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Women Counselor Educators: Level of Job Satisfaction While Raising Children

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In higher education, women take on many different roles in addition to the demands placed on them within their career. Roles such as wife, partner, homeowner, and parent require women to balance those facets of their life in conjunction with their responsibilities as faculty members (Bennett, 2006; Cron, 2001; Noor, 2004). These factors could potentially contribute to role overload, thereby impacting the subsequent level of job satisfaction for women in higher education. Research suggests that women faculty members experience less job satisfaction than men (Glenn, 2007). Trends in the research indicate that this is due to frustration and stress as a result of work overload, salaries, and partners who do not carry as much of the demands of childrearing and work (Glenn, 2007).

Additionally, and relevant to Counselor Education, is despite the fact that women currently comprise almost half of the Ph.D. population in higher education (Mason & Goulden, 2004), they tend to be hired less frequently than men (Moore & Sagaria, 1993), are at less prestigious institutions, and are promoted less frequently (Harper, Baldwin, Gansneder & Chronister, 2001; Hill, Leinbaugh, Bradley, & Hazler, 2005; Olsen, Maple & Stage, 1995). To individuals outside of the academic realm, being a faculty member is not typically viewed as a stressful occupation, due to tenure, job security, perceived short work hours, and overall freedom (Hill et al., 2005). However, workplace stressors in the 21st century are becoming more evident (Hill et al., 2005) with the pressures to balance teaching, research, and service commitments (Olsen et al., 1995). Subsequently, the advancement of women in academe, in particular Counselor Education, has increased the relevance of their level of job satisfaction (Cron, 2001).

Finding specific contributors to women faculty members' level of job satisfaction is increasingly essential in order to recruit and retain Counselor Educators (Hill et al., 2005). Counselor Educators are responsible for the growth and development of counselors in training, thereby highlighting even more the importance of identifying the contributors of their levels of job satisfaction (Leinbaugh, Hazler, Bradley, & Hill, 2003). One may anticipate that if women Counselor Educators are well, they will be better equipped to promote wellness in their students and the clients who they serve.

Finally, understanding the current level of job satisfaction for women in Counselor Education gives voice to women currently in the field and assists those who may be considering this specific career path in making a decision and being proactive in their own wellness. This article will review the current trends in the literature regarding women in higher education and job satisfaction, challenges for women Counselor Educators, and factors that may exacerbate women's stress in balancing multiple roles. In conclusion, a strength based approach and implications for Counselor Education and future research will be provided.

Women in Higher Education and Job Satisfaction

There is a paucity of literature regarding female Counselor Educators as most of the research is focused solely on faculty from other disciplines (Hill et al., 2005). Sorcinelli (1994) stated that most new faculty members describe high levels of satisfaction with their job in regards to *intrinsic* rewards. *Intrinsic* rewards can be described as factors unique to the academic work within the institution that are independent of circumstances externally (Sorcinelli, 1994). Specifically, factors such as the quality of their collegial relationships within the departmental environment contributes to overall job satisfaction as noted by new faculty (August & Waltman, 2004). It is seemingly important for women to have meaningful relationships with colleagues that facilitate a sense of community within the department (Ropers-Huilman, 2000).

Furthermore, aspects of the university such as course loads, teaching expectations, and the availability of internal funding for research are examples of factors said to contribute to the level of job satisfaction for faculty in general. Similarly, perceptions of overload may impact women faculty's level of satisfaction (August & Waltman, 2004). Features of the university such as the library and facilities available for research are also important qualities that can enhance satisfaction with faculty employment (Olsen & Sorcinelli, 1992; Sorcinelli, 1988, 1992a; Turner & Boice, 1987, as cited in Sorcinelli, 1994).

Extrinsic rewards also impact the current level of new faculty's job satisfaction. *Extrinsic* rewards can be described as job security, salary, and benefits (Sorcinelli, 1994). Sorcinelli (1994) asserts that the level of job satisfaction for new faculty may decline over the first few years. Further, women faculty tend to be found in lower paying, nontenure- track positions such as lecturer or instructor where job security is significantly lessened (Harper et al., 2001; Williams, 2004). Additionally, even when controlling for age, rank, discipline, and the type of institution, women faculty as a whole are promoted

and tenured much slower than men, and they are compensated less financially (August & Waltman, 2004).

The women who do succeed and earn tenure are less likely than men to be found working within four-year universities or colleges, and, if so, the institutions are less prestigious (Williams, 2004). Women who are not found working in four-year universities may be found in community colleges or working part time as adjunct faculty members. This concept has classically been called the “glass ceiling” theory, which implies that women are prevented from reaching the top positions in their field and exhibiting their maximum potential (Mason & Goulden, 2002).

Women today are less likely to pursue a career in academia due to the high expectations of balancing professional goals and expectations with their personal life when considering the long hours and somewhat low pay (August & Waltman, 2004). This may be a result of the lack of sufficient intrinsic and extrinsic rewards or due to the “glass ceiling” effect. Because so little is known, research focused on identifying the contributing factors to job satisfaction for women Counselor Educators becomes essential.

Women Counselor Educators and Parenting

There is a dearth of research within Counseling and Counselor Education regarding women faculty and their level of job satisfaction as they are simultaneously parenting. As women continue to enter the workforce, they are increasingly focused on balancing their career with family (Bennett, 2006; Cron, 2001; Noor, 2004). The literature on parenting suggests that the decision to have children for women faculty is a career decision (Mason & Goulden, 2002). When women choose to have children quickly after earning their Ph.D., they are less likely to earn tenure. On the other hand, men are 38% more likely to obtain tenure even if they have children at the same point in their careers (Mason & Goulden, 2004; Williams, 2004).

Level of job satisfaction becomes a salient issue with regard to raising children and maintaining a partnership. On average, faculty earn a Ph.D. at age 34 and will be eligible to apply for tenure at approximately forty. When a woman reaches forty, her fertility is rapidly declining. This poses a challenging dilemma for women who are on the track to establish tenure and wish to combine work and family. Women have to decide whether they will start a family while in the midst of earning tenure, and if they choose to do so, what they will do about work once the baby arrives. If women choose to wait to have children, they could jeopardize their fertility and the subsequent ability to conceive a child (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Motherhood in Counselor Education is an essential issue to examine closely. When a woman in academe becomes pregnant and has a baby, she typically takes maternity leave. Consequently, someone else in the department has to cover her teaching load while she is away. This may negatively impact the woman when she returns to work or if she challenges her institution’s maternal or parental leave policy prior to taking maternity leave (Williams, 2004). The decisions regarding women faculty’s maternity leave are typically enforced by the chairs of departments, who are often men. Women’s

wishes are not always accommodated (Armenti, 2004), thereby potentially impacting job satisfaction.

The impact of deciding to have a child does not stop at maternity leave for women. Williams (2004) asserts that women may be challenged with further consequences once they become parents. Prior to having children and being out of the office, colleagues may assume that the women faculty member is away at a conference or writing to increase publications. Whereas after they become parents and choose to be away from the office, they are presumed to be at home taking care of their children. This may be a source of stress and a subsequent decline in level of job satisfaction, when in fact; the women faculty may be at the library working on writing a book (Williams, 2004).

Another negative impact women face in higher education is a pattern known as *benevolent stereotyping*. *Benevolent stereotyping* may occur when women are overlooked for opportunities such as summer funding for research, important committees, or conference opportunities because they are seen as being too busy with all of the components that comprise motherhood (Williams, 2004). Williams (2004) identifies these patterns in academe as “hitting the maternal wall” (p. 16). The aspects of balancing career and family make it seem like women cannot have tenure and family, yet men seemingly can (Mason & Goulden, 2004). This could significantly impact the occupational satisfaction of women in Counselor Education.

Additionally, benevolent stereotyping affects all women, with or without children, as most employers assume that all women will eventually become mothers (Williams, 2004). Due to this stereotyping, tension between women with children and women without children results. This makes it less likely for women to work together to reduce gender bias in the workplace (Williams, 2004). This tension could also result in a decrease in social support for all women, which has been documented as an important variable of job satisfaction for women faculty members (August & Waltman, 2004).

Overall, there is no research on motherhood in the field of Counselor Education. This becomes a salient issue to explore when taking into consideration how conducive the institution is for those being a parent and a woman counselor educator. The policies that are in place that help or hinder women in Counselor Education parent while working as full time faculty could impact their level of job satisfaction.

Another area to examine is the educational level of the women Counselor Educators’ partners. The partners’ educational level may impact the overall relationship, the counselor educator’s wellness, and subsequently job satisfaction either negatively or positively. If there is discord within the relationship, delineating parenting roles may become difficult. Furthermore, women counselor educators may feel more pressure to carry the majority of the parenting responsibilities.

Partnership

The levels of educational attainment between women in Counselor Education who have earned a Doctorate and their partners who have equal or less levels of education may influence job satisfaction. Views regarding the traditional family were established in

the nineteenth century where there were set standards for men and women. Specifically, society is based on a male career model that not only can be viewed as pressuring women into a forced choice between family and work (Mason & Goulden, 2002), but may also create challenges for a partnership in general.

For instance, if the women counselor educator's partner has less education than she, the partner may have difficulty with the fact that she earned a terminal doctorate degree and he/she has not. While partners may perceive themselves as not having a job with similar prestige, the women faculty may simultaneously feel pressure that their partners are not comfortable having her as the primary earner in the family. Consequently, strain could be placed on the partnership and this could carry over into parenting, the workplace and potentially impact job satisfaction for the woman counselor educator.

Tenure Status and Carnegie Classification

Issues of motherhood could be exacerbated by institutional variables such as tenure status and Carnegie Classification. There are many demands for Counselor Educators who have a desire to pursue tenure and earn increases in pay and a sense of enhanced job security (Roland & Fontanesi-Seime, 1996). Dependent on the Carnegie classification of the institution, demands to obtain tenure and promotion may be different. If you are working at a large research university, there may be more pressures to conduct research and be more productive by way of scholarship overall (Quinn, Edwards Lange, & Olswang, 2004). When considering what factors may contribute to women counselor educator's level of job satisfaction, it is important then, to consider strength based ideas. Working together and generating a strength based approach may assist in increasing the level of job satisfaction for women. Several ideas for success are listed below.

Strength Based Approaches

It is essential that Counselor Educators collaborate with one another and discuss the salient issues that arise for women. Mutual support between Counselor Educators is important, especially during times of life transitions such as: having a child, going up for promotion and/or tenure, or transitioning into a new institution. Mentoring programs within the institution could serve as a time to exchange creative ideas for balancing the demands of the multiple facets of being a faculty member. Counselor Educators working together to find synergy in this area may serve well to compliment one another's strengths and assist in balancing career and family.

At the institutional level, faculty meetings could engage in dialogue regarding job satisfaction for Counselor Educators in general. It is necessary for women to provide support for one another and challenge themselves to be transparent regarding factors that contribute to their levels of job satisfaction either positively or negatively. Articulating specific strategies for promoting higher levels of job satisfaction may help department chairs to adequately advocate on the faculty members behalf.

It may also be helpful for women Counselor Educators to actively seek opportunities to learn about institutional policies and make connections. Women may choose to target this area of institutional policies for service opportunities. For instance, women Counselor Educators may choose to serve on tenure and promotion committees, become active on search committees to recruit and retain women Counselor Educators, or become involved in organizations on campus that are specific to women.

Implications for Counselor Education and Future Research

Due to the paucity of research regarding Counselor Education and job satisfaction, especially in regard to women, there are limitless possibilities for further research into this important aspect of the field. Researchers may choose to look at the differences in levels of job satisfaction by comparing men and women in a quantitative or qualitative fashion. Furthermore, interviewing women about familial and institutional aspects may shed light upon aspects that contribute to their levels of job satisfaction that have not yet been uncovered. Another area for further investigation may be to inquire about women Counselor Educators' level of wellness in general. Counselor Education and Counseling are focused on promoting wellness, yet, little is known about Counselor Educators' wellness.

Conclusion

Job satisfaction for women Counselor Educators may be impacted by a variety of familial and institutional variables. It is essential for all counselor educators to advocate for women within Counselor Education and be aware of which factors contribute to job satisfaction. Facilitating dialogue at professional conferences is a starting point to generate ideas about future research endeavors in the profession. Being transparent about women Counselor Educators and their perceived level of job satisfaction is a must for all Counselor Educators. Future research initiatives are necessary in order to recruit and retain women Counselor Educators and moreover, promote wellness within the field.

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