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Roads Taken: Women in Student Affairs at Mid-Career (review)

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Journal of College Student Development, Volume 46, Number 3, May/June
2005, pp. 335-337 (Review)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2005.0033>



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ments/experiences an individual must address while in college. Evans and Broido (1999) and Stevens (2004) also address the environmental influence in their research. Specifically, Dilley discusses the following impacts: the general campus environment, gay student organizations, fraternity life, sexual activity, the goals of being “normal,” emotional attractions, and media influences (p. 198).

The author creates plausible concepts for other researchers and practitioners to consider when exploring sexual identity formation and provides a new understanding to the complexity of sexual identity and the importance of terms and how they may be interpreted. He provides more details regarding these socially constructed terms and how/why they were used historically. As with any qualitative study, the work is done to provide an understanding and while the resulting terms and their definitions are to some extent intuitive, it is important that the reader determine the transferability of this study to other environments. Dilley’s appendix provides details of his participants and his ethnographical methodology.

In this review the term non-heterosexual was used, and was probably the most challenging concept to overcome throughout the book. As Dilley talks about his use of queer theory and its postmodern perspective of looking from the edges of “normal,” it was often difficult to use the term non-heterosexual. This term perpetuates the concept of inferiority or “less than” that I did not hear in the voices of all of his narrators. Dilley adequately explains his choice to use this term as a point different from the fixed heterosexuality that was uniformly viewed by the participants’ voices, but it still resonated with other terms, such as non-White, that provoke a concept of what is the norm and how the particular group is different from that norm,

and often seems contradictory to a post-modern perspective.

One of the author’s goals was to provide information to practitioners in order for them to provide better services and programs to students. His resulting work provides a terrific opportunity to explore campus environments and how they may or may not positively influence the identity development of non-heterosexual men. His work offers a unique way to explore the differences among those men who do not identify as heterosexual and provides new ways to avoid the oftentimes dichotomous thinking of identity.

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Roads Taken: Women in Student Affairs at Mid-Career

Kristen A. Renn and Carole Hughes (Eds.)
Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2004, 256
pages, \$24.95 (softcover)

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Roads Taken: Women in Student Affairs at Mid-Career focuses on mid-career as a topic that

has received little attention in the literature, and most interestingly, on the personal and professional decisions made along the way to and at mid-career. The topic of mid-career is important to those who are headed for or are at this stage of their working lives, and to those who supervise mid-career colleagues. The focus of *Roads Taken* on decisions is the most valuable contribution made by this book. The chapters where this succeeds are especially worthwhile.

Roads Taken is an edited book divided into five parts, each beginning with an introduction. Part I, Considering the Doctorate, includes an introduction by Mary Howard Hamilton and chapters by Susan Jones, Rebecca Gutierrez Keeton, Julie M. Wong, and Gage E. Paine. Particular strengths of this section include explicit attention to the decision making of women of color, and practical, grounded advice provided by Gage Paine. Part II, Dual Career Couples, was introduced by Lisa E. Wolf-Wendel, Susan B. Twombly, and Suzanne Rice, and featured chapters by Melissa McDaniels and Kristen Renn, and Martha Ruel. McDaniels' and Renn's chapter did a particularly good job of walking the reader through early career-building decisions in the context of a two-career (both in student affairs) relationship.

Part III is titled Motherhood and Student Affairs: The Skillful Art of Managing Work and Family. The highlight of this section is the introduction by Sarah Marshall. Refreshingly, this introduction was based on recent research and did a complete job of charting the broad territory that must be navigated by working mothers. Carole Hughes, Jean Joyce-Brady, and Terry Zacker also wrote chapters for Part III. Part IV, "I've Arrived": It's the Journey, Not the Destination, included an introduction by Carole Hughes, along with chapters by Gail P. Olyha, Sheilah Shaw

Horton, and Anna M. Ortiz. Carole Hughes' introduction was very good and could have served as the organizing chapter for the entire book. She contextualized mid-career and mid-life nicely, and was skillful in laying out career development issues especially relevant to mid-career. Anna Ortiz's chapter, "Arriving at Tenure," was perhaps the strongest in the book. Though autobiographical like nearly every other chapter, it was reflective in a far more substantive and articulate way than most of the other chapters.

The final section of the book, Part V, Alternate Routes: Exiting the Mainstream Student Affairs Highway, was introduced by Kristen Renn, and included a chapter by Barbara Fienman and one by Marcie Schorr Hirsch and Lisa Berman-Hills.

The strength and weakness of *Roads Taken* is the autobiographical nature of the book. Many of the personal stories are immediate, accessible, and compelling in their candor about difficult life circumstances, as well as professional disappointments and joys. One can easily imagine how effective these accounts would be in the live conference setting that spawned the idea for the book. The weakness of this approach is that the writing is of uneven quality, making some of the personal accounts read like cover letters while others lost focus mid-way through the narrative.

The important recurrent theme throughout *Roads Taken* is the interplay between professional decisions and aspirations, and personal ones. Many of the authors identified this tension as positive as well as negative. A notable example of this is the number of contributors who described how their own management of this tension led to greater empathy and more effective supervision of their staff. The moments when these realizations were made constituted the high points of the book.

Roads Taken accomplishes a couple of important things. First, it opens up a topic that matters. The first-person accounts that characterize the book constitute a helpful starting place in thinking seriously and comprehensively about mid-career issues for women in student affairs. Second, it does a competent job of “setting the table” for others who will address the topic of mid-career in a

more systematic and scholarly way. The lack of solid, recent research on this topic was evident in the book, and the potential for good scholarly work in the area is great. While *Roads Taken* does a good job of giving voice to women in mid-career, its most important contribution may be the research that it inspires.

