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I, Nicole K. Lepone Mayo, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Urban Educational Leadership.

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An analysis of student affairs professionals' management of role conflict and multiple roles in relation to work/life balance

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An analysis of student affairs professionals’ management of role conflict and multiple roles in relation to work/life balance

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Of the College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this inquiry is to study how student affairs professionals manage role conflict in relation to work/life balance based on the challenging culture of the field. The underlying goals are to identify the barriers or challenges of managing multiple roles as a student affairs administrator and identify strategies to assist employees in managing and integrating multiple roles. To conduct this qualitative study, I interviewed 15 student affairs professionals regarding their ability to manage role conflict in relation to work/life balance. Findings include recommendations for university leadership in assisting professional staff in managing multiple roles, which include supporting self-care, value adoption, and changing the institutional culture around work/life balance practices.
This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Brian, and my parents. To Brian, thank you for supporting me and challenging me to start and finish this process. I am thankful we walked our academic journeys together and pushed each other through the most challenging times. The sacrifices we made over the last several years will no doubt come to fruition in the future.

To my parents Joe and Andrea, thank you for instilling work ethic and determination in me at a young age. If it were not for you infusing the importance of education in me, I don’t think I would have reached this goal today. Thank you for your support during all of my personal and professional pursuits thus far; I could not have reached these goals without you. I hope I have made you proud.
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A special note of gratitude goes to the participants in this study. I am thankful you were willing to share your experiences with a colleague and that you trusted me to tell your story. I hope you are pleased with the outcome and I give you my word that this mission will not end after this dissertation. There is much work to be done.

To my students—past, current, and future—I hope that my research continues to improve professional practice in order to give you the best possible undergraduate experience. This is an amazing time in your life; you deserve to work with staff that is well balanced and dedicated as you are. Know that I learn from you each day and I am looking forward to see the impact you will make on the world.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background
When one thinks about work/life balance, one thinks of a weight scale. The scale typically starts on an equal level; however, if an individual’s career is placed on one side of the scale and his or her life categories (children, parents, siblings, volunteerism, pet care, etc.) on the other, the scale can become unbalanced. How can we, as parents, siblings, partners, managers, and employees help stabilize the scale?

Work/life balance has received extensive publicity due to demographic and social changes, including more women in the workforce (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Jones, Burke, & Westman, 2006; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002), advancements in technology (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009), and global competition for financial resources (Edwards & Rothbard, 2006; Jones, Burke, & Westman, 2006). Strapped financial conditions in many industries have led to decreased staffing while increasing the workload and stress on those who do not lose their jobs (Jones, Burke, & Westman, 2006). These stressors call for industries to take notice of employees’ well-being—in both work and life—to maximize individual productivity and alleviate stress, burnout, and turnover, particularly in student affairs divisions in universities.

The culture in student affairs, a division specifically dedicated to students and student learning and services, has changed dramatically over time. The culture of the field makes it a challenging environment in which to find work/life balance, as the demands of the job often require long hours and evening and weekend work (Nobbe & Manning, 1997). Houdyshell (2007) contended that, “Unfortunately for many, the culture of student affairs does not encourage professionals to be balanced in their professional or personal lives” (p. 191). There tends to be a
high attrition rate due to the heavy demands of the field, especially among women in mid-level positions (Dale, 2007; Houdyshell, 2007). In addition, current researchers (Anthony, 2012) reveal that practitioners are not just leaving specific jobs; rather, they are mostly deserting the field. As a result, Boehman (2007) has called for a shift in the cultural norms of the profession, specifically targeting the identification of work/life balance.

Statement of the Problem

Previous studies have highlighted a variety of causes for work/life imbalance (Bailey, 2008; Hochschild, 2003; Koppes & Civian, 2010; Quinn & Shapiro, 2007; Waters & Bardoel, 2006). Low morale is the most common effect for work/life imbalance, typically stemming from various issues faced by administrators (Drago, 2007; Koppes & Civian, 2010). Recent economic uncertainty fuels much of the low morale present in administrative units as budget cuts, unemployment fears, understaffing, and survivor guilt after layoffs all contribute to workplace dissatisfaction. These factors often lead to increased workloads, the most common cause for low morale (Waters & Bardoel, 2006). Because of significant financial reductions across higher education, administrators are not only managing the responsibilities of their current jobs but also are overseeing responsibilities for positions left vacant because of limited financial resources (Glazer-Raymo, 2008). Though institutions try to assist employees in dealing with workload stressors by instituting childcare programs and flexible work arrangements, these do not address the central cause, leaving employees still stressed (Elliott, 2003; Koppes & Civian, 2010; Renn & Hughes, 2005).

Some studies (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002) have suggested that family responsibilities more strongly negatively affect the career success of women than they do men; however, scant research exists that addresses gender differences in work/life experiences (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002). Thus, there is a strong need to include
various types of couples (single parents, blended families) as well as single employees with other life responsibilities such as elder care, in order to measure the influence gender has on managing multiple roles (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this inquiry is to examine how student affairs professionals manage role conflict in relation to work/life balance, based on the challenging work culture. The underlying goals are to identify the barriers or challenges of managing multiple roles as student affairs administrators and identify some strategies that can assist employees in managing and integrating multiple roles.

**Research Questions**

In an effort to uncover the differences administrators encounter on the issues of work/life balance, the problems they experience from role conflict and multiple roles, qualitative research methods will be used in the current study. The research questions follow:

- What are the barriers or challenges of managing multiple roles as a student affairs administrator?
- How do student affairs administrators manage role conflict in their life based on work/life balance?
- What can be done within the institutional work environment to assist in managing multiple roles (wife, mother, husband, father, caregiver, etc.)?

**Significance of the Study**

The topic of work/life balance in student affairs has been extensively studied though the inclusion of role conflict when investigating the management of multiple roles remains relatively unstudied. Blackhurst (2000) suggested that further studies be undertaken to examine how student affairs professionals balance their personal and professional roles. Including men in
these studies can bolster the notion that work/life balance and multiple role management are not solely women’s issues.

The importance of this study lies in the demographic shift currently taking place. First, women are leaving the field of student affairs more rapidly than their male counterparts (Blackhurst, 2000). Though this is not necessarily linked to work/life balance issues in student affairs, the problem does deserve some consideration as institutions spend large sums of money constantly recruiting and training employees, suggesting that turnover is a concern. Second, large numbers of senior student affairs officers are beginning to retire (NASPA, 2011), leaving behind many vacant positions. As mid-level managers start to move into these senior-level positions, they must properly understand the challenges their employees confront regarding work/life balance and managing multiple roles if the former are to increase productivity in departments and improve morale in a field that has seen its share of struggles over the last decade.

**Theoretical Framework**

The use of feminist poststructuralism to study role conflict and how conflicts affect work/life balance in these administrators is critical to understanding how individuals negotiate and experience work/life balance and manage multiple roles. This study aims to highlight the roles of power and hierarchies in higher education administration, the difficulties encountered in achieving work/life balance, and the responses to multiple roles and role conflict.

hooks (2000) offered a simple definition for feminism—“A movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression . . . the movement is not about being anti-male . . . the problem is sexism” (p. viii). This definition encompasses the three main principles of feminist theory: 1) identifying women’s valuable contributions to the world; 2) understanding women’s
inability to achieve their potential as an oppressed group, and 3) pinpointing the critical link between feminist research and social transformation (Ropers-Huilman, 2002). This study will focus on the third point by identifying the critical link between the research questions related to work/life balance and the social transformation required to deal with challenging situations.

**Feminist Poststructuralism**

Feminist poststructuralism will serve as the theoretical framework for this study as it is a valuable way to analyze normal, everyday practice. By using this framework, one can challenge the programs, policies, and issues student affairs administrators encounter. Many of the critical analyses of work/life policy in higher education have been conducted using feminist poststructuralist thought. Feminist poststructuralism is a branch of postmodern thought based on a critique of structuralist approaches. Late 20th-century feminists adopted Foucault’s (1978) poststructuralist philosophy in order to analyze power relationships. Feminists supported Foucault’s philosophy particularly because of his belief that people’s lives are thoroughly interwoven with the social world that surrounds them. Feminist poststructuralism utilizes language, subjectivity, and power relations to understand and identify strategies for change (Gavey, 1997; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2008; Weedon, 1997). Feminist poststructuralism carries certain assumptions. First, one’s sense of self determines the language one utilizes, influenced by economic, social, and political practices (Weedon, 1997). Social practices can affect men and women differently in the workplace and fuel many issues related to work/life balance faced by student affairs administrators. Second, language is understood as competing discourses. Discourse is defined as interrelated systems of statements that revolve around common meanings and values “that are products of social factors, power, and practice” (Gavey, 1997; Holloway, 1983, p. 231). In other words, there are many ways and lenses through which one gives meaning
to the world. Discourse becomes especially critical when looking at the supportiveness of an institution across departments as each supervisor uses a specific discourse, influenced by differing social practices.

Subjectivity incorporates the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions that underlie sense of self in relation to the world (Weedon, 1997). Subjectivity is variable, changing each time a person thinks or speaks. An individual’s subjectivity is constructed through social discourse, cultural practices, and individual motivations and intentions. These subjectivities are shaped through multiple discourses, known as conflicting subject positions, which either reinforce or compete with one another (Gavey, 1997; Weedon, 1997). Thus, it is no surprise that individuals encounter serious and conflicting subject positions in the workplace. For example, men who work long hours, travel often, and remain geographically mobile to gain advancement opportunities may find the demands of the job and parenting responsibilities incompatible. Weedon (1997) provides an especially useful example of a woman experiencing conflicting subject positions:

A woman who is the primary caretaker of her child and works outside the home in a white-collar job may be referred to as a working mother. The working mother must negotiate competing discourses that produce conflicting subject positions: woman as mother, a subject position produced by a discourse of motherhood, and shaped by dominant discourse of femininity, and woman as white-collar worker, a subject position produced by a discourse of professionalism, and shaped by a larger dominant discourse of masculinity. The working mother, thus, is subjected to the contradiction and double blind that often occur within a range of conflicting discourses. (p. 34)
Further, since American culture views women as the primary caregivers, society places expectations on them to perform these duties along with other responsibilities, including paid work (Collinson, 2003; Gavey, 1997; Weedon, 1997). Though this societal expectation is implicit, it can shape the way women view their abilities to balance multiple roles. Further, one’s sense of self is quite complicated in the workplace. Individuals rarely experience one true self because of unlimited identity sources, which vary depending on the situation. While some of these identities are mutually compatible, others may be contradictory or incompatible (Collinson, 2003). As a result, these individuals’ work and home lives may collide.

Not surprisingly, one of the main influences on a person’s subjectivity is education. Individuals are exposed to alternate ways of constructing meaning through educational experiences, which constantly rewrite one’s subjectivity. It is important that higher education institutions take note of the effects that policies and practices have on individuals’ subjectivity, as related to gender norms and work/life balance. Student affairs administrators may be poor role models for students on these issues. For example, their working several late nights in a row without overtime compensation to regain balance, or answering e-mails late in the evening, can continue to perpetuate a never-ending cycle of imbalance and unrealistic work/life expectations.

Finally, power and knowledge are mutually dependent on one another as both conceptualize the relationships between language, social institutions, and individual subjectivity (Weedon, 1997). Power generates knowledge, knowledge initiates power, and truth comes from power and knowledge (Weedon, 1997). Truth is not finality in feminist poststructuralism; rather, scholars in this area approach truth by gathering knowledge to show the history of the truth in question. In addition, feminist poststructuralists do not view power as repressive. They feel that it is exercised rather than possessed. Foucault’s (1978) work established power as a productive
force when used in conjunction with knowledge. According to his reasoning, power not only emanates from those with structural authority but also creates change at local societal levels.

Feminist poststructuralists ignore the power binary of those who have power and those who do not (Allan, 2010; Weedon, 1997). Located within power, however, is the idea of difference. In interpreting difference, one is naturally drawn to binaries. For the purposes of this research, a natural binary may be men/women. However, using Derrida’s (1982) notion of deconstruction, one can recognize how within any dichotomy, multiple complexities exist; therefore, discourse is representative of power relations that construct culture and reflect it—one single truth to any complexity does not exist (Allan, 2010; Baxter, 2003). Discourse, subjectivity, and power are inextricably tied in feminist poststructuralism. Discourse is the central locus where power and knowledge join to create a sense of reality and sense of self (Foucault, 1978; Mills, 1997).

In higher education and student affairs, power dictates the complex social realities that create and support gendered institutional policies and organizational structures—creating a barrier to work/life balance and effectively maintaining multiple roles. This power supports male-dominated identities with which leaders still struggle (Bailey, 2011). Administrators construct identities based on this power and social structure, identities that do not support all individuals’ best interests (Pasque & Nicholson, 2011).

**Definition of Terms**

**Behavior-based conflict:** When role behaviors required in one domain are inappropriate for role behaviors needed in another (Blundson et al., 2006; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985)
**Boundaries:** The physical, temporal, emotional, cognitive, and/or relational limits that define entities as separate from one another; the process of simplifying and ordering the environment (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000)

**Gender:** The socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women (World Health Organization, 2009)

**Identity:** Referring to persons, (a) A whole with multiple parts, and (b) A collection of multiple parts. The first is an integrated identity in which all elements connect to one another, and the second is a contextual identity in which the connection of elements depends on situational variables. The multiple identities include such traditional categories as: occupation, relationships, religion, politics, race, and sexual orientation, but can also encompass other factors such as age, socioeconomic class, and vocational interests (Collins, 2001)

**Role:** A set of expectations applied to a person in a particular position

**Role conflict:** “When pressures experienced in one role are incompatible with pressures arising in another role” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77; see also Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Michel & Hargis, 2008; Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler, & Cullen, 2010; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002)

**Role overload:** “Decreased ability to fulfill obligations required by various roles” (Blundson et al., 2006, p. 3; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000)

**Role sender:** An individual who develops and communicates role expectations to a focal person (Marshall & Barnett, 1993)

**Sense-of-self:** One’s personal identity as defined by each individual

**Strain-based conflict:** When strain in one role affects performance in another role, resulting in tension, anxiety, and stress (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985)
**Student affairs administrator**: Employee working in the Division of Services who provides support to students at institutions of higher education in order to enhance their growth and development in a co-curricular environment, outside the classroom

**Time-based conflict**: The result of two scenarios: A person has multiple roles that compete for his or her time, and/or pressures in one role cause preoccupations in another (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985)

**True self**: In poststructuralism, the self is represented through a person’s true feelings and desires (as opposed to the false self where one adapts feelings and desires to fit in or in some cases, survive) in a particular setting. For example, one’s true self may be different at home than at work, due to the cultural meanings and practices in the separate environments.

**Work/family conflict**: A type of role conflict when situations create incompatibilities between home and work responsibilities

**Work/life balance**: The balance between a person’s work life (paid employment) and personal, unpaid life experiences (Koppes & Civian, 2010)

**Organization of the Dissertation**

This chapter presented an introduction to the problems university administrators encounter in student affairs related to work/life balance and managing multiple roles. The theoretical framework of feminist poststructuralism, will guide the research study. Chapter Two will be a review of the work/life balance literature, including role conflict, work/life balance experiences based on gender, Federal regulations, work/life balance initiatives in higher education and student affairs, and an industry comparison. This review will help frame the methodology applied in the research study in Chapter Three. Chapter Four will cover the findings of the research study. Chapter Five will discuss the results related to the existing
literature presented in Chapter Two, will address the implications of the study, and will offer recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Both scholars (Koppes & Civian, 2010) and lay writers often describe work/life balance as a balance between a person’s work life (paid employment) and personal unpaid life experiences. Loumansky, Goodman, and Jackson (2007) defined work/life as the interweaving complexities individuals face rather than work-life, the compartmentalization of complexities. The 2007 definition of work/life balance has broadened in recent years. Studies often incorporate a definition of work/life in broader terms than the mere management of home and family (Koppes & Civian, 2010). This expanded definition minimizes the importance of work-family despite significant research still focusing on work-family conflict (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Michel & Hargis, 2008; Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler & Cullen, 2010; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002). Work/life balance as the management of multiple responsibilities at work and home includes other responsibilities, such as caring for elderly parents, maintaining friendships, and volunteering. The following chapter presents the available literature on role conflict, Federal mandates, industry comparison, and work/life balance as related to higher education.

Role Conflict

Role conflict theory is a valuable tool to apply to understand the consequences of work on other aspects of life. Individuals experience role conflict when “pressures experienced in one role are incompatible with pressures arising in another…” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77; see also Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Michel & Hargis, 2008; Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler, & Cullen, 2010; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002). Role conflict is a negative phenomenon which can lead to dissatisfaction with life and work, increased stress, and role overload (Blundson, Blyton, Reed, & Dastmalchian, 2006).
The term ‘role’ is defined as a set of expectations applied to a person in a particular position. Examples of roles include spouse/partner, parent, supervisor, friend, confidant, mentor, caregiver, coach, etc. It is inevitable that individuals play these roles simultaneously. Conflict arises when individuals are required to play roles that conflict with the value systems associated with other roles, when role expectations are not clearly defined or articulated, or when too many roles need attention at once.

One of the most significant stressors on individuals experiencing role conflict is that role senders communicate multiple messages (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Role senders develop and communicate role expectations to individuals (Marshall & Barnett, 1993; Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981) who are the ones most likely to experience conflict, based on senders’ messages. Typical role senders are supervisors and managers, spouses, and co-workers, or the institutional or professional culture. A frequently overlooked role sender that can trigger role conflict is society/societal expectations. The way in which society in general views employment, parenthood, or its combination often creates the largest role conflicts in working parents, especially those in student affairs.

**Types of Role Conflict**

Role overload, an important principle for fully understanding work/life balance, is the “decreased ability to fulfill obligations required by various roles” (Blundson et al., 2006, p. 3; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Thoits (1983) found that assuming no more than five roles at one time is optimal for psychological well-being; if pushed beyond five roles, participants in her study experienced stress, guilt, and overall life dissatisfaction. In addition, role quality appears more critical than the number of roles an individual assumes or the time spent in any given role. In applying role conflict to work/life balance issues, one assumes that individuals have limited
time and energy; to add any extra roles and responsibilities creates tension between competing demands, fostering role overload (Blundson et al., 2006; Gilbert, Holahan, & Manning, 1981; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Marshall & Barnett, 1993).

Work/family conflict is another type of role conflict. In 1985, Greenhaus and Beutell (see also Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) identified three main sources of work/family conflict: time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based. Time-based conflict is the result of two scenarios: 1) A person carries multiple roles which compete for his or her time, and/or 2) pressures in one role cause preoccupations in another (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Time-based conflict is directly triggered by the number of hours worked per week and the number of hours spent commuting to and from work each week (Burke, Weir, & Duwors, 1980; Keith & Schafer, 1980; Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1980).

Days for student affairs administrators vary widely. Variations in hours worked from one day to another can create time-based conflicts in those with families. For example, during the summer months, an orientation director may experience more time-based conflicts due to demands made by first-year students participating in pre-enrollment programs. Business managers may experience time-based conflicts as they approach the end of the fiscal year as budget management, planning, and audits require long days. Large families, part-time employment, and a spouse/partner’s work schedule can also trigger time-based conflicts (Burke et al., 1980; Keith & Schafer, 1980; Pleck et al., 1980).

Strain-based conflicts crop up when strain in one role affects performance in another (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Symptoms of strain include tension, anxiety, fatigue, depression, apathy, and irritability. At work, a variety of situations can lead to these strain-based conflicts: taking on a new role or responsibility (due to a lack of knowledge
or experience in a particular area), and poor or absent leadership and management (leaving employees with little direction, supervision, and support when they need it). A major strain-related problem, interaction fatigue (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kanter, 1977), occurs when frequent, challenging interactions with students emotionally drain administrators, which may cause them to withdraw at home, interacting less with family members. Unsympathetic spouses/partners, spouses/partners who disagree on how to divvy up housework and domestic tasks, and caring for children under the age of six can also contribute to these conflicts (Crouter, 1984; Emmons, Biernat, Tiedje, Lang, & Wortman, 1990; Marshall & Barnett, 1993). Quality childcare services are often difficult to find and/or are unaffordable, especially those on college campuses where childcare facilities frequently operate at maximum capacity. Time and strain-based conflicts involve similar symptoms since long and inflexible work hours are part of each.

Behavior-based conflicts come about when role behaviors required in one domain are inappropriate for role behaviors expected in another (Blundson et al., 2006; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). This creates a greater number of conflicts in women than men as the culture is based on male leadership traits (Bailey, 2011). This display of stereotypical masculine traits including emotional stability, objectivity, and self-reliance, is expected in university administrators even though women, regardless of position, are generally expected to nurture, collaborate, and reduce hierarchical bureaucracy. Though some women are undoubtedly capable of exhibiting masculine characteristics in the workplace, behavior-based conflicts crop up when women use gender-expected traits in an arena where such traits are not conducive to the given moment--at home or work.

Though most research on role conflict usually focuses on its negative outcomes, some researchers have found that handling multiple roles can be beneficial to both men and women
(Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006; Farrell & Rosenberg, 1981; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Rao, Apte, & Subbakrishna, 2003; Wethington & Kessler, 1989). For women, maintaining a balance between work and life can affirm the degree of their success and broaden their perspectives on work and family. In addition, women can also benefit from the added incomes, larger social networks and support, and increased self-esteem. For men, keeping a balance between work and family is linked to better health outcomes (Farrell & Rosenberg, 1981; Marling, 2006). Thus, both genders experience a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment after successfully balancing multiple roles (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981; Farrell & Rosenberg, 1981).

Sieber (1974) identified four linking mechanisms that can enhance the quality of life while carrying out multiple roles: role privileges, status security, status enhancements, and personality enrichments. First, role privileges are defined as rights obtained from one role which improve the quality of life in another (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Sieber, 1974). Examples include health benefits, vacation, sick time, and tuition remission. Second, status security refers to the coping mechanisms utilized in one role that help individuals meet challenges in another (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Sieber, 1974). For example, a spouse or partner, secretary, administrative assistant, or helpful neighbor may all serve as buffers to help individuals avoid failure in any of their multiple roles. Third, status enhancements are the resources provided in one role that improve experiences in another (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2006; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002). Status enhancements normally assist individuals in reaching career and personal goals. Examples include invitations to various networking functions or social events, access to childcare or after-school programs that others may not be able to obtain, and applications of flexible work schedules. Fourth, personality enrichments
involve the development of skills in one role that can be applied effectively in another (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Sieber, 1974). Examples include the acquisition of professional skills in the workplace, such as negotiation, problem-solving, and conflict management. These same skills can also be applied in one’s personal life, permitting spillover that can positively affect work and family life.

The existence of role conflict is central to work/life imbalance. Its presence has spurred the crafting of initiatives across the country to assist employees in juggling their multiple roles. Despite creators’ good intentions, these programs are aimed mainly at women. It is worrisome that despite the programs, women still deal with unacceptable levels of role conflict that affect their jobs, and their ability to effectively handle multiple roles.

**Gender Differences**

The extant research suggested that both men and women struggle in achieving a balance between work and life (Drago, 2007; Hochschild, 2004; Hochschild & Manchung, 1989; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Parasuraman and Greenhaus (2002) noted that despite men’s changing views on gender roles in dual-income couples, the status quo persists due to societal expectations, gender constructs, and a concept termed the ‘second shift.’ This term refers to women’s tendency to do more of the household labor, including childcare and elder parent care, than do men, imposing greater time demands on the former (Drago, 2007; Hochschild, 2004; Hochschild & Manchug, 1989; Press & Townsley, 1998). Levtov (2001) argued that because of professional standards (i.e., the requirement to work late nights and on weekends and obtain a terminal degree), a woman may come to believe that the “realities of combining a family and a career may be incompatible with the current values of the profession” (p. 17). This is a dilemma especially evident in student affairs, which as Levtov put it, was “founded on the values of equal
access, equal rights, and the development of the whole person” (p. 30). The very nature of their work which involves, as noted, long hours, weekend labor, and the need for terminal degrees, challenges administrators who must deal with multiple roles (Marshall, 2009; Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2008).

Men and women experience role conflicts differently. Women are more likely to sense conflicts between career and family because of their perceived or actual responsibly for family and household tasks unrelated to ‘real’ world work tasks (Belkin, 2003; Elliott, 2003; Gilbert et al., 1981; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). Men typically resolve role conflicts—specifically work/family conflicts—by compartmentalizing. This compartmentalization, also known as segmentation, means that they leave work roles behind and concentrate on family roles at home (Bird & Ford, 2009; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). While this compartmentalization represents the ideal scenario, work roles tend to intrude into people’s lives, thereby inciting potential behavior-based conflicts. Women, on the other hand, find it difficult to compartmentalize due to behavior-based conflicts, and unspoken requirements to maintain male-gendered characteristics at work, and traditionally female-gendered characteristics at home (Dale, 2007; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Bird and Ford (2009) contended that “women administrators who choose to combine these roles are survivors in a system that does not easily forgive inadequate performance in any realm” (p. 26). Technology, however, has made the process of compartmentalizing much more problematic for both men and women. Virtual workspaces are now common, regulating how most people conduct their work, eliminating boundaries (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009), and allowing access to individuals 24/7. The usage of smart phones and other plugged-in technologies makes it hard for administrators to leave work as the work is ever present whether on cell phones, laptops, or tablets.
The ability to balance work/life demands varies across the subpopulations of women. Marshall and Barnett (1993) found that work/life integration is much harder for working mothers to achieve if they have children under the age of 12. Women at senior levels of administration pay the highest price for career interruptions: institutions have invested heavily in these women, and though the expectation is unwritten, institutional leaders do look for long-term work commitments in return (Alliance for Work-Life Progress, 2008). Single mothers confront even greater burdens. Elliott (2003) (see also Edwards & Rothbard, 2006) found that spousal/partner support is crucial for women who combine university employment with family responsibilities.

Much of the reviewed research regarding work/life balance in men at the senior level has yielded conflicting findings. According to Howard-Hamilton (2005) and Renn and Hughes (2005), men do not generally coordinate children’s care, and thus are less likely to need or seek institutional support for this particular domestic area. However, Hochschild (2003) (see also Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Stebbins, 2001) argued that men’s roles are changing; men today spend on average more time each day with their children than they did 20 years ago, and many are becoming more directly involved in eldercare. Drago (2007) and Hochschild (2003) asserted that men are taking on more housework tasks because women are taking full-time jobs with significant responsibilities. Many men also resist the idea of becoming like their fathers. As dual-income families gradually became the norm over the past years, men have come to accept the roles of husband/partner and father. Men now can be valued presences in their wives/partners’ and children’s lives in ways their fathers never were (Drago, 2007; Hochschild, 2003; Stebbins, 2001). Including men in this discussion is vital to understanding how supervisors can provide stronger support for all employees, especially in student affairs where men hold the majority of management positions (Levtov, 2001).
Federal Regulations and Work/Life Support

The early legislation regarding work/life issues both positively and negatively affected women. The Women’s Bureau Act of 1920 was one of the first pieces of legislation related to work/life issues (Stebbins, 2001). This bureau was charged with the task of collecting research on the issue, a project which ultimately led to the passage of other legislation. In 1932, the Federal Economy Act, dubbed the married person’s clause, forced one spouse to resign if both were working for the Federal government, thereby limiting the number of job holders in a household (Stebbins, 2001). After this Act was passed, the Women’s Bureau kept statistics on the spouses forced to resign, and discovered that 75% of them were women (Stebbins, 2001). The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 set minimum wages and a 40-hour workweek for men and women (Stebbins, 2001). The Lanham Act of 1940 allocated defense-related funds for World War II for the purpose of building child-care facilities to support women assisting war efforts (Stebbins, 2001).

Three historic pieces of legislation were passed in the 1960s and 70s. First, the Equal Pay Act in 1963 which prohibited unequal pay for similar work by both sexes (Stebbins, 2001), represented the first attempt to address sex discrimination in the workplace. Second, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, passed in 1964, mandated equal opportunity for women, including a ban on wage discrimination (Stebbins, 2001). Third, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, passed in 1972, was designed to protect individuals from discrimination, due to race, religion, national origin, and gender.

At about the same time, institutional leaders became concerned about work/life issues because of social, economic, and political changes, including an increase in the number of women joining the paid labor force (Goodstein, 1994). The initial work/life issues that
employers were forced to confront were child leave and childcare. During the 1960s, as noted previously, women were expected to resign from their jobs after becoming pregnant due to their workplaces’ inflexible natures (Smith, Downs, & O’Connell, 2001). In 1978, Congress passed the Pregnancy Discrimination Act which prohibited employment discrimination based on pregnancy or childbirth. It protected women’s hiring, promotions, job security, and pay levels. At the same time, the Federal tax code was altered to offer working families with dependent children a tax credit on childcare costs. This change signified the first time employers became involved in work/life related issues (Stebbins, 2001). In the 1980s, employers began to offer more flexible work schedules and employer-based childcare benefits. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, the most comprehensive Federal act related to maternity leave and employment protection, mandated that employers give employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for childbirth and adoption, care of a family member with a serious illness, or care for oneself due to a serious illness that makes it impossible to perform one’s job (Stebbins, 2001). Eligibility requirements included employment with companies for one year, 1,250 hours worked in the 12 months prior to the leave, and full-time employment status. FMLA covered only businesses with 50 or more people (Smith, Downs, & O’Connell, 2001).

Industry Comparison

Work/life balance is an issue found across all sectors of the work force. In 2005, Corporate Voices for Working Families compiled a comparative report on the state of workplace flexibility in the corporate sector and in higher education. World at Work, a highly regarded association for human resources professionals, published the study. The report separated the data into three groups: higher education faculty and staff, and corporate employees. The topics involved the following: the top factors considered to join an organization, the factors to decide
whether to stay with an organization, and the opportunities for flexible work options considered valuable to these groups. Table 1 reveals some of the significant factors potential employees considered before deciding whether to join particular organizations.

Table 1

*Top Factors in the Decision to Join an Organization*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty/colleagues</th>
<th>opportunity to grow/learn</th>
<th>Advancement opportunity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic reputation of program/academic unit</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for career development</td>
<td>Challenge of the job</td>
<td>Job security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Advancement opportunity</td>
<td>Salary/pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family considerations</td>
<td>Ability to integrate work with personal and/or family life</td>
<td>Ability to balance work with personal/family life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University’s academic reputation</td>
<td>Challenge of the job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Corporate Voices for Working Families, 2005, p. 10)

The ability to integrate work, family, and personal life is lower for all these groups on the list behind factors such as advancement opportunities, the ability to grow and learn, and the reputation of the organization. Table 2 presents the factors employees ponder when deciding to stay with an organization.
Table 2

*Top Factors in the Decision to Stay with an Organization*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty/colleagues</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Salary/pay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to balance work with personal life</td>
<td>Salary/wages</td>
<td>Job security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary/compensation</td>
<td>Ability to integrate work with personal/family life</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family considerations</td>
<td>Opportunity to grow/learn</td>
<td>Ability to balance work with personal/family life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Challenge of the job</td>
<td>Advancement opportunity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Corporate Voices for Working Families, 2005, p. 13)

Balancing work with personal and family life is ranked most essential to faculty members and less so to university staff and corporate employees, respectively. However, this imbalance is likely linked to faculty status. For example, job security is potentially less tenuous for faculty than for staff who typically are not contract employees; serving instead at the whim of the Board of Trustees. Similarly, faculty members tend to collect higher salaries than staff do and manage negotiated raises that are incorporated into contract agreements. Staff usually receive raises only when the budget allows, especially at public institutions.

The study also revealed that flexible work options were deemed valuable to faculty (see Table 3 for the full display).
Table 3

Flexible Work Options of Value to Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Faculty Total %</th>
<th>Asst Men %</th>
<th>Asst Women %</th>
<th>Assoc Men %</th>
<th>Assoc Women %</th>
<th>Full Men %</th>
<th>Full Women %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate teaching for one semester to focus on research</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flextime or flexible hours</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time back-to-work as transition after major illness, etc.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time tenure appts</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time post tenure appts (period of time)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time back-to-work as transition after childbirth or adoption</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011, p. 15)

Faculty women from varying levels found that flexible work options were mostly beneficial. Seventy-one percent of the female associate professors preferred flextime or flexible working hours as compared to 33% of the men at the same level, and 28% of the female assistant professors found part-time options after a child’s birth or adoption the best choice as compared to 9% of men in the same position (Corporate Voices for Working Families, 2005).

Table 4 displays higher education staffs’ preferences in flexible work options. Sixty-three percent of women preferred flextime or flexible work hours as compared to 47% of men, and 32% of women valued part-time work or reduced hours, as compared to 16% of men (Corporate Voices for Working Families, 2005). In a stance different from faculty women, only
17% of female staff valued part-time employment as a transitional option after childbirth or adoption. Table 4 also revealed that women in corporate positions also chose flexible work options: seventy-six percent of women preferred flextime or flexible work hours, and 77% found value in part-time work as a viable transitional option after childbirth or adoption (Corporate Voices for Working Families, 2005).

Table 4

*Flexible Work Options of Value to Higher Education Staff v. Corporate Employees*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Higher Education Staff</th>
<th>Corporate Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>Men %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility in schedule to take classes</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flextime or flexible hours</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility in work schedule to exercise</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compressed workweek</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommuting</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time back-to-work as transition after major illness, etc.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time or reduced hours</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time back-to-work as transition after childbirth or adoption</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job sharing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011, p. 17)

The disparities that exist between the differing careers highlight the difficulties organizations face when assisting employees in managing their work/life balance. The preceding data were placed into a flexibility spectrum, a four-point scale that describes the extent of an
organizations’ work/life flexibility (see below for abridged version from Corporate Voices for Working Families, 2005):

- Let’s make a deal: No flexibility philosophy, strategy, or policy
- Moving toward formalization: Written policies exist and programs exist, but flexibility is extremely limited
- Evolution to strategy: Flexibility is perceived as a strategic portion of the business plan
- Cultural embedding: Flexibility is part of the organizational culture (p. 22)

Researchers from Corporate Voices for Working Families found that higher education fell into the ‘moving toward formalization’ phase in which policies exist, but flexibility is limited to one segment of the workforce or offered only in one type (e.g., flexible scheduling). This particular phase also emphasizes the lack of training offered to managers and employees on how to best facilitate work/life balance, a lack that can lead to inconsistent management practices institution-wide. The Corporate Voices for Working Families study revealed a significant retention issue in higher education. Seventy-two percent of employees in organizations with high levels of workplace flexibility, plan to remain with their employers for the next year, as compared with 49% in organizations with low levels (Corporate Voices for Working Families, 2005). These facts are of significant concern to managers in higher education. Elliott (2003) argued that,

In order for universities to remain competitive employers, and to produce high quality scholarship and educational training, they must take serious steps to address work and family conflict, and use their intellectual capital to devise solutions that work for the good of the university, its mission, and the well-being of its staff (p. 179).
Higher Education Administrators

While the functions and job responsibilities of higher education administrators differ by department and rank, they generally provide leadership and manage the day-to-day activities in universities. There are four main areas: student services, academic support, business services, and external affairs. Administrators establish and enforce policies and procedures, supervise professional and paraprofessional staff, develop academic and co-curricular programs, keep records, prepare budgets, handle relations with parents and other guardians, recruit and admit students, and strengthen relationships with various community partners (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Most of these positions require masters’ or doctoral degrees, strong interpersonal and communication skills, and a solid understanding of budgeting and state and Federal funding processes.

In the first quarter, 2012, these administrators held approximately 1.3 million jobs in the United States (U. S.) (Higher Education Employment Report, 2012). Salaries at this level vary, depending on the types of institution, the positions held, and the administrative departments in which the employees work (see Table 5 for more detailed salary information, based only on doctoral-granting institutions). Benefits for administrators are usually more generous than for those in other industries; most university packages offer four to five weeks of vacation a year, generous health and retirement packages, and tuition remission for employees and employees’ spouses/partners and dependents.
Table 5

Median Annual Salaries for Selected Higher Education Administrators, 2011-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Title</th>
<th>Median Annual Salary (in dollars)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Academic Officer</td>
<td>281,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Development Officer</td>
<td>239,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean of Students</td>
<td>115,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director, Women’s Center</td>
<td>65,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrar</td>
<td>69,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director, Student Activities</td>
<td>101,621</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) projected that hiring of higher education administrators will increase by about 8% between 2008 and 2018, a consistent growth rate as compared to other occupations. During the first quarter, 2012, these jobs continued to grow at a faster rate than U.S. jobs overall (Higher Education Employment Report, 2012). Specifically, the report revealed that during the second quarter, 2012, the Midwest region of the country, including Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana, saw the greatest increase in administrative positions. Despite this promising development, fewer applicants are expected to apply for student services positions: many people do not seek these positions because they require a master’s or doctoral degree, and they can earn higher salaries in other occupations which carry fewer degree requirements (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

The types of administrators remain static across institutions though specific job duties may differ. The Provost—or Chief Academic Officer—aids the President, makes faculty appointments and tenure decisions, develops budgets, and establishes academic policies and programs, including general academic visions for institutions. College department heads—or chairpersons—run departments that specialize in a particular field of study, such as business,
history, or biology. In addition to teaching, department heads coordinate class schedules and teaching assignments; propose budgets; recruit, interview, and hire new faculty; evaluate faculty, and serve on committees, among other responsibilities.

Some administrators also direct and coordinate a variety of student services. Vice Presidents for Student Affairs, Deans of Students, and Directors of Student Services may direct and coordinate admissions, international student services, health and counseling services, career services, financial aid, housing and residential life, student activities, women’s and multicultural centers, and campus recreation and athletics. The most important administrators include directors of public relations, technology, and development and fundraising. At smaller institutions, administrators oversee most of these functions while at larger ones, administrators focus only on one particular area or unit within a particular department (Love, 2003; Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Over the past 10 years, administrators’ responsibilities have increased, due to diminished funding as colleges and universities have been forced to do more with less (Glazer-Raymo, 2008). Reduced staff means that administrators must work more hours. In 2008, approximately 35% of administrators worked more than 40 hours a week (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Increased expectations from the state and Federal governments, community members, and students and parents have also placed greater demands on administrators. These factors among others, have caused their stress levels to rise, leaving them with serious work/life balance conflicts (Bailey, 2002; Marling, 2006).

Faculty

Many academic work/life initiatives began as part of a larger strategy to attract, retain, and advance women into leadership positions. While work/life initiatives are often perceived as
women’s initiatives (Alliance for Work-Life Progress, 2008), they are intended to aid all employees with the goal to retain them. They “support employees faced with balancing the competing demands of work and family in today’s fast-paced complex environment” (Newman & Matthews, 1999, p. 42).

Universities generally lag behind industries because the latter usually adopt family-friendly policies (Anderson, Morgan, & Wilson, 2002; Elliott, 2003). Work/life balance has long been of concern to leaders in higher education. It is difficult for administrators to address employee work/life needs, due to the differing structures and demands encountered. Research conducted over the past three decades has focused largely on its impact on faculty (Armenti, 2004; Curtis, 2004; Levтов, 2001; Mason & Goulden, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). The demands placed on faculty include rigorous teaching and research requirements, tenure obtainment, and increased involvement on administrative committees. Curtis (2004) and Fochtman (2010) argued that inequalities in faculty life more negatively impact women than they do men, especially in the areas of work/life balance and childrearing. Demands on these administrators include the requirement for late night and weekend work and a terminal degree, involvement in professional associations, and participation in community and civic engagements, demands that become increasingly difficult to balance when they have other responsibilities, such as caring for families and children. A study conducted by the Alliance for Work-Life Progress (2008) found that faculty usually have greater workplace flexibility than do administrators. In addition, the authors concluded that administrative activity in academic settings more closely resembles that in corporate settings while faculty activity entirely differs due to the tenure process (Alliance for Work-Life Progress, 2008).
Work/Life Programs in Higher Education

Institutions across the country have implemented a wide variety of programs to address work/life balance and its integration. Work/life programs and policies support employees by reducing the stress levels so that they are better able to juggle multiple roles. Nobbe and Manning (1997) suggested some supportive work environments, including the limitation of campus dialogues around work/life issues; and the provision of quality, affordable, subsidized daycare; sick care and after-school care on or close to campus, and flexible work schedules. Participation in these programs generally increases employee morale, creates greater loyalty to employers, and enhances the employees’ productivity (Loumansky et al., 2007).

No matter how well intended these programs are, many issues and challenges are associated with them (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981). In a study on work/life balance Bohen and Viveros-Long (1981) discovered that flextime and part-time work schedules do not sufficiently reduce conflicts in employees with primary childcare responsibilities, especially mothers. Often, when flexible work arrangements are approved at work, job responsibilities remain the same. Thus, employees must complete the same amount of work in less time, meaning more work at home in the evenings and on weekends when family responsibilities do not interfere. This never-ending cycle of imbalance can actually increase stress levels rather than improve work/life balance as intended.

Communication about policies and programs is often unclear, inconsistent, or difficult to find, especially at large institutions. Human resources decisions are frequently made at the departmental level, thus allowing certain departments more or less flexibility, based on the opinions of the departmental manager. In addition, inconsistent tracking and evaluation of programs and policies make it difficult to judge the effectiveness of different options. Without
this data, managers have little reason beyond personal beliefs to offer work/life support to staff members. Similarly, many institutions contribute little or no funding to these initiatives, which sends a clear signal that work/life balance and integration are not important.

Employees find that three major issues pose challenges that prevent them from taking part in work/life balance initiatives. Waters and Bardoel (2006) noted the lack of managerial support, perceptions of negative career consequences for participating, and perceptions of co-workers toward those who use the programs discourage these employees from participating. In addition, the approval process can be a long, daunting experience filled with excessive paperwork. The requirement to disclose personal information, for example, discourages many employees from enrolling in these programs because they fear the information will not be kept confidential.

**Institutional Support for Work/Life Balance and Institutional Type**

Support for work/life balance initiatives varies greatly by institution type and employee status; faculty members often receive more work/life balance services than do administrators though some initiatives assist in doing more uninterrupted research than reducing employee workloads or creating balance. For example, Ohio State University offers 100% compensation for faculty to take professional leave for two quarters (Work Life at Ohio State University, n.d.). At Lehigh University, the Sloan Program for Faculty Career Flexibility aids pre-tenured faculty in shifting from full- to part-time status by providing funds to generate consistent research, attend conferences, and collaborate with other faculty (Lehigh University Human Resources, n.d.). Neither of these institutions provides programs targeted specifically to administrators despite their research agendas and needs. Many institutions offer Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), free services to employees that are underwritten either by the institutions
themselves or by health insurance programs. These services are typically referral programs, however, and do not offer services to alleviate work/life balance issues.

While implementing these programs can often be difficult on large, decentralized campuses, some successful and extensive programs have been found in these larger, four-year institutions (Elliott, 2003). Interestingly, many of the services offered by larger institutions center on childcare. The University of Washington (UW) offers preferential space in the institution’s childcare facility to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers of faculty and staff (University of Washington Benefits & Work/life, n.d.). If room is not available, UW offers spaces at the same cost at nonprofit childcare centers around town. The University of Michigan offers Kids Kare at Home, an emergency in-home childcare program for sick children (University of Michigan Work/Life Balance, n.d.). Similarly, UC Berkeley (University of California Wellness in the Workplace, n.d.) and UCLA offer “Wheezles and Sneezez,” a sick child program where employees can send their children to the sick child care center or request an in-home provider (UCLA Human Resources, n.d.). Boise State University offers part-time childcare options, considered a unique service as most on-campus childcare services require full-time attendance (Boise State University Human Resources, n.d.).

Four-year liberal arts institutions typically offer similar services. At Williams College in Massachusetts, the Office of Spouse and Partner Employment Counseling assists with partner/spouse hiring and placement (Williams College Human Resources, n.d.). The leaders in these smaller institutions usually approve this personalized work/life support even though a third party company is responsible for coordinating services. Swarthmore College (Swarthmore College Human Resources, n.d.) and Haverford College (Haverford College, n.d.) utilize the
services of Carebridge Corporation, a confidential consulting service that helps employees with work/life balance, eldercare, and school issues.

Community colleges, known for their equity, openness, and democracy (Bailey, 2008) are frequently less supportive of work/life balance initiatives than are other institutions for a variety of reasons: high turnover rates, large non-traditional student populations, and stratified management of diverse academic programs. These challenges leave little room for administrators to focus on work/life balance for themselves, let alone their employees (Bailey, 2008). Townsend and Twombly (2006) found that community colleges are more welcoming to women than other institutions are. This lets the faculty and staff serve as role models for their non-traditional student body (see Appendix A for a list of services typically provided at institutions of higher education).

Summary

Work/life balance is a complex term that encompasses a person’s work life and his or her home or personal life. If administrators do not carefully consider the factors that could affect their work/life balance, they will find that these two areas clash, fostering stress, fatigue, and other negative symptoms. Student affairs administrators are particularly at risk for work/life imbalances because of the long hours, civic and organizational responsibilities, and terminal degrees required to advance. The universities’ financial situations can also alter the size and structure of their work forces. As resources dry up, workloads increase, and open positions frequently go unfilled, or are eliminated.

Despite the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993, no other nationally mandated programs have been developed to assist employees in maintaining work/life balance. Some universities do offer limited services; however, programs vary, depending on the types and
sizes of institutions. Similarly, policies are often difficult to find and may not be completely understood.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The primary purpose of this study is to understand how university administrators manage role conflicts in their lives, based on work/life balance and the challenges associated with managing multiple roles, and to determine ways in which institutions of higher education can assist administrators in managing their roles. Little attention has been paid to how much families, including children, parents, and other familial dependents, worsen role conflicts (Anderson, Guido-DiBrito, & Morrell, 2000), especially in men who to date have been studied very little. Much of the extant research focuses on the negative outcomes associated with the issue (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002); this study presents an opportunity to fill in the gaps in the literature to date and suggests opportunities for change.

This study was designed to address these issues by exploring the experiences of student affairs administrators who come from a variety of different roles, backgrounds, and life experiences. The study was restricted to full-time professional student affairs administrators at the University of Cincinnati. The following questions guided the study:

- What are the barriers or challenges of managing multiple roles as a student affairs administrator?
- How do student affairs administrators, both male and female, manage role conflict in their life, based on work/life balance?
- What can be done within the institutional work environment to assist in managing multiple roles (wife, mother, husband, father, caregiver, etc.)?
Qualitative Methodology

Unlike quantitative research, feminist qualitative research is ideally suited for studying certain issues where the findings are used to promote positive change (Cancian, 1993; Miles, 1991; Oakley, 2000). Feminists are drawn to qualitative research because the interviews and ethnographic research require direct interactions with participants. These interactions can be fruitful in many types of research, particularly research that has as its aim promoting change. While participants’ words are powerful, their nonverbal cues speak volumes. The face-to-face interactions represent one of the greatest strengths of qualitative research on feminist issues: they provide an avenue to hear women’s interpretations and voices.

A significant aspect of qualitative inquiry is the researcher-participant relationship (Devault, 1996). The researcher understands and accepts that knowledge is produced within this relationship, rejecting the positivist view that dismisses the idea that women are creators of knowledge (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 2007). This shared knowledge can assist in reducing any potential power struggles in the researcher-participant relationship, allowing the participants to feel more comfortable during the data collection process. In summary, creating open, subjective relationships with participants is essential for understanding participants’ experiences in relation to the research questions.

Qualitative research methods contain other strengths. As the focus of this research is on naturally occurring situations, the context is taken into account, and the inclusion of underlying and non-obvious issues become a strength of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In addition, qualitative data emphasize people’s lived experiences. Participants attach meaning to the events, processes, and structures in their lives and connect these meanings to the social world around
them. The data collected are considered rich; these “thick descriptions” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10) provide a vivid context to which readers can relate.

Grounded Theory Methodology

When Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed the concept of grounded theory, their intention was to move qualitative research toward theory development. Grounded theory is a method in which theoretical frameworks emerge from analyses of the data (Charmaz, 2000; Conrad, 1982; Creswell, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). When conducting research, grounded theorists explore data patterns that lead to the discovery of a theory illustrating a specific phenomenon.

Grounded theory “specifies analytic strategies, not data collection methods” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 514). Therefore, it requires that a substantial amount of rich data to be gathered, as mentioned above, and thoroughly analyzed (Charmaz, 1995; Creswell, 1997). The methods of data collection “consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in themselves” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2).

Participants

Student affairs administrators from the University of Cincinnati were the focus of this study, due to the complex nature of universities. Typically, these organizations incorporate silos, complex hierarchies, and a variety of cultures, depending on the department. Since I am a member of this community, and a current supervisor, I have an inherent interest in supporting my staff as a future high-level administrator.

The participants were identified through casual conversations with personal and professional contacts. Patton (2002) identified several types of sampling strategies for qualitative studies, zeroing in on criterion and snowball sampling, both of which are applied in
this study. Criterion sampling was used to identify participants who met the study’s criteria. This is a particularly useful method for selecting individuals when certain requirements for participation are needed. Snowball sampling was utilized to recruit initial participants who could offer names of additional participants. According to Merriam (2009), snowball sampling is one of the most highly used strategies to select participants.

Fifteen participants, 11 women and four men, were selected to participate. The participants work in eight units in student affairs, including Resident Education and Development, Ethnic Programs and Services, the Student Wellness Center, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Center, University Judicial Affairs, the Women’s Center, Student Services, and Student Life. To protect the participants’ identities, pseudonyms were assigned.

Participants were sent an electronic e-mail invitation to participate (see Appendix B) and an Adult Consent Form (see Appendix C), the letter which had to be signed prior to participating. Individual follow-up meetings conducted with those who showed interest provided administrators the opportunity to ask questions about consent forms or the participation process.

**Data Collection**

Data were collected during 15 individual, semi-structured, open-ended interviews that lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. First, the interview questions established why participants came to work in student affairs putting their current experiences in a context related to the research questions. Second, the interviews focused in on participants’ work/life balance experiences, and the challenges or barriers they encountered in managing multiple roles. Finally, through selected questions I encouraged participants to address the intellectual and emotional connections between their work and lives. These interviews were conducted during the summer
Each participant selected the location for his or her interview so each could speak openly without any repercussions or eavesdropping: all topics discussed were kept private. Interviews took place in quiet, closed-door conference rooms or personal offices. These locations provided, as noted, atmospheres for intimate conversations and few distractions.

I interviewed 15 men and women who are currently employed at the University of Cincinnati and work in the Division of Student Affairs. The interviews generated 327 pages of data, transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist. I reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy and to determine themes.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis and coding began with transcribing and reading the interview transcripts after each session throughout the interview phase (Conrad, 1982; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This allows the researcher to uncover initial ideas, themes, and categories. Coding was employed to categorize the data. According to Charmaz (2006; see also Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), coding is the process whereby researchers attach labels to data in order to explain what is occurring in particular environments. The goal of coding is to arrange the data into categories, facilitating comparison and separation simultaneously (Maxwell, 2005). Known as the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 1995; Glaser, 1992), this procedure requires researchers to evaluate differing participants in a study, compare the same individual at different points in time, and draw contrasts between incidents and categories.

Initial or open coding permits researchers to study data line-by-line and then attach meanings to the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Though this open coding phase typically provides the initial foundation (i.e., themes) for the study, it raises more
questions than answers for researchers. In the current study, I read through each transcript and attached meanings to words, phrases, or paragraphs that stood out from the rest of the data. I determined the point of theoretical saturation (i.e., when no additional or new themes emerged) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), or when themes effectively represented participants’ experiences. I then applied axial coding (see below).

Axial coding involves the grouping of codes together (Charmaz, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). For group codes, I used a color-coding system. My goal was to identify large, broad categories and place specific incidents, comments, and words from a list of themes into one of the larger categories. After generating a list of themes from 15 transcripts, I attached a corresponding color to each theme. I re-read the transcripts, using colors to separate particular sections of data. The axial coding process yielded 52 categories.

Selective coding was done next. Selective coding zeroes in on the concepts that emerge from open and axial coding. These concepts often shape the developing analytical framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I derived 22 themes that fit three major research categories, each of which directly connected to a particular research question: how participants manage multiple roles, the barriers/challenges to managing multiple roles, and how institutions can assist them in managing multiple roles.

Memo writing is central to the ground theory approach (Charmaz, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Memos, which consist of jotting down thoughts about emerging concepts, facilitate analytical thinking about the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I wrote a memo after every participant interview. My goal was to capture my feelings, my experience of the participants’ feelings, emotions, and experiences, and anything else that I wanted to follow up on during the member-checking process. In two separate interviews, participants shared stories
after the audio recorder was shut off and I asked permission to write document those stories. Both participants related anecdotal stories about how at a moment’s notice they creatively figured out techniques to manage work/life. In addition to writing about the interviews, I wrote notes about my own work/life balance journey.

**Reliability**

In qualitative research, the trustworthiness of the data can be affirmed through confirmability, reliability, and internal and external validity. Confirmability stems from an acknowledgement of researcher bias. Confirmability encompasses the following elements: 1) A description of research methods, 2) The accuracy and detail provided in data display techniques, and 3) The availability of the data to be further analyzed by other researchers (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

According to Ratcliff (1995), researchers in qualitative research determine the degree of validity and reliability by using among other things, various kinds of triangulation and comparisons with the literature, and by extracting extensive quotations from interview transcripts, referencing archival data or supplementary materials, and member checking. Triangulation helps ensure the validity of the research. Patton (2002) noted that data triangulation is utilized to cross-reference data; moreover, it strengthens studies by obtaining perspectives from various stakeholders. For example, I interviewed staff members, supervisors, and division leaders to understand work/life balance as it is related to managing multiple roles. To ensure validity, I linked specific literature passages to quotes from interview transcripts, and conducted member checks.

Internal validity speaks to the truth and credibility of the study’s findings. Data should be rich, be plausible to readers, and be linked to current or emerging theories. External validity
establishes if a study’s data are transferrable and theory-connected. All these techniques were used to confirm the trustworthiness of the data results.

**Reflexivity: My Experiences, Education, and Career Life**

The researcher-participant relationship is a delicate one as the researcher relies on participants to share their experiences and insights concerning the research topic. It is important that the researcher fully inform participants of the former’s goals in attempts to build collaborative relationships; in addition, it is important to address the reflexivity in these relationships (Devault, 1996). Reflexivity is defined as the ability to acknowledge the researcher’s social position within the context of the study, and the effects it may have on the analysis and interpretation of data (Allan, Iverson, & Ropers-Huilman, 2010). As mentioned previously, building relationships with participants is critical to the success of feminist qualitative inquiry (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Normally, the feminist poststructuralist researcher views her role as an activist (England, 1994): the researcher seeks reciprocal relationships, based on understandings and mutual respect. I am a female student affairs administrator and have been in the field for approximately 8 ½ years. I found it difficult to balance my work/life roles as a graduate student when I seemed to juggle fewer roles than I do today. I am newly married with no children. I have put off having children until I finish my doctorate for fear that I would not finish if I did. I am a mid-level manager who oversees a department of nine full-time professional staff, and I take my role as supervisor very seriously. I am conscious of my staff’s efforts to balance work/life and strive to assist them in managing roles more easily. To be honest, I have continually struggled to attain work/life balance while working full-time and working toward a doctorate. This research has made me cognizant of this imbalance. Thus, this topic is important to me because I see others, especially women, wrestle
with work/life balance on a daily basis. In higher education, we often talk about this topic; my hope now is to talk less, act more, and serve as a role model for others.

To that end, this study did not focus only on the abilities of women and men in this area; rather, it was intended to reveal solutions so that managers and supervisors can better understand differing employee perspectives and show supervisors how their own subjectivity, power, and knowledge may influence their views or practices related to work/life balance.

Summary

This chapter provided a summary of grounded theory methodology and the research design. In the next chapter, I present the results of the study. The results of the study may contribute new knowledge to the field about work/life balance and student affairs administrators’ abilities to manage multiple roles.
CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the following research questions:

- What are the barriers or challenges of managing multiple roles as a student affairs administrator?
- How do student affairs administrators manage role conflict in their life based on work/life balance?
- What can be done within the institutional work environment to assist in managing multiple roles (wife, mother, husband, father, caregiver, etc.)?

This chapter presents the major findings related to the three research questions. The chapter begins with an overview of the participants’ demographic data. These data provide the context in which the themes emerged through the data analysis process. Direct quotes from the participants were taken using content analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This technique involves “taking constructions gathered from the context and reconstructing them into a meaningful whole” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 333). After the demographic section, a report of the major themes that emerged from the data will be provided. Each research question is broken down by themes, which emerged from the coding techniques described in Chapter Three. Quotes from participants are used to support each theme. Discussion of the themes’ importance and relevance to the research questions follows.

Demographic data

Eleven women and four men participated in this study. The participants’ ages ranged from 29 to over 60 years old. Eleven participants were married or in a partnership, and four were single. The participants identified approximately 34 different roles held. For example, four
participants identified as a caretaker to an elderly parent. Seven had at least one child, ranging from one to four children. Participants’ service in student affairs ranged from two to over 40 years, and participants held positions from entry-level to senior student affairs administrative ones. See Appendix E for a full list of participant roles. Below is a brief introduction to each participant. Pseudonyms are utilized to protect the identities of participants.

**Donna**: Female, senior student affairs officer between 40-50 years old with over 20 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: supervisor

**Rachel**: Female, mid-level student affairs practitioner between 30-40 years old with 5-10 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: mother, wife, supervisor

**Rob**: Male, entry-level student affairs practitioner between 25-30 years old with 1-5 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: son/caretaker, boyfriend, mentor

**Laura**: Female, mid-level student affairs practitioner between 30-40 years old with 1-5 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: daughter, sister, organization member

**Beth**: Female, mid-level student affairs practitioner between 30-40 years old with 5-10 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: wife, daughter, mentor

**Becca**: Female, entry-level student affairs practitioner between 25-35 years old with 5-10 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: daughter, friend

**Michael**: Male, senior student affairs officer between 60-70 years old with over 35 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: husband, father, grandfather, supervisor

**Fiona**: Female, mid-level student affairs practitioner between 35-45 years old with 10-15 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: wife, mother, sister, daughter

**Doris**: Female, senior student affairs officer between 40-50 years old with 10-15 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: wife, daughter, mother, supervisor
**Teresa:** Female, entry-level student affairs practitioner between 25-35 years old with 5-10 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: daughter, friend, organization member

**Jennifer:** Female, entry-level student affairs practitioner between 25-30 years old with 1-5 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: fiancé, daughter, sister, aunt

**Ellen:** Female, entry-level student affairs practitioner between 30-40 years old with 5-10 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: wife, mother, daughter

**Allison:** Female, mid-level student affairs practitioner between 35-45 years old with 5-10 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: wife, mother, daughter, supervisor

**Doug:** Male, senior student affairs officer between 45-55 years old with over 25 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: husband, father, mentor

**Ryan:** Male, mid-level student affairs officer between 25-35 years old with 5-10 years experience in student affairs. Key roles: partner, friend, supervisor

**Common Themes**

The participants in this research study were forthcoming in discussing their lives in relation to the research questions. They seemed appreciative that someone took an interest in moving beyond the conversation of work/life balance and toward real change. Table 6 identifies the significant themes that emerged after an analysis of the data.
Table 6  
*Significant Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barriers/Challenges</td>
<td>• Contextual Challenges (Time, Technology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Expectations (Personal, Societal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Culture (Institutional, Professional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of Conflict</td>
<td>• Boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-discovery</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supervisorial Relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional Support</td>
<td>• Self-care</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I determined these themes through the coding process discussed in Chapter Three. The themes corresponded to the research questions and were grouped into three main categories:

1. Barriers and challenges of managing multiple roles as a student affairs administrator
2. The ways in which student affairs administrators manage role conflict in their life, based on work/life imbalance
3. Institutional support initiatives that can assist in managing multiple roles

In the sections below, I define the themes and support them with participants’ quotes that illustrate the themes’ significance to the study.
Intersections with Role Conflict

Role conflict exists when “pressures experienced in one role are incompatible with pressures arising in another role” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77; see also Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Michel & Hargis, 2008; Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler, & Cullen, 2010; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002). The participants in this study identified a variety of sources of work/family conflict, a type of role conflict (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The term ‘role’ is defined as a set of expectations applied to a person in a particular position. Thoits (1983) contended that maintaining more than five roles at one time causes stress, guilt, and overall life dissatisfaction, a phenomenon she termed role overload. Thirteen of the 15 participants in this study experienced role overload, according to Thoits’ definition.

Each participant wrestled with time-based and strain-based conflict; however, none identified with behavior-based conflict, based on their responses to interview questions. Time-based conflict, or when a person has to handle multiple roles that compete for his or her time, was certainly familiar to many participants. Rob, Becca, Beth, Laura, and Doris noted that they experience significant time-based conflict as they serve as caretakers for elderly or sick parents. Becca, Rachel, and Fiona faced time-based conflict on a daily basis due to the long commutes from their homes to campus. Teresa, Jennifer, Rob and Laura’s families do not live in town; therefore, they must spend significant amounts of time traveling on weekends and holidays to visit their loved ones. Eight participants said the number of hours worked a week leads to time-based conflicts as well: many work 50 hours a week and sometimes more during peak seasons. Allison’s husband is also in education which causes conflicts as his work schedule tends to be less flexible than hers is.
Strain-based conflict occurs when strain in one role affects performance in another. This is different from time-based conflict in that time-based conflict tends to be connected to the number of roles one holds while strain-based conflict is often the result of role senders’ needs. Rachel, Allison, Fiona, and Ellen have children, many of them under the age six, which can cause both time and strain-based conflict. Doris’s supervisor delegates a significant amount of his work to her, fostering strain-based conflict which adds on to her already overloaded job responsibilities.

Michael, Teresa, and Jennifer confront strain-based conflict as they don’t have supervisors because of positions left vacant. Undetermined or unclear expectations and miscommunication typically develop within organizational hierarchies when there are vacant leadership positions, often triggering strain-based conflicts in employees. Laura and Ryan are both in new roles, which in itself is causing strain-based conflict. The process of learning a new position is often frustrating as one must navigate new expectations, cultures, and new policies while overseeing programs and building relationships.

Rachel’s and Beth’s husbands don’t always agree that they should or need to spend so much time at work. Rachel mentioned that,

So sometimes when my husband’s like oh, you’ve been, you haven’t been home the last three nights or whatever. I have to remind him like hey, I’m bringing in a paycheck and it’s not like I’m just having fun, that’s part of my job and things like that. The lack of understanding by Rachel’s husband can incite strain-based conflicts in her, typically in the form of extra stress.
Allison finds that her flexible schedule frequently causes strain-based conflict as she tends to over-compensate for the time she is out of the office. The added stress of staying at the office less is often made up late in the evening when her children have gone to bed.

The crossover between time-based conflict and strain-based conflict comes in the long hours and evening and weekend commitments that many participants discussed. These inflexible hours eliminate many of the non-work hours that people typically spend with family, friends, shopping, and other activities. In addition, long hours can trigger stress, fatigue, and irritability, symptoms of strain-based conflict.

**Barriers and Challenges in Managing Multiple Roles**

The first research question seeks to identify the barriers or challenges of managing multiple roles as a student affairs administrator. Each participant discussed several challenges, many of which were related to two of three types of work/family conflict: time-based and strain-based (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

**Contextual Challenges and Barriers**

Many participants experienced contextual barriers to managing work as a student affairs administrator and in other life aspects. Contextual barriers are those specific circumstances that interfere with one’s work/life balance. Both the notion of time and the use of technology were contextual barriers that emerged from the data.

**Time.** Lack of time was a problem many participants discussed. Time-based conflicts result from an individual trying to handle multiple roles that compete for his or her time, and/or when pressures from one role take time away from another (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The concept of time differed for each participant. For example, Donna consciously commits a tremendous amount of time to her career and institution.
Work sucks up a lot of me, and I let that happen. I put a lot into my job, and if I put less time and energy in my job and identified less with it, I might make room in my life for other roles, but I just failed to choose to do that.

Rob feels that time is the primary barrier to effectively managing his multiple roles.

Time is always a barrier. I think that, given the fact that I’m not married and I don’t have any children, I still have a lot of freedom that some of the colleagues and some of my peers may not have. But being a son and then having parents who have undergone illness, just trying to balance everything is challenging. I’m concerned, and I want to be there and be active in their lives.

Becca is also a caretaker for a sick parent and identifies closely with Rob’s situation. She often has to leave work in the middle of the day to take her parent to doctor’s appointments or for treatments. However, she noted a different challenge related to time constraints within her day.

Another barrier might just be sometimes time; I don’t live very far, but from a commute standpoint, it can be just wacky. Like I don’t know if it’ll take me 15 minutes or 30 minutes or 45, or if there’s construction and all of that is just grating. It’s just enough to get to work or home in a disjointed kind of way. Especially when you factor in I need to leave to take someone to a doctor’s appointment, [and] be able to get back in a timely manner. I always wonder how much I could get done if I could just work straight through with no interruption.

Doris feels as though she manages her time well, but must deal with others who interfere with her ability to stay on task.

The barrier, for me, yeah of course, managing your time, but I’m pretty good at that. The barrier for me is the unpredictable things. I work well with a schedule, a daily one, a
weekly one. But it’s always only mine. It never accounts for the things that are going to pop up. You know, can you get this agenda out? Somebody forgot to do it, but will you do it? So, it’s the, the things that are unpredictable that can just really throw your schedule off.

Ellen discussed how the lack of time makes her feel less effective in dealing with her many roles.

I would say a huge barrier is time. It feels as [though] there’s never enough time in the day to put on the hats of all those different people I’m supposed to be and do every one of them effectively.

Lack of time in any given day was a theme among participants. As 13 of the 15 participants experience role overload, it is not surprising that many feel as though they do not have adequate time to devote to each role. Technology, frequently thought to help manage one’s time, is discussed below.

**Technology.** Many participants talked about how technology can be a barrier to juggling multiple roles. In many ways, technological advancements have increased productivity; the ability to work from a mobile device or from a remote location has offered student affairs administrators the opportunity to conduct business from places other than their desks. However, the advancements have also increased the expectations from various constituents who want or feel entitled to immediate communication responses. Laura struggled with the idea of putting an application on her phone to receive e-mail directly to the device.

It’s my own fault for putting my email on my phone. I was out in December for a retreat for a week, and I thought I needed to be able to access my email. It’s hard for me to not look at it. When I was on vacation in July, I took my computer. I answered emails. But,
if things come up, people know, especially when I’m out of the office during the school year, if they text or call or email, I have to address whatever it is.

Beth feels conflicted by the amount of time she has to commit to working in the evenings. This challenge has led to confrontations at home because even there her mind and attention are on work.

Well, I’ll tell you, we got into a little kind of confrontation about home is home, work is work, because sometimes Beth is always in a work brain and can never turn that off.

Students call me. It’s challenging for me to not answer or cut that off. It’s challenging for me to not look at my phone and have my work emails coming through to not reply back. So I feel like I’m always at work, so I don’t feel like I give my husband enough time. We kind of laid some ground rules about, how about when we go to bed, we don’t bring computers upstairs, laptops or anything like that.

Michael has been in student affairs for over 40 years and has seen firsthand how advancements in technology have changed the profession.

Well, now that technology’s changed, you can work all the time. You can do it in your car at a light. I chuckled yesterday. I got here yesterday about 9:20 in the morning, and I chuckled because I said I’ve done more work before 9:30 this morning because of technology than I would do between 9:30 and noon if I were in the office. That’s sort of what technology does. The technology, I think, commits us again to a 24/7 reality.

Michael’s position in the institution requires him to be accessible at all times. Over the years, this responsibility has conditioned him to always have his phone on and remain attentive to it. He admits that he now struggles with disconnecting, especially during vacations.
I went on vacation, but for two days, I was really nervous because I was disconnected. I had no cell phone. I had no iPad working. I was disconnected. I couldn’t send a text, and I couldn’t make a phone call to the office. You know, I should have been OK because what I did do was establish one phone, my wife’s phone, with international connection, such as if it was a really big issue, my assistant had that number. For two days of the six, I was nervous. Because I was disconnected.

As a supervisor, Michael has to model acceptable levels of connectivity for his staff when they are out of the office. He acknowledges his struggles with this, and makes a concerted effort to serve as a positive role model.

I heard that one of our staff members went on vacation and didn’t have a phone. And it’s not within their role that they have to be connected, not like this. But I will admit to you, for a moment I went ‘What? They’re disconnected?’ Then I realized that it’s OK they’re disconnected; they’re on vacation. But I will tell you when I first heard that, and when I first hear that frequently, I go ‘huh?’ Because of my role and my experiences.

Though technology lets us work at locations other than offices, it does create a 24/7 connectivity, as Michael noted. As we become more dependent on electronic devices, our ability to step away from work, physically or mentally, is becoming ever more difficult.

Contextual barriers to managing multiple roles, such as time and technology, were consistent across all participants. The more roles one held, the less time one could give to each role, and the more technologically accessible one was, the more business one conducted outside the office and normal business hours. Beyond these obstacles, barriers related to expectations were also discussed among participants. These are presented below.
Barriers and Challenges Related to Expectations

Many participants discussed how expectations create barriers to managing multiple roles in student affairs. Personal expectations are set by the individuals themselves, particularly to improve performances or advance careers. Though the individual develops these expectations, they are commonly passed along to others in the work environment, up or down. For example, if a supervisor sets high personal expectations, she or he often expects similar outcomes from those she or he supervises.

Societal expectations are ingrained; in the context of this study, the most common societal expectation concerns gender roles. According to Eagly (1987), social roles guide behaviors more than gender itself. These social roles tend to dictate male and female division of labor with women primarily expected to manage work and family roles. The societal expectations often cause time- and strain-based conflict, triggering stress, anxiety, and guilt. Guilt frequently comes from failing to meet one’s personal expectations or perceived societal expectations. The latter two were mentioned by many participants.

Personal Expectations

Rob discussed how his professional ambitions can be a barrier to managing multiple roles.

I think at a certain point, my ambition might hinder my ability to find work/life balance. I think that as you get older, you want more or want something different, and there’s not always [a] clear way to get there, so you have to invest more of yourself into getting that outcome that you want, and I can kind of see that creating some tension between work and life.
Beth said that she grapples with high expectations in the workplace, including her own expectations and those she supervises. Her expectations may not align with those she supervises, preventing her from delegating work to subordinates.

My biggest issue which causes me to be overloaded and overwhelmed is I have trust issues. I didn’t trust my colleagues with things because I knew in my head that they couldn’t do it right. As a supervisor, holding hands is good…especially in training mode. But when I still have to hold your hand year two, year three, year four, I can’t trust that it will be done right. There are certain ways I like things done. I’m a little anal. But I just feel like I can’t delegate to certain people, and that means I have to do it myself.

Beth also discussed the underlying expectation in student affairs that employees be present at all events hosted by their units. After many years of being present, due to the high expectations in her unit, she feels that her ego may pose another barrier to managing multiple roles.

I feel like part of my ego is that I’m needed, or it will all fall apart. But I understand that if I left, it would still go on. But having to be here, choosing to be here, and needing to be here are different. Sometimes, I feel like it’s time to move on, but I’m needed. Or so I like to think.

**Societal Expectations**

Many women in the study discussed how societal expectations block their abilities to manage effectively multiple roles in student affairs. Ellen talked about how personal expectations do not necessarily hinder her ability to manage work/life balance, but societal ones definitely do.

The expectation is that you’re supposed to be able to be a mother and work full time and be able to balance everything. And do it flawlessly, like all the pieces. And the reality is
you can give more to certain parts at certain times and more to the opposite parts at certain times.

Rachel echoes Ellen’s sentiments about how societal expectations of women’s dual roles pervade the workplace.

In our department, there’s a lot of men in the higher positions, so they don’t see some of the women’s roles of mother and wife and things like that. They don’t have to deal with that, so I don’t think they see those struggles as much.

Fiona has encountered similar experiences in student affairs.

I think that even in our society today, people’s ideology about gender roles and things of that nature plays a huge part in managing multiple roles. My husband and I, we take turns when my daughter’s sick. Although I’m rarely out of the office, anytime I’ve ever had to leave, with the exception of my current boss [who] is another woman, I’ve [run] into the ‘Oh, well, you know, I guess mom has to take care of the babies.’ I’m thinking, well, no, it’s actually just my turn. And so when it’s my turn, it’s my turn. There’s not as much understanding when it’s technically my turn. When I listen to my husband talk about his experiences at work, it’s more of ‘Oh, you’re being such a sweet husband.’ He gets accolades, and I get, ‘Well, I guess, are you going to get that done?’

Beth feels as though expectations differ for men and women in this particular Division of Student Affairs.

I don’t think men are held to the same accountability as women in this department. It amazes me that I had to fight for a colleague to go to school to take a class when a male with a higher title was able to just go as he pleased. She wanted to take night classes. He was taking classes during the workday. How can you say she can take classes on her own
time? Is it really her time though? In student affairs, the evening might not even be seen as our own time.

Allison talked about a different societal expectation, focusing more on the expectation that the more one works, the more dedicated he or she must be to his or her career or unit.

The dialogue is ‘Oh my gosh, I was here until midnight last night,’ and ‘I put in my 80 hour work week.’ I mean, that’s the culture we live in. Not just here at this institution and in student affairs, but in general. It’s like the more you work and the crazier you are, the more committed and the better employee and the more productive and all that. It’s just not healthy. It’s not practical, and honestly, I don’t really believe it. It’s an ongoing process of having to debate that for myself and having to say no, Allison, don’t buy into that.

Both personal and societal expectations are barriers to managing multiple roles in student affairs. This is an especially complex issue for women, as the added pressure of societal expectations often overshadows personal expectations. Managing both sets of expectations can lead once again to time- and strain-based conflict. In addition, societal expectations can incite behavior-based conflict, particularly in women in leadership positions. According to Sterling (2012), the social roles prescribed to women are often less associated with leadership than are the social roles associated with men. These role associations may impact women more than men, thereby making it more challenging for women to manage multiple roles.

**Cultural Barriers and Challenges**

Many participants discussed how the culture of student affairs and the participants’ institution create barriers to managing multiple roles. Student affairs is a relational field: it is all about building relationships with students to foster their growth and development in and outside
the classroom. Allison found this responsibility especially challenging in managing multiple roles:

The thing about student affairs work is that it’s all relational. You build these relationships with these students, and the relationships are deep. And so students build trust in you, and they see you as somebody that they can talk to, and that never ends. And that’s kind of a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week thing. Not that you always have to respond that way for them, but those are issues that are important to them, and it makes student affairs unique compared to other professional roles within the institution.

Rob agreed with Allison’s sentiments on the nature of student affairs work:

The culture of student affairs, which is very proactive and centered on student engagement and tries not to be reactive, is to build relationships with students. So I always feel like I’m doing my job in the evening or on the weekends because students have my cell phone number, so they’ll text me and have questions, or they’ll email me and those emails come to my phone. You’re never really off work when it comes to building and maintaining relationships with students.

This constant building of relationships makes the idea of working a 9:00 to 5:00 job in student affairs nonexistent for many. This notion becomes ingrained in new or young student affairs professionals with certain work habits, and these expectations become harder to break over time.

Reflecting on his early career, Michael discussed how he perceived the culture of student affairs and its effect on other aspects of his life.

As a young professional, I felt like I had to give it my all to be successful. I had to give it my all in order for my supervisors to recognize that I was sincere about working in student affairs. And unfortunately, nobody stops you when you turn into a workaholic.
And I think sometimes there’s a penalty for making a transition from being a workaholic into someone else. It feels and sounds like you just aren’t working as hard as you used to.

Beth felt similarly though she acknowledged that she often works long hours for the wrong reasons.

I heard this one student affairs professional tell a group of young professionals that I stay and work all day and no one acknowledges what I’m doing. And so someone told her ‘Do you see what you’re doing? You’re working yourself to death for a pat on the back that is not even coming your way because no one sees you at work at 8:00 pm. Why? Because they left at 5:00 pm. They are going on with their lives and could [sic] care less about what you are doing, so you’ll never be acknowledged for the late nights.’ So what? Are we just working in vain?

Specific units within student affairs have different cultures that present challenges in managing multiple roles. The professional staff who are required to live in residence halls may face greater challenges than those who are able to return to their off-campus homes in the evening and on the weekends. Michael stated that,

When I was in housing…from the beginning of August until classes began, I didn’t have time for my friends. Wow. And so, I always said if for some reason they were angry about that, that was their fault. Because they knew what my life was like. I felt that I had to extricate myself from the social world during that time. And I expected in housing particularly, everybody around me to do the same.

Donna discussed the fact that though professionals in housing may have a weekend off, it does not necessarily mean they will not be contacted to handle a situation.
The weekends, if they’re not on duty, their weekends are their own, sort of. So you can do whatever you want. You can sleep late. You can go shopping. You can do whatever. But if stuff happens, we train the student staff that the first people they should try to call are their professional staff because they’re the ones [who] are going to end up dealing with it anyway. So their weekend is their own, but they all know that going a whole weekend and not being called is pretty unlikely.

As Michael looked back on his career, he observed that student affairs is making strides in addressing work/life balance even though the culture of student affairs is not necessarily changing with the conversation.

I think the language has at least changed. Because I think we’re more open. For example, this discussion, we’re more open about the fact that it ought to be different. Wow. And the real rub is I can look at it as a supervisor and say the real rub is that we still work everybody real hard. We still have expectations. I think we’re also more sensitive than we may have been 40 years ago. The issues today are very different than the issues 40 years ago, so I hope that today, sensitivity around those issues are such that it will help us either make our decisions or help us structure the way we program work and life.

The participants felt that the culture in student affairs itself is a barrier to managing multiple roles. Though there may be variations across departments due to differing supervisors, the solid expectation in student affairs remains long hours and frequent evening and weekend work. Below is a discussion about the institutional culture and its relationship to managing multiple roles.
Cultural Barriers within the Institution

According to the participants, the culture of the institution in which they work also fosters barriers in managing multiple roles. Leadership, perception, the institutional environment, the hierarchy, and politics were all indicated as contributing factors. Allison felt as though the leadership was lacking in the department and division. “I don’t see that we have a lot of leadership on that issue in our department or in our division, and so it’s just hard to know really where to go.” Doris concurred, arguing that the mostly male leadership may be the reason why work/life balance is not addressed in the division. “I’ve only had one male boss in my career. He was the one who understood the least about work/life balance. He was a classic workaholic, and that was his expectation.” Fiona felt that most of those making policies within the division are well beyond the parenting years, forgetting what it’s like to balance evening and weekend commitments with the needs of children.

We deal with a lot of people making the policies for the institution [who] are well beyond the child bearing and young child age group. So some people unfortunately have forgotten what it’s like to have a two-year old at your house. It wasn’t that easy for them when their kid was two, either. I can still be effective, but there are moments when things will get a little sticky because maybe they’re sick, and so it’s important to get people who haven’t forgotten those days and those times to be the true policymakers.

Other supervisors within the division look to Human Resources to make decisions or provide guidance on how to manage work/life balance issues. Michael noted that,

I think we’re a little slower, and I think we’re behind the times, but I think we at least are attempting to change. I think you have change agents in Human Resources, but a lot of it rests on the understanding that supervisors have authority. The HR structure has to be
open to hearing when consideration for flexibility isn’t given. But, at a large institution like this, I really don’t know how one department has the time or staffing to manage that. Beth noted that some supervisors have very different expectations in terms of its employees balancing work and life, which sends mixed messages to staff across the division.

I think it’s good to have an understanding environment, but we also have to be accountable to what we do. I really don’t think we’re as accountable as we should be in this division. Even though we’re one division, everyone’s ship runs differently. You might need your staff to work on Saturdays. It’s inevitable sometimes. And then there might be another area that says we’re not going to program, we’re going to be service oriented, and work until 4:30 each day and never on the weekend. So some people are lax and others are incredulous. I don’t know what the division can do to make sure that we have a clear understanding of when to work and when to have a life.

Jennifer discussed the fact that perceptions can create a challenging culture in the workplace. She has heard supervisors send mixed messages about taking vacations, stepping away from the office, or even taking lunch.

I think creating that acceptability to just take vacation whenever you choose or whenever you know it’s time for a break is important. Last January, I told someone I was taking a week off at the end of the month and they looked at me like I was crazy. Why would you do that, we just started the semester? That culture makes me feel like I can only take time off when the students aren’t here.

Jennifer talked frequently about the behavior she would show when she becomes a supervisor one day, hoping she can pave the way to a balanced work/life experience by assisting staff in managing their many roles. Simply taking lunch, encouraging others to step away from their
desk, and using vacation time were just a few of the expectations she would like to see from a supervisor.

Despite the feelings some participants shared about the institutional culture, Becca felt blessed to work in her particular department. As her father’s primary caregiver, she has to work on a flexible schedule due to his health complications.

This is a conservative university and very, very much about hierarchy and politics. But the department I’m in does not function that way. There are some strategic things we do that stay in line with the politics of the institution, but there are quite a few places where we butt heads or just kind of go against the grain.

Contrary to Jennifer’s experience, Becca stated that she is encouraged to take vacation or sick time.

Well, there’s a significant push to take the time. Take vacation time if you have it. Take your sick time if you’re sick. If you’re doing flex time, really make sure you’re doing your flex time.

The study was conducted at the University of Cincinnati which is a large, public research institution that employs over 15,000 people and has several hundred different departments, and the culture of this institution may not be representative of all institutions. It is important to note, however, that supervisors’ abilities to manage work and life are often linked to the culture within specific departments. Below is a discussion about emotional barriers that interfere with managing multiple roles, which are typically effects of the contextual barriers, expectations, and cultural barriers discussed above.
Emotional Challenges

The challenges discussed above can trigger a variety of emotional responses that hamper the ability to manage multiple roles in student affairs. The two most common emotional challenges that emerged were guilt and burnout. Female participants with children seemed to suffer the most from guilt. Rachel and Ellen shared similar feelings of guilt stemming from wanting to do well in their careers and be great moms at the same time. Rachel felt guiltiest when attending out-of-town conferences.

I feel guilty a lot leaving the kids, especially overnight. I just left them a couple of weeks ago, I’m leaving them again next week, and then there’s a conference at the beginning of the year [when] I’ll be leaving them. So I try to spend extra time with the kids when that happens. For example, my husband and I went out of town for our anniversary, so I took Monday and Tuesday off and spent the day with my son.

Ellen, on the other hand, battles constantly with guilt: it is almost cyclical. She acknowledged that she needs to give herself time to unwind, relax, and participate in activities she enjoys but even then she feels guilty.

I recently have been trying to find a way to give time to myself, but even when you give time to yourself, you feel guilty about that, too. I was recently really stressed out, and I needed to find a way to release the stress, but then I realized that takes away from the limited time I’m home with my family for the day, so I figured I’d better not take that time for myself.

The guilt Ellen feels is not confined to her home situation, however. A large part of the culture involves being present for both students and colleagues in other student affairs departments. It is a supportive culture by nature, and with that come unspoken expectations to be present at other
events. Ellen noted how this adds on to the guilt she already feels about not spending enough
time with her children.

I feel guilty that I’m not fulfilling all aspects of my position at work. Sometimes I feel
like I’m not meeting the student’s expectations, like I’m not being there for the students.
I also feel guilty about not attending other departments’ events. I don’t always feel like
I’m a supportive colleague.

During the semester, many students participate in co-op programs which take them off campus to
work for other companies from 8 am to 5 pm or later. These students typically stay involved in
co-curricular activities which make it difficult to get back to campus during the business day.
This presents problems for Ellen who can’t be on campus many evenings.

If I want to meet with a student, and they work during the day or they’re on co-op or
something, I can’t meet them at 7:00 pm. I can’t even meet them at 5:00 pm. So I’m not
always as available as I probably should be, but again I feel like I’m not fulfilling my
role.

Michael has been in the field longer than all other participants and addressed his feelings of guilt
from hindsight. When Michael’s children were young, he was still in housing which holds
differing expectations for its employees than perhaps for an activities coordinator or women’s
center staff. He acknowledged that at certain times in the school year, he would have to make
sacrifices and choose work over his family, but struggled when choosing to work became the
rule for him rather than the exception.

My kids loved Disney on Ice. Was it my favorite activity? No, but I made sure they went
with their mom. The kids would tell me all about it after, and it wasn’t until a few days
later did I realize, man, I missed it. I didn’t always understand that there’s a piece of the
relationship that you miss because you weren’t there, and you can’t get it from a picture. If you’re not there to share the experience, it’s different. I didn’t realize it then, but I can look back on it now and say that I probably should have done it differently. I didn’t care to do anything about it then, but I can share with others now how important it is to have those kinds of shared experiences that I didn’t [have].

As participants wrestle with guilt, they tend to find ways to overcompensate, personally or professionally. Below is a discussion on the role of burnout in managing multiple roles in student affairs.

**Burnout**

Student affairs is cyclical, due to the nature of the academic calendar. No matter how prepared any one person or unit is, there are times in each academic year when the workload is much heavier and far less flexible. For example, student activities’ offices are usually busiest at the beginning and end of an academic year with the winter months and summer months less so. Orientation offices are most active in the spring and summer, a pace that diminishes at the beginning of the academic year. During these busy times, student affairs professionals most often experience burnout, long-term exhaustion, or diminished interest. Other factors can contribute to burnout, including decreased staffing or ‘doing more with less’, the higher education mantra brought up during periods of sustained budget reductions. Donna experienced burnout when vacant positions in her department were left unfilled.

For a year and half, I was doing the job that three people had previously done. And in that period of time, I worked crazy, crazy, crazy, crazy hours. Crazy. I would be at work at 7:00 in the morning and I would work until midnight or 1:00 in the morning and go
home and get up and come back in the next day. I just worked constantly. I wasn’t paid one iota of additional funds. I was not even given an acting title.

The lack of acknowledgement Donna experienced is not uncommon in higher education. At the end of the day, work remains to be done, and particularly at public institutions, no money is allotted for bonuses or other financial incentives to take on additional tasks, especially for administrators who lack union protection.

Teresa stated that the culture itself can lead to burnout. As a younger employee, she feels frustrated by the negative culture that governs the taking of vacations.

Our department was told we couldn’t take vacations this past summer. So if you’re not going to take any vacation during the summer, and you’re expected to just work, work, work, by August 27th when school opens, you’re going to be completely burned out.

Your employees aren’t happy when that happens. They’re burned out. We’re getting the message of ‘Don’t take any vacation’ and on the back end, we’re getting the ‘You better take care of yourself’. The way for me to do that is to take the vacation time I’ve earned.

But I can’t.

The barriers and challenges associated with managing multiple roles in student affairs can profoundly affect these professionals’ emotional responses to role conflict. The participants in this study experienced a great deal of burnout and guilt, especially women with children.

In the next section, I will discuss how the participants manage work/life balance related to role conflict.

**Management of Work/Life Balance**

This section discusses how participants managed work/life balance related to role conflicts. Three major themes are presented: the development of boundaries, the style of
supervision, and the practice of self-discovery. See Chapter Two for detailed information on role conflict and its subsidiaries.

**Boundaries**

Women spoke often about the importance of setting boundaries between their professional and personal lives. A boundary is the result of simplifying or ordering the environment, creating physical, temporal, emotional, cognitive, or relational limits (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). Allison and Teresa both approached boundaries in terms of technology. Allison works on a flexible schedule: she leaves the office at 2 pm three days a week and works at home in the evenings after her children have gone to bed to make up the time. With this schedule, Allison felt that she operates within clear boundaries so others will respect her schedule and time.

I’ve made it clear to everybody that I work with that I work a flex schedule, so it’s important that I create that boundary so people aren’t expecting to just get a response from me right away or don’t expect to catch me in the office in the evenings when they come by.

Though Allison feels that she likely over communicates her schedule to her colleagues, she thought it important to inform others, so they know what to expect from her. Though Allison strives to be flexible, she strictly upholds one boundary when at home. “I don’t do phone calls at home. This is a big one. I don’t do that.” When Allison comes home, she wants to be with her family and has found that once that boundary is breached, colleagues will start to take advantage of her other boundaries.
I got into the habit of taking phone calls after hours and before I knew it, those calls were taking a toll and interfering with my personal life. So now I feel pretty strongly that we need to have these boundaries just for our own sanity.

Teresa felt that she needs to set strict boundaries due to her live-in position in housing. She discovered that many staff members there give their cell phone number to residents, student staff, and even parents, a violation of her set personal boundaries.

I don’t give my cell phone number out to every parent that walks through the door even if they ask for it. No, your child is not a child anymore. They are at college and if you have concerns, you need to start with your student first.

Teresa thought that the culture of her department encourages her to work late in the evenings. She often receives emails from her supervisor at these times, and other staff members normally respond. Another boundary Teresa established is to not check or respond to e-mail after going home for the day.

I get to work in the morning and see an e-mail from my supervisor that is time stamped 9:34 pm. I’m like, why are you still sending e-mails? Why are you still in your office? And then that leads to the belief that if she’s working at 9:34, we should be too. Oh no. Not me. I’m not working at 9:00 pm. I left at 4:00, and that’s my boundary.

Donna also sets technological boundaries, but hers may actually lead her to spend more time in the office.

I don’t have a personal computer at home. And in many ways I have protected that because if I did have a personal computer I know that I would work 24 hours a day. I would just be on email all the time. And I don’t really care to be.
Donna admittedly struggles with work/life balance, often finding herself in the office late at night. However, as a supervisor, she feels guilty about sending e-mails out late in the evening.

I have this group of hall directors who don’t seem to mind answering e-mail at all kinds of crazy hours. I’ll be working late one night and have a bizarre question, so I’ll just send out this e-mail. And people will answer. I feel a little bit bad, like I’m expecting to get this information. I don’t know if it’s a generational thing like a convenience factor to have e-mail on their phone. They just don’t seem to mind as much.

Fiona’s role in student affairs is to act as a liaison between students and faculty. She is as sensitive to the fact that faculty know too much about her as she is concerned about the judgments others may make regarding her legitimacy as a professional.

I don’t have any pictures of my children in my office. None of my husband. Because what I found is that, and it’s sad to say this, but as a woman, men will start making these comments like ‘Oh, you’ve got babies’ and then all they see is you as a mom. Like my professional legitimacy is gone. I’m just a mom to them now.

Fiona’s boundary helps her separate her work from her home life and eliminates any perceptions others may harbor about her work ethic or ability to manage work and life.

Allison, Doris, and Beth stated that the most powerful and difficult boundary they insist on is to be able to say no. Doris prefers work/life integration because keeping a balance is not possible for her. To find that integration, Doris approaches this balance differently.

It’s a strategy really. You have to really drill down and figure out things that are meaningful, things that are necessary, and say no to those things that are not. And that’s hard. That’s hard because we’re the go-to people at universities. We really are.
Allison struggles with saying no as a mid-level professional for fear of turning down opportunities she is enthusiastic about, or that can make a difference for students. There are times you have to be ready to say to either your colleagues or your supervisor that ‘I can’t do this’. And sometimes it’s saying no to yourself, like I really want to do that, I would love to be a part of that, but I just can’t. And that’s the hardest thing to do, but you have to before you feel resentful because you become overloaded or overwhelmed. Allison’s struggle extends beyond becoming overwhelmed or burned out. However, if she says no, she often thinks that colleagues will conclude that she does not care about certain initiatives, the department, or even her career.

I feel excluded. I feel invisible and all that. And I’m scared I’m going to be left behind. But I’m confident enough in myself and the work that I do that if I just keep doing what I’m doing that it’ll come around and honestly, in the long run, I’ll be glad I made those boundaries, so I’m not feeling resentful toward my job or colleagues.

Beth agreed with Allison, fearing that she will also miss important opportunities if she says no to certain requests or people.

There’s a lot I can’t do, but I feel like when you say no at times, it might, you might miss an opportunity. Especially in student affairs. You know, if you’re not being developed where you want to be developed and you look outside for growth, you can’t say no to certain opportunities. It’s a catch 22.

The boundaries mentioned above represent the themes of boundary setting participants’ use to mange role conflicts in relation to work/life balance; there are many more examples in the data. Each boundary appears to be a negotiation, one that must be strictly upheld so others do not take
advantage of the boundary. Interestingly, these boundaries are not necessarily developed to better manage actual job responsibilities. Rather, it seems these boundaries help the participants manage implicit expectations or concerns, discussed previously in this chapter.

**Self-Discovery**

Many participants divulged how they had to figure out on their own how to handle multiple roles related to work/life balance. Though the idea may seem inherently negative, many participants preferred to work out this balance on their own terms rather than someone else’s. Allison found that it was crucial to define one’s role and work/life balance from the very beginning.

It’s everything from defining for yourself what the issues are, to communicating to your colleagues or supervisor, to finding a solution that best fits your life. It’s personal and so it’s a personal responsibility. You can’t allow someone else to dictate your responsibilities.

As Jennifer’s supervisor was working on her Ph.D. when Jennifer first started at the institution, she felt she was provided little direction in managing her new roles. As a consequence, Jennifer was forced to go beyond her comfort zone.

I had to just find my own way. But that made me very independent. It allowed me to network with different people and trust other people, which actually benefited my programs. It was difficult at the time, not having much direction, but it was really rewarding at the end of the process.

Doug made it his priority to find out how to efficiently manage his multiple roles as animbalance could negatively affect the rest of his life.
I take control of that on my own because the reality is [that] my spiritual health, my mental health, and my physical health has to be controlled by me. I can’t let external influences hamper those pieces of my identity. When there are other people in your life [who] are important, then you begin to make decisions that influence them in a way, and you need to be able to balance that. You have to find your balance, and you have to do it on your own. If you want somebody to do that for you, time will do nothing but pass, and you’ll find yourself older and in mental, emotional, and physical decay.

Allison mentioned how change remains constant when one is figuring out one’s work/life balance. As life circumstances change, so are the ways in which one manages them.

Each person has to figure it out for themselves, and those answers continue to change based on their home life circumstances. The key is being open to change and trusting employees that they’re going to figure it out for themselves and really be honest with their organizations and their colleagues about what is and what isn’t working.

Though many participants concurred that management of role conflict and work/life balance is a personal responsibility, some emphasized the importance of the supervisor/supervisee relationship in managing work/life balance. In the following section, I address participants’ positive and negative experiences with supervisors in managing role conflicts related to work/life balance, as well as one supervisor’s perspective on how the initiatives help or hinder the process.

**Supervisor/Supervisee Relationship**

In matters of work/life balance, no relationship is more important than that with one’s supervisor. The study participants were emphatic about how this relationship can make or break one’s ability to handle effectively work/life balance and role conflict.
Beth has a strong, collegial relationship with her supervisor though the latter’s lack of work/life balance impedes Beth’s ability to attain a balance. “My boss will contact me in the evening because she wants to talk about work and I have to say, I really don’t have time for that right now.” That interference caused Beth to feel guilty because she knows her supervisor has good intentions and has helped her grow as a professional.

Jennifer faced similar issues, and often felt that being dependable and reliable at work can negatively affect one’s work/life balance.

When you are dependable or trustworthy and loyal to the organization, I think a lot of things are put on your plate just because you are reliable. However, that means you are expected to be like that at all times even when you have personal matters or commitments. I have to remind my supervisor that I have a life outside of work.

For a number of reasons, Teresa found it difficult to discuss work/life balance with her supervisor. She acknowledged that as her supervisor is overloaded and has difficulty managing her own work/life balance, Teresa is not sure if approaching her supervisor about work/life balance would be beneficial. Role modeling, or the lack thereof, appears to have had a negative effect on Teresa’s work/life balance: she feels that she can discuss the issue with no one.

Some participants found that supervisors were supportive of the participants’ work/life balance. When Becca’s father became sick, she knew that her role as a caretaker was often going to take her away from the office. Initially concerned about how supportive her supervisor was going to be, Becca was relieved to find that her need for flexibility was not going to be an issue.

On very short notice, I was able to tell my supervisor that I had to take my dad to an appointment, or I need to leave at a certain time. It was never frowned upon that I was
leaving and it made me feel so much better. My supervisor would actually call and check in. “How’s your dad?” ‘How are you?’

For Becca, that made an extremely stressful period in her life much less so. Similarly, Fiona found her supervisor extremely supportive and flexible, especially when Fiona ran into an unexpected issue with one of her children.

My supervisor is so understanding. Because my husband and I take turns with the kids, even on snow days, she gives me the flexibility to work from home when we need to.

She is truly a supportive supervisor, and I couldn’t really ask for a better one.

Ellen approached her relationship with her supervisor differently, and found that their relationship is the reason they are so supportive of one another.

Our relationship goes deeper than just the supervisor-supervisee relationship. She knows my children. I know her children. And so, if one of us comes up and says ‘My daughter needs speech therapy,’ it’s not even really a question if she was going to allow me to navigate that within the office structure.

These examples illustrate the fact that the supervisor/supervisee relationship can assist or block employees from attaining work/life balance and managing multiple roles. I asked participants who are supervisors how they approach their employees regarding work/life balance. As a supervisor for many years, Michael noted the importance of the supervisor/supervisee relationship and open, honest communications centered around work/life balance.

I really hope supervisors communicate that this conversation is a positive one. It needs to go on, and if a subordinate doesn’t feel like they can have that conversation because it may impact them negatively, that’s problematic. We’ve got to be willing to have that
conversation. It’s my role as the supervisor to make you feel like it’s okay to have that conversation.

Doug shared similar feelings, noting that,

I think a good supervisor would be sensitive to a conversation about work/life balance. If someone maintains work/life balance and is personally happy, then they’re going to be happy as a professional and produce [as] I need them to produce.

Doris agreed, stating that,

I encourage my staff to figure out how [to] integrate their work and personal life. A balanced employee is a productive and happy [one]. I talk to the people [who] report directly to me and encourage everybody in the units to let me know how I can support them.

Donna viewed the topic differently by focusing on acknowledging employees when they go beyond typical duties.

When people do extra work, I try to recognize them. But it takes a lot to rise to that level. When somebody says I’m doing extra, I think honey, you haven’t seen extra. So, yeah, you’re doing something. But if you’re doing it for two weeks, buck up. I don’t want to be exploitive of people, but at the same time, my tolerance level for what is ‘a lot’ is high.

Regardless of the approach, supervisors interviewed in this study conceded that work/life balance in student affairs can be difficult to manage, and at some point in their careers, they have grappled with finding their own balance and managing multiple roles. Communication and flexibility appeared to be the most common methods supervisors employed to assist their employees to attain some level of work/life balance.
Solutions within the Institutional Framework

The final question addressed in this study sought to identify some solutions within the institution that can help student affairs employees better manage work/life balance. Three major themes emerged from discussions with participants: value adoption, cultural change, and self-care.

Value adoption

For work/life balance to become a priority in student affairs, many participants emphasized the fact that the profession and institution must also place value on work/life balance. Becca talked about the importance of being honest with ourselves as a profession.

We have to say that this is going to be a priority, and we’re going to do some work, knowing that we’ll make some missteps on the way. Intentionally saying this is a priority, we’re going to show it’s a priority by acting, and we’re going to check back in with you to see how it’s working to hold ourselves accountable. We need to value it and be honest that work/life balance is different for different people and that’s okay. We need to get intentionally behind it and be honest in saying this is a value for us, and we’re going to live this value.

Rachel agreed with Becca:

I think just addressing it would be nice. I think that even having some sort of women and student affairs lunch type things are helpful. Just getting together and talking about things, whether it’s work-related or not, just knowing that you have a place where you can talk about these things and know that other people value this (and the ability to find work/life balance).
Doris concurred, saying “to really create change, we need to bring voice to this issue. Men, women, mothers, single people, everyone. It needs a voice.”

Allison made a valid point about the communication and culture that surrounds work/life balance.

It’s more about creating a culture where people can begin to talk about how to do their job in a way that’s most productive. So you can’t really create culture until you start talking about it.

Once work/life balance becomes a priority for division leaders, discussions about the issue need to occur in order to create changes in the culture. Allison believed that communication will be the most likely driver, forcing us to act on our shared values.

I think just simply talking about it, having a conversation around it, seeing how people are managing it. I think it would be helpful for people to say, you know what, this is how we’re doing it right now. Let’s gather information with how people are doing it in different departments and share it.

Allison already does this. She felt she needed to tell her story regarding her flexible work schedule.

I feel really strongly about telling people what I’m doing and why I’m doing it. I don’t necessarily feel like I have to be the voice of the flexible schedule, but I think because of my role at the institution, it’s important that I share this with others.

Once work/life balance has been accepted as a value, and it is talked about at levels across the department, many felt that only then will cultural change begin. Below, participants discuss the importance of culture change in helping them manage multiple roles and create work/life balance.
**Culture Change**

Several topics emerged from the data regarding culture change. First, many participants said the institution, supervisors, and departments need to become as flexible as possible. As Donna put it,

I think that within the standards of being able to get business done, that schedules should be as flexible as they can be. I would love, love, love, love to say let’s work four 10s instead of five 8s because so many days are 10s anyway that having a day off in the middle of the week when you can get personal stuff done is valuable.

Though Donna acknowledged that is unlikely to happen, she understood that there may be times when that can be accomplished, over holiday breaks or during the summer. Michael also acknowledged the importance of flexibility.

I’m in favor of institutions being as flexible as they can. It’s going to vary from department to department. For example, if I can allow one of my staff members to come in at 9:30 every day because they want to take their child to school, then I can work to make that happen. And if that can’t work, then maybe we can talk about another solution that may.

Becca provided a great example for how temporary flexible arrangements assist in alleviating other stresses in her staff member’s lives.

When gas prices were really high, we moved to a four-day workweek so we could save some money on gas. We had to negotiate how that would work, who would work when, what day we would take off, but we did it as a team, and we were each concerned about being fair to one another.
Once the flexibility issue is addressed and accepted across departments, supervisors need to encourage employees to have conversations about work/life balance with their supervisor.

You are empowered to have a discussion about work/life balance with me because I won’t always know what is and isn’t working… As a supervisor, I need to be sure my staff is empowered to address special issues like work/life balance.

Further, Michael noted that it is not his responsibility to look in a crystal ball in order to determine his subordinates’ work/life balance needs, but it is his responsibility to be open and encourage his employees to have this conversation.

Along the lines of empowering employees, many participants discussed how important it is to value employees. At times, participants found value in their supervisors’ ability to help or hinder their own work/life balance. Jennifer struggled with her own self-worth at times.

At the end of the day, when you’re working crazy hours and doing more than what’s required of you and not getting paid overtime or even getting thanked, what do you have? We can all be replaced in a minute, but if I just felt some sort of value, or some sort of appreciation from my supervisor, that could make a difference in my attitude during those stretches of 60-hour weeks.

Beth concurred,

If you know that I’m going to have to take work home, if you know that I’m going to have to stay late to meet with student government, if you know, and you value my work in student affairs, acknowledge it. A salary increase would be nice, but we know that’s not an option. How about a card. A thank you. Just acknowledge it.

Rob also agreed though he took the notion of value a step further.
We do not get paid enough. They should reciprocate, and they should compensate us either with more vacation time or with more resources. If enrollment is going to continue to increase, then our offices should be larger which would in turn allow us [to] spread the wealth a bit and have some work/life balance. More resources.

Fiona concurred with Rob on this:

Hire more people. That would be a start because that within itself will keep people from spreading themselves way too thin because the work has to be done. But how you get it done, it can be done a lot of different ways.

Changing the institutional culture takes time, communication, and a re-evaluation of resources.

The participants in this study felt that institutional flexibility, employee empowerment, and showing value for employees can lead to culture change which can bolster work/life balance.

Finally, participants discussed the importance of self-care: how supervisors and institutions can encourage employees to take better care of themselves, which in turn, will bolster their ability to juggle multiple roles and maintain work/life balance.

**Self-care**

Many participants discussed the idea of self-care. Allison stated that self-care actually improves her own work/life balance.

Times when I’m feeling really out of control, and I’m not negotiating all my different roles is when I know I’m not taking time for myself. And it can [be] just literally [having] a cup of coffee by myself in the morning, but that’s a big one. You have to be disciplined and take care of yourself.

Doris concurred, discovering that having other women in her life to keep her grounded is important.
I have a group of three to four women and not one of them is in town. Two are in Lexington, one is in West Chester. I’m very close with them, and we take a girls’ trip a couple times of year at a minimum. They keep me balanced with the work/life balance. I can’t ever say I’m too busy for those trips, or I’ll never hear the end of it. That’s a good thing.

Beth acknowledged that she needs to do a better job at prioritizing her needs.

I need to prioritize myself if I want to continue to grow, but [what] my family needs right now is sort of preventing that. I need to, no I want to go back to school. I want to date. I want to do those things, but when you have a sick parent, when do you find the time?

Michael linked self-care to health improvement.

I just had a doctor tell me I need to walk more. My knees are starting to bother me, but he said I don’t want you [to] talk [about] walk[ing] once a week, that won’t do you any good. If you’re going to walk, you need to establish a regimen and do it five days a week. It needs to be a priority.

Beth agreed, noting that she’s become more selfish with her time as she gets older.

I’ve become a little more selfish to say, hey, I’m important. My health is important, my personal life is important, my husband, my family, my future is important. So if it’s leaving early to walk the track or attend a Weight Watcher’s meeting, I’m going to do it.

Because that’s important.

Self-care was one issue that professionals from all levels emphasized during the research process. Along with value adoption and changes in institutional and professional culture are ways in which participants felt institutions can better support employees in managing multiple roles.
Summary

This chapter outlined the themes that emerged from participants’ experiences in managing multiple roles as student affairs administrators. The interviews highlighted multiple barriers and challenges that prohibit their ability to manage so many roles. However, participants did offer suggestions to supervisors who have the power to make institutional changes to better support work/life balance. In a discussion about these changes, Doris noted that,

I’m on a pre-conference coordinating committee, and we’re creating a workshop. And we had a conference call this week, and we were talking about work/life balance, how we talk about it all the time, but it doesn’t feel like we talk about it all the time. And the one thing I would say is practice it. Quit talking about it and just practice it. You can talk it to death and talk about strategies and everything else, but if you don’t practice it, it’s all for naught.

Doris’s point provided a segue to Chapter Five in which I discuss the results and implications of this study with the purpose of informing the profession and encouraging practitioners and institutional leadership to implement and support initiatives that assist employees in managing a multitude of roles.
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the ways in which institutions of higher education can better support student affairs administrators in managing their multiple identities. Fifteen student affairs professionals from the University of Cincinnati were interviewed. A feminist approach within qualitative inquiry was used to explore the experience of each participant. I sought to answer the following research questions:

- What are the barriers or challenges of managing multiple roles as a student affairs administrator?

- How do student affairs administrators manage role conflict in their life based on work/life balance?

- What can be done within the institutional work environment to assist in managing multiple roles (wife, mother, husband, father, caregiver, etc.)?

Summary of Key Findings in Relation to the Literature

The previous chapter reviewed the study’s key findings and outlined the challenges student affairs administrators face in managing role conflict in relation to work/life balance. Participants discussed the barriers or challenges they confront in managing work/life balance, including contextual challenges such as time and technology, personal and societal expectations, and institutional and professional cultures. Participants’ discussions led to the finding that the achievement of work/life balance and the reduction of role conflict will require social, professional, and institutional cultural changes.
Societal expectations of men and women appear to strongly affect whether one gender can manage multiple roles more easily than another. A woman’s sense of self is often shaped by societal expectations regarding gender roles. Traditional gender roles still place housework and primary caregiver roles as women’s responsibility. Though this cultural view is gradually shifting, female participants in this study still felt the burden of trying to be professionals and caretakers and do both perfectly. This constant struggle often triggered feelings of guilt and burnout, symptoms of strain-based conflict.

Another societal expectation that appears to influence the managing of multiple roles is the male-oriented expectations fostered in universities. The characteristics expected of leaders, regardless of industry, often closely line up with these roles, generally causing women to feel unsupported in the work environment. At the University of Cincinnati, most Division of Student Affairs leaders were male at the time of the study. Many women in the study felt that these male-oriented expectations posed barriers to successfully managing multiple roles since the male leadership either did not recognize women’s other roles or identified women specifically with the other roles they held, say as mothers rather than as professionals and mothers. This study carried out through a feminist poststructuralist lens, revealed how power and knowledge are strongly linked. As Ropers-Huilman (1998) put it:

Knowledge that is viewed as complete and true in a given social context varies over time, and those whose knowledge is most highly regarded in any such context are often defined as those with the greatest power. (p. 6)

High-level student affairs leaders, no matter the gender, are seen as having greater power in the institutional structure, especially in relation to enforcing or creating policy. Thus, it is critical that leaders carefully examine work/life balance issues through others’ lenses.
The culture in this Division of Student Affairs and Services also contributed to difficulties in effectively managing multiple roles. Many participants described a culture in which dedication to the field means working long hours and appearing to have little work/life balance, as if that were a badge of honor. This perennial culture which I have personally experienced, undermines the field, the institutions, our efforts, our families, and students. In particular, how do we as supervisors, mentors, and role models demonstrate just how to best manage multiple roles? As educators, we influence others; we must acknowledge how our own habits have effects on others’ perspectives of work/life balance, and how important it is to effectively manage multiple roles.

Most participants seemed conflicted about who should lead the effort to encourage work/life balance. Some felt that institutional leaders, such as the Vice President of Student Affairs or the Dean of Students, should set divisional and departmental expectations regarding work/life balance initiatives. Others felt that the responsibility lay with the Human Resources department to ensure that a consistent message is sent across the institution. Currently, the supervisors of individual departments set their own work/life balance expectations for staff. This might make the most sense as supervisors are more likely to know the day-to-day needs of their department staff than the Vice President or Dean of Students would. Taking this power away from supervisors may restrict their ability to work with staff in developing programs that work best for the latter.

The challenge in implementing work/life balance initiatives at the supervisory level crops up because of the different discourses each supervisor brings to the table. These discourses, influenced by social practices in their lives, can vary from extremely flexible and encouraging (creating an environment that supports work/life balance) to a less flexible environment (placing
little value on certain initiatives or practices). These inconsistencies across departments send mixed messages to the staff about what institutions value in regard to work/life balance.

**Scholarly Implications**

This study emphasized the problems within the structures, norms, practices, values, and cultures within higher education that are still gendered today. Many women in this study confirmed that processes and practices within the institution that aligned with male gender characteristics, fostered an atmosphere that excluded women. According to Bensimon (1991), men more easily navigate the structures within higher education, including its bureaucracy, politics, and symbols, than women do. These male-dominated systems often dictate policy creation, thereby leaving women out of consideration during such processes.

I chose feminist poststructuralism because of its strong ties to studies related to higher education policy research. Using this theoretical perspective let me focus on organizational transformation solutions, not just individual transformational solutions. In addition, acknowledging the role of gender was an important way to give women a voice, as gender is often excluded as an analytical category within most research studies (Marshall, 2009). Though gender was not the central point of this study, use of a feminist perspective allowed me to understand gender’s importance in relation to work/life balance and managing multiple roles.

The findings of this study meld well with feminist poststructuralism in two ways. First, the data supported the idea that truth is not a universal concept; rather, that it lies within a person’s subjectivity. It is difficult to make broad assumptions and generalizations about work/life balance because of individuals’ differing backgrounds and experiences. These variations confirm the fact that one person’s truth is not the same as another’s. This notion
aligns with conflicting subject positions (i.e., when women in higher education work in social environments that oppose them) (Harding, 1986).

Second, feminist poststructuralism acknowledges that women are frequently evaluated on by male norms. As men hold the majority of the leadership positions in student affairs, women are often compared to men in terms of productivity and success. These roles, when paired with societal expectations of women, specifically women with children or those in caretaking roles, begin to conflict. These conflicts encourage leaders to see work/life balance only as a women’s issue, not as an organizational or cultural one.

The combination of power, language, and knowledge in feminist poststructuralism enables us to view higher education policy differently, particularly as related to gender and identity. Further, the study results revealed the importance of dictating who should be involved and whose interests need to be considered in formulating higher education policy.

**Practical Implications for Higher Education**

A strong supervisor/employee relationship is crucial to individuals’ abilities to manage differing roles. High-level leaders can better support supervisors by training them to recognize signs of stress, fatigue, and burnout, helping them understand the services provided by the institution (i.e., work/life balance initiatives), and empowering supervisors to think about methods that can best support employees outside the workplace. Those who feel that their supervisors are not supportive generally look for new jobs, as Teresa and Jennifer did during this study. In turn, supervisors must take responsibility for policy placement, be attentive to employees’ needs, and be willing to discuss issues and provide solutions for those who feel overwhelmed by their work schedules.
Training for supervisors should be mandated. Opportunities to educate supervisors on work/life balance challenges them to confront the question of what would benefit staff members who are negotiating multiple roles. Some supervisors do not advocate for their staff because the former do not know about the work/life balance policies/initiatives available for them.

In addition, leaders can create a culture of self-care. Taking care of oneself is important if one is to manage multiple roles. Offering services like free or reduced gym memberships, discussion groups for those who struggle with maintaining balance, and free or reduced cost counseling services are just some of the ways in which institutional leaders can create atmospheres that support caring for oneself. Supervisors can encourage staff to get some exercise during the workday, or start a conversation group with certain populations who struggle most. For example, new parents, caretakers, or long distance commuters may be interested in talking to colleagues with like experiences on how the latter manage multiple roles.

Institutional leaders can also support changes in this department’s professional culture. Many participants discussed the field’s emotional, physical, and mental demands. Student affairs has a strong prevalence of an ethic of care, meaning professionals often place their students’ needs before their own, causing an emotional drain. In addition, the late nights and weekend work make for a mentally and physically demanding workplace. Most participants termed the student affairs culture as challenging and difficult (Collins, 2009; Houdyshell, 2007; Fochtman, 2010). Thus, supervisors’ acknowledgement that working hard and working too much are two very different things is one step in the right direction. It is also critical that supervisors comprehend that when a person’s life circumstances change, their ability to be flexible may alter as well. A new parent may have to leave by 5 pm each day to be at the childcare facility on time. A caretaker who must take his or her parent to a treatment or a
doctor’s appointment in the early morning needs to be able to arrive a few minutes late for work without penalty. One’s commitment or work ethic has not changed, but life circumstances are simply causing scheduling conflicts.

Similarly, if an employee participates in a work/life balance program such as a flexible schedule, it is important that supervisors and top leaders alike keep offering growth and development opportunities to subordinates. Collins (2009) found that women who worked a flexible schedule had perceived that they had fewer chances for career advancement than did women who worked regular hours. These negative perceptions decrease the likelihood of the use of these initiatives, especially by women.

Finally, many participants noted that in order for any initiative or policy to work, communication across the institution must increase. Employees need to easily access work/life balance policies or initiatives, and these policies need to be written in clear, concise language. Work/life balance initiatives and policies also must be discussed at the highest levels and disseminated to all staff so that available options are known.

Limitations

Some of the study’s limitations were considered during the construction of the research design though certain limitations were beyond my control. Because this study is designed to be applicable to a larger population, my small participant size (15) prevented broad generalizations. Similarly, the study was conducted at a large, public research institution with over 40,000 students and 15,000 employees. Student affairs professionals at other types of institutions may encounter differing experiences. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized.

The participants in this study are diverse in a number of ways. In relation to ethnicity and race, four white women, six African American women, one Latina, three African American men,
and one white male participated. Though race and ethnicity likely influenced the participants’ abilities to manage work/life balance, the interview questions did not focus on this in relation to the research questions; therefore, is a limitation of this study.

Finally, the data was collected during the summer of 2012, a season typically less busy for many student affairs professionals as was the case during the study period. If the study had been conducted when demand was highest, participants might have conveyed different views on the topics.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study illustrated the challenges student affairs professionals experience in managing the multiple roles connected to work/life balance. Though participants answered the three research questions, their answers prompted additional questions as data was collected and analyzed. This section offers recommendations for future research.

This study was conducted at a large, public research institution that boasts 12 colleges, 3 campuses, Division 1 athletics, and a large Division of Student Affairs and Services that incorporates 20 different departments. It is natural then that silos and strong hierarchical processes can foster communication problems. Many participants felt that the large organizational structure itself hindered their ability to manage multiple roles. Thus, it is crucial that other types of institutions be examined, including small private institutions, community colleges, and women’s colleges in order to gain a clearer understanding of how organizational units impact student affairs administrators’ ability to manage work/life balance.

In addition to studying other types of institutions, it is critical to examine subpopulations in student affairs administration roles, particularly single parents or single caretakers. These individuals frequently face more economic stresses due to the lack of a second income. Limited
income may prevent these administrators from accessing services like childcare or eldercare, fostering various time- and strain-based conflicts, and difficulty in managing work/life balance.

Finally, though this study sought to include men and their perspectives on managing multiple roles, only four of the 10 approached responded to the participation inquiry. As men still hold the majority of leadership positions in student affairs (Levtov, 2001), their input is critical to creating the culture change described in this study. Further, managing multiple roles and work/life balance is resigned to one gender though the views on the subject differ based on the responses of the participants in this study.

**Conclusion**

Work/life balance issues are not new to student affairs administrators. Why then is this topic so often discussed but difficult to resolve? The challenge for managers and supervisors in higher education in assisting their employees to manage multiple roles comes from the diversity of the workforce. People differ: they have different roles, financial circumstances, and so on. One’s roles can change in an instant, triggering the need for more flexibility and support in the workplace. After discussing with participants how to manage work/life balance and multiple roles, I found that individual staff members need to feel empowered to discuss work/life balance with supervisors, and supervisors and institutional leadership need to listen carefully so they can respond appropriately to staff concerns. Changes in culture—in this case societal, professional, and institutional—will not happen overnight. However, if leaders in institutions, particularly those in student affairs, can believe in and stress the value of maintaining work/life balance and integrate its principles within the culture, employees may find that feel their roles, at home and at work, are supported; a support that can make for efficient, happy, and dedicated employees better able to serve students’ needs.
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Appendix A

Commonly Used Human Resources Terms Relating to Work/Life Balance Initiatives

Childcare services: Childcare facilities available to faculty, staff, and students that provide both long- and short-term daycare options.

Dependent care assistance: A pre-tax deduction for eligible dependent care expenses from employees’ pay.

Dual career accommodations: This service is often used by institutions in an effort to recruit and retain outstanding faculty and academic personnel. Institutions explore employment opportunities for candidates' spouses and partners across departments, divisions, and schools.

Eldercare support: Informational, financial, or flexibility benefits offered to employees who are primary caregivers for elderly family members.

Family leave: Family leave closely tied to the Family and Medical Leave Act, gives parents a set time off for non-medical situations.

Flextime: A flexible work arrangement where individuals’ starting and ending times differ from the organization’s standard, yet they work the same number of hours per day. For example, four 10-hour workdays is the most common flextime arrangement in higher education.

Flexible work arrangements: The variety of options that permit employees to meet work requirements.

Job sharing: The flexible work arrangement where one full-time position is split between two people, each working part-time. The paid benefits are usually shared by the two employees.

Modified duties: A policy that gives time off without reducing pay on a part-time basis, by eliminating teaching duties during adjustment periods after childbirth or adoption.
On-campus lactation stations: As of March, 2010, institutions across America are required to provide safe, clean, and private lactation rooms for women to express breast milk.

Sick childcare: If an employee’s child is mildly ill and in a certain age range (from 1 and 12 years old), he/she can take the child to the sick childcare center. This care center generally runs on a fee-for-service basis.
Appendix B

Invitation to Participate in Study

Study Title: Finding work-life balance while having a career in higher education administration

Dear [Participant Name],

My name is Nicole K. Mayo. I am a third-year doctoral candidate at the University of Cincinnati. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Urban Educational Leadership, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying the balance between a career in higher education administration and other aspects of life. Men and women with administrator status in student affairs and services will be included in this study. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for one interview and a follow-up meeting to discuss the data collected. In particular, you will be asked questions about how you manage role conflict in your life and ways in which you manage multiple roles as a university administrator. The meetings will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 60-90 minutes. The interview will be audio taped so that I can accurately reflect what is discussed. The tapes will be reviewed by myself and a third party transcriber who is not associated personally or professionally with the University of Cincinnati or myself. Prior to the second meeting, I will give you the typed transcripts of the audio-recordings so you can be sure it accurately represents your thoughts and feelings. The transcripts will then be kept in a locked cabinet in my office until the study is completed. After the study is completed, transcripts will be kept for three years, at which point the documents will be shredded.

You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to. You may feel uncomfortable answering some questions. A few sample questions include:

1. How long have you been in student affairs (can follow up to ask how long have you been in this position, at this institution)?

2. What led you to work in student affairs?

3. Do you have children? Do they live at home?

4. Where do you live in relation to work (distance)?

Although you probably will not benefit directly from participating in this study, we hope that others in the higher education community will benefit by highlighting the importance of work/life balance and managing multiple roles for student affairs administrators.

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a locked cabinet in my office at
the University of Cincinnati. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed. In an effort to protect your identity, the office name in which you work, your title, and any other personally identifiable information will be withheld from the study.

Taking part in the study is your decision. You do not have to participate in this study if you do not want. You may decide not to answer any question you are uncomfortable answering or you may withdraw from participating in the study at any time, including after the completion of the interviews.

We will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at 513-556-6120 or nicole.mayo@uc.edu or my faculty advisor, Mary Brydon-Miller, Ph.D. at 513-556-5108 or mary.brydon-miller@uc.edu if you have study related questions or problems.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please contact me at the number listed. I will follow-up within the next week to see whether you are willing to participate.

Sincerely,

Nicole K. Mayo
Primary Researcher

Mary Brydon-Miller, Ph.D.
Faculty Advisor
Appendix C

Adult Consent Form for Research

University of Cincinnati

Department: College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services

Principal Investigator: Nicole K. Mayo

Faculty Advisor: Mary Brydon-Miller

Title of Study: Work/life balance and student affairs administrators: Managing multiple roles.

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Please read this paper carefully and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Who is doing this research study?

The person in charge of this research study is Nicole K. Mayo of the University of Cincinnati Urban Educational Leadership department of the College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services.

She is being guided in this research by Mary Brydon-Miller, Ph.D.

What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose of this research is to study how higher education administrators balance a career with other aspects of life. Additionally, this study will investigate institutional support of administrators’ professional and personal lives.

Who will be in this research study?

Fifteen people will take part in this study. You may be in this study if:

- You are an administrator in student affairs
- You are employed at a Research 1 institution

What if you are an employee where the research study is done?

Taking part in this research study is not part of your job. Refusing to be in the study will not affect your job. You will not be offered any special work-related benefits if you take part in this study.
What will you be asked to do in this research study, and how long will it take?

You will be asked to participate in in-person, audio-recorded, individual interviews. If you do not want to be audio-recorded, you cannot participate in the study. The interviews will take approximately 60-90 minutes. The interviews will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place. The following information will be collected from/about you:

- Roles in which you perform in your work and home life
- General information regarding your employer, job, and job duties
- Information regarding your perspective on work/life balance
- Information regarding how you approach work/life balance

You can choose your own pseudonym, or fake names for the interviews to protect your confidentiality

Are there any risks to being in this research study?

You are not expected to experience any risks beyond what you experience in a typical day. However, due to the personal nature of this research, some questions may make you uncomfortable. You can refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?

You will probably not receive any benefit by participating in this study. However, your participation could help the researchers better understand how higher education administrators balance a career with other aspects of life.

Will you have to pay anything to be in this research study?

You will not have to pay anything to take part in this study.

What will you get because of being in this research study?

You will not be paid or given anything to take part in this study.

Do you have choices about taking part in this research study?

If you do not want to take part in this research study you may simply not participate. If you stop participation before the interview is completed, you have a choice to keep your data in the study. There will be a box to check at the end of this Consent Form if you wish to keep your data in the study or not if you do choose to withdraw from the study.

How will your research information be kept confidential?

Information about you will be kept private by:
Using pseudonyms, or fake names, for key identifiers like names, locations, titles, departments, etc. that would personally or professionally identify you
- Not including your name on the typed transcript
- Erasing audiotapes after the second meeting (member check) is complete
- Keeping research data on a password-protected computer

Your information will be kept electronically on a password protected computer in the researcher’s office until the study has been completed. It will be kept in hard copy form in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s office for three years. Signed consent documents will also be kept in a locked file folder in the researcher’s office for three years. After that, data will be destroyed by deleting all computer data files and shredding all hard copy data files.

The data from this research study may be published; but you will not be identified by name.

Agents of the University of Cincinnati, which may include various faculty, may inspect study records for audit or quality assurance purposes.

**What are your legal rights in this research study?**

Nothing in this consent form waives any legal rights you may have. This consent form also does not release the investigator, the institution, or its agents from liability for negligence.

**What if you have questions about this research study?**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, you should contact Nicole K. Mayo at nicole.mayo@uc.edu or 513-556-6120. Or, you may contact Mary Brydon-Miller at mary.brydon-miller@uc.edu or 513-556-5108.

The UC Institutional Review Board reviews all research projects that involve human participants to be sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or complaints about the study, you may contact the UC IRB at (513) 558-5259. Or, you may call the UC Research Compliance Hotline at (800) 889-1547, or write to the IRB, 300 University Hall, ML 0567, 51 Goodman Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0567, or email the IRB office at irb@ucmail.uc.edu.

**Do you HAVE to take part in this research study?**

No one has to be in this research study. Refusing to take part will NOT cause any penalty or loss of benefits that you would otherwise have. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer.

You may start and then change your mind and stop at any time. To stop being in the study, you should tell Nicole K. Mayo at 513-556-6120 or nicole.mayo@uc.edu.
**Agreement:**

I have read this information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I give my consent to participate in this research study. I will receive a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep.

If you drop out of the study before it is completed, please check whether you would like to keep your data in the study or you would like your data removed from the study.

☐ I would like my data included in the study if I drop out of the study before it is completed
☐ I do not want my data included in the study if I drop out of the study before it is completed

Participant Name (please print) ____________________________________________

Participant Signature __________________________ Date ______

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent __________________________ Date ______
Appendix D

Interview Protocol

1. How long have you been in student affairs (can follow up to ask how long have you been in this position, at this institution)?

2. What led you to work in student affairs?

3. Do you have children? Do they live at home?

4. Where do you live in relation to work (distance)?

5. How long have you been in student affairs (can follow up to ask how long have you been in this position, at this institution)?

6. What let you to work in student affairs?

7. Do you have children? Do they live at home?

8. Where do you live in relation to work (distance)?

9. What things in your life do you find you need to work especially hard on to balance?
   a. How do you balance them?

10. Some people try to separate their work and family lives and others try to integrate the two. How would you describe yourself in that regard?

11. Do you do work (related to your job) at home?

12. Do you incorporate your family into various work experiences (events, etc)?

13. Do the demands of work ever take away from your home life?
   a. Do the demands of home life ever take away from your work life?

14. Are there people in your life that help you find balance between work and home?
   a. Are there people in your life that hinder you in finding balance between work and home?

15. Have you found that there are certain things you can do to maintain the work/life boundary to your liking (Physical arrangements, flexible work schedule, vacations, separation of calendars, email, etc)?

16. How have your attitudes about work/life balance changed over time?
a. If so, what kinds of things prompted that change (position change, children, spouse, sick parent/family member, etc)?

17. What would you recommend to a brand new student affairs professional regarding work/life balance?

18. Are there any other issues you’ve thought of during the interview that you think might be important for me to know regarding work/life balance in relation to working in student affairs?
Appendix E

Roles Held By Participants

Advisor (5)
Aunt (3)
Boyfriend (1)
Brother (3)
Caretaker (3)
Choir Member (1)
Church Member (1)
Citizen (1)
Cousin (1)
Co-worker (1)
Daughter (9)
Educator (1)
Employee (10)
Father (2)
Fiancé (1)
Friend (7)
Godfather (1)
Granddaughter (1)
Grandfather (1)
Husband (2)
Leader (1)
Mentee (3)
Mentor (4)
Mother (4)
Pet Owner (1)
Professional (2)
Role Model (2)
Sister (7)
Son (3)
Sorority Sister (2)
Supervisor (3)
Uncle (2)
Volunteer (2)
Wife (5)