Denise, each expanded upon this sentiment through an indication that when their workplace did not provide the conditions through which they could perform to their self-imposed standards they felt disconnected from the tasks of their position. Nancy talked about how difficult it was to realize that she was not able to work to her personal standard in her position,

> I am a hard worker; I'm the kind of person who's going to keep asking for things to do. But now I'm at a point of tradeoffs, so I'm

> optimizing [by choosing the tasks I take on] and it feels almost wrong.

Amber, Lisa, Sarah, Nancy, Mary and Denise wanted to be in positions where they could continually push themselves to learn new skills in their roles (e.g. adding new of different types of responsibilities to their duties) in order to meet their personal performance standards. Mary has concerns about what would happen if her standards slip. She, like the other women, wanted to demonstrate her connection to the work; "You have to have more invested in it for it to be worth the low pay and the long hours and all of that… [if not] you lack the believability because you don't really believe what you're saying". Denise expressed a need to set her own standards in her work so that she can be rewarded in the outcomes and be better prepared for her role.

> I think that it's always setting the bar a little bit higher than you think you can accomplish or than you think somebody else can accomplish. Because if you set the bar higher people are more likely to try and raise or elevate themselves to meet that goal. I think it's taking a step back, thinking about what I would want from somebody else, putting that into my own life, and then also knowing that I'm always wanting to be a step ahead of where I should be is also a great way to set that expectation.

Setting standards was important for the women; it reinforced their choice to become a student service practitioner. Denise expressed this idea by stating; "I think that you have to take a little bit of how you build yourself and how you

build your character and your personality and the job that you do". This manifests in a level of increased diligence for their performance standards, a personal connection to the work and a thoughtfulness regarding their career as demonstrated when they surround themselves with colleagues who keep them on task. Denise spoke about staying connected to the work was a key to her success as a student service practitioner,

> You can't let yourself get sucked in by those who are comfortable and those that are just fine doing what they have been doing. You have to continue to surround yourself by people that have similar goals and similar expectations to what you have. If you start to step back and you step into that other side, then I think you kind of let your goals slip.

Building blocks to future positions in student services.

Each participant indicated that their current position was a step in their professional career in student services in higher education. In order to continue in their professional development, Amber, Lisa, Sarah, Nancy, Mary and Denise expressed a need to feel challenged by their work. They look for tasks that both matched their current abilities and gave them an opportunity to develop new skills. The women shared stories of how they became confident in their abilities and figured out how to build professional skills (e.g. program planning, student leadership development, management). For, Amber, Sarah and Lisa, challenge in work was about taking on additional tasks within their current position, while for Nancy, Mary and Denise, it was about finding ways to be more engaged in

professional positions by working on more meaningful tasks in order to avoid frustration and boredom.

The women saw their current positions as stepping-stones to further career advancement in student services. Amber talked about how she felt that she needed to apply learned skills as she built her professional cache, “I like what I’m doing, but in order to make it sustainable, I have to pitch some way for me to help out in the business office and use these skills and the accounting that I have and help out.” As Lisa states “I realized that I was — not to brag, but I felt like I was pretty good at what I was doing [in my position], and I thought that I could do more”. Lisa goes on to talk about how took on new responsibilities in order to be happier at work, and how those experiences have helped her to discover career options. “It’s also fun to take on those additional responsibilities… I’d rather take on additional responsibilities, and kind of use those as an opportunity to find out what else there is for me”.

Sarah saw the tasks associated with her position as a series of opportunities to learn skills that will be applicable later in her career. She, like both Amber and Lisa, sought out additional responsibilities to feel more challenged in her work and to be prepared for future positions in higher education. Sarah articulated this feeling in stating, “I feel like I’m constantly wanting to learn. I want to be challenged…I always try and offer to assist with anything that I can to try and take some [workload off of my supervisor], and that will give me a broader depth of what I can expect if I ever want to move up within the office”. For all three women, the desire for challenge in the work was about the ability to

advance their skill set in order to be better prepared for other roles in student services.

The women expressed frustration and boredom when they did not feel as though they were challenged by the work. They understood that there were periods when the workload would be busy and periods when it would be slow, but they expressed a desire to be given new tasks that refreshed their daily work experience. Nancy, Mary and Denise spoke on the need to build on their skills through opportunities in their current position. The women wanted a breadth of tasks at work so they can feel challenged by their assignments and to be utilized for their skills. Nancy wanted more to do, and has asked for additional responsibilities but had not received them. She made tradeoffs at work and talked about: "doing a better job of more thoroughly weighing the cost and benefits of how I'm not really trying to impress my bosses, I'm not really trying to go anywhere, I'm just accepting that there's nowhere to go". Nancy, Mary and Denise also mention that their time at work was filled with tasks that appeared to be disconnected from the primary work of the position. These assignments were seemingly provided to occupy their time rather than to provide skills that would aid in professional development. Nancy expressed a feeling that she was; "under employed; … it's hard to be like, "Oh, I love stuffing envelopes. It's like my favorite part." Mary goes on to elaborate on Nancy's point, and spoke about the cycle of the work in her current role, "When I feel like I'm busy and I have a lot of tasks, I feel like I'm being utilized. But there are times…when we do have a lot of downtime and I feel like some of the tasks we're given are pointless, or

filler, or unrealistic". The women want to work on tasks they deem to be professional, skilled work that allowed them to utilize the professional abilities that they have learned as early career women in student services roles in higher education. Mary states directly that; "I want to be professional. I want to be respected for what I do". She wants to showcase her skills and take on additional responsibilities. For Denise this was expressed through her knowledge that she could take on more in her work if only she was provided the training needed to complete more advanced tasks. "I think that we're under utilized in the information that we can know and knowledge that we can take… there are plenty of other things that we could take on". The women have a good sense of their abilities and limitations, and look for the opportunity to challenge themselves through work tasks.

External Dynamics at Work – Interpersonal journey to Self-Authorship

While the participants have advanced thorough the journey toward Self-Authorship in the intrapersonal dimension via internal dynamics at work they also spoke to the importance of external dynamics in their work environment. These dynamics represent the interpersonal dimension of Self-Authorship or how the women define themselves in the context of others in their workplace. External dynamics at work affected the women's satisfaction with their work environment, which in turn caused a reevaluation of their career choice as a professional in student services in higher education. This element of the women's experience was reflected in stories about their relationships with their supervisors and others members of their institutional community.

Relationship with her supervisor.

The participants identified that the relationship with their supervisor was one of the most important external dynamics that impacted their work experience. They defined a supervisor as both the person to whom they report and as the other individuals in higher-ranking positions who influenced their work. Lisa expressed only positive elements of her relationship with her supervisor, Nancy spoke only to negative elements of this relationship, and Amber, Sarah, Mary and Denise each expressed both positive and negative elements of the relationship with their supervisor dependent upon the particular context of their work. The relationship between a woman and her supervisor was discussed in every interview, and whether that relationship was defined as positive or negative it was an external dynamic that shaped their work.

Amber, Sarah, Mary and Denise each talked about the complex relationship they have with their supervisor. They described the relationship with their supervisor as it helped them to define their self in context of others at work through their positive and negative interactions. This dualistic relationship was the most common experience of the relationship between the supervisor and the participants. Lisa, whose relationship with her supervisor was positive, talks about how she models her behaviors and actions after those of their supervisor, and uses the example to build her own style in working with others. Nancy's relationship with her supervisor was built in negative interactions, and has helped her to build her sense of self when working with others; in showing her ways in which she does not want to interact with the people with whom she works.

Amber, Lisa, Sarah, Mary and Denise spoke to their need for trust in their relationship with their supervisor. Nancy also wanted this trusting relationship, but felt it could not be built because her interactions with her supervisor were internalized as negative. The women felt that they must be able share ideas with their supervisor. The participants expressed that they needed to feel as though they would receive honest and open feedback regarding those ideas and guidance on how to move forward with their plans. This support allowed the women to challenge themselves to build new skills to apply to their work in student services. Sarah talked about how she felt that her supervisor was supportive of her as a new professional

> My supervisor …She has an open communication, open door policy…if you have any questions or if you ever need anything, you can always come to me and talk to me in private and whatever's said in the office will not leave the office... We have a really good relationship.

The trust between supervisor and staff allowed the women to feel that while they may make mistakes, those mistakes will be met with words of encouragement and that they would serve as opportunities for learning how to be a better student service practitioner. For Denise, trust comes from the time spent by the supervisor to "get to know your employee. Get to know the goals that your employee has set for themselves." In doing so, a supervisor can learn how best to provide support and professional development for early career women in student services roles in higher education.

Each of the participants, with the exception of Nancy, spoke to at least some positive interactions with their supervisor. These positive experiences have helped Amber, Lisa, Sarah, Mary and Denise, to learn how to be a professional in student services roles in higher education. Amber's supervisor recognizes her abilities and pushes her growth as a professional, "[My supervisor] challenges me a … to present to the [work related professional] conference … it's hard because that's just not my natural inclination, but she knows professionally that that would be good for me". Lisa, like Amber commented on her supervisor's "ability to encourage me in areas that she sees my strengths. I feel like she's a good manager because of that. She knows that she saw certain strengths and she kind of tried to encourage the growth in those strengths". Lisa's supervisor gave her the praise she needed in order to feel successful in her position. The women appreciated when their supervisor openly recognized them as a contributing individual to their organization, which in turn provided them with confidence in their abilities. For Mary, her supervisor has made a conscious effort to let her know exactly how valuable her skills were to the organization through comments about her potential for future career advancement in student services

> My supervisor [has] always said "let me know what you're interested in, let me help you so that you can be more marketable. So that you could move up. If there's something you're interested in, talk to us about it so that maybe we can put you into that area… Let's see if we can work it out for you so that we can give you

> specific tasks and responsibilities that will make you more marketable for a higher job title."

When supervisors recognized a participant's abilities the women felt that it helped teach them who they were in the workplace and that it allowed them to meet their career goals.

Lisa's story only demonstrated positive interactions with her supervisor. She has been in an extraordinary position with support from her supervisor, which allowed her to demonstrate her skills and, as a reward, she was allowed to move into an advanced professional position within her current department. Lisa's supervisor has given her space and opportunity to contribute to the organization in a meaningful way, the chance to succeed as a new professional. As Lisa presented her experiences she spoke to how it represented an ideal supervisor to staff relationship. She acknowledges that her supervisor recognized her strengths and allowed her to utilize them at work,

> My supervisor looks at my strengths and she says… I think you're good at this. And I think that she kind of tries to assist me in taking on those roles and responsibilities. I really appreciate my supervisor's ability to encourage me in areas that she sees my strengths. I feel like she's a good manager because of that. She knows that she saw certain strengths and she kind of tried to encourage the growth in those strengths

Lisa's supervisor provided opportunities for growth that allowed her to make a contribution to the office and to develop professional skills. Lisa has been

presented an opportunity as provided by her supervisor to effect business operations, “I don’t want to just be like, oh you give me this task and I’ll do it or whatever. I want to critically think about it, and I want to kind of say is this the right way we should be doing [this business process]”. These interactions in her supervisor relationship demonstrated to Lisa that her individual contribution was of value to her workplace. Her voice was heard and valued by those in positions of power within the organization, as was reinforced by her supervisor’s support. This acknowledgement of her skills and abilities allowed Lisa to know she was critical to the department infrastructure, which in turn led to her know that she was irreplaceable, and that she was respected for her ability to critically analyze the processes of her work.

Nancy, who had a negative relationship with her supervisor, felt stifled by their interactions, unrecognized for her abilities and underutilized in the types of tasks she was assigned. She spoke about wanting to be recognized as an individual, someone who was recognized for their specific skills that would contribute to departmental goals. As she sates “I’m completely underutilized. I don't think that there is any leader in my department who has taken the time to even consider what my strengths might be and how they would be best optimized”. Nancy expressed how she wanted to feel valued for her contribution to the department through the production of work that was both meaningful and challenges her skills and abilities. The desire to be recognized for her contribution has made Nancy evaluate who she was in the workplace and how she

can be an individual in her work. Nancy looks for straightforward recognition from her supervisors, validation of her individual contribution to the department.

> The only recognition I would like is … that somebody who has control over how my time is spent is taking the time to even consider my strengths and weaknesses, even taking the time to consider what I've done well and what I haven't

Nancy wants her supervisors to communicate to her that she serves a specific and meaningful role in the department, and does not just occupy an office. As in the experiences of the Amber, Lisa, Sarah, Mary and Denise, communication is a key facet of the supervisor to staff relationship. It allows the specific employee to know that when they apply their skills to their work, it was an effective use of their time, and through communication they were validated for their individual impact to their workplace.

The negative elements of the supervisor to employee relationship were often more tempered than that expressed by Nancy. Amber, Sarah, Mary and Denise express that even when they feel underutilized, that it was not about them specifically, but the fact that their status in the institution impacts the relationship they were able to build with their supervisor. Amber was frustrated by the bureaucracy of the organization and how it has impacted her ability to move forward in her career, which in turn impacted her relationship with her supervisor;

> I am frustrated on a daily basis with how long anything takes to get done. I mean — it took six, seven months for me to be promoted, but you're doing the work kind of already. And there's even a time

where it's like okay, are you just telling me this so that I stay on and continue to do this work and you don't lose me?

Sarah too saw where the organization did a disservice to her as an individual, and notes that there were environments in the organization which were not set up to support employees "When I worked in [my previous office], I did notice that there's a lot of turnover…I just felt like I got burned out…Just you get tired, and I felt like there wasn't a lot of support there." Like Amber, Sarah spoke to the organizational dynamics that impact her relationship with her supervisor.

Nancy and Mary acknowledged that their relationship with their supervisor has been shaped by the nature of their interactions. Nancy had concerns that her supervisors did not care who served in the professional role she occupied in the institution, and that they did not see her individual contribution to the department. She did not see clear reasoning or thought put into the decisions regarding her work;

> There doesn't seem to be much rhyme or reason to certain decisions and certain assertions of authority and power; or even why the person that is asserting that power or authority over you; like the reasoning behind that. Like — it's been thought out. Like I feel like it would be easier if I felt like the people that were in those positions telling me what to do, if I respected; that it was coming from a thoughtful, educated, place

For Mary, the nature of her relationship with her supervisor was often tainted by the tone in which he provided her with feedback. She often did not feel

that he treated her as an individual, or even in a professional manner, rather "Sometimes he talks to me as if I was a child. He scolds me like I was a child, which really gets me upset, but I'm not good with confrontation. If I get scolded I kind of shut down, and even if I know it's unfair I don't have the words to fight back." Mary, like Amber, Nancy, Sarah and Denise, wanted to be treated in a professional manner. She wants feedback to assist her in her professional development, but also expected for this feedback come in an appropriate tone. Denise articulated what she needs from a supervisor in terms of the feedback provided regarding her performance as an early career professional in student services. For her a supervisor should provide guidance through feedback, not only on work done well, but also in what can be done to improve. For Denise, "Continuously not getting I guess constructive criticism or criticism at all so to speak, you just kind of feel like well, what am I doing? Why am I doing this? Why am I working so hard for something that nobody else seems to care about?" Denise wanted a supervisor who could provide her with feedback that would help her performance as an early career woman in a student service role in higher education.

Recognition for work.

Lisa, Nancy, Mary, Sarah and Denise spoke about their need for verbal and written forms of recognition of their contribution from their supervisor. While Amber did not specifically speak about the need for feedback and recognition, she alluded to it through her stories of interactions with her supervisor and the way she felt supported in her work. Since there were not many

tangible ways of recognizing or validating an individual's contribution to the work environment (e.g. salary increases or a move into a more desirable office) these comments from a supervisor were extremely important to the women. For Lisa, her most valued form of recognition comes when her supervisor turned to her as an expert in her work tasks; "it is nice to be considered kind of an expert in an area. And it makes you feel needed and valued and wanted". Mary spoke about the importance of this validation from her supervisors, "I think there does need to be recognition and praise … there aren't raises just for doing a good job … a lot of your incentive is verbal praise or is some maybe intangible benefit or non-monetary benefit that you can get". The participants understood that student services was not a career path in which monetary incentives were plentiful, nor were they necessarily motivated by those types of performance based incentives. Instead, the women looked for non-tangible recognition. This comes in the form of praise that indicated their contributions have made a difference to by the department, such as a public thank you in a staff meeting, emails or phone calls from upper administrators which recognized their work or a supervisor taking the time to say how much they appreciated what they did for the department.

The participants want to give their best to their departments; they want to be recognized for their work, and for their individual contribution to the department. For Nancy, this recognition is simple and straightforward.

> The only recognition I would like is, it really comes down to these basics, that leadership decision that, that, first of all, that I do have

> any utility, to just even think about it. That's the only kind of recognition [I want] … interpersonal recognition.

Mary and Denise continued to discuss this feeling of frustration in that they often felt that the only recognition for their work was to be given more work, without being recognized for their outstanding contributions. For Mary, these additional assignments were often provided with little notice and were given as directives. She did not mind helping out in the office, but "I'd be much more happy to do the task you asked me to do if you would compliment me on the task I just completed instead of just assuming it would be there." Mary wanted to be recognized for her individual contribution and for the times in which she went above and beyond for the department. Denise too felt frustrated that her supervisor recognized her positive performance outcomes on her work tasks through tasking her with additional work instead of validating her contribution. Often these work assignments were tasks that were not completed by colleagues, which made the women feel as though they were being penalized for completing their own assignments. Denise shared this frustration when the reward she earned for doing good work was being assigned more work by her supervisor, without praise for the contribution she had just made to the department.

> You can bust your butt and bust your butt and bust your butt and do what you need to do to get your job done, but in the end there is no reward or praise. And it's not that I think you should be looking for reward or praise – if you are doing your job, you should be doing your job and doing it well. But at the same time, like it's

> really easy to get burned-out in this position because you just continue to go and go and go and then the reward is, "Oh congratulations, you've done all your work. Here is somebody else's work that didn't do their work".

Being consistently given additional work by supervisors, without recognition, took an emotional toll on the women, which caused them to evaluate their commitment to the department. This had led the women to feel that they were over used, burnt-out by the work of their current position. Sarah was so overwhelmed by the feeling of being over used in her first professional position that she sought a new opportunity in a different department in which she perceived a better fit for her skill set and her needs from a supervisor relationship. In Sarah's experience the overuse was caused by the nature of her work assignments and the expectations on her time placed upon her by her supervisor. "With my position I did work a lot of long hours, and wasn't compensated for it… It was pretty flexible if I wanted to come in a little bit late, or leave early on some days. But it wasn't—it didn't add up to the number of hours that I worked within that workweek". She was constantly asked to put in additional time through late nights and weekends, but without recognition for that exceptional contribution, since her supervisor saw it as a part of her positional responsibilities. The lack of recognition from her supervisor for the time she put into work caused Sarah to change positions into a department in which she felt the supervisor would better acknowledge her workplace contributions. The women want to know that

supervisors recognize the work they put into their assignments, validating their work as student service practitioners in higher education.

Mary and Denise also expressed their concern about the professional performance standards they were held to in comparison to their peers. They perceived that when they do not meet their supervisor's expectations the repercussion for that lack of action was greater than that which would occur for colleagues for whom the expectations were not as high. Mary knows that there was a benefit and a drawback in her supervisor recognition of her as a talented employee,

> I look for a boss saying, I hold you to high standards because I expect more from you. Again, it's a blessing and a curse. I appreciate that, and at the same time I do sometimes get feelings of, well, that's unfair, don't treat me differently or don't get after me about little things I do more than others because you see this potential in me.

Feedback was indicated to be the way in which a supervisor could share their experiential knowledge with an employee. Denise, like Mary, wanted a supervisor who recognized her as an individual and provided her with consistent opportunities to improve performance,

> The reason that person is your supervisor is to share with you what they've learned. And I think in a lot of cases that's what it is. To share with you maybe what you're not doing so well. How you can improve upon it, and there's things that you're doing really well—

being able to point them out. If you have a relationship that's nonexistent with somebody, then you're not going to build as a person professionally or personally

The women wanted to learn from their supervisor about what it meant to be a student service practitioner, to have someone who would help them to grow as new professionals in the field, and to have a supervisor who was going to help them meet their career goals.

The relationship with their supervisor was an external dynamic at work that impacted the career path of early career women in student service roles in higher education. It was through this relationship that the women built upon their sense of self in the workplace, defining who they were in context of those with whom they work. As they gained an understanding of their role in these relationships they were advancing through the interpersonal dimension of their journey toward Self-Authorship.

Connection with members of the institutional community.

Amber, Lisa, Nancy, Mary and Denise each spoke on the importance of having found a community amongst their colleagues. Sarah did not address her need to build community amongst her colleagues, but did talk about how those individuals impacted her work by helping her to stay focused on her assignments. Colleagues recognized a woman's abilities by asking for help on a task and provided validation to the individual through recognition of their skills. The participants looked for compliments and kudos, being noticed for a job well done or providing excellent service by members of their institutional community. As

Amber says, “I have a lot of ambition, and so I really do feel like I need to be climbing a lot, and I like to be recognized. I like to feel like people value me”.

Workplace relationships have eased the participant’s transition to work, and make their day to day experiences not only more positive, but also more productive. Positive relationships with colleagues eased pathways for productivity by building the trust and rapport needed by the women to be efficient and effective in their work. Without the colleagues with whom they have these connections they would not be able to achieve the goals of their personal and professional agenda. Amber and Lisa both spoke openly about how they felt that their colleagues made their work easier. For Amber,

> I think that having healthy work relationships makes everything a lot easier for everybody, for your personal agenda that you want to get accomplished in work, like you having a good rapport with the people that you work with is one of the most important things to achieve what you want to achieve, because people will respect you more, and they’ll listen to you more, and they’ll really take your advice if they respect you.

Lisa went on to echo this sentiment, that colleague relationships were more than just ways in which the women built bonds in the workplace; it helped them to feel acknowledged for their individual contributions. Colleagues often showed to the women that they are a high performer or major contributor in their workplace. Their institutional network utilized the women as content experts, and as Lisa states, this made them feel empowered in the workplace.

> You always want to be an expert on something, don't you? I know I can't be good at everything. I can't remember it all, but it is nice to be considered kind of an expert in an area. And it makes you feel needed and valued and wanted. And it's nice to have that from your supervisor and your peers at kind of all levels…It's been really really nice. I do like it a lot.

Mary also sought opportunities to show that she was in expert in her work. She sees it as a way not only to show her value to the organization but also to be a good colleague,

> I do appreciate being turned to. … I'm definitely one of those people that likes having the information that other people are looking for, which is what makes me good at my job, but also, I think, makes me a good coworker is that I'm always happy to answer questions or explain things or agree or talk things out with people

Connection to their colleagues gives Amber, Lisa, Nancy, Mary and Denise a network of support within their institutional community. Again, Sarah did not address this network of support, but she did talk about her experience as building relationships with colleagues that were personal as well as professional, having lunch with friends with whom that relationship was built at work. This blurs the professional and personal boundaries of the women's lives. Lisa's colleagues were her favorite part of her work. She, "really, really take[s] a lot of joy in working with people that I really connect with, and also that I can just go in

[to work] and have fun". These relationships are important, as they not only provided personal connections, they allowed for the women to take care of their personal well being. The women shared with their colleagues personal details of their lives, having built friendships that were strong enough to exist both inside and outside of the workplace. The relationships built with their colleagues allowed the participants to tend to their mental health by bringing joy to their daily work.

Work in a team setting has helped Amber, Lisa, Nancy, Mary and Denise to build their work relationships. These teams were not defined solely by the confines of their current department. These teams extend to individuals with whom they have worked in the past, and to others in their institutional community with whom they have collaborated on work tasks. Mary knows she has built lasting relationships with colleagues in previous departments since **"**old colleagues and old bosses that still include me on … an event that's kind of more centered to their employees". In inviting her to participate they showed her that she was valued as a person and as a professional colleague. This validated her experiences and sense of self as it relates to others, as colleagues recognized her for her contributions to the workplace. Sometimes these relationships between the women and their colleagues come from unexpected sources; such has been the case in Denise's experience. She expresses that "I have surprisingly just made connection[s] with [people] I didn't think I would make the connection with. So that's probably one of my favorite parts [of my work], the meeting people". They

built them through informal and formal networking opportunities, and each participant spoke about how much they enjoy building these connections.

Nancy, even more so than the other participants, has used these relationships to support her through challenges at work. Nancy has "taken on [my older colleague] as kind of a life mentor… conversations with her about how to approach things that are positive or negative about my work and just kind of life in general, that's really awesome". This relationship was perhaps the most important one she had at work, and has provided her with insights that have helped guide Nancy though the most difficult situations she has faced at work. She also recognized that peers were an important sounding board for her concerns about her work environment. Nancy has initiated conversations with her peers regarding their workplace frustrations, but fears that while she heard her colleagues echo her thoughts they would not support her if she were to take those concerns to her supervisor.

> People have all sorts of opinions that they want to talk about, and it's sad, it's never going to get heard, not unless somebody puts their ass on the line…Like, you'd really have to put yourself out there, because there's a very good chance that people aren't going to back you up when you do.

Mary too has built these types of relationships with her colleagues. These connections allowed her to share experiences with others who have similar work values. It provided a way of validating that she was not going through the experience alone, "It's really nice now to have other early career people in my

office that are…all really capable…so it's more fun because we can complain about the same stuff. Or we can have the same enthusiasm for new ideas". The women were also aware that these relationships should be mutually beneficial, and that when credit for tasks completed successfully was provided, it should be shared appropriately with colleagues. For Amber when credit for a task was applied inappropriately she makes sure to take steps to associate the credit with the correct people, in one particular case Amber; "responded and disassociated myself with the credit and put [my colleague] on it, just because I think it's so important for people, everyone, to feel validated, too, and that wasn't fair for…For me to just let that go would've kind of been dishonest or inaccurate." On the other side of that experience, Denise mentions that it was be frustrating when credit was shared inappropriately and colleagues or supervisors acknowledge contributions to a task that were not made;

> [Recognition is given] generally as a group, not necessarily as individuals which is good and bad, because there are some people that definitely don't pull their weight as in any situation. So that's kind of frustrating to hear oh, three people did this. Well no, actually it was only 2 people that did that. Give credit where credit is due

Colleagues provided an important resource for early career women in student service roles in higher education. They turn to them for support and to help navigate their professional careers. These colleague relationships were important external dynamics shaping the work experience for the participants.

Summary

The stories provided by the participants highlighted the internal and external dynamics at work that impacted their experience as early career women in student service roles in higher education. Each of the women has chosen student service work as their career path, and each felt strongly that they had something to contribute to their employing institution. They identify the dynamics that impacted their ability to be successful in their endeavors as student service practitioners. These dynamics are stages on the journey toward Self-Authorship across the dimensions of intrapersonal and interpersonal development. Each of the women were at a different point in their journey toward Self-Authorship, and some, like Amber and Lisa, have a more advanced understanding of their sense of self based on the dynamics they have identified as impacting their growth. The figure below demonstrates where each of the participants is in their journey toward Self-Authorship in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions.

	Following Formulas	Crossroads	Becoming the Author of One's Life	Internal Foundation
Intrapersonal dimension		Sarah Nancy	Lisa Denise	Amber
Interpersonal dimension	Sarah	Mary Nancy	Amber Lisa Denise	

Figure 3. The Participants Place in their Journey Toward Self-Authorship

Internal Dynamics at Work are the things to which the women feel they can control, decisions for which they are ultimately responsible. These dynamics impacted the way in which the women define themselves at work and the

challenges they wanted from their work tasks. *External Dynamics at Work* are the dynamics that impact the participant's work that were outside of their immediate control. The themes presented in this category are the participant's relationship with her supervisor and her connection to members of her institutional community.

CHAPTER 5

LESSONS LEARNED IN MY SELF-AUTHORSHIP JOURNEY

In taking on the study of young women professionals in student services roles in higher education, I came to recognize that my own experience in this professional setting was relevant to understand the journey toward Self-Authorship in early-career roles in higher education. As a woman entering the next stage of my professional career, this study has given me the chance to reflect on my own experience. In doing so, I can see where and how it mirrored the journey toward Self-Authorship of the participants and where it exposed the role of the institution for which I worked in that journey. My journey toward Self-Authorship within my work experience has progressed through the steps of the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). It is through this journey that I have been able to look at my experience as an early career woman in student service roles in higher education to make decisions as it relates to my new role as a manager in the field.

My Early Career Experience in Student Service Roles

Who I am in my work is a reflection of where I have been as a professional. For a little less than a year, I have become a student services manager, moving from my early career stage and into my mid-career. This new role includes supervising a staff of entry-level professionals in student services. My study on early career women in student services roles in higher education is both a reflection on my experiences and an informative document that I will be able to apply as a manager. I felt that it was important for me to remember what

it was that brought me to where I am. The more I listened to the participants the more I realized that sharing my story would contribute to the study. In doing so I could not only provide another story of the experience of an early-career woman in student services roles in higher education but also demonstrate how similar experiences shaped me as a new manager.

While I no longer sit in the same professional space as the participants of the study, I am not so far removed from my early-career experience as a young woman in student service roles in higher education that I do not remember what work is like for a new professional. Said differently, I have been in their shoes, and have experienced conditions in my work that have shaped my professional identity and development. These growth experiences have pushed me through my journey toward Self-Authorship in both the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions within the context of my work environment in student services roles in higher education (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

Before I share the story of my experience as an early-career professional in student services I want to note that I am not a member of the participants' generational cohort. The participants are all members of the Millennial generation, born after 1982 (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak, 2001). I am a 'Cusper' born between 1978 and 1982, ahead of the first Millennials, but after the last members of Generation X, who are bound by birth years 1960-1978 (Zemke, et. al., 2001). As a Cusper my individual experiences and worldview are influenced in part by the generational characteristics on either side of my birth year (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010). I identify with several of the characteristics

of both Generation X and of Millennial. Specifically in the work environment, I share more Millennial characteristics (e.g. selecting a position that provides a sense of personal fulfillment) then Generation X characteristics (e.g. putting career goals ahead of personal relationships) (Zemke, et. al., 2001; Twenge, et. al., 2010). The Millennial work characteristics which I most identify in my own experience include a passion for what I do in my work tasks, desire to work hard to meet outcomes, consciousness of the balance between work and personal life, and a strong desire to give back to the organization I work for through my workplace production (Rickes, 2009). Where I am more like a member of Generation X at work is that I like to operate on my own, rather than in a team as Millennials prefer; further, I like to keep busy with multiple projects at once which in turn helps me to stay focused on any one task (Zemke, et. al., 2001). My generational cohort membership impacts my work experience. Elements of my experience will be similar and different from the participants since I do not belong to their generational cohort, but the similarities in some generational characteristics and early career experiences are strong enough that my story is relevant to the overarching themes of the study (Zemke, et. al., 2001). Lastly, it is important to note, my early career experiences were at the same institution that employs the study's participants. The experiences shared in my story are impacted by similar institutional policies to those that affected the women whose stories are shared in chapter 4.

My journey from new professional to manger echoes the journey toward Self-Authorship, as work experiences are a key element toward the stages of

development in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of Self-Authorship (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). I have found my sense of self through my work, having learned who I want to be in the workplace and how I work with others (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). My story as an early-career professional highlighted an example of the journey toward Self-Authorship of a young woman in student service roles in higher education (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). In this chapter I will first focus on my experiences as an early career professional in student service roles in higher education, then describe how these experiences impact my role as a manager of a student service unit, and finally will talk about how I plan to establish spaces in the institutional environment which promote the journey toward Self-Authorship for early career professionals in student service roles in higher education.

My Early Career Experience: a Journey toward Self-Authorship

I entered the field of student services after the discovery that I enjoyed the work experience of assisting students in their process of transitioning to college via undergraduate student worker roles. The field found me, rather than the other way around; it combined my love of teaching, working with others and a passion for institutional traditions. With great guidance and support from my undergraduate supervisors and mentors, I was directed to pursue my master's degree in higher education so that I would be qualified for the student service roles I wanted to take on as a new professional in the field.

In making the choice to pursue a master's in higher education I made a conscious decision to find an institution in a political and fiscal climate that was different from the one I attended as an undergraduate. My undergraduate

institution is one known for supporting liberal ideas, in a Midwestern state that at the time I attended, was a strong supporter of higher education, with a city surrounding the institution that was large enough to be diverse, yet still small enough to be a college town at heart. The institution in which I chose to pursue my graduate work is in a politically conservative Southwestern state, one in which education was not a priority of the state. I felt strongly that this institutional diversity would enhance my experience, giving me a unique perspective on student services along with a series of experiences to refer to in my professional work.

My career path as a professional in student service roles in higher education has extended from my role as a graduate assistant to my current position as a manager in the field. Along the way I have tried my hand at different positions (e.g. academic advising, student engagement in an academic unit and prospective student event management) and each one has taught me about my professional identity in the workplace. I have also had opportunities in my career to learn what it means to work with others in student service roles in higher education. In each of my early career positions I defined myself through the relationships I have had with my supervisor, colleagues in my campus community and the students with whom I have worked.

Internal Dynamics at Work – Intrapersonal Journey Toward Self-Authorship

I have been affected by my early career work in student service roles in higher education; I discovered who I am as a professional and what role I wanted

to pursue in my career path. I loved my work; I feel a passion for helping students to transition, I see myself in my work (e.g. through the success of the programs I have created and their impact on students) and I take great pride in accomplishing tasks that make a difference to my constituents and department. My definition of sense of self at work was built beginning with my first professional position in student services as an academic advisor and continues to be redefined in my current role as a student services manager.

Sense of self as a student service practitioner.

My graduate coursework was coupled with a graduate assistantship position, which for twenty hours each week allowed me to work as a professional in student services while providing me with tuition and a stipend to earn my Master's degree. In this role I served students as an academic advisor – working one on one or providing occasional group advising sessions. It was a key learning experience for me to serve as a student advisor; I learned, I like to work with students in transition from high school to college, however I found that I did not like the highly repetitive nature of advising students in their course selection, which coupled with the fact that there is no clear path for advancement in this particular line of work, did not meet my needs as a young professional. I was aware of my skill set which included, my ability to multi-task, make quick decisions, interact with diverse students and other relevant student-centered skills and as result, I could visualize how to further apply my skills in other student service positions. While serving as a graduate assistant academic advisor I found

myself at the crossroads in my intrapersonal development, while I knew what my skills, I was unsure how to fully utilize this knowledge in my work assignments.

When my graduate experience concluded after a two-year appointment and upon completion of my Master's degree, I was offered and accepted a full-time role in the department I worked for as a graduate assistant. My decision was made in part because I was afraid I would not find a better opportunity. A few months in to my position as an academic advisor, I could no longer pretend that I was happy in the position. Moreover my professional goal to contribute meaningfully in my workplace, to leave a legacy on the department, and to effect change in policies and procedures had grown more transparent. I needed a work environment in which I could demonstrate my professional abilities and meet my goals. To do this I took the next professional steps, finding a workplace which met my needs, allowed me to highlight what I valued in work and to demonstrate my sense of self at work (Baxter-Magolda, 2004).

After nine months working as an advisor, I made a change to a new position which allowed me to build from my advising experience and to incorporate the work that inspired me to pursue the student services field; I became a student engagement coordinator in an academic college working with students in transition from high school to college. The coordinator position was a good next step and a professional fit. I was the first person to hold the student engagement coordinator role in the academic college in which I was employed. This position and experience allowed me to shape my professional identity, and

for that identity to become synonymous with excellence in my institutional role (Baxter-Magolda, 2004).

The position was an amalgamation of a burgeoning professional concept, a student service professional located in an academic division; planning student programs which shape the institutional identities of a particular group of students who share a common academic identity. The role allowed me to develop student transition programs including first year college student success learning modules, development of a first year college student weekend retreat experience, and new student orientation programs. The position went beyond the traditional relationship between academic and student affairs hence, reminding me of why I wanted to work in student services; to give back to college students in a meaningful way. The position refocused my energies, setting me back on my career track, allowed me to develop my sense of self at work and move me toward upper administration in student services.

Work style as a new practitioner in student services.

My position as a student engagement coordinator in an academic unit was an amazing professional development experience. For the first time in my career, I could set my own standards for performance, and was given the freedom to meet those standards through my work. I was able to shape my sense of self through this role as a student engagement coordinator by creating projects in which I could see myself in, successful endeavors that enhanced the experiences of undergraduate students. Those experiences allowed me to build upon my sense of self in my workplace, by showing me that I was capable and my ideas were

validated through the positive experience of the students participating in the events, thus showing my professional leadership potential.

Leadership in my academic department gave me the tools I needed to be successful in the tasks associated with my position. These tools were presented as support of the division in the projects I was responsible for and a supervisor who provided direction but also the freedom to make decisions on my work tasks. I was the professional to whom I had aspired; irreplaceable, someone who defined her own place in the organization, and I created a legacy that would last long after my tenure in the position was over. In my journey toward Self-Authorship along the intrapersonal dimension, I had not only become the author of my own life, but I had also built an internal foundation which gave me framework to define my actions as a student service practitioner in higher education and helped me to ground my sense of self as a professional (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005).

I set standards for my work performance based upon the self-imposed expectation that I would move into mid- and senior-level positions in student service units in a higher education environment. I recognized that in order to make the move I would need to pursue a doctoral degree. During my experience as a student engagement coordinator, I found I had the time, flexibility and drive to begin my doctoral coursework. I pushed myself to develop my professional cache, by both working full-time and taking the required elements for my doctoral degree. I knew that in order to be successful in advancing my career, I would need to maintain my standards in work so that I would be ready for the next

professional position. Pursuing my doctoral degree was a part of the process of reaching my goals, but I also needed to maintain my professional standards so my work experience would be as viewed by potential employers as valuable as the degree. The doctoral degree program provided me with the credentials needed to advance my career by combining years of experience with the academic credentials needed to move into advanced career positions in student services.

Building blocks to future positions in student services.

An environment that promoted self-authorship.

What I enjoyed most about my position as a student engagement coordinator in an academic unit was the level of challenge in the work. In my first assignments, I was provided metrics (e.g. learning outcomes and participation rates) to determine program or event success. Every program and event success came with an implied expectation to do more with the same or greater success. After a year in my coordinator role, these new challenges began to dissipate and soon the tasks became rote. To counter routine and sometime mundane work, I provided innovative ideas that would change the way I was conducting my work but was told that what I had already accomplished was enough, and to keep up the good work. I was not happy in this experience despite the positive feedback. Soon enough, I could do the job without the need for effort and with limited thinking. As a result, I desired to be more challenged (e.g. to be given new assignments and to be allowed to problem-solve) in my work. After two and half years in this position, I was ready for a change and sought another coordinator or assistant director position in the institution.

As I sought my new opportunity I looked for departments and areas of the university that would be new to me such as learning support services and residential life. I applied and interviewed in a couple of different student service departments. The interview process showed me what I did and did not want to do for my daily work (e.g. work that benefited students but not work in environments where my assignments were to develop policy). For example in one of the interviews, I learned that I needed to be careful in how I would chose my next work environment by investigating the opportunity to understand the daily work of the position for which I was applying. The interview was for a position in academic support services department in a student services unit. I had applied in part because of the position's title and classification; it would have placed me in a mid-level administrative position within the institution. Additionally, I thought the position could teach me an entirely new skill set. The idea of being challenged in new tasks such as learning a new way of working within the institution seemed very exciting. Ironically, after fifteen minutes into my four-hour interview for the administrative position, I knew I was not the right person for the job based on what they were presented as the responsibilities of the position and my goals and interests in my work as a student service practitioner. Essentially, I thought the new role would be a new challenge but I knew I would not be happy. I had come to the field of student services in higher education to work with students in transition and this position would have taken me away from that component of the work and my true passion. I was keenly aware of my sense

of self in the workplace and as such, knew the position and my sense of self would not result in the right professional fit for the hiring department or me.

I interviewed and accepted a position as a coordinator in a campus level student service unit at a smaller campus of my employing institution. The position duties required me to manage the student transition process for the entire campus (e.g. all the academic units) and to build a core team of college student leaders who would peer-facilitate the new college student transition program. This position gave me the opportunity to work within the area I was most passionate plus the challenge to provide service for an entire university campus. All of my experience with student paraprofessional and professional work in student services in higher education up this new appointment had been in large public university with student populations over 35,000. My new position was at a campus with less than 10,000 students. In addition to my primary responsibilities serving this campus, I would contribute to institutional and other campus priorities. The opportunity to be engaged in multiple projects was exciting and led to me to believe I would learn new skills to fully realize my goal to be an administrator in student services.

My early experiences in my role on the smaller campus were positive. I was constantly challenged, building new relationships, recruiting student leaders and learning how to manage programs around the construction of new buildings. I was happy and satisfied with the level of challenge in my work. However, within three months I realized that the opportunities promised to me were not coming to fruition in the day-to-day experiences of my work. To compound my

realization, after my first few successes with programs and events, my supervisor pulled new tasks away from me. Instead of allowing me to be creative and further the program's success, he required me to simply repeat what I had previously done; moreover, he directed me to change program processes which had proven to be successful based on the metrics they had established. I was astonished with the lack of vision, trust and leadership and grew increasingly frustrated the position.

I had risen to the challenge of the position and shifted the culture of a campus program practice to better serve students by providing leadership opportunities for continuing students and re-focusing the college student's first year experience. My supervisors and others in my campus community (e.g. directors of student service units and academic deans) did not recognize the breadth and impact of my work. Colleagues with higher administrative positions than myself saw me as an upstart as I was trying to change established practices in the campus community by incorporating more institution wide traditions in my work and disregarded my contributions as being inconsequential. I had allies in the institutional community, yet I often felt out of sight and out of mind by being located on a campus away from the central administration. While I wanted to take on assignments that would provide me with professional development I was only given projects specific to my campus, with no opportunity to employ innovative and high impact changes. I could not understand why my supervisors could not see that I was ready for the next step. I had proven my ability by successfully revitalizing failing programs into to meet the student and program outcomes as assigned. For the first time as professional, I was vocal with my

supervisors about what I wanted: what new professional opportunities, with greater challenge in assigned tasks. I had found and used my voice.

I wanted new responsibilities and while I asked for them, I was not heard by my supervisors and the requests were ignored. I started to become more open about my plan to leave the position to pursue opportunities that were a better professional fit. Because my supervisors perceived my personal and professional ties to the institution as being very strong, and that there were few positions in the institution I would be eligible for, they made no effort to provide me with additional responsibilities because they thought there was no place for me to leave to. I was no longer willing to wait for an opportunity to advance, it was clear that the institution that I had been employed with for almost eight years would not be the place in which I would take my next professional step. I knew several administrators saw me as someone with great potential, but there was also a hierarchy at the institution, and my location in that structure was lower than others who had served the institution for a longer period of time. It was made clear to me by my direct supervisor and one of my professional mentors that the only way to professionally advance would be to put in more time in my current role. The thought of working day in and day out without new challenges in my work to put in my time was not an option. I needed to feel professionally challenged and happy in my work –I decided I would no longer wait. I had built my sense of self as a professional, knowing who I was in the workplace, and how I wanted to shape relationships with my colleagues and supervisors. I began to look for positions that would give me that next professional step, allowing me to highlight

the skill set I developed through my work experiences as a young professional in student services. It was only through the processes of my journey toward Self-Authorship that I was able to identify my sense of worth to the organization, and shaped how, when and where I could professionally move in the future (Baxter-Magolda, 2004; Creamer and Laughlin, 2005). In short, my sense of self expanded to a greater sense of self worth within my professional relationships and the organization in which I worked.

External Dynamics at Work – Interpersonal journey to Self-Authorship

Those with whom I have worked impacted the dynamics of my work experiences as an early-career professional in student service roles in higher education. My career, in part, has been defined by relationships with supervisors, colleagues and other institutional community members. These interactions have taught me how to interact and my role with others in the workplace and I have learned to work with a variety of individuals and learned with whom I work best, for example, individuals who help me to be the most productive in my work tasks. My professional relationships are important to my success at work and have taught me who I want to be in my interactions at work, and have propelled my journey toward Self-Authorship in the interpersonal dimension.

Relationship with my supervisor.

My supervisors have shaped my experience and satisfaction with work more so than any other individuals with whom I have worked. Over the course of my professional career I have had a variety of supervisors with varied skills, interests and leadership approaches; all of whom have impacted my development

as a professional in student service roles in higher education. My first professional supervisor was a passive individual by nature. The role I served for the institution, as an academic advisor, did not engage me with the passion that had drawn me to work in student services. I was bored, which necessitated approaching my supervisor to ask for more tasks or to offer my assistance within the unit. My request were acknowledged but not acted upon. I was routinely told I was still learning and needed more time at the current task before taking on something new. This was hard for me to understand especially when I felt mastery in my assigned tasks. I wanted to keep my supervisor happy with me but I also wanted more work and opportunities for professional growth. My supervisor had outlined my tasks in the position and defined my place and role in the organization. Despite being discouraged, I continued to allow my supervisor to provide me with the formula for success in my work (Baxter-Magolda, 2004).

My supervisor understood that I was not happy in the academic advising position and was willing to support me to find other positions on campus that was a better fit. As I continued to look for new positions, she would utilize her professional network to gather information about jobs I was interested in and provided me with introductions to people on the hiring committees. This was her way of acknowledging that I needed to find a better professional fit, and was willing to help me find the place in the organization that would make me happiest.

Developing self-authorship in the interpersonal dimension.

After about nine months of full time work as an advisor, I moved to a different position on the campus, as a student engagement coordinator in an

academic unit. My new supervisor was more actively engaged with her employees than the person who oversaw my work in the advising role. She provided direction on the scope of the tasks I should take on and gave me the space I needed to make decisions about how to conduct my work. This supervisor outlined for me what she expected from me in the coordinator role and illustrated what she wanted in terms of our interpersonal interactions. She wanted me to come to her with my ideas, made sure that I felt as though I could make changes that suited my work style and gave me positive reinforcement when I successfully completed an assignment. Through this relationship with my supervisor I began to grown confident in my skills and about my abilities. She would praise my work, and would encourage me to try new things, including taking responsibility for major projects, like creating a train the trainer program for student workers who would work in assisting first year student success. In our interactions I defined my sense of self, I became reliant on my supervisor to shape who I was as a student engagement coordinator.

This reliance upon my supervisor relationship to define my sense of self became problematic after only five months into the position. As I became more comfortable with the tasks assigned and more at ease with my supervisor I took greater risks in my work. No longer did I go to her with questions on every step of a project, instead I listened for a definition of expected outcomes and conducted my work to meet those goals. I knew that the way in which I was approaching my tasks was not the way in which my supervisor expected work to be done, but I continued to receive validation that the outcomes I achieved met

and exceeded the expectations of my supervisor. As I grew more confident in my abilities, I noticed that my supervisor stopped providing the same types of recognition for the work I completed. Instead of overt praise, I was receiving comments like "I am glad this worked out, I was not sure you were going to get this done" or "this is great, it is too bad you did not come to me with some of your ideas, we could have made it even better". I did not understand the change in our interpersonal dynamic and why my supervisor did not see the successes in my work in the same way that she had previously,

The relationship between my supervisor and me made a major shift after the other student engagement coordinator in the academic division with whom I collaborated on all major projects left his position. I was shocked to lose the person with whom I spent so much of my work time. Together we built a definition for successful student service work in an academic unit. In part my professional identity was wrapped up with his and I felt uneasy with the idea of replacing him. I approached my supervisor with my concerns about the change of staff. I felt that she had established that we could be open in our communication and that she would hear my voice as I requested to be actively engaged with finding my colleague's replacement. While I was granted a role on the hiring committee, my contribution in the process was to be minimized. Instead of being involved at every step, my supervisor provided me with a final list of candidates, whose resumes I could review after the first round interviews. I thought this was strange, as up to this point my supervisor had always indicated that she valued my contributions and wanted me involved in the decisions related to my work

processes. I came to realize as the interview process progressed that my supervisor was trying to replace my colleague without looking at how that person would work with me as a part of the coordinator team.

The individuals my supervisor had selected to interview appeared to define their professional sense of self as differential to their supervisor within that relationship. In each interview the candidates spoke about how they wanted direction, and that they liked to be given very specific outlines of what was expected of them. My relationship with my supervisor was not defined by specific outlines; instead I took her expectations and built my own work plan to meet those goals. I felt as though my supervisor had sent me a message about our relationship through these interviews. It was clear that she appreciated the volume of work I produced, but she preferred staff members who came to her for guidance and directions on every step of a project. The experience pushed me to the crossroads. I knew that the work I was produced meet and often exceeded the expectations of the department, and I wondered why I sought her approval for each step in my work processes. I had learned that I needed to assert my own sense of self in the workplace relationship with my supervisor (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

While I continued to enjoy the work of my position as a student engagement coordinator in an academic unit, I no longer felt confident that my relationship with my supervisor was built on trust. I felt like I was playing a game, and figured out how to meet her expectations of my work, even when she changed them. I learned that in our relationship I needed to provide only the

information my supervisor needed to know, as that I was not sure if she would use what I told her about personal or professional concerns against me at later points in our work relationship. I had noticed that my supervisor was taking credit for my contributions to the department. She presented the program plans I crafted to departmental leadership as if they were her own ideas and redirected the accolades received from the dean of the division away from me and to herself or other colleagues in my department.

The relationship with my supervisor was permanently stifled; I was not confident in her support for my ideas and work style. I began to hear from colleagues that my supervisor made false accusations about my performance and created stories about how I was unable to meet workplace expectations. Despite this experience, I refused to let my professional standards slip. I did everything in my ability to perform above her expectations and to hit the continually moving target for the outcomes of my tasks as provided by my supervisor. It was through this experience that I no longer relied on my professional identity in terms of my supervisor and instead acted with a true to sense of self in my workplace interactions. These interactions showed to me that I had to author my own life and professional experiences in the interpersonal dimension of the journey toward Self-Authorship (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

Defining my sense of self in working with others.

The stress of working, with a supervisor whom I felt I could not trust took a toll on my attitude toward the student service profession. While I still enjoyed the work with students, I needed to find a position that would bring the sense of

personal fulfillment I felt when I started my career in student services. I made a lateral professional move to a coordinator position in the campus level student services division at one of the smaller campuses of my employing institution. The position came with a promise that I would be able to shape the scope of my work. More importantly it allowed me to no longer work for the supervisor I felt was stifling my potential as a student service practitioner. As I made the transition to this new role, the supervisor with whom I was trying to leave behind also changed roles at the institution. Her new role and my new position would work together and while she was not going to be my direct supervisor, there would continue to be a working relationship in which she may have influence over required or assigned work tasks. As I had already resigned my previous position, and accepted the new role, I decided that I needed to address my concerns about working with my previous supervisor through a conversation with my new supervisor. My new supervisor told me that while she may have some input in the types of assignments I would be given, he was my supervisor, and that I would be responsible to the campus and to him. With this knowledge and support, I felt I would be able to navigate the complexities of working with my previous supervisor. I jumped into the new coordinator position with this promise to myself: while I may have to work with my former supervisor, I would not have to work for her, …my new position is my primary responsibility. I felt confident that the new coordinator position played to the strengths I had identified in my professional sense of self moreover, I was confident in my relationship with my new supervisor.

Unfortunately, my new position was complicated by institutional reorganization. I was now responsible to three different supervisors: my campus supervisor, to my previous supervisor in her new role and to a third supervisor in another division. Suddenly, I was balancing the priorities of three different university divisions and was being given direction from three very different supervisors. Often the direction provided from one individual conflicted with the direction provided from another. I was often the pawn in their conflicts, being used as both intermediary and as the means by which to complete their personal agenda for the position all the while being given different answers to the same question. I was steadfast in my work and never allowed my work product to falter. I continually exceeded the expectations of each of my supervisors even when those expectations were in conflict with one another. I knew who I was, and I was able to identify my sense of self in the relationships I held with each of my supervisors in my position as a campus level student service coordinator.

Recognition for the work.

In my coordinator position on the small campus of the institution where I reported to three different supervisors, support waned and conflict increased. For example, each supervisor took credit for my successes, but none provided me with professional development opportunities or coached me through my missteps. When I asked for resources to complete my work responsibilities each supervisor sent me to the other supervisors telling me that it was not their responsibility to provide me that kind of support, but rather it was the responsibility of one of my other supervisors. This constant run around was frustrating which forced me to be

more creative in my planning and coordinating successful events. I grounded my sense of self by defining each relationship independently and provided outcomes that met each of my supervisors their expectations (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). In the interpersonal dimension of my journey to Self-Authorship I had found my internal foundation. I found that in order to do my best work, I would need to connect with each supervisor by building mutually beneficial relationships; said differently, utilize the relationships where we both received sought outcomes (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

For two and a half years I balanced the supervisor triangle, working my best to make sure that I was one step ahead of the supervisors, anticipated problems and was prepared for whatever may come my way. Through all this, I remained unchallenged by my assignments—my position became static. To counter my static position and stifled growth, I presented a plan advance my career through the task of professional supervision. The supervisors informed me the timing was not right to have me supervise, moreover, there was no means for them to offer this type of professional development. As a result of my final request denied, I applied for and accepted a new position at a different institution as a supervisor in a student service unit with a staff of early-career professionals.

Connection with members of the institutional community.

Part of the joy I have received from my work as an early-career professional in student services roles in higher education were the interactions with the colleagues with whom I have worked. In each of my positions, I have found people who supported me through challenges and celebrated with me in my

successes. I have also worked with colleagues whose support was not genuine. In those experiences, where someone I thought I could trust provided me with bad information or used our relationship to benefit their own personal goals, I once again learned. Through positive and negative work interactions I have learned how to define my sense of self when working with others (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

Learning to be a colleague in my role as an academic advisor.

My first professional position was in the department I worked in as a graduate assistant. While the role was not a perfect fit for my professional goals in student service work I took the position in part because of the relationship I had with my colleagues. I had enjoyed working with the individuals in the department, and felt that they would support me as I transitioned into a full time role. While I began to define my sense of self as professional I believed these colleagues would teach me how to interact with others as a full time member of the staff. In this new role I reported to a different supervisor, one who also oversaw the work of the individuals whom had supervised me as a graduate assistant. Despite my new status in the department, my colleagues continued to see me as a graduate assistant and felt it was their responsibility to teach me how to do my job.

Managing this role as a new colleague was a learning process. It took me three months to realize I was their peer and that I could shape my work in my own way (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grace & Molina, 2009). I had to learn how to be myself while working with my colleagues and not always try to seek their approval

before completing a task. In my journey toward Self-Authorship, I was moving from following the formulas of others on how I should perform, toward the definition of my own identity at work as an individual (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

As I built my sense of self as an advisor, and began to create my own work style, my colleagues perceived I was changing their established work process through the efficiencies I implemented in my own work. Their main concern was that I would show to our supervisors that it was possible to be more effective in the position. What I saw as a way to make my job a better fit for my skills, my colleagues saw as a threat to their way of working. I was conflicted as a brand new professional. The changes I made in work processes were validated by the positive responses from the students with whom I worked; yet they were negated by my colleagues' negative reactions (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). These conflicts lead me to the realization that I needed to find a work environment that allowed me to showcase my skills with colleagues who would support my growth (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005).

Creating personal and professional networks as a coordinator.

After I made the transition to my role as a student engagement coordinator in an academic college I found colleagues who would support me both on personal and professional levels. The position signified a shift in my work experience as an early-career professional in student services and reignited my passion for work in an institutional setting. The tasks at hand were challenging, and while my personal life was undergoing a significant transition, I was able for at least eight hours every day to focus on the work instead of my personal

situation. Further, the issues in my personal life actually helped me to connect with my colleagues in my new department. I shared my life experiences with my new colleagues who were very supportive of me. My colleagues in my new department helped me to keep my work and life in balance by understanding why I was putting so much time into the work and providing a sounding board for both work and personal issues (Airini, Collings, Conner, McPherson, Midson & Wilson, 2011). Built into my work environment was a network of people on whom I could rely on for my personal and professional needs. In blending my personal and professional lives I felt a greater connection to the department. However, I focused my on the external approval I received from the people who to provided me a support structure for my personal and professional lives. I had slipped back into following the formulas of others in my interpersonal development by becoming too dependent on others to define my sense of self at work (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

In my role as a student engagement coordinator in an academic unit I relied on my institutional colleagues whenever I needed assistance in the completion of a work task. As a result, I had to learn how to reciprocate in these relationships, to know when and how to share departmental information in order to be successful. For me it was easiest to build trust in these relationships by first building friendships which meant I needed to know how I wanted to define my sense of self in the context of working with others. I used these friendships to redefine who I was and how I wanted to interact with others, and began again to

listen to my internal voice to establish my sense of self in my relationships with colleagues.

I am proud of my reputation as a personable and professional colleague. I have made myself open to others to provide support that benefits both parties in the relationship. I strive to be able to work with everyone and to do what is needed to be successful in my endeavors. Knowing who I am in my interactions with others makes my work easier because I am capable of building mutually beneficial relationships. My sense of self as it relates to working with colleagues is wrapped up in my reputation. It is authentic, something I have self-authored, a sense of self from which I can build an internal foundation on all relationships I build with colleagues in my workplaces.

As I prepared myself for the next roles in my professional career I came to realize that I had progressed in my journey toward Self-Authorship in both the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. As an early-career professional I had made more progress in my journey in the intrapersonal dimension than in the interpersonal dimension. I felt confident in my sense of self, but I still utilized others expectations to define my interpersonal relationships.

	Following Formulas	Crossroads	Becoming the Author of One's Life	Internal Foundation
Intrapersonal dimension			Rachel	
Interpersonal dimension		Rachel		

Figure 4. My place in the Journey Toward Self-Authorship at the end of my Early-Career Experiences

Lessons Learned through My Journey toward Self-Authorship

One year ago, I took my next step in my professional career in student services in higher education to serve as a mid-level administrator position at another institution. For the first time, I had a supervisor with whom I felt I could be open, one who understood my career goals, and someone who has empowered me with the opportunities to achieve my professional goals. The new position has allowed me to lead a staff of employees who were in their early-career in student services, most of whom were also members of the Millennial generation. It has been my goal to reflect on and employ the lessons of my early-career experiences with my supervisors in order to support my staff in their professional development.

In taking a supervisory, mid-level professional role, I was prepared to utilize the lessons I had learned as an early-career professional to inform how I would interact with my staff. I was not prepared for the realization of how naive I had been concerning the environmental conditions of the prior institution for which I had worked and how that environment had shaped my experience as an early-career professional.

Throughout my early-career experiences I felt as thought I was ready for the next step and that I shaped my own destiny in my career journey. I was surprised to find, as a mid-level administrator, that the work environment in my prior institution played a major role in my definition of my sense of self in my early-career roles in student services. I had believed I was in control of the direction of my career, and I should have played an active role in the decisions

that were shaping my experience, however I have found that as a manager there are many different institutional dynamics that must be balanced in the workplace experience in student services.

As an early-career professional I wanted a voice in the interview processes that built the team with whom I was to work. I wanted to play a key role in deciding who would be the colleagues I interacted with most, and wanted my supervisor to understand how important I felt it was to build an environment that worked best for me. At the time, I did not understand how the institution and the structure of the institution impacted the decisions that were made by my supervisors. My supervisor needed to shape our team to be sure that all work assignments were to be completed and that there was a balance of style and personalities in our division. I was naive to think that my personal preferences should take precedence over the greater structures of the workplace. As a manager, I have learned to balance the priorities of my division and the needs of my individual employees. I have learned that maintaining this balance is more complicated than I had understood as an early-career professional.

Additionally, I have learned that the type of institution for which I work played a role in the nature of my sense of self at work. The institution that had employed me as an early-career professional is much different from that of the institution for which I was employed as a mid-level manger. The environment at my previous institution was structured to promote competition, which in turn caused me to compete with colleagues and supervisors for the attention of administrations. This competition also limited the opportunity to move forward in

my career as the institutional structure was set up to advance individuals in very specific career paths and through specific timelines. My new employer has established an environment in which building community is important. This has allowed me to change how I approach my work, and how I see myself in the workplace. I have become more collaborative and try to balance the priorities of my staff with the priorities of the division. This has been a major change, and allowed me to build a managerial style that is reflective of both my internal sense of self and the institution for which I work.

Application of lessons learned.

One of the most important lessons I learned in my new managerial responsibilities was to reflect upon my previous experience when making supervisory decisions, to avoid the pitfalls of other supervisors working with new professionals. In each of my good and bad supervisor experiences I learned what to or not to do when working staff. The relationships I built with my supervisors as an early-career employee shaped my work experience and definition of what a supervisor should provide their staff to be successful (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Collay & Cooper, 2008). Upon reflection as an early-career professional in student services, I recognized that what I needed from a supervisor was someone who provided guidance and flexibility so I could grow within my position. To that end, I focus on providing my staff with balance, providing them with the ability to control their own work, and provide them with the guidance so they may be successful in their endeavors. To this end, I try to maintain a consistent set of expectations for my staff. As a supervisor I make hard decisions and hold myself

accountable for the outcomes of the department. In my early-career positions, I always felt more confident in my work when my supervisor would support my decisions. As such, it is important for my staff to know that I support their decisions.

My experience of being overlooked for professional development opportunities inspires me to provide a balance between the current role and future career goals of my staff. Successful outcomes and metrics in student service work continually change (American College Personnel Association (ACPA) & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), 2010). In order to be able to keep on top of the latest methods for providing outstanding services, my staff is allowed to seek out professional development opportunities, which allow them to both gain new skills for their current position and to explore their professional interests. I provide my staff with the support they need to grow through their failures. Professional development is more than rewarding good behavior and reinforcing existing skills. Some of the most powerful moments of my professional development came from learning how to recover from missteps. For example, in my position as an academic advisor I was working with a parent and student in an appointment regarding course selection. The parent became agitated with me when I told him that I could not waive a particular requirement for their student, and despite his insistence I could not offer them the solution to their problem that they wanted. As the parent began yelling at me, my supervisor stepped into my office, listened to the parent's concern, provided them with the rationale behind my decision and then worked with them to come up with an

alternate solution. The experience taught me that much of the work I was going to do in my role as an advisor was to say no, but that I needed to find positive ways to spin my response. It also showed me that I needed to recognize my limitations and when I should call in my supervisor. My goal is to provide my staff with support that allows for opportunities to build their sense of self, and to know when they need to call on me to support them in their work processes.

In order to be the best supervisor for my staff I have realized it important to provide the best support possible for each individual on my team and recognize their individual accomplishments (Collay & Cooper, 2008). I need to learn to be supportive to each person on my staff and to figure out how to help them understand their place in the staff team. It is also important that I learn to recognize when someone is not acting as a member of the team. There are occasions when a particular staff member is not right fit their position and/or I am not the right person to supervise them through their professional growth. In these cases I need to learn what I can do to continue to support the individual if they plan to continue in their role, and to help them make an appropriate transition out of the department if necessary (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005).

In order to become my staff's ideal supervisor I have to listen closely to what they tell me about whom they are as a professional. I must find out why they chose to work in student service roles in higher education and their career path. Active listening is about more than just hearing what is being said, but identifying on what they need from me and to reward with praise in a way that is

meaningful to each staff member (Collay & Cooper, 2008; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Orrell, 2008).

I provide my staff with ownership in their work tasks, and allow them to take credit for successes in their work. Ownership over a critical project or assignment can provide the individual with a chance to feel as though they have made a significant contribution. As I learned from my own experience, early-career professionals want to feel as though they are making a difference and recognition of their individual contribution on a large project is important (Twenge, et. al, 2010). I provide thank you notes and kudos to recognize staff productivity, while acknowledging outstanding achievements through time off equivalencies (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). I also work hard to make sure that I am not providing my staff with more work just because they do good work. Rather, I try to match additional assignments to each employee's interests and career goals. In providing meaningful assignments I can help my staff to take steps to develop their sense of self in the workplace (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

Additionally, it is important to establish a work environment that allows staff to provide open and honest feedback to me about what they need in order to perform at their best. Open communication comes from building trust; I must illustrate trust by keeping staff informed of the dynamics that may impact their work such as when policy changes have been made at the senior administrator level. My goal as a supervisor is to be as candid as possible without revealing more than is appropriate within the context of the discussion, project or decision. The open exchange of information provides staff a how to relate the institutional

metrics with departmental outcomes (Airini, Collings, Conner, McPherson, Midson, & Wilson, 2011).

What I have learned from my early career experiences in student services in higher education is applicable to my new role as a supervisor: the good and bad practices and skills in supervision moreover, how I wanted to be treated as a professional. These experiences informed the ways in which I approach my own staff. It is important to recognize when and how my employees need to support, and where they need room to grow their professional skill set. My biggest challenge is being the appropriate supervisor to each of my staff, I continue to learn and grow as a supervisor in order to build upon my own sense of self in this new role and continue to journey toward Self-Authorship in the interpersonal dimension (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

Setting the stage for self-authorship amongst student service staff.

It is important to me that early-career professionals in the field of student services in higher education have opportunities to learn who they are in context of their work environment, moving through their journey toward Self-Authorship in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). While my study focused on the experience of women in their early-career experiences it is important to me that I use the lessons learned from this process, and my own experience as a professional, to support the men and women who work on my staff. As a future student service administrator I must provide opportunities for intentional professional development of early-career women in student service

roles in higher education, so that those who intend to have a life-long career in the field are prepared for their next professional steps.

There are many different types of career options in student services, and it is important to give individuals the chance to discover their career path. Coaching and mentoring can give young staff members someone with whom they can talk to about their current experience and about the direction they want to take in their career (Lancaster & Stillman, 2009; Robbins & Wilner, 2001). Accessibility to mid- and upper-level administrators, allows the individual to garner a better understanding of what preparation is involved with career planning. These types of conversations reinforced my goals and offered insight on the role and responsibility of an administrator in student services Further, building diverse networks provides early-career professionals a personal connection with student service administrators across their institution (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005).

Early career women in student services need a network of peers with whom they can relate and can discuss openly their concerns (Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007; Collay & Cooper, 2008). The peer network provides new professionals a chance to talk through their experiences at work to help them to balance work and personal priorities. Official networking opportunities such as NASPA Knowledge Communities (gathered April 9, 2010, http://naspa.org/kc/default.cfm) can develop into an authentic community amongst early career professionals. Additionally, these communities allow women to connect with professionals in a variety of roles across the institution and to discover the diverse professional roles available in student services.

Fit between an individual and their workplace is an important element of employee satisfaction. When an individual is not the right for a position, or that the particular environment of the department does not meet their professional needs, they or their supervisor may suggest they remove themselves from the position. This departure was evident in my own discovery process related to my sense of self as a professional in student services. Administrators should look at an individual's strengths and work to figure out how to best apply those strengths in the workplace (Collay & Cooper, 2008). In order to uncover how an individuals' strengths may be best applied in their student service workplace it may be prudent for student services to take an example of worker management from the corporate sector. Many employers give early-career professionals the chance to explore their workplace options through rotational programs and differentiated assignments throughout their interests within a particular organization (Hill, 2002; Hall, 2008; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Orell, 2008). In the student services workplace early-career women can serve on interdepartmental committees or projects to advance their professional development and extend their network. In my experience, internships a part of my doctoral program exposed me to a variety of roles in student services and helped me to define my professional goals for mid- and senior-level positions.

Early-career women in student services should be provided with clear pathways to leadership within the institution (Collay & Cooper, 2008; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). These pathways can be outlined through training programs, professional development opportunities - on campus or in regional and national

organizations – and by encouraging further educational attainment for those who are interested in advanced degrees (e.g. Ph.D. or Ed.D. programs in higher education or other related disciplines). These pathways should be institutionalized, to allow women to utilize their strengths wherever the institution can use those skills, which in turn allows for flexibility in advancement opportunities (Pollack, 2010).

Summary

My experience as an early-career professional in student services impacted my decision to take on this study. I felt as though my experience was not unique, that other women were experiencing similar conditions in their work experience, and that this shared experience is meaningful to the literature on assisting the professional development of early career student service practitioners. The women talked about wanting to feel connected to their work, to take on new challenges and to build relationships.

While I do not fit the profile of the study participant, I have had experiences that were reflective of what was said in their workplace stories. The places in which our stories weave together illustrate that a career in student services is shaped by an individual's sense of self in the workplace as built through their early-career experiences. Sense of self at work was demonstrated through a confidence in individual work related skills, their personal connection to the workplace and the relationships built with supervisors and colleagues in that experience. Workplace experiences as early-career professionals in student service roles in higher education allow women to discover their sense of self in

the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of their journey toward Self-Authorship (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

Chapter 6 will provide the reader with a discussion on the findings of the stories presented in Chapter 4 and 5. The chapter will also describe implications of the findings for future scholarship, research and practice in working with early-career women in student service roles in higher education.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter provides a comparison between this study's findings and previous research on both the work environment of student services in higher education and generational dynamics that shape the experience of early career women in student service roles in higher education, all members of the Millennial generation. Additionally, the chapter provides implications for scholarship, research and practice. The purpose of the study was to bring forth themes that allow for a better understanding of the experience of early-career women in student service roles in higher education through first-person stories of their experience. In doing so, I was able to share a unique perspective on the work experience of the participants in student service roles and provide suggestions to the early-career professional and to those with whom they work and to assist these women through the first stage of their career.

Chapter 1 provided the introduction, purpose and limitations of the study. A review of the relevant literature examined the work environment of student services and the generational dynamics was shared in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 discussed the research methods, contextual framework, and specific elements of the research design. Chapter 4 presented the experience of the participants as early-career women working in entry-level roles in student services in higher education. Chapter 5 provided the story of my journey toward Self-Authorship as an early-career professional and how those experiences have impacted my role as a manager in student services.

Discussion

Sense of self built through experiences at work.

Through the experiences of work, the women in this study have begun the process of defining their sense of self as early-career professionals in student service roles in higher education (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). This process of discovery began with the participant's response to the structures of the institution where they worked, including challenges and successes and interpersonal relationships with supervisors, mentors and colleagues. In many ways, the women demonstrated a naïveté of the complexities of the structures that shaped their workplace environment. My own experience also demonstrated this naïveté, as I recognized that it was only in entering a mid-level administrative role that I could see the interconnectedness of the institutional structures that impacted my experience. The women, whose stories were shared in this study, have been shaped by the environment of their workplace along with the characteristics (e.g. desire to make a contribution to their community through work, have an innate understanding of technology and prefer to work in teams) of the Millennial generation. It was primarily through the management of the challenges in their lived experience as student service professionals that the women defined their sense of self and how they defined their work with others. Through the experiences in their workplace, the women have built their sense of self and have learned to interact with others in their roles as student service practitioners (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Collay & Cooper, 2008; Gilligan, 1982; Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007).

Naïveté in expectations of workplace experience in student services.

The participants made an active decision to work in student services roles in higher education. Each of the women had a defining experience as an undergraduate student that showed them that the work of student services was the right fit for a professional career. Student services work allowed the participants to assist college students in the collegiate experience and assist those with whom they had worked to have their own epiphany regarding their career choice. Through their experiences as employees in student service roles in higher education, the women in this study built their sense of self to define the actions they have taken in the workplace (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Belenky, et. al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982). As new professionals, they needed to balance the expectations of their supervisors concerning their work outcomes and begun to build their sense of self in the work place. For example, Nancy felt that she would be able to critically analyze her work processes and to improve efficiencies on her tasks, but she was instructed to complete only the outcomes provided in her position description. It was hard for Nancy to stay within the parameters of her job description in as she felt she had skills that would not only improve her experience, but would leave an outline on how to complete the work for someone who was to engage with the role after she left. Amber, Lisa, Sarah, Mary and Denise all saw areas in their work where they could analyze their daily tasks and create ways to make the work more efficient. They would look for ways to convince their departmental leadership to try these new processes. In my early-career experiences I often felt the same way that I could contribute to the

departments for which I worked in more meaningful ways if my supervisors had given me the opportunity. As early career professionals we did not see the structures that shaped our work experiences in student services, and therefore set our expectations for the work environment in a manner that would not be structurally feasible (Kinser, 2003; McHugh-Engstrom, 2009; Morgan, 2006).

The participants in this study discovered student service roles through their undergraduate experiences. Amber, Sarah and Nancy were brought into student services in part due to their undergraduate academic experiences and in part due to their work as undergraduate student workers, while Lisa, Mary and Denise came to the field through experiences in student service departments as undergraduate student workers and as leaders in student organizations. Through both types of entrance experiences, the women had a defining moment in their experience that assisted in their decision to pursue work in student services. For Amber, that moment was in participating in an international academic program. The positive nature of the experience and the guidance and coaching received from professional staff at her home campus, made her seriously consider work in student services. Upon competition of her undergraduate degree, she accepted a position working to assist individuals to be ready to leave for their own international experience.

Lisa decided upon a professional career in student services after working with academic advisors in her own undergraduate program of study. Her advisor had spoken to her about becoming involved with a peer to peer advising program where she would be able to assist students with basic advising questions. The role

ignited her interest in student service work and provided her with the skills necessary to apply for her first position working in the college of nursing at her undergraduate institution.

Sarah was a member of an academic scholarship program that provided her with a designated mentor on campus. The individual she was assigned was an assistant vice president in the student services division, who provided Sarah with a student worker position in addition to serving as her mentor. Through this work experience Sarah learned what the work of student service administrators looked like, and as her initial career plan to become a high school teacher did not work out because she was not comfortable in the classroom she then decided to enter student service work.

Nancy's career path into student services was marked by her undergraduate experience as a national scholar. Nancy came to her undergraduate institution with a full scholarship, and with an opportunity to pursue any style or type of work. She successfully completed her degree and was offered an international post-graduate scholarship to pursue study on the culture of a community in another part of the world. As she engaged in this experience she worked closely with staff at her undergraduate institution who assisted her with making travel arrangements, securing her funding, and working with faculty at her host institution oversees. As Nancy navigated these experiences she came to realize that she wanted to help prospective national scholars to understand the opportunity that her undergraduate institution could provide. She sought out her

position in the enrollment management services division of the institution in order to be able to provide that service to prospective students.

Mary's story in making her career choice was born from a love for her undergraduate institution. She was dedicated to her institution, taking on undergraduate student worker roles that allowed her to be the face of the organization and to share her experiences with other students. Mary found a passion for encouraging others to find their place at the institution. Student services became a natural fit for her career choice because it allowed her to show others what was available by pursuing an undergraduate education. In some ways, she was able to sell the institution's experience to others, encouraging them to take an active role in their experiences. Mary liked to be: "Working for an underdog. We don't make money off of this. You have to buy in. You have to want to be part of it, so that got me started [working in student services]." My experience was similar to Mary's, finding that the passion for work was tied to my undergraduate institution. I learned that I wanted to find a way to serve a higher education institution and to feel a meaningful connection to the work I conducted each day.

Denise's experience was a little different from the other participants. Her defining moment came as a result of deciding to apply to work in a student service department at her undergraduate institution. Denise worked in this office for three years of her undergraduate experience, and as she was nearing graduation, one of her the entry-level coordinators was vacating their position. When Denise's supervisor approached her with the opportunity to fill that role,

she took the offer and found that the enjoyed the work as a professional in student services.

My experience was similar to that of the women who participated in this study. Through a combination of student worker roles and leadership positions, I was exposed to potential student service roles and made a conscious choice to become a practitioner in the field. Like these women, I did not realize that the student service workplace experience I was exposed to, as an undergraduate, was only a small slice of the work experience of student service practitioners. These women approached their first positions in student services work in higher education with an idealized expectation of the work environment. It was in their experience as student workers, leaders in student organizations, and outstanding scholars that they learned about the work in student services. Through their interactions with student service professionals, as undergraduate college students these women were encouraged by their mentors to apply for positions and graduate programs that would assist them in becoming a practitioner in the field. These women saw the outcomes of the student service professional work, the events, activities and services provided. Yet, through this experience these women did not get to see the process by which these outcomes were achieved; including the policies and procedures the student service practitioners must navigate in order to complete their assignments. Based on the stories shared by the participants, early career women must learn to temper their expectations with the reality of working in student services (ACPA / NASPA, 2010; Collay & Cooper, 2008; Kinser, 1993; Pizzalato & Ozaki, 2007).

The role of workplace structure in early-career experiences.

Through the interpersonal relationships found in the student services workplace in higher education, the women participating in this study developed their sense of self and their definition of how they worked with others in their workplace. This work environment was highly social, with many positions at the entry-level of student services working in teams focused on similar tasks (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice & Molina, 2009; Kuk & Banning, 2009; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). This environment provided these women with the opportunity to socialize, to communicate, and to work with other individuals with similar interests and passions. The work environment of student services also put these women in close contact with supervisors who dictate their work tasks. Supervisors in their early-career roles in student services were often the first people in their lives to provide them with constructive criticism, or negative feedback. They also reinforced their sense of self by providing positive reinforcement when a task was completed successfully. In learning to balance these various relationships, they learned how to fulfill their role within their particular workplace and how that role would dictate their interactions with others.

The participants have served their employing institution in a variety of different roles. Nancy, Mary and Denise worked with large groups of students, Amber and Lisa in one-on-one advising roles, and Sarah worked to assist students in navigating the policies that impact their undergraduate experience. Each found their forte within student services by assessing how their personality traits, academic, leadership and student worker experiences meshed with the

departments in which they were applying for full time employment. Nancy chose to apply for her position based on the knowledge she had gained through her undergraduate course experience that made her feel confident that she was the right person for the position.

> I'd applied for hundreds — to almost a hundred jobs at [my employing institution] and never got a phone call back, but this was the [position description] that it was like — "if I don't get a phone call back from this job, that means my degree is worth nothing," because this job was made for me

The participants in this study expressed that the work environment in student services provided the individual practitioner with the challenge to be creative within the scope of their work. It can also be an environment that can cause frustration, one in which the individual must learn how to overcome obstacles to achieve their goals. I too had these experiences in my early career; having experienced times when I felt as though the work provided me with challenges that allowed me to grow as a professional and other insistences when the work did not meet my expectations of what it meant to be a professional in the workplace. Early-career professionals in a variety of positions expressed this dichotomy, where one can be fulfilled and unsatisfied with their work experience at the same time (Baxter-Magolda, 2007; Buchanan, 2009; Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Stillman & Lancaster, 2010).

The workplace environment of student services can accelerate the journey toward Self-Authorship for the individual, regardless of whether their work

experience was positive or negative (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). These women were serving in roles where they advised others on academic and career decisions, which allowed them to reflect on their own experience. Due to this continual reflection, I was not surprised to find that they were aware of their sense of self in the workplace. This knowledge has provided a confidence about their skills and abilities as they manifested in their positions as student service practitioners. This confidence is demonstrated despite their relative inexperience in their role, with only a few years of full time work experience in student services work (Buchanan, 2009; Collay & Cooper, 2008).

Generational dynamics.

For the women, becoming a student services practitioner was more than just a holding job; it was a way to demonstrate their sense of self in their work experience. Working in a student service role in higher education was a conscious career choice made by the participants. It provided them with the opportunity to find a professional niche in which they felt personally connected to their work (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). The choice of a career in student services the participants made a statement about the importance of feeling passionate about their work, which connects with prior research on the archetypes of members of the Millennial generation (e.g. that they feel a commitment to assisting others to meet their goals) (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). Millennials were raised in an environment in which they were told they could do anything they want to do, and that by applying themselves in their chosen field they would be successful. The women echo this sentiment, having

mentioned that they chose to work in student services because they enjoyed the workplace and that they felt as though they could make a contribution in their community by serving in this role.

As members of the millennial generation the participants did not see the need to establish boundaries between their personal and work worlds. They saw these friendships as a part of their professional networks and their colleagues as people with common interests and goals, the people they would have built friendships with in any other situation (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). My own experience echoed the participants, in that I also crossed the boundaries between work and personal life in my experience as a student service professional. I turned to my peers and colleagues with my workplace concerns because I felt they would provide honest feedback on the particular work situation. I trusted their advice, and felt that they were more than colleagues they were friends; people I would invite to collaborate of projects at work and to socialize outside of the workplace. Mary and Denise also spoke to how their colleagues recognized them and allowed them to build a definition of their sense of self in relationship to working with others. For Mary, having colleagues who were also friends gave her a confidence about her place within her work environment;

> It's really nice now to have other young people in my office that are the same way. Like we're all really capable. Some of the people have actually come other universities, had other experiences, so it's more fun because we can complain about the same stuff. Or we can have the same enthusiasm for new ideas.

The participant's relationships with colleagues in the student service work environment helped to hold the women accountable for their actions. These relationships needed to be authentic, to be built one mutual trust. They felt as though their colleagues depended upon them to fulfill their role in work so that the department could reach the collective goals of its work. Feedback from colleagues about actions taken at work was important to Amber, Lisa, Sarah, Nancy, Mary and Denise. Nancy spoke about the ways in which her colleagues validated her work and allowed her to feel as though she had made a contribution.

> We also tell each other…you did a good job down there …we work closely together when we're busy, always [engaging in] constant communication with each other [about expectations] … working in a team is validating

Friendships built within the scope of the workplace provided the women with validation they need in order to feel as though they have contributed within their workplace. Amber, Sarah, Lisa, Nancy, Mary and Denise all felt as though their colleagues have helped them to become better professionals, by giving them the feedback that they look for regarding their performance by being open and honest about their successes and failures in their work tasks. Interpersonal relationships at work provided the participants in this study with the network they needed to be successful professionally and with the support needed in their personal lives. Members of the Millennial generation surround themselves with others; belonging to groups, teams and organizations from youth soccer leagues to the professional associations of their workplaces (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010).

Workplace relationships with colleagues allowed early-career women to feel that they were a part of a group, and to develop how they understood their sense of self in their relationships with others in their work and personal communities.

Amber, Lisa, Sarah, Nancy, Mary and Denise each have had an experience in their work environments that allowed them to feel both challenged and supported in their work. As is the case with other members of the Millennials generation, the women found the greatest sense of happiness in workplaces where they are able to grow and be consistently challenged through their work (Buchanan, 2009; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). Early-career women wanted to be an active part of the decision making within their department; they want to feel as though they have a role to play in the organization.

As members of the Millennial generation, the women in this study exhibit the characteristic of the belief that if they were to apply themselves to a task that they would succeed. All of the women spoke that when presented with a task they would need to complete it, regardless of the time needed or what they needed to do to finish the assignment. For Amber, this experience of tying her sense of self to her ability to complete tasks manifested to meet assignments deadlines, regardless if that meant working late hours or weekends. When the women were unable to meet the goals or expectations set forth they questioned if their work position was the right fit for their professional career (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). This was made more difficult when the women did not feel that the position was a natural match for their skills (e.g. that they cannot be successful in their role because they do not have the knowledge needed to complete assigned

tasks). Sarah, Nancy, Mary and Denise questioned their career choice when they felt that they were asked to complete more tasks than their available time could allow, even when working extra hours. For Denise there were times that she would stay at work two or three hours late to finish up phone calls, only to come back in the next day to find another list of names to contact. The women grew frustrated when they tried their best to complete a task and regardless of their effort, could not finish the assignments.

The early career women in student service roles in higher education in this study spoke about the desire for a collaborative relationship with their supervisor. This was an especially true expectation of Nancy and Mary, who were in their first professional roles in student services. They sought out supervisors who provided the guidance rather than those who dictated their work. They sought individuals with whom they connected with on personal and professional levels. Lisa found a collaborative relationship with her supervisor and built upon the relationship through promotions in her workplace. When the women found that their supervisor relationship did not meet their needs as early-career women in student service roles in higher education most often they reacted with disappointment, as was Nancy's experience.

Amber, Lisa, Sarah, Nancy, Mary and Denise all have looked to their supervisor for guidance with the expectation the supervisor would assist them grow as professionals. Denise, most directly stated, "I think part the reason that you're in that management position is to help somebody develop their career. Especially for somebody that is just entering the higher education workforce." In

the eyes of an early-career woman in student service roles in higher education, the successful supervisor and employee relationship was to be more than just directives regarding work performance; it was about being the coach, mentor and friend to the employee. The desire for a collaborative relationship with their supervisor was driven from the Millennial's sense that their voice has value to the authority figures in their lives (Buchanan, 2009; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Zemke, et. al., 2000). The women were supported by parents and teachers in every stage of their development as children and in the workplace they expect for their supervisor will support them in their professional growth (Buchanan, 2009; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010).

The women have a strong sense of their abilities, and honor those abilities by looking for work that was the best fit for their talents; this trait is common amongst Millennial employees (e.g. they chose work environments for which their skills were particularly well suited) (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). Growing up, Millennials were focused by their parents into activities in which they excelled (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). The participants have filtered themselves into their particular role in order to best highlight their skills and abilities. It was important to them that they excel and that they find work allowed them to excel in their role within the organization. The women in the study should continue to reflect on their skills and where these skills can be used in their roles as student service practitioners in order to discover the right place for them to continue their growth as an early-career professional and to further define their sense of self in their work. As Millennials, the women expected that once they had mastered a

task, they were ready for the next challenge in their work. This manifested in the stories as the need for recognition for their work. I related to the women, having felt that I was always ready for the next professional step even when one was not available. Millennial employees need to know the stages they must progress through to move into their next professional position. If they feel as though they have demonstrated mastery of the tasks associated with their position, they want to be given an opportunity for professional advancement even if they have only served in their current position for a few months (Buchanan, 2009; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). In order to accommodate this desire for more, the women in the study either sought out new roles in the institution that met their perceived need for professional growth or approached their supervisor with the request for additional work that included specific plans for advancement in their current role.

Where the participants sit in their journey.

Each of the participants had made progress in their journey toward Self-Authorship through their experiences as early-career women in student service roles in higher education. The process is individualized, with each person is in a different place in her personal journey. The figure below illustrates where the participants and myself are located in our journey toward Self-Authorship in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions at the end of the study as indicated in the stories shared in chapters 4 and 5.

	Following Formulas	Crossroads	Becoming the Author of One's Life	Internal Foundation
Intrapersonal dimension		Sarah Nancy	Lisa Denise	Amber Rachel (author)
Interpersonal dimension	Sarah	Mary Nancy	Amber Lisa Denise Rachel (author)	

Figure 5. Place in the Journey Toward Self-Authorship at the End of the Study

Implications

The findings of this study have uncovered the experience of early-career women in student service roles in higher education. The findings of this study suggest that early-career women in student service roles in higher education were aware of dynamics that shape their sense of self and the interactions they have with others in their workplace (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). They were conscious that they build their identity as professionals in their chosen field of work, student services, and they have a passion for their work. Scholarship, research and practice should reflect that early-career women in student services should (1) learn to develop their sense of self and their place in their work and (2) how these individuals should be supported by colleagues, supervisor and administrators to achieve their professional and personal goals (Collay & Cooper, 2008; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005).

Scholarship.

Early-career women in student service roles in higher education should be encouraged by supervisors and administrators to produce scholarship on their own

experience. While women are busy with their work tasks, time should be dedicated on regular intervals which allow the women to reflect upon their experience. As an example, a supervisor should provide reflection time as part of one's preparation for monthly status update meetings. There is not much formal research on the experience of early-career women in student services, and that which has been conducted, does not focus on the experience of practitioners who were members of the Millennial generation. Women who belong to the Millennial generation have been taught that their experiences were valued by authority figures as they grew into adulthood. They also were used to sharing their opinions, thoughts and feelings. Social media has allowed members of this generation to stay connected to one another by sharing their actions, activities, likes and dislikes through digital platforms. As the women in this study illustrated, they were willing to share their stories, and those stories can be translated into scholarship on the experience of early-career women professionals in student service roles in higher education.

The ease by which women can share their experience with others can be channeled into scholarship produced by early-career women in student services in higher education for their peers in the field. Early-career professionals should be encouraged to create a shared digital community, to discuss the dynamics that shape their experience, and share strategies for success in student services work in higher education. This can be done through Facebook, Twitter and blogs and other social media platforms. Early career women in student services should be encouraged to find ways to share their experience with others who work in higher

education. This can be done via contributions to online and print higher education magazines, like Inside Higher Ed or the Chronicle of Higher Education, NASPA and ACPA. If the women do not feel as though they can openly share their experience using their own names or other identifying factors they can write on their experiences utilizing pseudonyms. Many of the online higher education publications have set a precedence to allow individuals to contribute anonymously in order to gain a first person perceptive on a particular situation. As an example, the Chronicle of Higher Education has published a number of articles from authors who use pseudonyms when they feel specific details may harm them in their professional career. These first person writings can highlight the thoughts of members of the population group, providing insights on the dynamics impacting their experience to individuals beyond their early-career stage in student services work.

Women should also be encouraged to share their experience at professional conferences. These settings, especially at the national level, were set up so that experienced professionals provide their stories to new professionals to give guidance and to illustrate the paths by which the individual can advance in their own careers. Early-career women professionals should also be given space in these conferences to share their experiences with older professionals. The latter provides space for the voices of the early-career women to be heard and shared with student service administrators who may be able to impact their work experience in meaningful ways (Gilligan, 1982). The information exchange

allows the women to authenticate their stories as early-career professionals in student service roles in higher education, by adding to the existing scholarship.

Research.

One of the difficulties I found in conducting this study was the lack of formal research on early-career women in student service roles in higher education. The findings of the study provided themes to be further explored by scholar-practitioners - those working and conducting research on student services, full time higher education faculty, and other researchers interested in the work experience of early-career women in the student services workplace.

Future research on similar population groups can expand upon the themes uncovered in this study. First, the theme of *relationship with supervisor* should be further explored to understand how supervisors impact the individual's career experience in student services. In doing so, researchers can uncover how early-career women build confidence in their professional work setting, and the dynamics that cause individuals decide to make changes to their work environment or apply for new positions.

The journey toward Self-Authorship provides a framework for understanding the experience of the early-career professional in student service roles in higher education (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). This model should be applied to other research populations, including men in student service positions, mid-career women in student services and student service professionals at different institutional types.

The research frameworks used to study the experience of early-career women in student service roles can be expanded to include other models which address the experience of early-career women entering their professional workplace (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). These models may be found in areas such as personnel management, human recourses, sociology, and other areas that address the experience of the individual in the workplace.

Practice.

Practical considerations of this study indicate early career women need purposeful guidance in student service roles in higher education. The women in this study expressed the desire to grow new skills, to be recognized for their contribution, and to have supervisors coach them in how to be professional in the workplace. Early-career women have a responsibility to shape their own experience. However, supervisors and colleagues must promote an environment for these early career professionals to grow into their role.

Early-career women's opportunities to build their sense of self.

Early-career women in student service roles should be encouraged to explore their professional options. In doing so, they may learn the particular environment within their institutions that are a best fit between the individual's skills and the workplace of a department or division in student services. This exploration of the work environment should begin with the individuals search process for their first professional positions. Early-career women should engage in informational interviewing, meeting with individuals who hold positions they aspire to, in order to discuss the experience of working in that role for the

organization. The interview should be focused not only on the nature of the work, but also of the workplace environment. In asking questions regarding the workplace early-career women can learn more about how the employee interacts with others and the type of support they can expect from supervisors if they were to serve in that position. When possible, these interviews should also be conducted with potential colleagues. This can show to early-career women the role of the position within the department infrastructure and the expectations of the work to be conducted by the individual serving in the role.

Early-career women in student service roles in higher education should also be encouraged to continually build their professional networks. This can be done within an institution, by participating in committee work, joining professional development programs or connecting with others in similar roles through organizing working groups or social networking events. These networks provide women with the connections they need to grow within their positions. The connections provide insight into new job openings within their departments, can share policy changes that affect the individuals work and challenge women to build their skill set by discussing what they were leaning within their own roles. This camaraderie can allow the women to learn how they can develop positive and productive relationships to build upon their professional identity within the student services workplace.

The role of supervisors, mentors and colleagues.

While early-career women in student service roles must take an active role in their development as professionals in higher education, their supervisors,

mentors, and colleagues also serve to assist the professionals in their growth as new employees. The women in the study looked for guidance and mentorship from those with whom they work. They wanted honest and open feedback about their performance in the workplace, and strategies for improving upon their abilities in order to be more successful in their assignments. Supervisors in particular, must find ways to share this information with early-career women professionals to assist them to grow skills and perform tasks within their current role. Within student service departments, early-career professionals should be given opportunities to take on new challenges to build their professional skill set while guided through challenges by supervisors and more experienced colleagues. The assignment of meaningful project projects by supervisor provides early-career women the need to contribute and to build their skills so they were ready for their next professional career steps.

Supervisors, mentors and colleagues play a large role in the development of early-career women professionals in student service roles in higher education. The people with whom these individuals work in their first positions shape the ways in which they will interact with colleagues and others throughout their career. The relationships between the early-career women and their colleagues teach them the boundaries and definitions of the professional workplace relationship. As members of the Millennial generation, these women wanted to build these relationships into authentic friendships (e.g. those which extend past the boundaries of the work environment), and it was important for their colleagues to recognize that they may need their support not only on a

professional level but also with concerns in their personal lives (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). Supervisors, mentors and colleagues, need to learn how to assist these new professionals and to provide the support that early-career women in student service roles in higher education need in order to be successful in their professional endeavors.

Finally, conditions within the work environment of student services in higher education should allow for the development of early-career women professionals into the roles they aspire to hold within the organization. This can be done by allowing women to collaborate on projects with others within, and outside of, their department which peak their interest. Further, women need to participate in professional conferences to gain tools to be successful in their current and future career roles. Early-career women should engage in professional development curriculum, through training programs and formal degrees, which can provide them the credentials needed to advance. To this end, supervisors must allow flexibility with schedules for early-career women to learn new skills and earn credentials in preparation for future career roles.

Conclusions

The participants' stories as early-career women professionals in student service roles in higher education provided insights on how these women come to learn who they are and how they interact with others in their professional workplace. Through sharing the women's stories, I was able, in part, to come to answer the driving question of the research, what were the salient experiences and relationships that impact the work experience of early-career women in student

service roles in higher education? Through the findings I came to recognize that the women were aware of their skills and abilities, their strengths and weaknesses, and wanted to be able to apply this sense of self to the roles they fill within their organization. The women were also learning how to be professional colleagues by defining their relationships with others both in terms of their role as a member of the institutional community and through the personal connections they built. Implications from the findings indicate: (1) additional scholarship, (2) additional research and (3) changes to the professional practice of student service administration can assist early-career women in student service roles in higher education to develop their sense of self in building meaningful relationships with supervisors, mentors and colleagues.

The experience of early-career women professionals in student services was reflective of their journey toward Self-Authorship (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). Women entering their professional workplaces after completing their undergraduate studies were learning about their sense of self in the context of their adult lives which was framed through their experiences at work. The student service workplace in many ways is no different than others career paths where any early-career women self-authors and explores their professional interests. Women who are considering work in student services, current early-career women professionals in student service roles and supervisors, mentors and colleagues should promote conditions in the workplace that allow early-career women to build upon their sense of self, to develop who they are in the context of their workplace. In doing so, early-career women can be encouraged to discover

the right professional fit, and to find a life-long career in the field of student services in higher education.

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APPENDIX A

EXPLORING THE WORK-LIFE OF MILLENNIAL WOMEN IN STUDENT SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Date March 30, 2010

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Kris Ewing, Ed. D. in the Department of Higher and Postsecondary Education in the Mary Lou Fulton Institute and Graduate School of Education at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the work-life experience of millennial women in student services in higher education.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve participating in two individual interviews and an opportunity to meet in a focus group to discuss the final product of the study. In total your participation should be around seven hours of time over the course of a three month period, with each interview lasting no more than three hours and the focus group lasting no more than two hours. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview or focus group at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. All participants in the study must be employed full time in student service roles in higher education, have been born in 1982 or later, and identify as a woman.

The responses you provide to the interview will be placed into a format in which administrators, employees and others may be able to better understand the experience of the participants and to learn strategies as to best work with those individuals. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Every effort will be made to make sure that confidentiality is maintained. Participants will be interviewed in places outside of their work environment. Your individual responses will be confidential. The results of the study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used in any format.

I would like to audiotape this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be taped; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. All recordings will be kept in a secure location, to which only I will have access. The recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

Additionally, as a part of this study you will have the opportunity to participate in a focus group discussion regarding the final product of the study. Participation in the focus group is not required for participation in the interview process, rather it is offered by the researcher to garnish further information, if applicable, for the final product. Participation in the focus group will remain anonymous, and you may withdraw from the group at anytime. The focus group will take place outside of the participants work environment. Your individual responses to the focus group questions will be confidential. The results may be

used in reports, presentations or publications, but your name will not be used in any format.

I would like to audiotape this focus group. The focus group will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be taped; you also can change your mind after the focus group starts, just let me know. All recordings will be kept in a secure location, to which only I will have access. The recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the study

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: Kris.Ewing@asu.edu and Rachel.Beech@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

By signing below you are agreeing to participate to in the interview component of the study.

_____

_____

Signature Date

By signing below, you are agreeing to have your interview taped.

_____

_____

Signature Date

By signing below you are agreeing to participate to in the focus group component of the study.

_____

_____

Signature Date

By signing below, you are agreeing to have your focus group taped.

_____

_____

Signature Date

APPENDIX B

FIRST ROUND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself, talk about your upbringing and what brought you to working in higher education

2. Tell me about your experience working in higher education.
    - Describe for me your current job.
    - What are the responsibilities of your current job?
    - How are the current responsibilities of your position the same or different from the position to which you applied?

3. What experiences stand out when you think about your work?
    - Do you have any favorite components of your work? What do you find enjoy about your work?
    - Is there anything you dislike about your work?
    - Do you feel that the expectations you have for work in higher education have been met?
    - Do you feel that there is more expected of you from your position than you anticipated?
    - Do you ever interact with work outside of work hours?
    - How / do you interact with work outside of traditional work hours?
        - Peers
        - Technology
        - Answer Email

4. What is it like working in your position at the institution at which you are employed?
    - What are some of the unique characteristics of your workplace?
    - How do you feel about your current work place / the institution at which you are employed?

5. What are your future plans in terms of employment in student services?
    - What factors are likely to impact those plans?
    - Does the institution in which you work play any role in how those plans are being shaped?

6. Do you feel your social identities play a role in your experience with and plans for work?
    - Does your age play a role?
    - Do you feel that being a woman plays any role in your experience with and plans for work?

7. How / do you interact with work outside of traditional work hours?

8. Do you have any other comments about your experience working in and with student services in higher education?

   Prompts
   Can you elaborate on that point?
   How did / does that make you feel?
   Please tell me more about _.
   Is there anything else you would like to say about that point?
   Please continue.

APPENDIX C

SECOND ROUND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions:

1. Since our last meeting has anything changed in your work experience?
- Has anything else impacted you since our last meeting?
- Is there anything you would like to share that came up after our first meeting that you feel is important for me to know for the study?

2. How are you reflected in the work that you do?
- Do you feel personally connected to the work that you do?
- How does your work shape your identity?

3. Many of the participants talked about their feelings of value and validation in their work environment. How important for you is feeling validated in your work place?
- Do you feel that you are validated in your workplace?
- Do and how do your supervisors validate you?
- Do your peers provided validation?
- What about colleagues across the campus?

4. Do you feel fully utilized by your workplace?
- Where or how are you most utilized?
- Where or how are you under-utilized?
- What do you think impacts how and were you are utilized?

5. Do you feel that you are recognized for the work that you do for your department?
- From supervisors, peers, colleagues across campus

6. How do you like to receive recognition for your work?
- Are others aware of your preferences?

7. How do you set your expectations for your work performance?
- Is this process different that that set for you by your supervisors?
- How or where are your expectations for your performance different or the same from those of your supervisors?
- How or where are your expectations different from your immediate peers in the department?
- Do you feel that you hold yourself to higher standards than most others in the department?
- How do you communicate your expectations to others?
- Overall, what is the most important factor in setting expectations of your work performance?

8. Another constant in the previous interviews was the importance of interpersonal relationships. How do you define the most important relationships in your life?

- What are those relationships like?
- With whom do you have those relationships?

9. What types of relationships have you built though work? What are those relationships like?

- Supervisors?
- Peers?
- Students?
- Colleagues across campus?

10. How were those relationships built?

- Shared experience?
- Mentoring?

11. What factors may cause a relationship to move from professional to personal?

12. What advice would you give to someone entering the work environment of student services in higher education?

- If you could give your supervisor, or those who give you direction, advice about how best to work with someone like yourself, what would it be?

13. At this point is there anything else I should know about your experience working in higher education?

Prompts
Can you elaborate on that point?
How did / does that make you feel?
Please tell me more about _.
Is there anything else you would like to say about that point?
Please continue.