

AN EARLY CAREER IN THE MILITARY: A DEVELOPMENTAL-CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Young professional military officers' experience of their internal career development was studied longitudinally from a life-span, life-space approach. Significant transitions between the life roles of worker, student and leisurite, with concomitant changes in their value system, away from traditional military values towards occupationalism, were confirmed. Gender differences were found for the work and community roles as well as in the developmental patterns of the need for authority, creativity, cultural identity, physical activities, social relationships and variety. Significant differences between the career development profiles of military and civilian students with regard to life roles were revealed.

OPSOMMING

Jong militêre beroepsoffisiere se belewenis van hulle interne loopbaanontwikkeling is longitudinaal uit 'n lewenspan-lewensruimte benadering bestudeer. Beduidende oorgange tussen die werk-, studie- en ontspanningsrolle met gepaardgaande veranderinge in hulle waardestelsel, weg van tradisionele militêre waardes in die rigting van 'n beroepsgeoriënteerde waardestelsel, is bevestig. Geslagsverskille is gevind wat betref die werk- en gemeenskapsrolle sowel as in die volgende ontwikkelingspatrone: 'n behoefte aan outoriteit, kreatiwiteit, kulturele identiteit, fisiese aktiwiteite, sosiale verhoudings en verskeidenheid. Beduidende verskille met betrekking tot lewensrolle het in die loopbaanontwikkelingsprofiel van militêre en burgerlike studente aan die lig gekom.

Traditionally career psychology is approached from either an organisational or a counselling perspective. The former, according to Fitzgerald and Rounds (1989), emphasizes the social-organisational context of work, whereas the latter focuses on individuals and their career development. The term 'career', from the industrial-organisational point of view, only refers to the sequence of work-related positions in a person's work life. The counselling approach expands the definition to include all the major life roles (Gouws, 1995). Recently, however, a call for the integration of the two perspectives came from many directions (Betz, 1991; Borgen, 1991; Hackett, Lent & Greenhaus, 1991; Hall, 1990; Loscocco & Rochelle, 1991; Russell, 1991).

Super supported the abovementioned broader definition and described a career as '– the combination and sequence of roles played by a person during the course of a life-time' (1980, p. 282), and as '– the constellation of interacting, varying roles' (p. 284). He proposed his now well-known 'Life-Career-Rainbow' in an attempt to describe more adequately the many aspects of a career throughout the life-span. Through this model, which he described as 'a graphic device for portraying life-span, life-space career development' (1990, p. 211), he tried to depict the major life career roles, their changes and their interactions over the life span. He thus singled out the centrality of work in human behaviour by 'juxtaposing it with other specific and competing or supplementing life roles' (Super & Nevill, 1989, p. 1). This perspective on careers was propagated by the International Work Importance Study (Super & Verko, 1995) and as a result received international recognition.

In the military, the industrial-organisational perspective was applied and since the Second World War psychologists have studied military jobs and occupations. On the contrary, as far as careers in the armed forces are concerned, Super & Nevill (1989) stated that surprisingly little study had been done in this regard.

Moreover, the military utilized its human resource development functions to develop people to meet the employment needs of the organisation. Careers, as such, received little attention. Gade (1991) voiced similar criticism with regard to contemporary research models in military manpower and personnel research. He stated that military personnel research consisted of 'ad hoc, empirically based, atheoretical attempts to address current high priority problems' (p. 189), but lacked research on career decision making and other life choices. This lack of career development research in the military was confirmed by a 20-year review of career development constructs by Chartrand and Camp (1991). They gave an exposition of the research participants in career development studies between 1971 and 1990. Between 1981 and 1985, for example, no research was published for subjects employed in the military. The corresponding output for 1986 to 1990 was only three studies or one percent of the total number of studies published. Gade (1991, p. 190) speculated that the reason for the lack of publications in scientific literature in this field could be ascribed to the absence of 'an adequate theoretical orientation for framing questions about the nature of the processes underlying these decisions.' As an alternative model to enable the researcher to assess the long-term as well as the short-term effects of various military experiences and to evaluate more fully their impact on multiple aspects of people's lives, he suggested that the life-course paradigm could provide the conceptual model and theoretical orientation needed to address effectively the long-term costs and benefits of military service.

Similarly, in South Africa virtually no research has been done with regard to the careers of young military officers. In the light of Gade's (1991) suggestion towards the use of the life-course paradigm, Super's life-span, life-space approach to career development offers a valuable alternative to the contemporary research models which Gade criticized.

Super (1990) described the life-span as the longitudinal and the life-space as the latitudinal dimensions of his model. The life-span concept was thus time or developmentally related, while the spatial concept, the life-space, was defined as the

RESULTS

The repeated measures MANCOVAs for the effect of time of measurement (study year) on the life roles of military students showed that they underwent significant changes with regard to their study, work and leisure roles. Table 2 indicates between which times of measurement these changes took place.

The direction of change was determined by a closer look at the different means which indicated that, as students' participation in study increased, their participation in work decreased. Commitment to and value expectation of the student role decreased continuously until the end of the third year. The same dimensions initially also decreased for the work role, but then recovered and did not, by the end of the third year, differ significantly from the first year scores. Participation in, commitment to and value expectation of the leisure role showed continuous increases.

Gender had an effect on the students' community and work roles. Although no significant differences existed when students entered the Military Academy, the women took more part in community activities in their third year, felt more committed to the role in the second and third year and, during the same

period, also expected to realise more of their values through this specific role. The repeated measures MANCOVA for the work role indicated a significant interaction effect between gender and year of measurement. According to the post hoc tests this interaction took place in the third year. At that stage the women's value expectation of the work role declined to significantly lower than that of the men.

The MANCOVAs for the repeated measures for the effect of time of measurement (study year) on the values of military students showed that students underwent significant changes with regard to six different values. Table 3 indicates between which times of measurement these changes took place.

The direction of change was determined by a closer look at the mean scores. Military students' need for autonomy, an own independent lifestyle, prestige and a variety of tasks, activities and people increased during their stay at the Military Academy whereas the need for helping fellow men (altruism) and the need to live according to religious principles decreased. Independent variables which correlated with the developmental patterns were gender, marital status, language and arm of service. An interaction effect between gender and time of measurement revealed a remarkable drop from the second to the third

TABLE 2
LIFE ROLES INVENTORY: t-TESTS FOR DEPENDENT MEASURES BETWEEN YEARS

Life Role Inventory		Year					
		1 - 2		2 - 3		1 - 3	
		t (106)	p	t (106)	p	t (106)	p
Participation	Study	3.385	.0010	0.948	.3452*	> 4.234	.0000
	Work	> 4.234	.0000	0.963	.3377*	4.044	.0001
	Home and family	0.574	.5674*	2.726	.0075	2.139	.0347*
Commitment	Leisure	1.259	.2109*	2.458	.0156	3.853	.0002
	Study	> 4.234	.0000	3.538	.0006	> 4.234	.0000
	Work	3.592	.0005	1.265	.2087*	2.270	.0252*
Value expectation	Leisure	0.200	.8418*	2.480	.0147	2.686	.0084
	Study	3.452	.0008	2.602	.0106	> 4.234	.0000
	Work	2.804	.0060	2.120	.0363*	0.671	.5039*
	Leisure	0.888	.3767*	1.565	.1206*	2.465	.0153

* No significant change ($p > .0167$) (Bonferroni adjustment)

TABLE 3
VALUES SCALE: t-TESTS FOR DEPENDENT MEASURES BETWEEN YEARS

Value	Year					
	1 - 2		2 - 3		1 - 3	
	t (106)	p	t (106)	p	t (106)	p
Altruism	1.302	.1956*	1.696	.0929*	3.017	.0032
Autonomy	> 4.234	.0000	3.492	.0007	> 4.234	.0000
Life style	2.448	.0160*	3.007	.0033	> 4.234	.0000
Prestige	0.212	.8325*	2.657	.0091	2.874	.0049
Spirituality	2.766	.0067	2.609	.0104	> 4.234	.0000
Variety	2.612	.0103	1.354	.1787*	4.044	.0001

* No significant change ($p > .0167$) (Bonferroni adjustment)

measurements with regard to the value which females attached to authority, creativity, cultural identity, physical activities, social relationships and variety. By the end of the third year females attached significantly less importance to authority than males.

The intercorrelation matrix between life roles and values revealed that military students initially expected to satisfy their needs through all the life roles. By the end of the third year it was, however, mainly the work and leisure roles which provided the opportunity to fulfil their value expectations. Table 4 reflects the significant correlation coefficients.

To determine whether military and civilian students differed significantly with regard to specific life roles, t-tests for independent groups were utilized. The results are summarized in Table 5.

According to the results reflected in Table 5, it was especially with regard to the work role that significant differences between military and civilian students were revealed. In all three study years military students participated significantly more in work activities and also felt more committed to the work role. With the exception of the second year, the military students also had a higher value expectation of the work role.

On the other hand, civilian students, in their second and third years, felt more committed to their studies and, at the end of their study period, expected to realise more of their values through this role than their military counterparts. This was despite the fact that second year military students participated significantly more in study activities. Civilian and military students' participation in community activities did not differ significantly. Civilian students, however, felt more committed and even expected to realise more of their values through the community role than their military peers. On the other hand, the leisure role was considered as more important by the military group. By the end of their third year they participated more in leisure activities and had a higher value expectation of the role than their civilian counterparts. No significant differences between the two groups were found for the home and family role.

As no empirical studies on a tertiary level have been done with the Values Scale, the results of the military students are compared to the norm group (grade 12 pupils). When the values of these two groups are arranged hierarchically the same five values fill the top positions for both groups. This remains unaltered for the duration of the military students' three years study period. The military students' value system thus corresponds with that of the general population. Table 6 reflects the relative positions of the most important values for military students and grade 12 pupils.

TABLE 4
SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR LIFE ROLES AND VALUES: YEAR ONE VERSUS YEAR THREE

Values	Role Components									
	Study		Work		Community		House and Family		Leisure	
	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3
Ability utilisation	.3766		.3645	.3214	.3130		.3122			
Achievement	.3420									
Advancement	.4252									
Aesthetics						.5297		.3820	.3139	
Altruism					.4680	.6382	.3646	.3054		
Authority		.3572	.3092	.4266			.3102			.3843
Autonomy				.3594						.4779
Creativity	.3622		.3051							
Cultural identity					.3478					
Economic rewards	None									
Economic security	None									
Life style										.3723
Personal development	.4738		.3495	.3360						.3082
Physical activities				.3122						.3591
Physical prowess				.3175						.4086
Prestige		.3510		.3269						
Risk				.4990						.3638
Social interaction					.4544	.3264				
Social relations	None									
Spirituality					.3355	.6008				
Variety				.3773	.3351					.4182
Working conditions	None									

Note: $p < .01$ (Only significant correlations reported)

If the mean scores of the matriculants are compared to the scores of the military students in their first year, the military students' scores are significantly higher for four of the five values. Table 7 reflects this information.

From Tables 6 and 7 the conclusion can be drawn that military students care for exactly the same values as the general population, but significantly more so.

DISCUSSION

Statistical comparisons of the results of this study with those of a longitudinal study amongst civilian students (De Jager, 1996) indicated similar developmental patterns. Over three years undergraduate students devoted more time and energy to study activities, but commitment to and value expectation of the role decreased. However, for the military students this pattern was much more pronounced.

The decline in the affective components of the study role amongst military students supported the findings of Priest (1979) at the USMA West Point. The value attached to academic achievement by American cadets decreased during their four years of study. Military students at both institutions, however, persevered in their studies despite the lack of an affective attachment to the role. The reason for their perseverance might be the fact that academically unsuccessful students have to withdraw from their studies and return to the line function permanently. Several authors speculated that military students want to postpone this return because they are

still in doubt about a military career (Johnston & Bachman, 1972; Kotze, 1993; Radway, 1971).

As South African military students' participation in the study role increased, participation in the work role decreased. This is a logical consequence of the fact that they spent more time at the Military Academy than in their line function at their home units. The decrease in the affective components was, however, only temporarily. By the time they had to re-enter their line function, the students were as committed to work as they had been three years earlier.

Women students in the military showed a unique developmental pattern. Whereas De Jager (1996) found that civilian women students felt increasingly committed to and expected more and more of their work role, female military students showed an opposite tendency. This finding is in accordance with the research of Morocco, Wilson and Floyd (1981) who found that the career aspirations of women in the military was significantly lower than those of their male counterparts. According to the authors this was because women in the military feared the consequences of too high career aspirations. The women's natural affiliation needs and need for approval lead to a denial of the aspiration need. This was supported by De Fleur and Warner's (1987) finding that women cadets in the American Air Force accentuated female characteristics in order to help them adapt to the male environment and protect them from rejection.

The leisure role became increasingly important for military students. By the end of their third year they participated

TABLE 5
LIFE ROLES: t-TESTS FOR MILITARY VERSUS CIVILIAN STUDENTS

	First Year					Second Year					Third Year				
	Civilian students (N = 146)		Military students (N = 107)			Civilian students (N = 146)		Military students (N = 107)			Civilian students (N = 146)		Military students (N = 107)		
Participation:															
Study	28.13	4.54	27.86	5.26	0.4368*	28.09	4.94	29.77	5.41	2.5665	29.75	4.7	30.31	5.37	0.8812*
Work	22.19	6.10	31.50	4.42	13.4135	21.99	5.69	28.71	5.36	9.5093	23.89	5.67	29.24	4.95	7.8174
Community	19.37	6.71	17.74	6.34	1.9536*	18.45	6.95	18.09	6.11	0.4281*	19.53	7.2	18.42	6.83	1.2379*
Home & family	25.22	5.58	25.22	6.83	0*	25.02	5.54	24.87	6.64	0.1955*	25.77	5.07	26.54	7.21	0.9974*
Leisure	29.13	5.10	28.43	4.78	1.1073*	27.97	5.16	29.09	6.17	1.5691*	28.04	5.13	30.38	4.98	3.6287
Commitment:															
Study	34.04	3.78	33.76	4.46	0.5391*	32.61	4.64	30.98	5.78	2.4860	32.08	5.67	28.98	6.31	4.0950
Work	31.47	5.24	35.31	3.86	6.4108	32.31	4.72	33.59	4.56	2.1616	32.35	5.64	34.21	4.27	2.8622
Community	26.29	7.23	23.93	6.87	2.6192	25.66	7.37	23.02	7.47	2.7987	26.19	7.94	23.04	8.24	3.0680
Home & family	33.42	5.44	34.24	5.68	1.1625*	33.01	5.83	33.67	5.96	0.8812*	33.47	6.07	34.77	6.41	1.6434*
Leisure	31.47	5.28	30.79	6.61	0.9089*	30.53	5.88	30.92	6.87	0.4851*	31.26	5.24	32.41	5.59	1.6764*
Expectation:															
Study	41.88	6.19	42.85	7.57	1.1198*	40.83	7.05	39.79	8.00	1.0946*	39.72	7.06	37.45	8.84	2.2691
Work	40.97	7.34	44.99	6.37	4.5472	41.97	7.22	42.90	6.73	1.0414*	40.85	8.14	44.49	6.56	3.8070
Community	33.34	9.78	31.98	9.18	1.1212*	33.38	9.76	30.92	9.82	1.9754	32.86	9.1	30.79	10.21	1.6971*
Home & family	40.84	7.86	41.86	8.41	0.9899*	41.43	7.7	41.63	7.54	0.2059*	41.04	7.22	42.93	7.79	1.9892*
Leisure	39.81	7.05	40.71	7.83	0.9571*	40.07	7.33	41.45	8.61	1.3734*	40.24	7.27	42.75	7.69	2.6473*

No significant difference ($p > .05$)

significantly more in this role and by that time also expected more of their important values to be realized through it. The importance which military students attached to the leisure role did not necessarily affect the work role negatively as they still expected to realize a significant number of their values through work. Although military students utilised both their work and leisure roles to fulfil their needs, they obviously regarded neither role as suitable for the satisfaction of their needs for advancement, financial security and achievement (Table 4).

Civilian students showed a different developmental pattern for the leisure role (De Jager, 1996). In their third year they spent significantly less time on leisure activities and also did not expect to realize as many values through this particular role.

Rosseel, in his research on Belgian Army students, revealed a new work ethic in which '— autonomy in work, anti-bureaucratical attitudes, an anti-career mood and a preference for leisure', were emphasized (1986, p296). South African military students also showed an increasing need for autonomy, an own life style, more variety and greater prominence of the leisure role. In Moskos' terms of an Institutional-Occupational continuum this is indicative of a shift away from traditional military values towards occupationalism. This shift is further confirmed by a decrease in the importance of altruism and spirituality (Table 3) which, according to Moskos, are purposes '— transcending individual self interest in favor of a presumed higher good' (1986, p. 378) the latter being a characteristic of an institutional approach.

The Values Scale has not been used with tertiary students in South Africa. Consequently, the only research with which the results of this study could be compared, was the norm group which consisted of grade 12-pupils. Such a comparison might, methodologically, not have been sound, because of the possible confounding effect of age. Super and Nevill (1989) were

confronted with the same problem and admitted that it would have been better to use an adult civilian group for such a comparison. Because of a lack of data on such a group, Super and Nevill and this researcher made use of the available data of a younger group who were, however, at about the same educational level.

A comparison between the five most important values for military students and civilian matriculants revealed that the value systems of the two groups were very similar (Table 6). Both groups showed a need for ability utilization, achievement, advancement, financial security and personal development. According to Yates (1985) these are universally important values. This value constellation of the military students remained relatively stable and unaffected by membership of a specific subgroup for the duration of their study period. Only one value, namely authority, showed a relationship with gender.

An interaction between time of measurement and gender occurred for several values. Graphical representations of the mean scores revealed a significant decline for women between the second and third year with regard to their need for creativity, cultural identity, physical activities, social relationships, variety and authority in the latter case to such an extent that it measured significantly lower than for the male students. This finding supported Super and Nevill's (1989) results in a study of Navy recruits, which established a significant difference between the two genders for authority and social relationships. They further also reported that females scored higher for altruism and aesthetics.

Although all the significant differences in the value patterns of males and females in the military reported by Super and Nevill (1989) and Yates (1985) were not statistically confirmed in this study, a study of the original mean scores revealed that the

TABLE 6
RELATIVE RANKS OF THE FIVE MOST IMPORTANT VALUES FOR MILITARY STUDENTS AND GRADE 12 PUPILS

Grade 12-pupils	Military students		
	First year	Second year	Third year
1. Ability utilization	Ability utilization	Personal development	Ability utilization
2. Personal development	Personal development	Ability utilization	Financial security
3. Achievement	Advancement	Advancement	Personal development
4. Financial security	Financial security	Financial security	Achievement
5. Advancement	Achievement	Achievement	Advancement

TABLE 7
VALUES SCALE: T-TESTS FOR FIRST YEAR MILITARY STUDENTS VERSUS GRADE 12-PUPILS

	Grade 12-pupils N = 2568		First year military students N = 107		t
	X	S	X	S	
Ability utilization	17,56	2,30	18,26	1,76	2,6330**
Achievement	17,30	2,31	17,59	1,88	1,0654
Advancement	16,54	2,76	17,98	1,88	4,6612**
Financial security	16,75	2,78	17,84	1,96	3,4716**
Personal development	17,32	2,38	18,11	1,96	2,8059**

** p < 0 .01

differences for the genders were in the same direction and showed that South African military students displayed similar value patterns as other military subjects.

The lesser need for social relationships found in the military studies is, however, not in accordance with Konrad, Corrigan, Lieb and Ritchie's statement that women 'do not seem willing to give up good relationships -' (1996, p. 370) and neither is the lack of a need for authority in accordance with an 'amalgamation' with traditional male values (Fiorentine, 1988). Together with the steep decline in the women's value expectations of their work role, these observations might be an indication of the influence of the military environment on the values of females and justifies further investigation.

CONCLUSION

Military students underwent significant changes with regard to their life roles and values during undergraduate study. The value changes generally indicated a shift away from traditional military values as embodied by career officership as a calling, towards occupationalism where the military becomes an extension of the civilian perspective that a military vocation is just another job. Women in the military exhibited a unique career development profile with characteristics different from the males as well as from civilian women. With the current increase in the number of women entering the South African Military Academy, this aspect justifies further research.

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