

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 361 806

CS 508 318

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 TITLE Constructivists' Use of Mentoring for Success in Broadcast Academe.
 PUB DATE Aug 93
 NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (76th, Kansas City, MO, August 11-14, 1993).
 PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Broadcast Journalism; Constructivism (Learning); *Females; Higher Education; *Mass Media; *Mentors; National Surveys; Occupational Surveys; *Professional Recognition; *Self Efficacy
 IDENTIFIERS *Faculty Attitudes; Procedural Reasoning; Protege Mentor Relationship; Success Emulation

ABSTRACT

A study considered women in broadcast communications academe who achieve their own purposes to have one of two epistemological perspectives: constructivist or proceduralist (non-constructivist). Women in broadcast academe were surveyed (N=428) and interviewed in depth (N=14) to measure epistemological perspectives and mentoring experiences. The women studied, most of whom were mentored, believe they can succeed in academe on their own terms, according to their dreams and self images. They tend to be constructivists, or proceduralists guided by someone they trust to identify their personal reward system, within academe. (Two tables of data are included. Contains 19 references.) (Author/NKA)

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ED 361 806

Constructivists' Use of Mentoring for Success in Broadcast Academe

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Abstract

Women who achieve their own purposes in academe are considered in this study to have one of two epistemological perspectives: constructivist or proceduralist (non-constructivist).

Women in broadcast academe were surveyed (N=428) and in-depth interviews (N=14) conducted to measure epistemological perspectives and mentoring experiences. Observations are offered on how mentoring serves women, whether constructivists or proceduralists.

Constructivists' Use of Mentoring for Success in Broadcast Academe

Hillary Clinton, Anita Hill and Murphy Brown. What these women have in common is that each of them has been pressured to let society define her at a time when most of us can't even define society. At the same time, each of these women has moved us an inch here, a couple of inches there. But solid moves. Sometimes they moved us by what they did. Sometimes by our reaction to what they did (Ellerbe, 1993).

Some women in academe who have learned to be guided by mentors have succeeded within the system, achieving tenure and promotion where others have failed. Having accomplished this, they are in unique positions to empower women who follow them. In some instances, mentoring will make the difference in a woman's success or failure in accomodating her life goals, interests in addition to career, to academe.

The inequality between men and women in achieving academic success, despite the hiring of more women into tenure track positions as a result of affirmative action, is well-documented (Chamberlain, 1991; Clark and Corcoran, 1986; Hensel, 1991; Vandell and Fishbein, 1989).¹ Those women who are successful, however, often require two to ten years longer than their male counterparts to achieve tenure (Hensel, 1991; Vandell and Fishbein, 1989), and most do not find their ways into administrative positions (Kaufman, 1992).

For a woman professional life in academe goes against the grain of occupational stereotyping (Clark and Corcoran, 1986). Although faced with the need to do research or

¹Although not all hiring of women into academe is to accomodate EEOC requirements, this was the primary reason given in research cited in this study.

perish, many women would rather place most of their emphasis on teaching, or, if they must produce research, collaborate with others (Hensel, 1991). Despite overload, lack of sponsorship and exclusion from collegial culture, some women have succeeded in academe as evidenced by their survival (Eastman and Leebron, 1992; Johnsrud and Wunsch, 1991).

"Survival" of some despite the rigors of the system, added to many women's needs to balance family caretaking with career--whatever the career (Aburdene and Naisbitt, 1992)--is often attributed to mentoring. First survivors helping those who follow is critical for women in order to satisfy the requirements for tenure and promotion (Clark and Corcoran, 1986; Gray and Gray, 1985; Johnsrud and Wunsch, 1991; Hill, Bahniuk and Dobos, 1989; Kaufman, 1992; Noller, 1982; Vandell and Fishbein, 1989 and Pearson, 1986).

Survivors of the system are also termed "constructivists" according to the epistemological theory set forth by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986). *Constructivists* are women for whom all knowledge is contextual; subjective and objective strategies are used for knowing (p. 15). They are women who move "beyond systems, putting systems to their own service" (p. 140). Constructivists seek knowledge, to stretch their outer boundaries, by listening to others, by imagining themselves inside an idea they are coming to know (p. 141). A mentor often provides such a conduit to knowledge.

Traditionally, women have been expected to conform to the white, male model as the idealized professor, which has evolved to meet the needs of the majority of academics (Hensel, 1991; Vandell and Fishbein, 1989). Women who have not succeeded in academia have made errors (Pearson, 1986) including acquiescing to the traditional female role, resisting traditional socialization and internalizing masculine characteristics. Some have

overemphasized the differences between men and women, and the discrimination that exists in the university. Such women can be described as "proceduralists." These women apply objective procedures for obtaining knowledge (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 15). Proceduralists feel rewarded when they please others. They try to measure up to external standards, be "good women" (Belenky et al., p. 134). Such women adapt and achieve success in academia if guided by a mentor who enables them perceive themselves as capable and rewarded by such success (Pearson, 1986). They are not required to deny their own vision in order to succeed (Kaufman, 1992). Women who perceive their social reality differently from men, who believe their reality centers on attachment and an ethic of care, learn to redefine care. They learn to distinguish between pleasing others and making their ethic of responsibility self-chosen, based upon personal integrity (Gilligan, 1982). Some women base their actions upon a new definition of self-efficacy established by a mentor (Hackett and Betz, 1981).

A study of members of American Women in Radio and Television (Egan, 1991) suggested that women who had succeeded in the broadcast workplace, who had defined their own success criteria and achieved them, or were on their way to achieving them, were *constructivists*, as defined by Belenky, et al. (1986). Based upon a report of these findings to the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) in April 1991, members of the Gender Issues Division requested a similar study of women in communications academe.

The study examined women who have achieved success, as defined by the system in terms of tenure, promotion and salary, or by their own definition. The women studied have learned to be guided by mentors, or have otherwise been able to perceive a role for themselves within the system while keeping other values intact (Belenky, et al., 1986; Eccles,

1987; Hensel, 1991). In this paper additional analysis of the study is in response to recently reported work by Kaufman (1992), which cites the literature on the absence of and need for role models for women in journalism and mass communications, particularly for those women who wish to move into administrative positions. Kaufman's conceptual model to address roadblocks encountered by women in journalism and mass communication education programs who attempt to move into administrative positions, includes mentoring as a variable. Kaufman suggests formalizing mentoring programs for women and minorities. She advocates identifying differences in men's and women's perceptions of what training is needed, whether they agree on skills, language, tools and concepts for training, and whether they have the same view of leadership.

In this paper, I define survivors of the educational system, who might serve as role models and/or mentors, are conceived as *constructivists* (Belenky et al., 1986), or as *Pathfinders*, defined as people who have "navigated a critical passage," one common to different stages in adult life, "in an expanding, self-renewing way" (Sheehy, 1981, p. 3).

The contrasting epistemological perspectives, as defined by Belenky et al. (1986) are:

Constructivism: A position in which women view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing. These women have learned "to speak in a unique and authentic voice" and to "jump outside the system" (p. 134).

Proceduralism (Non-Constructivism): A position in which women are invested in learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining knowledge. Their thinking is encapsulated within systems. They can criticize a system, but only in the system's terms, only according to the system's standards. These women seek gratification in pleasing others or in measuring up to external standards--in being "the good woman" (p. 134).

Two types of *proceduralists* are defined: *separate* knowers try to subtract personality of the perceiver from the perception; *connected* knowers see personality as adding to the perception. Each individual must stretch her own vision in order to share another's vision (p. 119). In summary, women who have succeeded in broadcast academe are constructivists or proceduralists. My assumption is that mentors help women in both epistemological positions. A mentor helps the constructivist negotiate the system according to her own visions and self-defined goals; a mentor enables the proceduralist to define her ethic of responsibility based on personal integrity.

In this study the research questions are as follows:

For women in broadcast academe:

1. How does epistemological position influence mentoring?
2. How does mentoring influence perceptions of the academic workplace?
3. How does mentoring influence women's success as measured in salary and position?
4. What influence does mentoring have on career planning to include other life goals, such as family caretaking?

Method

Belenky et al. (1986) describe five epistemological categories (See Table 1). For this study, women in academe are hypothesized to have one of two of the epistemological perspectives; constructivist or proceduralist (non-constructivist). Belenky's remaining three positions, *subjective*, which denies external authority and relies on intuited knowledge; *received* which relies only on external authority and denies the possibility of creating

knowledge; and *silent*, in which the self is experienced as mindless and voiceless, are judged to be incompatible with the demands of academe, and for the women who have succeeded there.

Table 1 about here

Nonconstructivists were conceived as those women who seek gratification in pleasing others, in meeting externally defined standards, who define success according to the traditional male, authoritarian model. Constructivists have analyzed the system, integrated it within their own goals, and put the system to their use. Nonconstructivists had no goals or dreams, or if they did have, doubted whether they could ever achieve them. Constructivists use their dreams to shape their careers and are on their way to achieving a dream; or they have discovered and begun to generate a new dream. Nonconstructivists place the locus of control outside of themselves and do not believe they are responsible for the way their lives have turned out. Constructivists place the locus of control within and believe they are at least to some extent responsible for their life outcomes.

Phase One: Mailed Survey. For the first phase of the study of women in broadcast communications academe, a purposive sample of the female membership of the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) was surveyed. Although the organization does not include all female members of communications academe, the directory suggests that the nearly 400

female members are representative of women faculty with professional and applied interests in communications academe.²

The questionnaire was mailed, with an explanatory paragraph about the goals of the research, in two waves to 425 females (names that appeared to be women's names) listed in the BEA Directory. Some 53 were returned because the addressee had moved or was no longer at the university or college listed, or because the woman was not an academic (such as a network senior vice president on the Board of Directors for BEA). Another 12 were returned uncompleted. Of the 360 remaining, 184 completed questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 51 percent. The questionnaires were tracked by identification number; those returned represented diverse parts of the nation, institutional size and structure (some were from schools of mass communications, others from departments). Respondents also were diverse in rank, teaching specialty and ethnicity.

Survey Instrument. The questionnaire used four-point agreement scales to measure reactions to career and job satisfaction issues. Questions adapted from Sheehy (1981) measured such issues as locus of control over one's life, sacrifices that may have been made for career, reactions to failure, risk taking, dreams fulfilled or not, fears, coping strategies, self development plans, and whether a relationship (mentor) had helped shape the person. Questionnaire items used to identify constructivists and proceduralists are included on Table 2.

²Personal communication from Susan Tyler Eastman: BEA membership is largely from non-research institutions. Although faculty have some research interest, most have professional and applied interests. The women belonging to BEA are from mid-size and smaller universities.

Table 2 about here.

Chi square analysis tested for significance of mentoring on career planning based on the woman's dreams, goals and values; success in terms of salary and promotion; fears the women might have held, and coping strategies.

Phase Two. To learn more about how women in academe use either a constructivist or procedural position to gain success (negotiate requirements for tenure and promotion), and whether or not they were mentored, a convenience sample of 14 female members of BEA were interviewed in depth during a four-day BEA meeting in Las Vegas, April 1992.

Interview Instrument. The in-depth interview schedule included questions from Belenky et al. (1986) to define each woman's epistemological position; and from Sheehy (1981) to describe success, imagined goals, turning points, risks taken, fears and locus of control, and whether they had found a person who became a transformative figure for them (mentor).

The 14 in-person interviews were tape recorded. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed. Responses were the unit of analysis; each was categorized for a constructivist, or proceduralist perspective, the proceduralist sub-categorized under connected, or separate. The responses also were categorized for evidence of subjective, received, and silent epistemological positions (See Table 1). Three coders categorized the responses according to the definitions in Table 1. For each interviewee, an index was calculated for epistemology: scores were computed for statements coded as constructive, separate,

connected, or subjective. The interviewee was categorized according to her highest categorical score.

An example of a response included in the analysis follows:

Women should run things in this world because they are into understanding and caring about each other. Women bring something to the workplace, and they should make sure they don't lose it by getting caught up in the old-boy system; they should allow the flow of what is natural and bring that to the mix and hope to humanize what's going on. There are some decisions that should be made without a focus on the bottom line. Men are into power. Women are involved with the larger picture.

This response statement was coded 1 for constructivist because of the evidence of a position outside the context of the question asked; the respondent has made herself part of the known. She considers relationships as important in making choices, finding her truths. She is willing to put the system to her own use.

Interviewees received scores for four categories: constructivism, proceduralism-separate; proceduralism-connected, and subjectivism (See Table 1). Coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's agreement co-efficient; using a four-category matrix ($r=.98$).

Results

Demographics. Nearly half (47.3%) of the women who responded to the survey questionnaire were assistant professors; 23% were associate professors; 13.5% were full professors. Twenty-eight percent had been teaching 5 to 10 years; 25% for 1 to 3 years; 21.7% for 3 to 5 years; 15.6% 10 to 20 years. Women in their forties constituted the largest age category (41.5%); 19.3% were 31 to 35; another 18.2% were 36-40 years of age; 11.7%

were 50 and older; 7.7% were 21 to 30. Most respondents (71.3%) had post-college education; 25.4% held Ph.Ds.

Over half (57.5%) were married; 66.7% had no children, only 2.8% had three or more children; of those who did have children, 13.3% had only one child.³

Research was the largest reported specialty (20%); production was second (19.3%); news was third (12.7). Others named management (7.3%), and human resources (1.8%). Most (33.6%) of the women marked "Other" as their work area.

Responses to the mailed questionnaire were analyzed, and in-depth interviews provided better understanding. In response to, "Looking back over my life I have had a relationship with someone who helped shape the person I have become (mentor)," 89% of respondents agreed they had such a relationship.

For women in broadcast communications academe:

Research Question #1. How does mentoring influence epistemological position?

Women who said a mentor helped shape them were more likely to agree with the statement, "to be successful in an educational career a woman may comply with criteria for tenure and advancement but do so according to her own life goals and priorities," [X^2 (4, N

³ In the personal interviews of 14 women at the BEA convention, eight of the women were age 36-44; two were in their early thirties, two 45-55 and two 55-64. Eight of the women were tenured. Six were married and only two had children. The women interviewed were ethnically diverse and at various stages of their careers. Six were constructivists, two were connected knowers, five were subjective knowers and one had equal scores in connected and constructed.

= 175) = 9.5, $p < .05$], indicating a constructivist position. Unmentored women disagreed with the statement that they should comply with criteria for tenure and advancement but do so according to their own life goals [X^2 (1, $N = 175$) = 5.6, $p < .02$], suggesting that having a mentor enables women to complete two epistemological tasks required for a constructivist position: one, understand the system; two, diagnose how to put the system to one's own use.⁴

Women who had mentors were more likely to believe the best way to learn is through experience [X^2 (4, $N = 175$) = 10.3, $p < .04$]. Life experiences, guided by a mentor, can provide context for perceiving how the academic system, its framework and requirements, might be adjusted to suit the woman's life goals. She can be helped to understand what she must accomplish for career success, on her own self-defined terms.

Women who were mentored were more likely to say they had a dream they were beginning to achieve, or were generating a new one to guide them [X^2 (1, $N = 176$) = $p < .02$], an indication, again, of constructivism.

During the in-depth interviews, response to the question, "I have found a person who became a transformative figure for me," all but one of the interviewed constructivists said they had a mentor; three of the separatists had a mentor; one of the connecteds was mentored, one was "undecided."

From a constructivist [tenured]:

A man, a senior professor, whom I consider to be a mentor invited me to a programming book when I knew nothing about programming. I learned to write better. He took a chance on me. Another mentor recommended me for

⁴An example of reframing the system to fit one's needs and interests would be to slow the tenure watch, stretching the time from hiring to tenure review to allow for family needs, such as pregnancy and child care.

the project knowing research can be a problem for a new junior professor. They didn't drag me into research--the research came much later.

Research Question #2. How does mentoring influence perceptions of the academic workplace?

Respondents who said they were mentored were more likely to perceive equal opportunity for men and women for their present position [X^2 (4, N = 177) 15.3, p < .004], and to perceive equal opportunity for women to achieve full professor position [X^2 (4, N = 175) 9.2, p < .05]. Mentored respondents were less likely to fear that time was running out for them [X^2 (1, N = 176) 4.5, p < .03], and less likely to fear loneliness [X^2 (1, N = 176) 6.3, p < .01]. When confronted with problems or uncertainty, they were less likely than unmentored to escape into fantasy [X^2 (1, N = 176) 4.8, p < .03], more likely, to give more time and energy to recreation [X^2 (1, N = 176) 4.2, p < .04].

Although not significant at the .05 level, respondents who were mentored were somewhat less likely to fear they were not advancing fast enough [X^2 (1, N = 176) 3.4, p < .06]. And again, although not significant at the .05 level, for some, reactions to problems were somewhat more likely to be to devote more time to work [X^2 (1, N = 176) 3.2, p < .07].

The fourteen in-depth interviews added further explanation and understanding of the mentoring relationship for women having differing epistemological positions. Each interviewee was asked whether or not she was tenured, and whether she had found a person who became a transformative figure for them (a mentor).

From a connectivist (non-constructivist) [tenured]:

A non-academic, a writer, who knows the ropes of academe and has a prestigious career helped me along. He helped me realize you do work because it's important to you, not to get tenure. I would send him articles and he would comment. This was mentoring in the craft of writing, not on the ropes of the institution.

From a constructivist [non-tenured] who said she had no mentor:

I feel like I can't get into research in depth or develop ideas as much as I'd like to because we're always on a time line, because we have to grind out more and more to get tenure. It's a silly game. The criteria for judging your job performance is so ambiguous in academia, unlike other jobs where you have a job descriptions and you now what to do in order to do well.

Research Question #3. How does mentoring influence the woman's success as measured in salary and position?

Respondents influenced by a mentor were more likely to earn more than \$30,000 a year or to be in the \$50,000 salary category [X^2 (7, N = 177) 14.4, p < .04]. Mentored women also were more likely to agree that women have an equal opportunity with men to become full professors [X^2 (4, N = 175) 9.2, p < .05]. These findings indicate some association between mentoring and success, although the association is not assumed to be causal. Further research is needed to explore the influences of mentoring on success.

Interview responses provided some evidence of how the mentoring process encourages women to pursue leadership positions, which result in greater success in academe.

From a constructivist [tenured]:

My mentor was not in communications academia. She was an older woman, in her sixties, and she encouraged me to go and talk to her. I could always tell her of my frustrations and fears, and she always said, "you're doing so well." What I got was encouragement for any leadership position I might be in.

Research Question #4. What influence does mentoring have on career planning to include other life goals, such as family caretaking?

Mentored women were more likely to postpone marriage or having children, or had children until their careers were established [X^2 (7, N = 143, 19.6, p < .006]; but 25.14% of those who said they had mentors also "started all three" in their 20s: developed career, married and had children. Those who had mentors were more likely to be married [X^2 (1, N = 176, 5.2, p < .02] (but not to their mentors).

Interview responses were instructive. From a separatist (non-constructivist) [tenured]: My father died when I was in high school. I guess that would be probably the most significant and sad part of my life. He died of Lou Gehrig's disease, ALS, and that led me to a decision of not having children. And that led me also to delay marriage, which worked with my career that I went on to have.

And, from a constructivist [not tenured]:

I got involved in a relief effort on the Thai-Cambodian border and met someone who persuaded me to come to this country and become an academic. He said "you're too bright not have any kind of university training and why don't you go to the States." He really convinced me, and gave me a lot of confidence in myself. I was probably 25.

Summary and Conclusions

The women studied, most of whom were mentored, believe they can succeed in academe on their own terms, according to their dreams and self images. They tend to be constructivists, or proceduralists guided by someone they trust to identify their personal reward system, within academe. They are positive about women's chances for success, based on their ability to put the system to their own use, and being able to take time for their other goals and interests, such as family care. Mentoring helps them work toward their goals, whether it is to have career and family all at once, or postpone either, depending on personal choice, not society's--nor academe's--expectations.

Mentors enable these women to avoid fears of not advancing through the system fast enough, of loneliness; and, when confronted with problems, they are less likely to dream of something better, more likely to work and play harder. Constructivists are guided by a dream or image of themselves used as an outline for designing their lives. A mentor, most likely male⁵ define the dream, perhaps perceives the woman's potential before she is aware of it. For a constructivist, having such a mentor provides encouragement and even specific steps to take to put the system to her own use. From a mentor a woman learns to adapt to the system, but according to her own abilities and timing.

A mentor plays a slightly different role for a non-constructivist. For the connected knower, the mentor provides achievement criteria different from those outlined for the woman in her given role and workplace to help the woman just beginning in the academic career think creatively about what is rewarding to her. The mentor offers continuing encouragement, advice and feedback about the woman's endeavors and plans. She/he provides the woman with assessment criteria to enable her to feel that she is traveling a positive path, giving her the rewards she requires to believe she is "good."

Engendering academe, in this case broadcast communications education, requires women to analyze and overlay their viewpoints upon the present system as to how the learning environment will be managed and evaluated. Until now academe has been structured using the male model, so that the need to balance career and family, for example, has not traditionally been considered in describing requirements for tenure and promotion. To

⁵The female mentor is rare, probably because so few women have achieved administrative or other leadership status in broadcast communications academe.

succeed in broadcast communications academe women have had to find ways around the given system, ways to succeed based on their unique capabilities and interests. Those who have been successful say they have received mentoring in the form of encouragement, advice, and guidance on how to work with the system to their advantage, beginning with identification of their potential and goals.

Limitation to the Study and Directions for Future Study

The response rate for the mailed questionnaire and limited number of interviews suggest a need for further study of the role of mentoring in women's academic careers in broadcast academe. This preliminary study provides indications of the importance of mentoring for these women. Future study will be administered to a larger random sample. A factor analysis of the epistemological constructs will be conducted to validate the measures used.

Recommendations

Women who have been successful should be sensitized to the importance of mentoring in achieving that success. For other women to succeed in academe, these women who understand the system and recognize potential must be willing to become mentors themselves. Shaping the academic workplace requires an understanding of the present system, and how it can be changed to support the needs, interests and contributions of female members. Mentors serve an important function in this changing system.

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Table 1

Epistemological Categories of Women in Broadcast Academe

CATEGORY⁶

- I. Constructivist Knower**
1. The knower is part of the known. (Truth is a matter of context)
 2. Sets goals; sees self in future.
 3. Planned life to meet career expectations
 4. Moves beyond systems; puts systems to own use.
 5. Relationship mitigates any single choice. (What will choice do to others?)
- II. Proceduralist (Nonconstructivist) Knower**
- A. Separate Knower**
1. Learns through formal instruction how to adopt a different lens.
 2. Engages in critical thinking.
 3. Impersonal knower, values disinterested reasoning.
 4. Knower is not part of the known.
- B. Connected Knower**
1. Begins with an interest in facts of other people's lives, then shifts her focus to other people's ways of thinking.
 2. Imagines herself in other people's situations.
 3. Seek gratification in pleasing others.
 4. No sense of one's unique voice.
- III. Subjective Knower**
1. Truth resides within the person.
 2. Denial of external authority.
 3. Cannot express well what is known.
- IV. Received Knower**
1. Receives knowledge from authority.
 2. Incapable of creating knowledge.
- V. Silent Knower**
1. Mindless and voiceless.
 2. Subject to whims of authority.

⁶ In *Women's Ways of Knowing*, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986).

Table 2

Questionnaire Items Used to Identify Epistemology

Based upon a four point agreement scale, respondents who marked Strongly Agree and Agree were coded Constructivists; respondents who marked disagree and strongly disagree were coded as Proceduralist (Non-constructivists).

To be successful in an educational career, a woman may comply with criteria for tenure and advancement but do so according to her own life goals and priorities.

Decision-making power comes more from the position that a person holds than his or her individual abilities and personal interactions.

An individual can have influence in whatever position he or she holds, whether tenured, not tenured, professional, part-time, etc.

To be successful in an educational career a woman may comply with criteria for tenure and advancement but do so according to her own life goals and priorities.

For the following items the respondent selected one multiple choice response.

How much control do you have over the important events in your life?

Responses: "Almost total control," and "Mostly under my control," identified respondent as a *constructivist*.

Responses: "Almost no control" and "Mostly not under my control," identified respondent as a *proceduralist*.

Looking back over your adult life, how responsible do you feel for the way it has turned out?

Responses: "Totally," and "very," identified respondent as a *constructivist*.

Responses: "Somewhat," "slightly," and "not at all," identified respondent as a *proceduralist*.

Looking back at the goals, aspirations or "dreams" you had as you entered adulthood, how do you feel at this point in your life?

Responses: "I am just beginning to shape my dream;" "I am on my way to achieving my dream," "I have achieved my original dream and have generated a new one," "I have achieved my original dream and have generated a new one," identified respondent as a *constructivist*.

Responses: "I have never had a clear dream or aspiration," "I am not sure whether I am on my way to achieving my dream," "I will probably never achieve my original dream," identified respondent as a *proceduralist*.