“THEY’RE’ ALL OUR CHILDREN TOO,” NARRATIVES ON NAVIGATING STUDENT AFFAIRS AS A BLACK MOTHER

By

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(Under the Direction of Georgianna Martin)

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to critically explore and analyze the experiences of Black mothers who work in student affairs. Using Black Feminist Thought and a critical constructivist framework, this study sought to analyze how race and gender interacted for Black women who work in student affairs. Black women experience both racism and sexism in the workplace, particularly in student affairs, that often prevents them from advancing (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Henry, 2010; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; West, 2019). Women in student affairs also confront upward mobility obstacles. Current literature regarding working women in student affairs does not include the examination of Black women.

In this study semi-structured narrative interviews were conducted with 10 Black mothers who worked in student affairs in the United States. I analyzed data using a categorical content list and feminist qualitative methodology. Significant findings included commonalities in how and why Black women enter student affairs. Representation to BIPOC students on their respective campuses, other mothering and community mothering to their students were two noteworthy outcomes. The participants also shared experiences with microaggressions, particularly around their hair, and navigating racism. Also, as working mothers, the women struggled with childcare issues, working to be present in their family lives, and with the idea of work-life integration. This struggle often led to the participants choosing or planning to leave student affairs. Despite wanting to exit the field, working in student affairs also provided the women with social capital that many planned to use to help their own children succeed in college. Also, most participants shared that they expected to leave the field due to the perceived lack of flexibility within the profession. This study offered implications for future research, and policy and professional practice to support and retain Black mothers in student affairs.

INDEX WORDS: Black women, student affairs, Black Feminist Thought, Black motherhood, working mother, mothering, microaggressions, work-life balance

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DEDICATION

In memory of

My grandmother, Ms. Adell Mathis Holston, who told me that one day I would be a doctor.

And

My uncle, George Atwater Jr., who taught me that education pays.

And to my three heartbeats: Payton, Carter, and Adele, I love you and thank you for being my motivation to be the best I can be. You are all the best.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Raising Black children — female and male — in the mouth of a racist, sexist, suicidal dragon is perilous and chancy. If they cannot love and resist at the same time, they will probably not survive." (Lorde, 1984 p.74).

When my husband and I decided to start a family, I remember thinking about how I would manage to have a career and a family. I grew up watching as my mother navigated her career as a military wife. With that foundation, I began to develop my own ideas about how I would manage. My career choice was very different from my mother's, and so I began to look around to see how women managed student affairs careers. Student affairs careers often include non-standard work hours, on-call responsibilities, compassion fatigue, low pay, and often a need for relocation to advance up the career ladder. Many of these things are incompatible or make motherhood extremely difficult. When I began looking around for mentors, I felt like there were not many new or young mothers represented at my institution, particularly mothers in mid to upper-level positions. Many women had adult children, but I did not see them managing the competing demands. When I became pregnant many colleagues began asking me if I was going to return to work after maternity leave. I saw many women choosing that option, but it was not an option I had grown up considering. My mother attempted it for a while, but her circumstances were different as a military wife. I questioned if I could give up my career and what that would mean. I later learned that some of my close colleagues had a pool going on, betting to see if I would return or not.

Once I had my first child, I began to navigate not only the ideal worker norms that I had grown accustomed to, but also the ideal mother norms. Motherhood is a defining moment for many women and trying to navigate a career can be extremely difficult. I worked until I was finished- no matter the time; I struggled with having to leave by a specific time to meet daycare hours and to at least spend the last moments of the day with my child. Working nights and weekends became difficult as the extra childcare costs often exceeded my hourly rate for these obligations. Missing meetings and rescheduling due to sick days and school closures became commonplace. Contemplating climbing the career ladder was inconceivable, as I would lose my family support system. Do I uproot our family to move for a chance at upward mobility and then struggle with finding new schools, childcare? Alternatively, do I stay and work in a more comfortable career for my family? I considered staying, leaving, and looking for another, more family-friendly career path. I then understood the popular adage that we expect a woman to work as if she does not have children and raise her children as if she does not work.

What made these internal dialogues harder was thinking about the societal messages Black women receive related to mothering. Motherhood for Black women does not follow the same themes and patterns of white motherhood. Motherhood for Black women is rooted in a structure of oppression where the historical elements of slavery, institutional oppression, and culture impact how Black women view mothering (Collins, 2001). While many white women decide whether to opt-out and stay at home, this choice is even more nuanced for Black women who may struggle with the cultural implications of such a decision.

Once my children were born, the impact of being a Black woman became even clearer personally. The biggest test of balancing Black mothering and my career involved making decisions about my next career steps while navigating whether or not to send my children to

schools where the discipline rates for Black students were higher than the rates for white students. Additionally, these schools had bad ratings. During a discussion with a local educator friend, she blamed the school's low ranking on the lack of parental involvement. As a working mother, I long to be involved in my kids' school, but that requires missing work, using vacation time, and affecting my career. While touring other school options, the importance of parental involvement was underscored by directors, principals, and research on student success and achievement. In the end, I found a school eight miles away from work that allows involvement and minimal use of leave time. However, the importance and focus on finding schools and safe spaces for my children will play a factor throughout my children's childhoods and my career.

As the country navigated through the murders of Black men and women at the hands of police, my role as a Black Mother became even more central to my identity. This intersection led me to study this subject. Then the COVID-19 Pandemic happened and further fractured the thin line that working mothers in the United States walk daily. When childcare systems broke down, it forced many women to leave the workforce. Those who continued working often reported increased demands as they struggled to support their children through online schooling while constantly feeling pressure to perform work demands at the same level (or greater) as they did before the pandemic. Burke et al. (2020) found that faculty mothers experienced "failure, guilt, unhappiness, and being overwhelmed by employment" (p. 3). Joyce and McCarthy (2020) reported working moms feeling burnout or stressed. Also, Fulweiler et al.'s (2021) "Women in the Workplace" study, estimated that the fallout could set women back for a decade. The toll for Black women is even heavier as Black women reported more stress from a "double pandemic" where COVID-19 ravaged the Black community at higher rates amid the ongoing American

pandemics of racism and police violence against Blacks (Addo, 2020; Burk et al., 2021; Fulweiler et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Expecting a woman to work as if she does not have children and to raise her children as if she does not work is a famous adage that is shared often on social networking sites. It is a sentiment that many mothers, both Black and white, feel when they react or share this meme. This sentiment is not unique to any one industry. However, mothers with careers in student affairs can undoubtedly attest to struggling with managing the competing interest of work and family life. The long, irregular hours, low pay, and the idea of constant relocation that is common in the profession can make it extremely difficult for mothers to continue within the profession or seek advancement once they have children (Nobbe & Manning, 1997). Black Mothers who work in student affairs face the challenges of navigating dual competing roles as professional workers and mothers while navigating the dual identities of Black women.

The combination of the identities of Black and female results in constant struggles with racism and sexism, which are often manifested in microaggressions, marginalization, and isolation, to name a few (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007). Black mothers navigate these day-to-day challenges at work and then face the proverbial "second shift" or the household and childcare duties that working mothers must complete once at home (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). This second shift becomes even more challenging when their career includes a first shift with blurred lines for women who live and work in on-campus residential facilities, take part in on-call duty rotations for students, or work long hours with students programming events. The burden of the second shift for Black mothers is evident in data from the Economic Policy Institute that showed

that Black mothers, whether single mothers or married, worked more hours per week than any other racial group (Wilson, 2017).

In addition to the second shift, research on mothers in student affairs has highlighted many strategies that mothers in student affairs have taken to accommodate their work and family balance. Strategies have included "saying no" to career advancement opportunities (Collins, 2009) or "opting out" and leaving the field entirely (Hebreard, 2010). For Black mothers, however, this choice has many cultural undertones. While upper- and middle-class white mothers in the United States largely entered the workforce in the last 30 years, Black women have usually always held some form of a job outside the home.

Cultural norms also expect women to use their education to further their family and community (Barnes Daniel, 2008; Giele, 2008). Historically, these jobs have been in lower-paying service fields such as domestic work. Black women have also often held jobs out of necessity due to systemic racial discrimination. This discrimination has manifested itself through federal relief programs that often discriminate against Black women and the other systemic issues of racial discrimination such as discriminatory housing practices such as redlining and over-policing of the Black community. These practices have often produced conditions for Black men that required Black women to be the sole providers of their households (Amott & Matthaei, 2007; Banks, 2019; Collins, 2000: Minoff, 2020). As Black women have become more educated over the last two decades, they have earned a significant share of graduate and professional degrees. With this increase in higher education and degree attainment, Black women also have begun entering professional and managerial positions, both within and outside of higher education and student affairs. These jobs often began to place them in the middle and upper-middle classes of American socioeconomic society and thus added an additional layer/element to

how Black women experience a professional career and motherhood. The changes of employment for many Black women entering professional and management jobs have led to a change in how Black women must navigate a new work-life balance (Barnes Daniel, 2008; Barnes Dani, 2015; Collins, 2000; Dean et al., 2013; Roos, 2009).

Further, much of the research on motherhood in student affairs has not looked at how race and gender intersect in the lives of Black mothers. There is research on issues for mothers in student affairs (Bailey, 2011; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Hebreard, 2010; Isdell, 2016; Marshall 2002, 2009; Nobbe & Manning, 1997, Snyder, 2011). According to estimations in 2016, Black women accounted for approximately 9% of those employed in higher education and student affairs (National Center for Education Statistics., 2017). Still, there is limited to no research on the statistics of those who work specifically in student affairs, nor is there research on the percentage of Black mothers who work in student affairs (Henry, 2010; West, 2020). This study will provide data on better supporting and retaining Black mothers who work in student affairs. Further, additional research may assist other Black women aspiring to higher positions and provide women seeking senior-level positions with some guidance on balancing motherhood with a career in student affairs as a Black woman. The problem is that much of the literature on working mothers in student affairs focuses on the experiences of white women. There is significant literature on the experiences of Black women in student affairs, but that often does not account for working mothers (Henry, 2010; West, 2020; Williams, 2019); however, much of this literature does not focus on the unique challenges and experiences that motherhood brings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this critical, constructivist study was to explore and share the narratives of Black mothers working in student affairs and illustrate how motherhood affected the career

development and decisions of these Black women. This critical approach allowed for examination of how historical factors contributed to the experiences of Black women working in student affairs. The use of the constructivist approach helped create meaning of the experiences for the study participants by co-creating with the participants. Using Black Feminist Thought (BFT), created by Patricia Hill Collins, this study examined the experiences of Black women in student affairs and focused on the intersection of race. This study addressed the following research questions:

(1) How do Black mothers experience student affairs as a career?

(2) How does race intersect as Black women balance career and family while working in student affairs?

Significance of the Study

The plight of the working mother is well represented in literature in higher education and to a somewhat lesser extent within student affairs (Collins, 2009; Isdell, 2016; Isdell & Wolf-Wendel, 2021; Marshall, M. R. & Jones, 1990; Marshall, S., 2021; McClinton, 2012; Snyder, 2011). Sharing the experiences of Black women, who have traditionally been left out of the literature, was an important goal of this study. Sharing stories of the marginalized is a component of the critical paradigm and sharing the experiences of Black women for Black women is an important tenet of Black Feminist Thought. The struggles of finding work-life balance or integrating policies that support and retain working mothers are essential to continuing the productivity of the American workforce. However, much of the literature does not account for an intersectional analysis of how racism and sexism affect the working mother. Further, as African American women continue to earn bachelors, masters and professional degrees at a higher rate than their counterparts do, understanding the factors and struggles of the working mother is

paramount to supporting them (U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). In addition, much of the literature and discourse about mothers in student affairs comes from white women's language and experiences, which are inadequate for empowering Black mothers against the systemic oppression and events that define their experiences.

Operational Definitions

Student affairs -Functional areas in institutions of higher education that consist of advising, counseling, management, or other administrative functions that exist outside the classroom. This term often includes areas such as housing, student activities, student conduct, and orientation (Love, 2003).

Black/African American- The term Black is used throughout this paper, although some research distinguishes African American participants who are descendants of American Descendants of Slaves and Blacks, representing those of African decedent from throughout the diaspora. These terms are often used interchangeably; however, many scholars distinguish the difference as referencing African American to include those who identify as American Descendants of Slaves (ADOS) and those who identify as Black from the diaspora, such as Blacks who identify as Afro Caribbean. (Agyemang et al., 2005) For the purpose of this study, I used the term Black to refer to all those who identify as descendants from the African diaspora, except where I cited work retaining the original author's language.

Mother- a female parent who cares for children whom she gave birth to (biological) or has taken responsibility for through legal means such as adoption, legal guardianship or fostering, or marriage.

Theoretical Framework

This study used Black Feminist Thought (BFT) as a theoretical framework. Black Feminist Thought is a political framework that explores how Black women experience the intersection of race, class, and gender as they navigate their lives through systems of oppression and white supremacy (Collins, 2000). Black Feminist Thought allows the participants to share their own stories and share how race and class, and other systems of oppression shape their mothering and career experiences. This was a critical, constructivist qualitative study with a narrative inquiry research design. These concepts are further explored in Chapter Three.

Summary

The stories of working mothers in student affairs in existing literature often do not represent diverse identities. This study sought to add the voices and stories of Black women to the existing literature by highlighting the stories of Black mothers who work in student affairs and how they navigate their careers. The addition of these stories to the existing literature may provide stakeholders and other Black women with an understanding of the experiences of Black mothers in student affairs and offer opportunities for how to support Black mothers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There is limited literature on the specific experiences of Black mothers working in student affairs. This chapter examines the existing research on Black mothers working in student affairs by looking at the student affairs profession and the work culture. Next, this chapter discusses Black women's experiences in the field. Data on working mothers and Black working mothers will provide context for how motherhood fits within the student affairs profession. Black Feminist Thought provided a theoretical foundation for understanding how Black motherhood intersects with Black women navigating their careers in student affairs.

History of student affairs

The passage of the Morrill Land Act in 1862 and 1890 changed the higher education landscape in the United States as the government began to fund higher education through money and land appropriations (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Hevel, 2016). Along with money, land, and more resources, the idea of higher education for the public became a more commonly accepted idea in the United States. The Morrill Act of 1890 also provided money to states for those who created and provided (segregated) higher education opportunities for Black people (Hevel, 2016). As access to higher education opened for more students, the administrations adjusted to meet the needs of students, and the field of student services began. Initially known as Dean(s) of Men and Women, these early student affairs practitioners handled student discipline and housing, which later morphed into other student services such as financial aid and managing the co-curricular aspects of students' lives (Hevel, 2016). As their purview grew, the title also changed

from student services to student personnel to student affairs (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). When in loco parentis was dismantled in the 1960s following the Dixon v. Alabama court decision, institutions of higher education were no longer concerned with being students' parents; instead, they focused on the development of students into productive citizens (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Hevel, 2016).

In the 40 years since the Dixon precedent, the student affairs profession has taken on new roles as increased federal regulations have mandated many responsibilities that fall under student services. Some of these responsibilities include federally mandated oversight for Title IX and Crime reporting. Currently, student affairs consists of a variety of functions on campuses that support student development both in and outside of the classroom. Common functions of student affairs may vary from campus to campus, but areas such as counseling, residential life, student activities, recreation and wellness, and student conduct are often included (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Love, 2003). As enrollment increased on campuses and access to higher education was opened, the number and variety of services have grown, as have the needs of students on campus. This expansion has led to growth and increased diversity within the profession. With this growth has come some troubling signs for the profession. Student affairs is often seen as a profession for those without family or caregiving responsibilities. It often requires those who can prioritize the job over personal responsibilities due to the need for working both during and after traditional work hours (Isdell & Wolf-Wendel, 2021). Research indicates that student affairs departments have an abnormally high attrition rate, with some estimates as high as 60% for professionals within the first five years (Marshall et al., 2016). This high attrition rate has been attributed to a work culture that often requires long, irregular, and nonstandard work hours and a lack of flexibility. While many other professions may require extended work hours, the

compensation levels within student affairs are not competitive compared to the private sector, particularly at the entry and mid-level junctures.

Many entry-level positions in the field also require advanced degrees, which means that many professionals have invested significant time and financial resources into a profession that does not offer competitive starting salaries (Marshall et al., 2016). This culture has been problematic for student affairs. While there has been progress since 1980, when 90% of women in the field indicated they were unsatisfied with their overall careers in student affairs, including the low salary, there is still progress that must be made to address these issues (Blackhurst, 2000). Student affairs is also often seen as a profession that requires constant geographical moves in order to advance in the profession (Kodama et al., 2021). Many women find this norm difficult and a barrier to the advancement of their careers as it puts the ideas of prioritizing family at odds with developing a career in student affairs (Kodama et al., 2021). The current student affairs profession favors the ideal male worker norms which stated that the dedication required to excel in the profession was due to the fact that many workers (traditionally male) were available at all times because they had others available (typically a wife) to handle family and other personal matters (Isdell & Wolf-Wendel, 2021; Jones Boss & Bravo, 2021; Marshall, 2021; Sallee, 2021). The first women who entered the profession were often unmarried and childless which perpetuated these norms further. As the workforce has changed over the last 50 years, with more women, and women of color entering the professional workforce, these professional norms need to be readdressed, since student affairs is now a profession where women outnumber men. Examining the career satisfaction of women in student affairs by looking at women's experiences in higher education is a crucial aspect of understanding the profession (Blackhurst, 2000).

Black Women in Higher Education and Student Affairs

Black women have been integral to higher education since they began to assume the Dean of women role. Historically, these types of positions were held by middle-aged, single women (Hevel, 2016). Lucy Diggs Slowe, who served as the Dean of Women at Howard University, a historically Black University, is often considered the grandmother of student affairs (Hevel, 2016). Slowe was the first Black Dean of at Howard University and worked to advance the importance and training of student personal deans at colleges (Perkins, 1996). Over the last half-century, as institutions and the workforce became integrated, Black women have entered and made significant contributions to the general profession. Black women make up approximately 30% of administrative positions in higher education; however, they only account for 6% of executive positions (West, 2017). Black women are also the most educated group in the United States and are the largest female minority group with conferred bachelors, master's, and doctorate degrees (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). In reviewing the graduate degree statistics, the data also reflects the upward mobility of Black women as they account for the largest number of graduate degrees attained in education and related fields (e.g., student affairs, higher education, counseling), which comprise the degrees often required in student affairs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

History, cultural norms, and expectations may also explain why many Black women enter student affairs. Within Black American culture, there is an ingrained ethic of giving back to the community and. This ethic combined with the notion to lift each other and the race up, make student affairs an ideal profession for many Black women (Collins, 2000; Rosser-Mims, 2010). While Black women have made slight gains in achieving faculty and executive positions within

the academy, Black women report experiencing barriers to advancement while working in higher education and student affairs (Baker, 2013; Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Henry, 2010; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Jackson & Holmes, 2004; Jones Boss & Bravo, 2021; Jones et al., 2012; West, 2017; West, 2019). Faculty face barriers regarding achieving tenure which are not applicable to women in student affairs, yet the barriers such as racism and sexism are similar for all Black women (Kamenou, 2008; Roser-Mims, 2010; West, 2017). These barriers include microaggressions, marginalization, tokenism, isolation, and the emotional and tangible effects of stereotypes that affect how Black women are perceived as well as their interactions with colleagues and management (Baker, 2013; Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008; Williams, 2019).

According to the 2016 National Center for Education Statics, Black women represent approximately 10% of employees classified as "student academic affairs and other services." (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). This statistic represents a decrease from 15% reported in the previous decade (Baker, 2013). While there is no dedicated study that focuses on the declining number of Black women in student affairs, extant research has examined many potential reasons for this decline. This factor was one of Blackhurst's (2000) key components regarding women in student affairs. Blackhurst (2000) explored career satisfaction seeking to determine if women were fulfilled in student affairs. Defining career satisfaction as the extent to which a person is satisfied with the student affairs profession and its compatibility with their values and commitment to the student affairs profession, this study also examined the perceptions of gender equity (or lack thereof) in the student affairs profession. Understanding these perceptions is important to understand how to support women, prevent attrition, and determine the equity equation in the profession. Blackhurst (2000) also looked at several factors

that can influence a women's career, such as race, parenting status, and relationship status. Blackhurst's research included a questionnaire that asked about career satisfaction, experiences with sex discrimination, and the participants' demographics. The results of Blackhurst's study highlighted that white women have the highest level of career satisfaction within student affairs, while Hispanic and Black women had the lowest (Blackhurst, 2000). Further research dedicated to these experiences may explain the low levels of career satisfaction for Black women.

For many Black women there is a negative culture associated with student affairs due to continued racism and sexism. Racism is more often highlighted for Black women than sex discrimination, and the literature on Black women emphasized themes of marginalization, alienation, isolation, and stereotype threats (Baker, 2013; Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; West, 2017; Williams, 2019). Williams (2019) examined why Black women felt pushed out or decided to opt out of the profession. Using the term "opt-out" to capture ways Black women resisted and left their employment on their conditions, Williams (2019) found that Black women routinely chose this method or felt forced out due to microaggressions and hostile work environments.

Similarly, Baker (2013) examined the challenges Black women faced while acclimating to their job and profession or socializing within the profession. During this process, Black women experienced racism, tokenism, and marginalization. Despite these obstacles, Black women continued to persist and excel in the profession. Henry (2010) examined the experiences of Black women in student affairs using Patricia Hill Collins's Black Feminist Thought as a framework. This research analyzed the experiences, both negative and positive, faced by a group of Black women working at a predominately white institution (PWI) in the southeast. Findings in Henry (2010) indicated that microaggressions and racism were common experiences for all participants. Moreover, the findings identified strategies that these women used to combat their

negative experiences. These strategies included mentoring relationships and sister circles or networks of support from other women of color.

The study conducted by West in 2017 explored themes of sister circles, and reviewed the African American Women's Summit, a professional development opportunity created by the professional organization Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA). The first African American Women's Summit was held at NASPA's 2006 annual conference. This summit provided an opportunity for Black women to connect and share their experiences. West (2017) interviewed seven women who participated in the summit from the inaugural summit until 2011. The results affirmed the findings in Baker (2013) and Henry (2010), stating that racism and sexism continued to plague Black women. Furthermore, West (2017) concluded that professional "counter space" where women can engage and support each other while dealing with racial microaggressions they encounter in their professional lives were helpful and supportive for Black women (West, 2017). West (2017) concluded that the African American Women's Summit provided that space for its participants and that creating this space had a positive impact on the experiences and retention of Black women in higher education.

Adjusting to the culture of student affairs and workplaces is often a struggle for Black women in higher education, as many of these environments are based on the ideal white male worker norm (Isdell & Wolf-Wendel, 2021; Boss & Bravo, 2021; Sallee, 2021). Many Black women feel overworked, isolated, and subject to constant microaggressions. These factors make their jobs feel even more hostile, all while making less money than their white counterparts (Alfred, 2001; Henry, 2010; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Reason et al., 2002). Reason et al. (2002) found that when reviewing salary data from NASPA, women of color

with master's degrees had the lowest mean salary and earned an average of $21,000 less than their Caucasian counterparts earn.

Suggested coping strategies for dealing with these issues include forming spaces where they can support and mentor each other while seeking mentors to assist them as they navigate their professional lives (West, 2017). Tamara Bertrand Jones (2012) provided an edited collection of research and advice for Black women seeking administrative positions within higher education. This research-based advice advocates for mentoring as one of the most effective methods to help Black women succeed in higher education. This book provides suggestions for several areas within higher education as well as how Black women can succeed despite the obstacles they face (Jones et al., 2012).

Recent research conducted by Nicole West (2020) examined the experiences of Black women in higher education and studied the educational attainment and professional aspirations of many of the same Black women who attended the African American Women's Summit at NASPA between 2015-2018 and completed the survey after their summit (West, 2020). West (2020) found that the "student affairs leadership gap" is still relevant. According to data from the NASPA 2014 Vice Presidents for Student Affairs census, Black women lagged in attaining Chief Student Affair's leadership positions (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 2018). Currently, Black women represent only 7% of Chief Student Affairs Officers (CSAO) compared to 38-39% for white women and men, respectively (West, 2020). Although 37% of Black women are enrolled in doctoral programs or have earned their doctoral degrees, they are still not employed in CSAO positions relative to the number that have earned advanced degrees. West (2020) further determined that the vast majority of Black women were employed in middle management positions that left them outside the reach of making influential institutional change.

As indicated in West (2020), 13% of the women held doctoral degrees, but only 3% were employed in chief student affairs positions. This finding provided further evidence that "Black women are often more educated than their white counterparts" (West, 2020, p. 87).

West (2020) also determined that while Black women were enrolling in doctoral programs at a higher rate than whites, they were not completing their programs at the same rate as white students. More research is needed to determine the cause for this disparity and to advise Black women on different paths they may take to obtain a doctoral degree. Even if the degrees are not leading to increases in the number of Black women in these positions, Black women are still very much interested in pursuing a doctoral degree (West, 2020). West (2020) recommended looking into the career trajectory and educational aspirations of Black women in student affairs to get a complete picture of Black women's experiences in student affairs.

The majority of the existent literature does not address how family structure and/or motherhood affects Black women working in student affairs. Several studies have focused on family structures of Black women while pursuing their doctoral degrees in student affairs (and related professions) and strategies for persistence (Appling, 2015; Mitchell, 2019; West, 2020). West (2020) asserted that Black women in student affairs are interested in pursuing doctoral degrees, hoping to secure leadership positions within student affairs. Understanding how motherhood affects these women is another factor that could help in understanding how to better support Black women in career development and progression.

To better understand the dynamics of working mothers in student affairs, it is necessary to consider how working mothers are represented within American work culture. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the percentage of mothers with children under 18 years of age in the labor force is 71.5% (Wilson, 2017). This is an increase over the last 40 years as (white)

middle-class and professional women typically did not enter the American workforce en masse until the 1970s. In contrast, Black mothers had long been in the workforce serving as teachers in segregated schools and doing domestic work (Curenton et al., 2016; Dean et al., 2013; Dow, 2016). There is significant research which focuses on working mothers and the glass ceiling. The glass ceiling, a metaphor for women experiencing barriers when trying to reach executive positions, turns into the "maternal wall" for working mothers. Williams and Dempsey (2014) coined the term "maternal wall" to describe working women with children who are pushed to the margins of the professional world (p.3). These women often feel as if they must choose between continuing, progressing, or leaving their careers to focus on or take care of their families. They often report feeling pushed out (looked over) or choose to "opt-out" of their careers.

The phenomenon of highly educated women "opting out" of the workforce gained notoriety in the U.S. in 2003 when the New York Times Magazine published an op-ed about highly educated, affluent women opting out of their career after having children due to the stress of performing multiple roles as worker, mother, and partner and maintaining a balance between them all (Belkin, 2003). Additional research has focused on the work-family conflict that working mothers face trying to juggle their work and family lives (Belkin, 2003; Hochschile, 1990; Hocking, 2019; Williams, 2019; Williams & Dempsey, 2014). Yet, much of the research focuses on the work-family conflict from a white, Eurocentric lens that does not consider how race affects this conflict. Overall, there is limited research on how race, gender, and motherhood intersect in the lives of professional Black women.

Working Mothers in Higher Education and Student Affairs

There is limited data on how many working mothers are in the field of student affairs is limited. However, there is adequate existing literature that broadly addresses how women in

higher education balance work and motherhood. The majority of this research focuses on faculty, not administrators or student affairs practitioners. While many of the issues that working mothers face are similar, such as childcare and the need for workplace flexibility, the focus on academic motherhood highlights the tenure clock and the publish or perish mentality, which are not concerns affecting student affairs practitioners (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Instead, in student affairs, the concerns include balancing work and family, and adopting to the culture of student affairs, which often consists of live-in and on-call positions, long hours, and low pay (Isdell & Wolf-Wendel, 2021; Marshall, 2021; Nobbe & Manning, 1997).

Nobbe and Manning (1997) created one of the seminal studies on work and family balance for student affairs professionals. Although conducted two decades ago, this study still provided relevant research on motherhood for those working in student affairs. Of the 10 women that participated in the study, only three identified as Black. The findings failed to address how race or ethnicity played a role in balancing motherhood and work in student affairs for those Black women. Marshall (2004) recognized that much of the research on working mothers in student affairs was outdated and limited. Her study sought to provide a more balanced perspective on working mothers in student affairs. This study highlighted how mothers found success and balanced their work and family lives through supportive supervisors, awareness, mentors, and realistic expectations. Marshall (2004) included 17 professionals in various functional areas. Similar to many other scholars discussed in this chapter, Marshall (2004) did not consider how race or racial identity influenced the women's experiences. This research did not identify the participants by their racial or ethnic identity.

Isdell (2016) considered mid-level professionals' work-life balance and the importance of a flexible or family-friendly workplace to support mothers in student affairs. With a focus on two

specific universities, this study highlighted the importance of flexible work policies and the importance of work-life support. Examples of support included on-site childcare and institutional cultures that value mothers in leadership positions. Practices such as these are important foundations for supporting mothers in student affairs (Isdell, 2016). Hebreard (2010) used the term 'opted out' to examine women in student affairs who dropped out of the profession in order to focus on the children. This study focused on mid-career women who left student affairs after having children, as well as some who returned to student affairs after "opting out." Hebreard (2010) asserted that despite high levels of job satisfaction, workplace flexibility was the biggest factor that influenced women's decisions to "opt-out" of the workforce. This same flexibility, combined with strong personal networks, were critical for women who returned. Most of the participants in Hebreard (2010) indicated their plans to return to the workforce but were unclear if they would return to student affairs. Of those women who returned to student affairs, half returned to part-time positions, which allowed for continued flexibility (Hebreard, 2010). All of the participants agreed that "combining the role of mother and student affairs was complicated" (Hebreard, 2010, p.202). Recommendations from the study focused on the importance of creating and sustaining institutional policies to support working mothers in student affairs.

In addition, Hebreard (2010) noted that the literature on mothers opting out and the findings of that study did not account for diversity in ethnicity, gender, age, or any other demographic. This notation is important because research has shown that opting out has seldom been an option for Black women who have participated in the American workforce since slavery and as domestics for centuries after. Black women have held jobs out of necessity due to social conditions in which they lived, whether they were the sole supporters of their families or providing support to their underemployed spouses (Browne & Kennelley, 2000; Giele, 2008;

Kamenou, 2008; Roos, 2009). Many of these factors continue to be remnants of racial discrimination.

Not all women in student affairs choose to opt out of their careers or professions when faced with the stress and challenges of balancing work and family. Collins (2009) examined how the women chose to forgo traditional career paths to prioritize their work-family balance. The six women she interviewed turned down or did not apply to advancing and more lucrative positions in student affairs, including vice president of student affairs positions (often considered the pinnacle of a student affairs career path), in an attempt to maintain the flexibility and work-life balance they desired. The Collins (2009) study only included white women. Recommendations of the study acknowledged the importance of how race and culture may affect these choices. The study concluded that more work is needed to understand how various identities manage work-life balance and career. Research that focuses on identities, as suggested by Collins (2009), may inform how graduate faculty can prepare new student affairs professionals before entering the field regarding expectations and the student affairs work environment (Collins, 2009).

The Levtov (2001) study asked whether the student affairs profession was family friendly. By addressing the choices that many women must make as they navigate the emotional challenges of combining work and family, Levtov (2001) noted these challenges were not unique to student affairs; women in many fields face the same challenges, but the culture of student affairs was problematic for mothers due to "long work hours, and increasing expectations despite decreasing resources" (Levtov, 2001, p.3). Recommendations that emerged from the study included the need to acknowledge that the challenges facing working mothers is not just a female issue. Also, it is important not to focus on "superficial" solutions. Finding the solutions will

require discussions and debates about the "basic definition of work culture, overworking and increased balance" (p.4).

Examining the experiences of mid-level student affairs administrators and how career position affects working mothers was the focus of Fochtman (2010). In this study, the term mid-level was defined as five or more years of experience. The most common title associated with mid-level tends to be assistant/associate director for their respective areas. According to the women in this study, being mid-level offered many challenges, but it was a "comfortable" stage when the children are young, compared to their experiences or thoughts about other stages. Like most other studies, supportive supervisors and clear family-friendly institutional policies were important for the success of these women. One area for improvement that emerged included training supervisors to better understand the needs of their workers, particularly those who are caring for others. Fochtman (2010) also noted that additional research with a focus on how women of color experience working motherhood in student affairs is needed.

Fifteen women participated in the Bailey (2011) study and shared their experiences of being mothers and student affairs administrators. Like Collins (2009), Bailey identified the career path these women took and found that they were shaped by their dual identities, which often meant delaying career advancement while they had young children. Bailey (2011) also created a new framework, which she named the "sliding puzzle," a tool for identifying how women navigated the pieces in their lives. Findings highlighted the importance of women acknowledging their dual identities and suggested a greater focus on career development and planning for women. Similar to most of the literature on women, mothers, and black women in student affairs, Bailey (2010) also touched on the importance of mentoring, supportive supervisors, and better family-friendly institutional policies. Similar to Fochtman (2010), Bailey

(2010) also found that training supervisors to understand employees' multiple roles is a key component for assisting working mothers in student affairs (Bailey, 2011; Fochtman, 2010). Unlike the other studies referenced in this review, Bailey (2010) only had one participant who identified as African American and discussed the importance of the impact of culture (southern culture) during this study.

The consistent theme in the literature is that motherhood for women student affairs professionals can be an obstacle that alters or stalls their career trajectory (Bailey, 2011; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Hebreard, 2010; Isdell, 2016; Isdell & Wolf-Wendel, 2021; Marshall, 2021; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Sallee, 2015; Snyder, 2011). Similar to working mothers in any industry, mothers in student affairs struggle with work-life balance and benefit from clear and supportive institutional policies and supervisors (Bailey, 2011; Fochtman, 2010; Isdell, 2016; Isdell & Wolf-Wendel, 2021; Marshall, 2021). Research has indicated that institutions, supervisors (who often oversee these policies daily), and professional associations can improve the support given to working mothers. Better training for supervisors and involvement from professional associations on these issues can also help women working to achieve work-life balance (Bailey, 2011; Fochtman, 2010). In addition, it is important that supervisors and others understand that these are not just women's issues but societal issues and cannot be solved by women alone (Levtov, 2001). More research is also desperately needed to understand how different family structures, cultures, and race impacts the lives and work of mothers in student affairs (Bailey, 2011; Collins, K.M. 2009; Fochtman, 2010; Hebreard, 2010; Isdell, 2016; Levtov, 2001; McClinton, 2012; Nobbe & Manning, 1997). This study, in particular, examined these dynamics for Black mothers in student affairs.

Black Feminist Thought

The majority of the research discussed throughout this chapter utilized Patricia Hill Collins' Black Feminist Thought (BFT) as the theoretical foundation (Baker, 2013; Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Henry, 2010; West, 2017; Williams, 2019). Similarly, Black Feminist Thought was the theoretical framework used in the present study. Collins (2000) has given specific consideration on how BFT and motherhood intersect. One of the key themes of BFT is standpoint, and Collins (2000) presents a standpoint of motherhood that debunks many of the stereotypes that are products of mainstream (white) analysis of motherhood. These tropes include the white male-centered "matriarch" and the Black female perpetrated by a super-strong Black mother. Many of these archetypes are byproducts of stereotypes of Black women that are still prevalent in American culture.

Collins (2000) refers to these stereotypes as controlling images or the specific images of Blacks within popular American culture. These controlling images portray Black women as Mammy, Sapphires, and Jezebels (Collins, 2000). Many more of these controlling images exist in popular culture and are experienced by many women in the workforce, such as the angry Black woman. The purpose of these controlling images is to control Black women's femininity and sexuality; and help to justify social practices from slavery to Jim Crow (Collins, 2000). Black Feminist Thought seeks to dismantle these stereotypes by allowing Black women to create and narrate their discourse both individually and collectively (Collins, 2000). This conscious decision to dismantle stereotypes and engage in self-definition is designed to shift their perception of their identity from the controlling images to be themselves and to being authentic. It is important to note that self-definition is not about replacing negative images with positive ones, but about the internal journey of Black women reclaiming their power (Collins, 2000).

The BFT standpoint on motherhood concludes that motherhood is an empowering experience for many, which is often a contradiction for Black women. For some, motherhood is "burdensome, stifles their creativity, exploits their labor and is a factor of their oppression" (Collins, 2000, p. 176). Others see it as a status symbol and catalyst for social activism (Collins, 2000; Story, 2018). An important aspect of BFT as it relates to motherhood is self-definition.

In addition to coming to terms with their path, feelings of motherhood, and the physical acclimation to motherhood, Black women must also navigate the Eurocentric stereotypes of a mother both from a white lens and through the lens of the Black community. The Eurocentric view often portrays the strong Black mother, similar to the strong Black woman trope. The strong Black mother trope praises Black women's resilience in a society that routinely portrays them on opposite sides of the spectrum- from bad mothers and "welfare queens" to Black matriarchs who are too busy working to properly supervise and raise their offspring (Collins, 2000). Regardless of how Black women view their roles as mothers and how it shapes their lives, their experiences need to be shared from a view that centers their self-definition and experiences (Collins, 2000).

Black Motherhood

The concept of Black Motherhood is very complex, as slavery, institutional oppression, and culture all play a role in what mothering means to and for Black women. Black mothers are often faced with one-dimensional narratives that fail to explore how Black women make meaning of their identities as mothers (Rousseau, 2013). Current literature often portrays Black mothers as laborers who do not spend time parenting their children and instead is focused on the dominating, Eurocentric idea of mothering, which excluded Black professional women.

According to Hayden (2017), popular culture, media, and politics continue to lack positive images of Black Mothers.

Collins (2000) used the Black feminist standpoint to examine how Black women make meaning of their experiences as mothers. Using Afrocentric theory translated into contemporary Black culture, Collins theorized that motherhood is symbolic, celebrated, and valued for Black women. Furthermore, many Black women gain elevated community status from their role as mothers. However, unlike the Eurocentric view on motherhood, which values the nuclear family roles of a nurturing mother and a providing father, in the Afrocentric view women are not dependent on males for economic support. The Afrocentric view of motherhood also highly values the biological mother-child bond, but views child-rearing as a collective responsibility (Collins, 2000).

Collins (2000) discussed themes of Black motherhood: The first theme refers to a community or collective parenting known as Blood mothers, othermothers, and women-centered networks. Other mothers are women who assist biological mothers in their mothering responsibility and are a central tenet in the Black community. This shared mothering network has provided childcare and support that has helped the Black community survive and persist. The experiences of Black women who engage with othermothers lays the foundation for social activism among Black women (Collins, 2000; Collins, 2003). The idea of sharing mothering responsibilities evokes the experiences that Black women have regarding feelings of nurturing their own family and extended networks. This involvement has often resulted in community and social activism. The second theme of Black motherhood addresses providing a cornerstone of mothering. This theme encompasses the idea that working has been integral to Black women and Black motherhood. This is in contrast to the Eurocentric view, which states that work is

incompatible with the ideas of motherhood. For Black women, the luxury of motherhood could not be considered a productive female occupation. The final tenet that Collins (2000) addresses is motherhood as a symbol of power. Mothers and community mothers are often revered in the Black community, and a substantial portion of a women's status derives from her role as a mother and other mother.

Collins's work titled *Shifting the Center*, addresses how motherhood for Black women cannot be isolated from race. Race, gender, and class interlock to provide a different experience of motherhood for Black women (Collins, 1994). Black women are tasked with raising their children to survive (and hopefully) succeed in a society rife with racial oppression, negative stereotypes and images. These factors seek to belittle and assimilate children of color into their perceived proper subordinated places in systems of racial and class oppression. According to Collins (1994), for many Black mothers, much of their identity as a mother is built upon a struggle for survival and working to raise children to both exist and resist within systems of racial oppression.

Barnes Daniel authored an ethnographic study of Black professional mothers in Atlanta in 2015. This study introduced the strategic mothering framework, which highlighted how Black professional mothers continually navigate and redefine their relationship with work to fit the needs of their families and communities. Strategic mothering often led to constrained choices where the mothers in Barnes Daniel's study made choices to follow a less demanding career track or temporarily place less emphasis on their careers. Many professional Black mothers in this study noted that "some of the conflicting demands between career and motherhood are a reflection of trying to protect their children from the harsh realities of racism, while simultaneously preparing their children to excel within the white, mainstream culture" (Barnes

Daniel, 2015 p. 27). Also, in this study, many of the Black professional mothers struggled with career ambiguity due to constantly having to define and redefine their relationship with their career to fit best the needs of their families and careers (Barnes Daniel, 2015). Barnes Daniel (2015) highlighted several other themes prevalent in other literature regarding how Black professional mothers navigate work, such as the uplift model. The uplift model describes how many Black women often feel a call to "uplift their communities," and many do this through their work and chosen professions.

Another common theme that emerged in Barnes Daniel (2015) is the unseen labor Black mothers engage in to "cultivate the world" for their children. Named the "strategic cultivation," the process outlines strategies that mothers can utilize to prepare and protect their children from racism and the differences between their Blackness and white American culture. Examples of strategic cultivation include buying Black toys, choosing books with diverse or relevant themes, and recognizing the importance of choosing the best school environment for their children. This study is one of the few studies that explored how Black women navigate motherhood and professional careers. With a focus on middle-and upper-middle-class Black married women, the participants in this study were all located in one geographical area, and all had graduate or professional degrees.

Black Working Mothers

For Black women, the choice to work or continue working once they have children has many racial and cultural undertones. While middle class and professional white women entered the workforce in the last 30 years, Black women have typically held a job outside the home (Barnes Daniel, 2008; Barnes Daniel 2015; Collins, 2000; Roos, 2009). Historically, Black women were steered toward low-paying jobs in domestic labor (Amott & Matthaei, 2007; Banks,

2019). Black women were also often forced to work due to laws and programs that denied public assistance or support to Black families or laws that required them to work (Minoff, 2020). According to Minoff (2020), these work requirements and laws were used as a tool to create a pool of low-cost labor and to stop Black economic autonomy. Cultural norms have led to the expectation that Black women use their education to further their family and community (Barnes Daniel, 2008; Giele, 2008). While many white women struggle with the choice to opt out or remain in the workforce, many Black women do not see this as a viable option due to the cultural history of Black women in the United States.

If white women encounter a "glass ceiling" as they attempt to move into executive leadership positions, Black women face the "concrete ceiling" (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). This concrete ceiling extends to Black mothers who work in student affairs and face the challenges of navigating dual competing roles as professional workers and mothers while navigating their dual identities as Black women. These dual identities include the daily struggle of dealing with racism and sexism and include microaggressions, marginalization, and isolation, in addition to stereotypes that often limit Black women to certain job duties and categories (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). These struggles can cause stress and emotional damage, which can evolve into medical issues such as depression and shortened life span (Torino, 2017). This type of racism can affect pregnant Black women especially hard and lead to pre-term labor, low birth rates and other post-natal complications (Orchard & Price, 2017).

Black mothers navigate these day-to-day challenges at work and then face the proverbial "second shift" or the household and childcare duties that working mothers must complete once home (Hochschile, 1990). This second shift becomes even more challenging when their career

includes a first shift with that does not clearly end for women who live and work in on-campus residential facilities, participate in on-call duty rotations for students, or work long hours with students programming events. The burden of the second shift for Black mothers is clear in data from the Economic Policy Institute, which shows that Black mothers, whether single mothers or married, worked more hours per week than any other racial group (Wilson, 2017).

Further research has found that "Black mothers are viewed as unreliable workers due to their perceived status as single mothers" (Cocchiara et al., 2006, p.278). An example of Black women's perceived status as single mothers comes from a 1999 study that found that when using descriptions of white women, "employers referred to "motherhood," but when referring to Black women, the same employers invoked the image of "single motherhood" (Browne & Kennelley, 2000). Further, these same employers "expected Black women to miss work more, but when they did not, employers attributed this to their role as sole supporters for their families and needs for income, rather than their work ethic" (Browne & Kennelley, 2000 p. 315). The statistics contradict this stereotyping that most Black women in the labor force are not single mothers (Browne & Kennelley, 2000).

Additionally, Black women were not more likely than white women to have conflicts between work and child-care responsibilities; in fact, they were less likely to have these conflicts by almost ten percent (Browne & Kennelley, 2000). The stereotype of single motherhood is only one negative stereotype that working Black mothers face. Others include the welfare queen, the super-strong Black woman, and the caretaking mammy (Collins, 2000; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). These prevalent and negative stereotypes combined with false assumptions about Black mothers continue to be detrimental for Black women as they attempt to ascend to executive

positions in various fields. Overcoming these negative racial stereotypes is yet another barrier that Black women must overcome (Collins, 2000).

Dow (2016) also focused on how African American motherhood differs from the ideology of motherhood in the United States (white ideas of motherhood). In this study, Dow (2016) found that Black women viewed work as a central part of their identities and that middle-class woman viewed a commitment to family, career, and community as essential to their ideas of womanhood. An important theme underscored in Dow (2016) argued that working is a duty of motherhood that fosters economic self-reliance. Black mothers often indicated that their "decision to pursue a demanding career was motivated by their desire to be good mothers" (Dow, 2016, p.190). This theme contradicts other research that focused on women without considering the intersectionality of race (Dow, 2016).

Curenton et al. (2016) completed a study of 24 middle-class African American mothers to explore their parenting practices, values and specifically their choice to opt-out or return to work. The findings indicated that most Black mothers adopt a work-family integration model in which their roles as professionals and mothers compliment themselves. This work-family integration is often incompatible with the intensive mothering ideology that dominates American society. Intensive mothering, as defined by Hays (1996), is the concept "that, to be a 'good' mother, women must spend copious amounts of time, energy, and material resources raising their children" (p. 8). Further literature on intensive mothering found that white women are often able to live the ideals of intensive mothering while Black women cannot.

Black women do not value intensive mothering ideology, largely due to the historical context in which Black women have had a high participation rate in the labor force. The majority of women in the study conducted by Cureton et al. (2016) who choose to return to work, had the

ability to create flexible work arrangements that were compatible with their child rearing goals. These child-rearing goals aligned with the ideas of intensive mothering, often highlighted by white mother practices. Other concerns included parenting issues related to racism and preparing their children to inhabit a racist society. Another outcome from the Curenton et al. (2016) study found that most Black women did not identify with the label of feminism, as many of the women found it too narrowly focused on (white) women's rights. Instead, the participants in this study preferred to define the term to incorporate their roles as a mother and a professional. The participant's ability to make these decisions was often the result of substantial social and economic capital, which included educated middle-and upper-middle-class husbands who earned substantial incomes.

Hane (1999) examined the experiences of Black professional women by looking at the many metaphors they used to detail the challenges they faced. From' juggling act" to a" tightrope" to being a "superwoman," these professional Black women voiced a constant struggle with maintaining the multiple roles associated with being a working mother. While they struggled with similar demands of most working mothers, such as caring for their children, spouses, partners, and other domestic duties such as cleaning and grocery shopping, Black mothers felt additional constraints. The biggest constraint was their concern for protecting their children. "Black children are at particular risk from not only physical dangers like disease or violence but also from the psychological threats of racism" (Hane, 1999, p.117). These threats can appear through various mediums, such as disparities in the educational system resulting from inequitable access to quality education to disciplinary issues (Crenshaw, 2015).

Additional cultural expectations of excelling at their jobs while managing and supporting their families added to Black professional working mothers' demands. Hane (1999) asserted that

the metaphors and cultural expectations were "burdensome and unsupportive of women's goals" and argued for additional research to garner a complete understanding of how Black women combine motherhood and their professional careers (Hane, 1999, p. 129). Marguerite McClinton (2012) provided a chapter in Bertrand-Jones' (2012) edited collection of essays on Black women in higher education administration that focused on how Black women can manage work and family in higher education. McClinton (2012) provided a list of practical suggestions for working mothers and advised researching practices such as flexible work arrangements and family leave policies when job searching. This resource also offered tips for establishing boundaries, managing the workload by getting up earlier to complete work assignments, considering and appreciating non-traditional career paths, and seeking support and mentors both in and outside of the institutions. Many of these tips apply to all working mothers and do not account for any racial themes that may exist (McClinton, 2012).

Dean et al.'s (2013) qualitative study, interviewed 31 married and middle-class Black women from an upper-middle-class suburb. All the women in the study had at least one child, and at least one spouse had a professional or managerial occupation. Dean et al. (2013) found that the women in the study belonged to two cultural schemas. The first is work-life integration, where womanhood is based on a dedication to both motherhood and their career. The second cultural schema is family devotion, when women believe that their place is in the home and choose to forgo their career to become full-time stay at home moms (Dean et al., 2013). The majority of Black women in Dean et al. (2013) aligned with the work-life integration cultural schema. This supported the idea that Black mothers organize their work and family roles differently from American cultural norms (Curenton et al., 2016; Dow, 2016). Also, the Black women in Dean et al. (2013) were likely to believe in work-life integration and the pairing of

both work and parenting as vital components of their identity. While the women who favored work-life integration were motivated by their desires for a family and career, they still often struggled with work-life balance (Dean et al., 2013). Many of these women adjusted their careers, work schedules, work hours, or jobs to fit within this framework rather than end their careers.

The literature on Black mothers and Black working mothers is clear that Black women experience both their career and motherhood differently than white women (Alfred, 2001; Barnes Daniel, 2008; Curenton et al., 2016; Dean et al., 2013; Dow, 2016; Haskins et al., 2016; Hayden, 2017). There is a need for additional research on how Black mothers working in student affairs experience careers and motherhood to both add their voices to literature and to better understand how they experience the profession as working mothers. This research can also assist other Black mothers and student affairs professionals by providing an understanding of how cultural and historical forces have shaped these experiences.

Career Development Theory

Career development theory evolved during the 20th century to facilitate understanding of how individuals make career choices and adjust to those choices over their life span (Brown & Lent, 2013). Theorists have identified several factors that may affect how individuals make these decisions. Many of the oldest career and vocational theories were designed and tested based on Eurocentric views and white male worker ideals. These ideals do not consider cultural expectations, and/or racial and gender discrimination. In addition, many notions of career mobility assume that male workers have a wife at home raising the children, rather than the modern dual-career families or single working mothers (Brown & Lent, 2013, Isdell & Wolf-Wendel, 2021). While some career theories consider culture and gender, many do not.

Identifying theories that are applicable to every population can be beneficial to assisting diverse populations.

Kaleidoscope career model

Introduced by Powell and Mainiero (2008), the Kaleidoscope Career Model assists in examining the impact of sexism, harassment, and gender issues relative to the careers of women. The Kaleidoscope Career Model seeks to address the two significant differences that impact men and women's career development: (1) sexual harassment and discrimination, and (2) women's roles as primary caregivers for children and elderly relatives (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2008). As the typical business model was designed around the traditional man who had a wife at home; many women find today's organizations, even those that claim to be family-friendly, of little value (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2008).

The Kaleidoscope model uses three parameters – Authenticity, Balance, and Challenge - to define how women view their career and life. Like a kaleidoscope that changes as it shifts, these parameters also shift over time as women progress through their lives. According to Mainiero and Sullivan (2008) Authenticity is defined as being true to oneself amidst the constant interplay between personal, work, and non-work issues. Balance is defined as making decisions so that one's life forms a whole. The final parameter, Challenge, is defined as those activities that allow women to grow and develop while on the job and that permit women to simultaneously demonstrate responsibility, control, and autonomy. Mainiero and Sullivan (2008) found that although early career women tend to focus on Challenge, mid-career women tend to focus on Balance and late-career women tended to focus on Authenticity. While all three parameters remained active in women's lives throughout their careers, decisions were often made that focused on one area at the expense of the others. For example, mid-career women

often adjusted and took less ambitious positions to make a more flexible schedule (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2008). Bailey (2011) used the Kaleidoscope career model to study student affairs mothers.

Career development for Black women.

The experiences of Black women are missing from the majority of studies focused on career development. The literature devoted to Black women and career development is limited. Moreover, there is scant research on the factors that influence African American women in their career development (Evans & Herr, 1991; Hamilton, 1996). African American women are often socialized to give back to the Black community with their career choices (Hamilton, 1996). This theme of uplifting the community has been found in additional literature on the career development and choices of Black women (Barnes Daniel, 2015; Hamilton, 1996).

Social Cognitive Theory has been adopted as one of the more popular career theories applied to Black women. The social cognitive theory is often used to consider how other factors from people such as family and friends or race and class, might impact career decisions. Evans and Herr (1991) determined that African American students often eliminate career choices when they perceive racial discrimination as prevalent in the career field. Additional research on the career development of Black women has found that when they do enter fields where they may be the minority, they often view themselves as "pioneers in the field" and work to increase the visibility of Blacks in the field. This finding is another representation of the uplift theory which highlights why many Black women choose and persist in careers (Richie et al., 1997).

Summary

Black women face an array of obstacles as they attempt to progress in their careers, whether in higher education or corporate America. In student affairs, issues that conflict with

work-life balance increase the number of obstacles faced by Black mothers and make their retention and career choices even more challenging. The literature identified various areas and structures that working mothers and Black women must overcome. While there is little that examines the intersections of these identities, this review has provided a foundation for understanding the need for further research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this study I sought to understand the experiences of Black mothers working in student affairs and gain a better understanding of how motherhood affects their career development and path. In looking at the qualitative design options, I chose to use a narrative design for this study. . I chose narrative inquiry as a methodology as it focuses on the creation of research, rather than the focus being on the researcher as an authority. Narrative inquiry is a methodology that focuses on stories and allows individuals to talk about their lived experiences as first-person accounts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The narrative methodology approach can also be useful in analyzing and understanding the influence of race and gender, which is at the heart of what this study sought to understand. The focus of this study was gathering the stories of Black mothers in student affairs due to the current lack of stories in the existing literature.

To retell these stories, I was guided by Black Feminist Thought Framework. It is important to consider the intersection of race and gender when seeking a better understanding of the experiences of Black women (Collins, 2000; Dixson & Seriki, 2013). This was demonstrated in Belkin (2003) during the discussion of the term "opt-out" as a choice for women who choose to opt out of the workforce when their children are young (Belkin, 2003). The idea that there is a choice is not a familiar thought for Black women who have historically always worked while raising children and are not generally presented with the idea of opting out of work (Giele, 2008). Therefore, using Black feminist thought as a critical perspective allows us to look at how the intersections of race and gender (and class) can provide us with the power system that affects Black mothers' lives.

Research paradigm

The research paradigm of this study was a blend of constructivist and critical theory. There is a gap in the literature regarding the experiences of Black mothers working in student affairs. The current literature focuses heavily on white women's experiences. This literature gap provides an opportunity to use the constructivist framework, which allows us to understand these women's experiences as they progress through their career in student affairs and their identities as mothers. The critical paradigm was useful to my study because it allowed me and participants to see how power and systems of oppression shape mothers' realities in student affairs. Much of the literature and discourse about mothers in student affairs comes from white women's language and experiences, which are inadequate for empowering Black mothers against the systemic oppression and experiences that define their experiences.

Ontology.

Ontology refers to how people make sense of whether something is real or not (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The constructivist paradigm's ontology introduced the idea that multiple realities are constructed through an individual's lived experiences. Moreover, these experiences are based on the recognition that power and privilege have a role in our subjects' lives. The experiences of white mothers in student affairs are varied and valid; however, when the lens of race and white privilege are added, it produces additional realities for Black women and women of color.

The critical paradigm also provides an ontological perspective as it considers the structural and historical insights. Understanding the participant's experiences is important and should be considered with the social and historical themes (Kim, 2016). For example, much of

the literature surrounding working women and feminism references the increase of women in the workforce over the last 40 years (Giele, 2008). However, Black women have generally always been in the labor force, whether paid or unpaid. While their positions have changed over the last 30 years, juggling work within the labor force is not a historically or socially recent phenomenon for Black women.

Epistemology.

Epistemology is how we understand knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Within a constructivist paradigm, knowledge is co-created with the study participants. The constructivist view also holds the belief that research cannot be separated from or objective about those being studied (Guido et al., 2010), thus making reflexivity during the research process important. Epistemology in the critical paradigm grows as the influence of power systems and oppressions is developed. Similar to the constructivist view, the researcher has an impact on the study and the findings. As the researcher explores the experiences and considers them in context to society and history, new knowledge is developed. Based on my theoretical framework, the critical framework epistemology was a component of the study as participants reflected on how society and historical choices impacted their worldview and decisions made as Black women working with raising Black children.

Axiology.

Axiology is the role of values and ethical issues in research (Creswell & Poth, 2017). It requires the use of reflexive techniques to make sure values and cultural norms are being honored (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Both the constructivist paradigm, which highlights individual values, and the critical paradigm, which focuses on human rights and social change, were relevant when considering the experiences of Black women and making sure their voices were

heard. Also, in the critical frameworks, respecting cultural norms is paramount. The constructivist view holds that values are based on the individual and should be honored and negotiated among participants.

Methodology

Narrative inquiry allows participants to share their first-person accounts. Narrative inquiry is useful in both constructivist and critical paradigms, which were utilized in this study. In a critical framework, narrative inquiry is useful because it allows the issues of power and privilege to be noted as the broader social discourse that shapes a person's story and experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2019). Framing this narrative inquiry study with Black Feminist Thought allowed the Black mothers in the study to share how being a Black woman in American higher education has shaped their experiences while navigating the complexity of motherhood.

Using a narrative methodology in this study allowed for sharing the lived experiences of the participants. Narrative inquiry is also well suited when exploring nuances and interrelationships among experiences that the reader might apply to better understand other related situations (Josselson, 2011). Interviews are the most well-known form of collecting narrative data. There are several types of interviews used in narrative inquiry, including structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. I employed semi-structured interviews, which allowed myself as the researcher to guide the conversation by providing some questions and letting the interview progress (Kim, 2016). Narrative inquiry also permits visual data to be used to continue or enhance their story. These visual objects are called artifacts, and asking participants to share artifacts such as pictures, personal belongings, or documents can enhance the narrative that these women share (Kim, 2016).

Another defining feature of narrative inquiry is that it places the researcher into the research. After analysis, the researcher narrates the experiences and shares the stories. According to Jones (2013), the researcher must decide how best to represent the participants' voices in telling the story. In reviewing the types of voices, the researcher can utilize the interactive voice which allows the participant's story to be heard. This requires the researcher to examine their own voice and be reflexive. Since I, as the researcher, shared some of the participants' identities, this type of inquiry is best suited to ensuring the ethics and integrity of the research.

There are many types of narrative inquiry. For this study, biographical inquiry offered the best opportunity to explore the gendered constructions of power, resistance, and agency. According to Kim (2016), biographical narrative aims to understand how the participants interpret their life experiences and how they interpret the sense of meaning made from their daily lives and their temporality. Life history/story is a type of biographical narrative that focuses on an in-depth study of an individual's life and seeks to understand how race has affected participant's experiences with mothering and career development (Kim, 2016).
Narrative inquiry was also compatible with my theoretical framework, Black Feminist Thought. Black Feminist Thought comes from critical theory, which is an important theory when striving to maintain the relationship between the story and the theory (Kim, 2016).

Theoretical framework

Black Feminist Thought is a theoretical perspective that is both compatible with and contributory to my study. Black Feminist Thought seeks to express how the intersections of race, class, and gender affect Black women to give voice to their varied experiences (Collins, 2002). Since much of the literature regarding motherhood in student affairs focuses on white women's experiences, whether intentional or not intentional, using BFT allows the experiences of Black

women to be heard as it relates to their career, mothering, and how race and class impact those experiences. Black Feminist Thought seeks to empower Black women and provide a positive representation of Black women reflective of their self-perception as opposed to the negative controlling images of Black women that permeate society today.

An additional principle of BFT that contributed to my study is the significance of the lived experience of Black women. At the heart of these lived experiences, is a desire to share the experiences (Collins, 2000). Black mothers are particularly vulnerable to the intersecting nature of racial and gender subordination; therefore, intersectionality is important to consider when analyzing the experiences of Black women (Dixson and Seriki, 2012). Black mothers have grappled with damaging misrepresentations, as they have borne the brunt of the blame for the plight of the Black community in America, which includes crime, poverty, and the so-called breakdown of the Black family (Collins, 2000). This stereotype misrepresents the narratives of many Black women who have entered the profession of student affairs and seek to balance their work with raising their families. Much of the literature on balancing work and family shares the common point of view that voices of Black women are missing (Jackson, 2003). As a result, the literature is absent of the historical and cultural thinking that shapes the world view of Black women. Black Feminist Thought offers the perspective of Black women sharing their own stories and creating their "standpoint." Another tenet of Black Feminist Thought is the need for Black women scholars to engage in this work (Collins, 2000).

In addition to BFT as a theoretical framework, career development theory was used as a theoretical perspective. Career development theory focuses on understanding how and why women choose student affairs as a career and how they navigate through that career choice, particularly once they become mothers. Using career theory aided in gaining a better

understanding of additional factors that help Black women and mothers navigate their careers. The use of career theory was also helpful when creating the interview questions. The Kaleidoscope Career model, a variant of social cognitive career theory, focuses on understanding the experiences and motivations for mid-career women (Mainero & Gibson, 2018). Since this study focused on mid-level professionals, the use of a model that focused on issues of work-life balance, attrition, as well as career advancement was applicable.

Participants

I utilized the following selection criteria for the participants: (a) must identify as a Black or African American woman, (b) must identify as a mother to at least two minor children ages 1-13 and, (c) must be currently employed full time in student affairs at an institution of higher education in the United States (see definition below).

To further define and target the sample, definitions for key words are provided. Mother was defined as someone who identifies as a mother through birth, marriage, adoption, or legal guardianship. Student affairs refers to a set of functions within higher education. Most often student affairs consists of advising, counseling, management, or other administrative functions at a college or university which take place outside of the classroom. This may also include areas such as housing, student activities, student conduct, and orientation (Love, 2003). Due to the variety of areas within student affairs, participants self-selected this category.

Selection Process.

To seek participants, purposeful sampling was used to target women who could share their experiences. Purposeful sampling is used to ensure that the researcher gains insight into the group being studied (Merriam & Tisdale, 2015). Criterion sampling, setting specific criteria to

ensure that the target group is reached, and that the information sought is gained, was also used (Jones et al., 2013).

Unlike quantitative inquiry, there is no sample size requirement for qualitative research (Jones et al., 2013). Narrative research calls for in depth-focus on a small group of about 6-12 participants (Kim, 2016). This study aimed to achieve sample saturation by determining when knowledge became redundant, and depth and breadth of information had been achieved (Kim, 2016).

Site.

Social media sites offered a recruitment path to the target participants. Targeted groups for this study included The Student Affairs Moms Group (S.A.M.S) Facebook group, the Black Student Affairs Professionals (BLSKAP) Group and the Black Women in Student Affairs Slack Social Networking Group. A flyer with a link to a pre-screen survey (See Appendix C) was posted in each group in Mid-September 2021 (see Appendix A).

Selected Participants.

Forty-five participants responded to the pre-screen survey. After reviewing the information submitted in the prescreening, 26 women met the criteria to participate. An email was sent to the 26 women (see Appendix B) with an invitation to select preferred interview times via a doodle poll. Fourteen of the 26 respondents completed the doodle poll. Follow up emails were sent to confirm the scheduled interviews. Two respondents did not attend their scheduled interview, and one provided limited availability that made it impossible to schedule an interview. The selection process was closed after I received 14 responses for scheduling and had actively scheduled 10 interviews.

The selected participants represent various functional areas in student affairs and have 2.5-15 years of experience. Most entered student affairs through a traditional path of involvement in their undergraduate years and matriculated into a master's in Higher Education or student affairs immediately after graduation. In addition, several participants entered student affairs after careers in Information Technology, Counseling, or Business Management. The participants all worked at PWIs, with the majority being from public four-year institutions and representing the Southern, Midwest, and Mid-Atlantic States.

Research suggests the need for additional literature that focuses on the impact that multiple children may have on one's career development (Heberad, 2010). Examining mothers with children in the 1-13 age range focused on more recent/current experiences and assessed several stages of parenting- infancy, toddler, and young elementary school-age children. This is the most intensive time of motherhood. (Komisar, 2017). This was the goal when I initially selected the age range for the participant's children to be one to 13. Also, children in this age range still require a lot of hands-on parenting and most American women have likely returned to work after maternity leave by the time the child turns one due to the lack of paid parental leave in the United States. Only about 59% of Americans women have access to unpaid leave through the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 (Valarino et al., 2017).

In the end, I had two participants who had one child who would not fall into the age category listed. One participant had a child older than 13 and a child that was 10 months old. The 10-month-old fell outside of the one-year age parameter, but I included this participant because she had returned to work and was navigating being a working mother with two children. There was sufficient time for her to have experienced some of the day-to-day minutiae of being a working mother to multiple children. A second participant had a 3-year-old and was currently on

maternity leave with a newborn. A third participant was also on maternity leave following the birth of her third child. At the time of the study, she had two older kids, 11 and six, and a newborn, who was approximately 2 weeks old. Although every participant did not meet the child age requirement, they still provided important information that contributed to the study.

Data collection

Narrative inquiry allows for the re-telling of a story into a story that best represents the research data, and that is grounded in the appropriative framework (Jones, 2013). Narrative inquiry often uses verbal storytelling through interviews as a form of data collection (Jones et al., 2013). Storytelling is a central theme of my theoretical framework, Black Feminist Thought. Kim (2016) highlighted the use of the interview to let the stories of the marginalized or those outside of the mainstream to be told. Kim (2016) also highlighted the valuable insights and reflections that participants have to share. Interviewing Black women, whose stories are often overshadowed by the centering of Eurocentric values or not told at all, will help provide voices that facilitate a better understanding of how race and gender affect the career of Black Women in student affairs. The constructivist frameworks within narrative inquiry provide the opportunity to present "a shared narrative that allows the story to be told by the participants without being weighed down by a strong theoretical perspective" while at the same time allowing the issues surrounding power and privilege to tell a story that often goes untold (Jones, 2013, p.87).

Feminist interviewing is in line with the BFT theoretical framework as it seeks to center the voices of Black women. Feminist interviewing focuses on creating interviews that are "ethical, sincere and interested in free and open dialogue with women participants" (Roulston, 2021 p. 18). The feminist perspective was used throughout the interview and analysis process,

mainly during the discussion of the artifacts, as it assisted in giving voice to the women in the study.

Interviews.

Interviews were semi-structured to provide interview guidance, ensure that comprehensive data was received from all participants, and to allow for clarification and follow-up. Each interview took place online, via the Zoom video conference platform. Zoom was appropriate for this study as Zoom has gained prevalence as a popular replacement for face-to-face interviews. Zoom also allowed the participant to be in their own comfortable setting for the interview (Archibald et al., 2019).

Questions were created from the themes discussed in the literature review. A life history framework was included by asking participants to share their life story in a chronological method (See Appendix E). The questions were pilot tested with two colleagues that fit some aspects of the study criteria. The pilot interviews helped refine the questions and add clarity to ensure that participants understood what was being asked and requested.

The interview process also used the constructivist framework, focusing on the interview as an encounter where researcher and participant played active roles. Interviews were conducted over a three-week period in September and October 2021. Prior to each interview, I sent a reminder email to the participants confirming the interview and reminding them to bring any artifacts that might enhance the study. Interviews lasted from 53 minutes to 75 minutes. I started each interview with a brief introduction to help build rapport. I then explained that I was a mother who worked in student affairs and when I read the literature on mothers in student affairs, the voices of Black women were missing. It was my hope that this study could add Black voices to the literature. At the end of each interview, participants were asked for to select a pseudonym

to ensure privacy. If a participant did not choose one, I chose a pseudonym for them. Interviews were transcribed using the transcription service otter.ai. I listened to each interview while reviewing the transcript to make sure that the transcription application accurately captured the correct words. I then reviewed the transcripts a second time to edit before sending the transcripts to each participant for their review. Most participants did not provide feedback, a few added clarification or fixed transcription errors.

Artifacts

Participants were encouraged to bring and share visual artifacts during the interview that could spark connections and potentially enhance the narratives or stories (Jones et al., 2013; Kim, 2016). This use of visual artifacts, also known as Participants Generated Visual Methods (PGVM), during the interview process is consistent with the constructivist and critical methodology (Kortegast et al., 2019). The use of artifacts advances opportunities for researchers to dig deeper, enrich data collection and reduce power dynamics by allowing the participants to take ownership of the research process (Kortegast et al., 2019). Each participant was reminded about the artifact in a reminder email, and all but one participant bought an artifact, with half of the participants bringing two artifacts to share.

Initially I asked about the artifact at the beginning of the interview, but after the second interview I decided to move that question to the end. I felt that the interview flowed better with the discussion of the artifact at the end. By the end of the interview, participants were a little more open with me because we had built a rapport. They felt more comfortable talking about the artifact.

Data analysis

The purpose of data analysis in narrative research, according to Josselson (2011), is to elicit stories in the framework of the research questions. The purpose is also to use the cultural, personal, and historical conditions that shape these stories, to provide a re-telling of these stories in terms of the larger culture. The incorporation and telling of multiple truths/stories are a key tenet of Black Feminist Thought (Patterson et al., 2016).

Once the interview process was complete, I uploaded the transcripts to otter.ai immediately after completing each interview. Once uploaded, I listened to each interview to make necessary redactions or corrections and ensure that what was said was accurately reflected in the transcript. I reviewed each transcript one additional time for minor grammatical and clarity errors before sending them to the participants for member checks. Once I received the transcript back, I reviewed at it again to add my field notes from the interview and my thoughts and other important data, including pauses and emotional responses to a particular question.

As I worked through each transcript, I organized the emerging themes into categories based on the categories of the study - Black Women, student affairs Career, and Black motherhood. This allowed the "findings to be arranged based on the description of common themes across collected stories" (Kim, 2016, p. 196.) I then went back to the transcripts and started to color code things related to the commonalities that I observed. I completed that process for all the transcripts.

The next step of the data analysis process was coding. Coding breaks down the data to capture the interesting features that build to identify and create themes (Saldaña, 2021).
I used In vivo coding during the first coding cycle. In Vivo coding permitted the use of the participant's language rather than my own (Saldaña, 2021). While gathering the initial codes I

also reviewed the transcripts using feminist qualitative methodology. This process involves analyzing the data that is produced to determine "both what is said in the absences and gaps in women's talk" (Mann, 2016, p.205). Noting the significant silence and other emotions exhibited was noted in the transcripts. This use of feminist qualitative methodology was important during the analysis of the descriptions of the artifacts the participants spoke about during their interviews. Through the absences and gaps in their statements I notated emotions and noted their reactions. Throughout the analysis process, I continually questioned the data to understand the ways race and gender intersected and the effect these intersections had on the experiences of these women (Madison, 2005). At the end of the first round of data analysis, I had approximately 58 codes still within the three main foci of student affairs: career, Black women, or being a Black woman and then motherhood. I developed a tree diagram for a visual representation to help connect categories and themes. I use Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software tool, to highlight the excerpts in preparation for the second round of coding.

Focused and pattern coding were used during the second round of coding. By identifying the most frequent and significant codes I condensed the 58 codes into the most salient themes (Saldaña, 2021). Pattern coding helped to identify similarities in the data such as observations, relationships and local means, and explanations. Pattern coding was especially helpful in capturing the data in metaphors that helped reduce large blocks of data into a single trope that required further analysis (Saldaña, 2021). Focused and pattern coding was helpful in determining when saturation, or no new information was emerging in the data (Saldaña, 2021).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest three analytic tools for coding narrative data. These tools, broadening, burrowing, and storying and re-storying were used during the second round of coding also to help narrow down codes. During broadening, researchers make a general

description of the participants and the social-historical or cultural areas in which the research occurs. Using field notes and the literature, I considered how the current milieu such as the COVID-19-Pandemic and current racial dynamics such as the fight over critical race theory in schools during the fall of 2020 may have added to my participant's narratives. To "burrow" into the data, I examined the details of the stories that the participants provided and used those details to begin to construct biographical sketches of the participants. The final tool, story, and re-storying used data and analysis to help bring the lived experience of the participants to the forefront of the narrative (Kim, 2016). To capture the re-storying aspect, I reviewed each participant's story while reviewing their life history within the confines of their experiences in particular times and places. These times and places included their childhood, the early career journey, their motherhood journey, and their current career trajectory.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) analytic tools also assisted in connecting the similarities between the narratives and the theoretical frameworks. Black Feminist Thought connected the focus on the development of the participants Black and female identity as well as their experiences and feelings toward motherhood as a Black mother. The Kaleidoscope Career Model helped connect their current career trajectory as mid-career women as well as their decisions regarding their career aspirations.

In addition to coding and comparing, to create the narratives I re-read the transcripts multiple times to understand the cultural and contextual contexts. This analysis known as the hermeneutic circle, is an "understanding of the whole cultural and contextual contexts, illuminates the parts as shared and analyzed from the narratives and thus creates the whole" (Josselson, 2011, p. 226). This process requires data to be organized and read multiple times so that themes and stories emerge. This process was important to understanding how the cultural,

social, and historical context intersects with how race and gender shape Black women's lives and thereby affects them individually and collectively.

This was especially important when taking into consideration the timing of this study. In the fall of 2021, the United States was still dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately affected the Black population in the U.S. (Millett et al., 2020). In addition to the ongoing effects of the pandemic, many Blacks in the U.S. were still dealing with feeling of racial battle fatigue and exhaustions. At the same time the labor market was undergoing a massive change titled the great resignation, led primarily by women and mid-career employees (Cook, 2021). Understanding all of these cultural and social forces, as well as the historical forces that shape the lives of Black women was important during the data analysis process.

Trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness is a central tenet in qualitative research. Trustworthiness is achieved through several strategies. Reflexivity, or critical self-reflection by the researcher, is one key component. Maintaining a critical view of my own biases and assumptions and chronicling the ways they showed up in my research was paramount. Kim (2016) defined this step as phronesis, or ethical judgment. It is described as doing the moral thing during the research process and highlights the importance of improving the rigor of qualitative research. Contributing to research and not contributing to the further marginalization of participants is another crucial component. This includes responding with empathy to participants who may struggle to respond to questions or discuss painful experiences in their past.

Another method to increase trustworthiness in qualitative research is member checks or respondent validation. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) highlighted member checks as the most critical way to rule out misunderstandings. Member checks offer the participants an opportunity

to review the preliminary analysis and provide their interpretation. Participants can help fine-tune and ensure that their experiences have been adequately captured (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

In this study each transcript was emailed to the participant for their review and to provide feedback. A few participants pointed out mistranslations, and a few worked to ensure that their thoughts were clearly portrayed. Saturation, or the point at which new data are not being uncovered and information or knowledge has become redundant, is another strategy employed for trustworthiness. Reaching saturation requires that the researcher spends adequate time engaging in data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Multiple coding cycles were also helpful in assuring that saturation was reached, as it required the data to be reviewed until nothing new was uncovered (Saldaña, 2021). An audit log was the final strategy employed for trustworthiness in this study. I included the interview guide in the documentation of the analysis, the field notes, and details of how I interacted and coded the data collected. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Roulston, 2009).

Subjectivity/positionality.

Being a Black woman is at the center of my being. It is what others see first. Pride in those two identities has been instilled in me for as long as I can remember. With this pride also came warnings about the challenges of being a double minority. So much of my story and worldview come from navigating the world with these identities. My identity as a mother also strongly resonates with me. Some other less salient identities are my professional identity as a student affairs' professional, my sexual identity, Christian identity, middle-class identity, and ability. These identities come and go and provide me with a privilege that I am aware of, sometimes more than others.

When my husband and I were discussing starting a family, I was concerned about how that would affect my burgeoning career. When I looked around, I did not see women, particularly Black women with children, in the positions I aspired to. When I sought advice, the advice came from women with identities that were different from mine. Dixon and Seriki (2012) wrote that "Black mothers are particularly vulnerable to the intersection nature of race and gender (p.217)." As I began to recognize how my identity as a Black mother as well as my social class and sexual identity contradict other identities, the intersectionality of these identities became the heart of what led me to this study. Research focused on African American women has found that class often presents a greater divide. Even though the participants may all share some of the professional and advanced educational lessons, understanding how class intertwines with my participants and in my life is a key issue to consider.

Maintaining reflexivity

The first area where I found myself practicing reflexivity was looking at language choices. Wickens et al. (2017) wrote that we understand ourselves through the expression of language. While working on my literature review, I made the first choice regarding choosing between Black and African American. Using my own experiences and preferences, I chose Black. However, in doing my research on similar topics, I see the terms used interchangeably. Many scholars identify their reasons for choosing the term African American versus Black, which can include distinguishing between the American Descendants of Slaves (ADOS) and those who identify as Black from the diaspora.

To maintain this type of reflexivity through the research and fieldwork process, Thurairajah (2015) offered some suggestions that I followed. One suggestion included creating a social brainstorm map of all positionalities to help researchers understand the intersectionality of

various identities. As part of the process, I created social identity maps (Merriam et al., 2001). These maps provided an excellent starting point for the suggestions in Thranaurjah (2015) pertaining to outlining positionalities and the motivations and oppositions. In my reflexivity journal I included a start of my map with the most salient identities and added the less salient identities and my reactions as I uncovered them. Maintaining a reflectivity journal was also an essential step to keeping track of maintaining transparency and reflections during the fieldwork process. This journal helped me monitor my positionalities and reactions as they changed or became more salient at times.

When choosing my topic, I considered whether this would be a good fit because I was part of the group/subjects being studied, and I wondered if I was "too close" to the subject. Addressing this hesitation and my insider status in my journal and during the process was an important part of maintaining reflexivity. Young (2004) cautioned against being too inquisitive, assuming that insider status provides understanding. On the contrary, Merriam (2001) highlighted the need to be cautious with questioning, because the participants of the study may view the researcher as an outsider, even if the researcher considers themselves to be an insider. These assertions caused me to acknowledge that I am both an insider and an outsider throughout this study. Addressing this issue helped me maintain my reflexivity as a researcher.

An example cited in Merriam et al. (2001) asserted that class being tied to Black women and their families' situations was something I should be aware of when conducting research. The issue of class and sexual identity and relationship status may make me an outsider in some situations when discussing Black motherhood. I noted these instances in my reflexivity journal.

As an insider, I also had to pay attention to the power dynamics that may exist between the researcher and participants. Social class and age differences might provide power imbalances for me while working within the Black Feminist paradigm (Reynolds, 2002).

Reflexivity is also a key component of researching Black women who are often marginalized. Jones (2013) cautions the researcher to assure that the questions and focus of the research study do not further contribute to the marginalization of the participants and instead seek to tell their story and provide fulfillment. As part of my reflexivity, I conducted a pilot interview using the interview protocol that was developed (See Appendix D). This exercise helped me refine questions as well as gave me experience and a better understanding of what it was like to answer and reflect on the questions that I would be asking of others. Many of these questions required reflection and caused emotions and feelings to surface that were important for me to acknowledge and to help me understand what participants might be feeling.

Protection of subjects

To ensure protection of subjects, this study was approved by the University of Georgia IRB. All risks and benefits were explained to the participants ahead of time and participants were allowed to determine if they wanted to proceed with the interview. Participants signed the IRB form (Appendix E) before proceeding with the interview. Pseudonyms were used to maintain the participant's confidentiality.

Summary

In this study, I used narrative inquiry through a critical, constructivist, and feminist lens to understand and share the stories and experiences of Black mothers who work in the student affairs profession. The participants in the study were recruited from social networking sites geared toward Black student affairs professionals and student affairs professionals who are

mothers. Participants engaged in semi-structured interviews and provided artifacts to aid in telling their stories of mothering while working in student affairs. Participants also discussed how race and gender influenced their experiences. I utilized several coding techniques as well as narrative analysis to determine salient themes across participant narratives, these themes will be discussed in chapter four.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES

won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? I had no model.
born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge between
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight
my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.
Won't you celebrate with me, (Clifton, 1992)

This chapter features the narratives of 10 Black mothers who work in student affairs. The narratives focus on how these women give meaning to their experiences as Black women as they navigate raising children and working in a profession that can present challenges for working mothers (Salle, 2001). The study focused on the following questions:

1. How do Black mothers experience student affairs as a career?

2. How does race intersect as Black women manage their career and family lives while working in student affairs?

A narrative methodology was chosen because "narrative is a scheme by which human beings give meaning to their experiences of temporality and personal actions" (Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 11). The actions explain how mothers experience student affairs and the method they

employ to manage their career and family lives. These narratives were shared during a unique time, as the U.S. continued to navigate 20 months (and counting) of a global pandemic, an even longer history of racism, as well as a massive shift in the labor market coined the Great Resignation, and ignited conversations about working, worker conditions and expectations in the United States. All of this added to the meanings these women gave to their experiences and actions.

In following the Black Feminist Thought theoretical framework, I used quoted material to highlight the participant's voices in sharing their own stories and to limit my influence as the researcher (Collins, 2000; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012). The participants are presented in alphabetical order. After all the participants are introduced, I discuss the themes that existed across each of the individual narratives.

Table 1

Participant demographics

Pseudonym	Age	# Of Children	Ages of Children	Region	Years of experience in student affairs	Student affairs functional area
Angel	43	2	13, 10months	Southeast	10-20	Enrollment Management
Centennial	42	3	5,7,9	Midwest	5-10	Orientation
Dee	37	3	1,3,8	Mid-Atlantic	10-20	Continuing Education
Esther	31	5	3,4,11,12, 17	Midwest	5-10	Student Activities

Jasmin	28	2	1 month, 3	Southwest	5-10	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Programming
Laila	40	2	3,5	Mid-Atlantic	10-20	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Programming
Maya	40	3/5*	3, 6, 8	Midwest	5-10	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Administration
Monica	42	2	3,6	Midwest	10-20	Student Activities
Natasha	35	3	2weeks, 6, 11	Mid-Atlantic	3-5	Case Management
Dr. Panther	35	3	4,6,14	Southeast	3-5	Academic Department

*Adult Stepchildren

Angel

Angel was a 43 year-old student affairs professional from the southeastern United States with 11 years of experience in student affairs at the time of our interview. She was married and the mother of two children. At the time of the study she worked as a Campus Instructional site director overseeing the day-to-day campus operations. Her professional background was in finance and accounting; however, she was introduced to student affairs through several accounting positions in higher education. She loved the connection with the students and sought out positions that pulled her out of the back office and into more student-facing roles.

Working and mothering while Black

Angel talked about struggling with imposter syndrome as a Black Woman working in student affairs, and the work she actively does to combat this struggle. This experience has led her to downplaying her abilities and removing herself from better career opportunities. She said:

> Sometimes I will talk myself out of going for something bigger. I just recently completed our chamber's leadership program. And I noticed that there were so many young white professionals in there that were touting all the things that they had done in their short time. And I realized that the things that they were saying were minute compared to what I had done. And I, I was like, what am I afraid of, for sharing what I've done if they're bragging about the fact that they just crafted beer for the first time? You know, and that's a silly example. But it was those types of things on that level. And I was like, well, if they can be proud of those little things, why can't I be proud of anything that I have done?

Overcoming imposter syndrome was important to her and even more important for her as a mother to ensure that her children have confidence to thrive in life. Angel shared:

> So, any chance that we get that we can get him to open up to words, and just talk about life and things and things that he's experienced is an opportunity for us to interdict those little things, to help him boost his confidence.

Angel credits strong supervisors with helping her navigate through some of the challenges of being a working mother, such as having enough time to get everything done and spending time with her children after an exhausting day at work. For example, her supervisor lets her work from home as needed, and the institution has remote Fridays. Angel recently welcomed a daughter into their family during the pandemic, which was a surprise as she had been told she could not have any more children. She and her husband were considering adopting when she found out she was pregnant during the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. After returning from

maternity leave, she noticed a change in her perspective since giving birth to her son 13 years prior. She noted, "I have found that (with) my work schedule, I am constantly trying to mold it around her as opposed to me molding my child around my work schedule." Between the COVID-19 pandemic and institutional changes, Angel is at a career crossroad with determining her next steps while ensuring that she can still work with students in some capacity, emphasizing that she still wants to be able to work and "touch" with students.

Centennial

Centennial was a 42 year-old student affairs professional with eight years of experience in student affairs. She worked in new student orientation at a two-year college in the Midwest. She was married and the mother of three kids. Centennial entered the student affairs profession from the business field through work as an adjunct professor. She eventual became a department chair in the Business school. She grew tired of some aspects of faculty life, so she transitioned into more student-focused positions.

At the time of our interview, she worked in Enrollment Management as an orientation coordinator. During her transition into student affairs, it took her a while to find her niche. She knew that positions in housing and activities came with long, irregular, and evening hours that would not be compatible with her role as a wife and a mother. She intentionally chose to work at two-year colleges because, in her experiences, they offered the flexibility and stability she needed. Centennial shared:

> I like being in a two-year institution because of my life, my personal lifestyle, um, being in a four year, I'm not groomed… I got kid(s) and I'm married, I'm not doing 12 o'clock, one o'clock in, in the area of student involvement and engagement or leadership. Like

some people that I know. And so, being in a two year, it was so set hours; I know it's from 8:00 to 4:30.

Despite this, as her kids grow older and start getting involved in extracurricular activities, Centennial realizes she needs more flexibility. She stated:

> Not being tied down to an eight to four job, but having three kids that as growing and wanting to start getting activities, being that whole 8:00 to 4:30. And now you only get to work from home one day a week, or you know, it just life's too short.

This realization led to making some critical decisions and changes in her life. Currently the changes are in addition to her professional responsibilities but without the needed flexibility, more changes might be needed to ensure that work-life integration needs are met.

Working while Black

Working in student affairs as a Black woman has presented some challenges for Centennial. Her previous business field had few women and few Black women. Consequently, her transition to higher education and student affairs was less of a shock. She has often sought out positions and institutions that were not as diverse with the intent of starting to be the change she wants to see. She shared:

> You know, like, I don't remember seeing people like me… or people even operate in an arena that looks like me. So, I went to the institution I'm at right now. It's like, I want to stay in (current home state) because (current state) it's not so diverse.

Staying in the state and in an institution that is not diverse was identified as a way to increase diversity and to start the change that she wanted to see by showcasing her representation in those spaces. Being that change often leaves her feeling lonely, undervalued, and under-compensated. When Centennial was given more responsibilities, a title change, and was moved

to a different department to align her position with institutional goals, she was not given any increase in her compensation. That has led her to shift her thinking about her future career goals. She was told:

> 'We will make you a director, but we don't have money for you'…. but you want to impose more responsibilities on me? And so, had me questioning, like, why am I in an institution or an environment where they don't value my worth, you know?

Centennial decided to look at entrepreneurship as a response to her dissatisfaction with some situations at work. These entrepreneurial ventures are currently something she does on the side and plans to continue investing in as she decides her next steps. These side hustles offered the ability to continue to work with students, however, her experiences during the pandemic changed her focus and mindset about the lessons she wants to teach her kids. She wants to teach her girls to think beyond what society expects. These expectations included both gender stereotypes and working to raise strong, yet emotionally intelligent Black kids. Some of this process included being gentler than the way she was raised and "breaking generational curses." Centennial explained generational curses as:

> You know, most Black people are not taught to, you know, we're taught to, you know, just you don't ask questions, don't talk back, don't you know, I mean, but I encourage my kids to do that, because we want to have that dialogue, you know, what is the saying that kids supposed to be seen not heard the whole thing. And I want my kids to be heard, they have a voice. And I don't want to shut them up. I don't I want them to be vocal about wanting to do it in a respectful way. And so, I'm doing things totally different from how I was raised. I want to make sure that I'm teaching them to be respectful, teach them to know, they're worth teaching them to just know that they are loved.

Demonstrating Centennial's entrepreneurial adventures will provide a way for her to hopefully create generational wealth for her and her kids, as well as provide them with a living example that they don't have to limit themselves and can be the "captains of their own ship" and determine what they want from life rather than allow their parents or society's expectations to make decisions for them.

Dee

Dee is a 37 year-old student affairs professional, wife, and mother of three, from the Mid-Atlantic region. She has been in student affairs for eight years, and her position at the time of our interview blended both academic affairs and student affairs, as she led the continuing education and summer programming for her institution.

Dee's entry into student affairs was traditional as she became a Student Conduct Board member during her undergraduate career. That experience led to her getting more involved and becoming a Resident Assistant. As a political science major, she found that working in student conduct infused her interest in education and criminal justice. She has worked for various institutions throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, including her alma mater, a PWI, and an HBCU. A significant motivator for entering and remaining in the field is her connection to students and her desire to provide students with representation. She explained:

> It [providing representation] has been a driver because a lot of times our students, just like under the K through 12 system, our students don't see individuals who look like them at their institutions. And so, I think that has been a motivator for me to just stay sort of in the field, because I enjoy it but also because I feel like it's a way for me to help and guide and mentor other people who look like me and might have similar or maybe not so similar experiences.

Despite this motivation, her focus shifted when she became a mother. She described it like this:

> But now having people who mean more to me than my students do, and are directly affected by my decisions, I feel like for me to be as present as I want to be, in my own little people's lives, who will later be big people. I feel like I'm okay with shifting my focus.

Another factor has been her growing family and the addition of subsequent children "in balancing this other piece that was once just one person needing time. It's now three [kids who need her attention]."

Dee was looking for something that offered flexibility along with a more competitive salary, since student affairs salaries are often considered less competitive (Marshall et al., 2016). In addition to navigating time constraints, the salary is a hindrance to continuing her career in student affairs. If her current job could pay more, she would like to stay. Having children also shifted her focus about climbing the career ladder and aspiring to higher roles. Previously her goal was the Dean of Students, but motherhood and even the experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic have shifted that thought process. She described it like this:

> I don't aspire to the same level, especially because I also know that the work-life balance changes the higher you go. And so, because I need to be present, and I want to be present, and I need that work-life balance, I'm fine with sort of staying where I am level-wise so that I can achieve success in my work and success as a mother.

Working while Black

As a Black woman in student affairs, she felt her institution worked hard to provide a supportive environment; however, she did face her fair share of issues and microaggressions.

One experience that stood out occurred while working at an HBCU, when she decided to stop straightening her hair and wear it natural. She recalled:

> My then supervisor, who was a Black female, told me that she'd like my hair better straight. Unsolicited, unrequested. I didn't say anything. But it really took me back like the audacity and the nerve.

Dee contrasted that with her current experience, when she declared: "I've been on a call with my camera on with the Dean of our college with a head wrap on. And it did not impact what I had to say, the work that I do? Not at all."

Mothering while Black

As a mother raising three kids who are both Black and Hispanic, Dee worries about them having a double strike and works to ensure that her family is taken care of, as they are her first focus. She ensures that she is a voice for her kids, especially in situations related to her son who was attending a predominantly white school.

Dee shared that she viewed her work in student affairs as a potential benefit to her kids if she can remain in the system to allow her children to attend college for free and not have to take out student loans or go into debt:

> I will say when I came to (current institution), it was motivated by not necessarily my kids, but thinking about long term like I don't want my kids to have the student debt that I have. So, one of my thought processes for remaining in higher Ed, although my son is eight, I don't know if I could do 10 years or more you know, was you know, for the tuition remission benefit that a lot of institutions have. And just a way to sort of supplement that, that the cost so that when my kids graduate, my goal is that all three of them would graduate with no student debt. Um, so I guess that is a driver in the sense.

An encounter with an older, childless woman who was retiring has shaped much of Dee's thoughts on motherhood and work and has given her the comfortability to shift her focus and put work first. The woman talked about not having a legacy and putting her work first, thinking that there would always be time for love and family and how she regretted it. Dee "refuses to let time pass me by, family is a priority. Work will always come second." Putting family first and work second has meant that Dee has had to make sacrifices regarding her current career progression. This is a common occurrence for women who work in student affairs as well as many of the study participants.

Esther

Esther is a married 31 year-old mother of five, soon to be six. Three of those include children through marriage, and two are children she has given birth to. She is currently pregnant with the sixth. At the time of our interview, she worked as an Assistant Director for Student Life and Activities at a small, rural, public college in the Midwest. Esther identifies as a Caribbean American and considers that an important part of her identity, even though she was born and raised in the United States. Esther's path to student affairs was traditional and began with her involvement in undergraduate student organizations. This led an advisor to tell her she could do this as a career, without changing her major or adding time to her degree program. For the last eight years, she has worked in various student activities roles. The students are what she enjoys about her work:

> It always draws me back as a reminder that my true joy is working with the students, and so advising them, and being able to, you know, work on their development, and see that development is like everything to me. So that is really what keeps me in Higher Ed, and what I genuinely enjoy about it.

That same draw of the students also often poses challenges, particularly on her campus, where she is one of a few Black staff members at the institution and often is dealing with the systemic problems that plague higher education. She explained:

> I think there's joy in it, because I genuinely have a lot of fun with my students, but at the same time, it gets exhausting, right? Because there is a level of emotional tax, right? Because while it's great that our students gravitate towards me, especially our students of color, there's, there's a lot of challenges and burdens that they have, that they're looking to unload on someone. Despite this, she talks about her desire to help college students navigate the system and achieve success.

Mothering while Black

Esther's journey to motherhood was unique in that she instantly gained three children upon marriage and immediately began having to navigate the oftentimes tricky world of blended families at a young age. Despite experiences of (step) motherhood, giving birth still caused a momentous shift in her identity. She began thinking about how her career could benefit her kids. From free tuition, knowing how to navigate higher education, understanding the FAFSA, to academic advising, there were multiple benefits to be gained from a career in higher education and student affairs.

Like many other mothers, Esther strives for flexibility in her job and the ability to be a mom when she needs to, whether that is taking the children to the zoo or to a doctor's appointment. Some of her need for flexibility stems from the lack of flexibility with her partner's job. This has led Esther to take a step back or off-ramping regarding her career. She said:

> In my role as Mom, I have to be there. I want to be there. And there's not too much leeway in regard to if I want to pursue a different part of my career or a new career.

There's not that leeway to just be able to do that without taking into consideration how that now impacts my ability to be present?

While some mothers found bringing their child to work for the evening and late programs a strategy for managing motherhood and being a successful student affairs professional, Esther noted that this did not work for her. Her children are still at a young and active age. She does anticipate that changing once they are older:

> So, what you know, I just being able to just like bring them to an event. It's like I have to think about it well. Do they have a snack? What's going to entertain them? What if they're not entertained? What if none of the students there are willing to kind of take hold in, like, care for them and stuff? Right? So, it's not as easy for me as it is for my colleagues.

Another challenge that Esther alluded to is the lack of mentorship or guidance for mid-level professionals, particularly mothers in student affairs. There was guidance for new professionals, but no one really "tells us how to get there." She referenced a Black woman named Mama D, which made a huge impact on her local campus, and she wonders how she can make that type of impact:

> I think that mentoring plays a role in maybe a lot of women being able to get to that place of like. This is my contribution to higher Ed…. But that's something that's just been in thought. And I think that it definitely, like, even as a mom, like, trying to balance being a mother and those responsibilities before work after work during work with how do I, how do I become an effective higher Ed professional? How do I make an impact? Because for me, and I think it's a lot of folks who go into higher Ed, like, this is not a job. I do this for a reason.

Esther also shared some of her thoughts on the challenges of raising Black children. Like the challenges of supporting her students, and helping navigate them to success, she finds similar challenges related to her children in the school system. Her son was constantly disciplined except for the one year he had a Black teacher. She and her husband ultimately moved him to a different school but felt that they had to be proactive. She recalled:

> I told (my husband) like we got to go into the school before he goes in because we have to show our faces in a way… we're not those types of absent parents, where you can say anything about our son, and we ain't gonna be there. So right before he started on that Friday, he started on Monday- on that Friday; we were up in that school meeting his teacher, talking to the principal, letting them know we're here, we see you; we raise our son. Because, um, we know like, there are already assumptions in already things placed on our kids. So, one thing you have to remember about our children is that you know their parents don't play. We don't play, so you see our face now. You will see it again if there are issues both with the principal and with the teacher.

The intentionality behind both choosing a school where the children could thrive without bias and making sure they, as parents, are present in their child's education is extremely important to Esther and evident in her work by her effort to provide representation and support to her children.

Jasmin

Jasmin is a 28 year-old wife and mother from the Southwestern United States, who at the time of our interview served as the Director of the Black Cultural Center. The mother of two young boys, she identifies as Black and Hispanic. Initially, she was interested in public policy but found a way to merge her interests through her undergraduate involvement. Her experiences

growing up and at work have been full of microaggressions, starting with her first day of kindergarten. She commented that her education was "instantly racialized," and her parents helped give words to what she was experiencing and supported her through it. She does the same for her students, as they often navigate through a system that is not designed for them—particularly her work in a cultural center. She elaborated on her theory:

> I don't think we're meant to survive as long as they were, right. Like, I think that they were supposed to be a quick solution to Black student activism in the 60s. And I don't think that institutions thought that they would last this long. And so, as a result, they're still the positions are still severely underpaid, underappreciated.

Being undervalued and underappreciated is difficult in any situation, but when working at an institution and in a state where the "Black population is deemed statistically insignificant" can also add challenges. Jasmin recalled how men, both black and white, have added to the obstacles she faces working in student affairs. She explained:

> A Black mentor who I deemed was a mentor of mine was like, don't be the stereotypical Black woman in this role. You don't have to be loud. You don't have to show how you're feeling in meetings. You don't have to speak up about this or that. And that was kind of like, huh, that didn't really sit right with me, you know? So, I feel like in some ways, like my experiences have been Black men wanting me to conform to like this one thing that they have like, don't outshine me is what it later what I figured out what that meant was like, don't outshine me Don't be too… Don't be smarter than me. Don't be more creative than me in these meetings.

Mothering while Black.

In addition to experiencing many racial microaggressions, Jasmin also faced gender discrimination when a (white) male supervisor advised and warned her on when to not have kids. "And so, he like warned me like I wouldn't consider having kids for like the next two years. So that you can be, you know, fully attentive to this position." Despite the struggles, Jasmin has stayed in the profession while her family grew and continues to work with her students. She credits her persistence to "the mothering that Black women do, right, that we had to take care of everybody. Maybe that's also why I felt compelled to stay in the work that I'm doing."

Learning how to juggle her mothering, for both her students and her babies, was something she knew she struggled with and wanted to improve. She elaborated by saying:

> I think it's hard when you have babies in your own house and you have babies in your school, right that like are your students are your babies too…. think it's hard when you have babies in your own house, and you have babies in your school, right that like are your students are your babies too.

Despite the obstacles, Jasmin hopes to continue in the profession and find ways to juggle her multiple identities - Black women, wife, mother, and student affairs professional. She recently added a student to that list by enrolling in a student affairs-based Ph.D. program, with the intention of continuing her employment in the profession long-term.

Dr. Laila

Dr. Laila is a 40 year-old, student affairs professional, wife, and mother of two young girls. At the time of our interview, she served as an Associate Director for the Student Cultural Center at a school in a Mid-Atlantic state. She has spent her career trailing her husband, a college athletic coach, which has kept her from pursuing leadership positions on campus. Now, as her

two children get older, she is starting to see that the flexibility she needs to be present for her two girls might also present a similar roadblock.

Working in student affairs.

Dr. Laila entered student affairs through a slightly nontraditional route. An early childhood education major, she switched to adult education while pursuing her master's degree. This allowed her to work with older adults. While working on her doctoral degree, she volunteered for a Greek life program and was hooked. Even though she already had an assistantship and could not be paid for her work, she continued to volunteer and began to look for more opportunities to work with this population and become more involved in student affairs. Since she could not be paid, the Greek life director compensated her with professional development opportunities, which gave her a foundation in student affairs that led her to professional positions in several functional areas resulting in her current position in diversity.

A big component of Dr. Laila's student affairs practice is bringing her mothering into her work. She described it like this:

> We're not only advisors and mentors to the students that we work with, we're their mothers and their aunties. You know, a lot of my students, I'm like, 'Come on, baby. Like, did you eat today? Are you hungry?' I'm looking at my desk for a snack, taking them out to get food downstairs in the cafeteria.

This includes her connection with students as well as bringing her kids to work so that the students see that there is more to her life than what the students see at work and that she has a family and is a mother. She has built close relationships with students who often serve as babysitters. Bringing her kids to work also lets her children see that why mommy works hard and how she helps those students like she helps them. She shared:

> So, I try as much as possible to include them once so that they can see why mommy works so hard. So that they can see that. You know, yes, I'm your mother. And you all need me. But these students need mommy too, in a different way.

Dr. Laila's future goals include continuing to work with students in some capacity, although she acknowledges that due to the flexibility she is seeking, the future job may not be in student affairs. To explain her future goals she elaborated:

> I want to provide (leadership) opportunities to our Black and Brown students who are first gen students who work in four or five jobs, to take care of themselves and to send money back home. I want them to have those experiences to just to complement their collegiate experience, right, to complement all the things that they're doing in the classroom. I still want to expose them to culture and to history.

Recognizing that student affairs may not offer the flexibility that Dr. Laila desires is a common theme expressed by the women in this study. As their children get older and become more involved in activities, having to choose between flexibility and the love of their career is a common occurrence.

Maya

Maya is a 40 year-old student affairs professional from the Midwest. She is married and is the mother of five children - two adult stepchildren, and three young biological children. At the time of our interview, she worked in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) at a private predominantly white university in the Midwest.

Although Maya is biracial, she identifies as Black because "that is how the world sees me and how I experience the world." She got her start in student affairs as a student worker in college. Originally a secondary education major, she shifted her career aspirations after attending

a NASPA regional conference as an undergraduate. Maya briefly left student affairs, staying in Diversity and Inclusion, to work for a non-profit but returned after a few years, burnt out from a toxic environment "trying to convince adults to care about diversity and inclusion." Maya prefers to work with young adults on DEI initiatives and helps them build DEI into their professional areas of practice. Returning to higher education was difficult because of Maya took a decrease in pay. Maya's career goals are unclear but include a way to combine DEI with her love of teaching and a higher paycheck. A few years prior, she considered a career as an elementary school teacher, even getting her degree in elementary education, but the idea of a lower salary than her current salary is a roadblock.

Maya's current position, as an Executive Director, is her first nonstudent-facing position. While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted how she has been able to experience this new role, she has had some realizations about working at the executive level. She recognized that she misses programming and interacting with students, but the shift has caused her to realize how her impact seems to be greater in this non-student facing role. Maya found that her impact working with faculty and university leadership provides more avenues to make impactful change to systemic policies than working in student facing positions. She questions whether "keeping us (Black women) exhausted in student-facing roles is intentional in keeping us from making real inroads in regard to diversity and inclusion at our institutions."

Mothering while Black.

Maya spoke about how she had not expected motherhood to deepen her sense of Black identity. She shared that the shift caught her off guard, but this new mentality and identity now shape every decision she makes. The way that her Black identity shapes each of these decisions is very profound and a unique experience to Black motherhood. As a mother, one of these

decisions is the schools, she enrolls her kids in. Examples include her decision to not send her kids to an all-white school and the conscious decision to ensure that her children have Black teachers, starting with the daycare and caregivers. This was amplified as she was returning to work from maternity leave in the aftermath of the unrest after Michel Brown's murder and the protests and unrest in Ferguson. She asserted:

> I could look at his black teachers and know that they were feeling what I was feeling and understood everything. I couldn't have left him just anywhere, yet knowing he was care of allowed me to take care of the faculty and staff on campus who needed community and support as well.

Working while Black.

Working in student affairs has presented challenges for Maya as a Black woman and as a mother. Low pay and alienation being two of the most prevalent. As a DEI professional, she has often worked in an office of one and felt the need to be hyper vigilant in her interactions with others, especially those who judged her due to her job working in DEI. The constant screening is exhausting and leaves her feeling paranoid. She asserted: "I'm not paranoid; I've just been taught better and am constantly assessing where people are coming from and what does it mean as far as a relationship." Maya's experience of being guarded due to her identity as a Black woman and her job title provide an example of the experiences of marginalization that Black women continue to face in the workplace.

Working motherhood.

In addition to microaggressions, Maya also struggles with work-life integration and workplaces that don't support working parents. She explained, "It should be reasonable for an employee to also be a parent, especially if we are in the business of college students because if I

don't have kids, y'all have no college." Her current supervisor is supportive, and some of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have helped her reframe her expectations of work by becoming less apologetic about needing to take the time away for her family. Supportive leadership is important in this aspect in addition to having the representation of working parents in positions of leadership. Maya recognizes that often the representation is not in the upper ranks of leadership, which can be problematic. For example, a member of the leadership team at her university has attempted to empathize with working parents as a parent themselves, but that understanding is different based on social, cultural, and most importantly financial circumstances. When "many of them [campus leaders] have access to caregivers and are often paid enough to have people do their parenting duties that makes them out of touch."

Maya's comments highlighted watching leaders show their allegiance to their own parenting responsibilities. Her comments also indicate that mothers in leadership positions can be powerful change agents for support. This additional support could make working mothers and parents feel less stressed about managing these dual roles.

Monica

Monica is a 42 year-old Black woman and mother of two young boys. At the time of our interview, she worked as the Director of Student Activities at a private college in the Midwest. Historically a PWI, her institution has seen a significant increase in Black student enrollment over the past years, with 52% of the freshman class identifying as Black or African American.

Like most other participants, Monica entered the profession after being involved during her undergraduate career and asking a mentor "how can I do what you are doing?" Monica changed majors a few times within the field of education, deciding that she did not want to work

with younger kids, before talking to her student organization advisor about doing the job that the advisor did. She stated:

> The connection with students and wanting to be a guide for them is what has kept her in student affairs despite the challenges *"*There have not been many people that have looked like me at any place that I've worked, or that I went to school. And the people that looked like me, those are the places that I hung out, because I felt like that, you know, that was my safe place. And so, I wanted to be that same person to the students.

Working while Black.

Monica used the term "institutionally raped" to describe her experiences as a Black woman working in student affairs. She is constantly navigating stereotypes, such as the angry Black woman, for speaking up - while at the same time being ignored or overlooked. She explained:

> We can, I can say something, or even my other colleague, who is a Black woman, can say something, and our supervisor will completely speed over what we said. But if a white woman in that same room shares the same thing, can say in the same way that we have said it, they're heard.

Working motherhood.

After giving birth to her oldest child six years ago, Monica began to feel led toward leaving student affairs and becoming a "domestic engineer" because "student affairs does not give you the ability to focus on family." The exhaustion of working all day and coming home to the second shift has taken its toll. That doesn't include evening events that require her to bring her children to work in order to maximize time with them and manage her work responsibilities.

After missing events at her kid's school due to work events, she is continuing to reevaluate whether or not to continue working, especially with the limited salary afforded to her.

Since becoming a mother, Monica has increasingly created boundaries to keep the emotional toll/mental anguish from overwhelming her. This is difficult because she realizes that she plays a vital role in her students' lives, and the students on campus realize it too. "And so, they were just like, well, we're just gonna start calling you auntie." This common expression "auntie", in the Black community references the close connection that many Black students have with Black women educators such as Monica and highlights how Monica's nurturing and mothering nature extends to her work.

Black mothering.

On being a Black mother, Monica talked about the importance of making sure her sons are treated right. She discussed the importance that schools play in this role and her attention to noticing the racial makeup of the teachers and administrators at their schools. She elaborated by sharing:

> I'm raising two Black kings. I am constantly concerned about how they may be treated by their teachers who the school that they go to all of their teachers is white, there are no teachers of color in the school. How they may be perceived by the administrators in the school, teaching them their worth.

Affirmations are a big part of raising her boys and teaching them how to appreciate their culture. Monica referenced her boys as Black kings and focuses on instilling the concept of royalty in them because they are often not surrounded by other Black people, particularly in school, where they spend a large part of their time. Monica declared:

> I also build them up. We call our sons our little kings. And so, I let them know all the time that you are little kings. I'm realizing it's important for us to instill in them the value of who they are as little Black kings, because they're going to school again. They don't see a lot of people that look like them. They don't see a lot of people that speak like them or eat the same things that they eat in their house or have some of the same traditions that they may have in their homes.

In addition to the affirmations of their Black identity and open communication she has with her sons, she also works to ensure that they have positive representations of themselves and their culture. Monica talked about the impact colorism has had on her as a dark-skinned woman and how she works to ensure that the negative effect of colorism is not passed down to her kids or that her kids struggle with self-esteem or acceptance based on their complexion.

Natasha

Natasha is a 38 year married mother of three from the Mid-Atlantic region. A mental health professional by trade, she entered student affairs after completing her master's degree in counseling and doing an internship at her current institution. At the time of our interview, she worked in a non-counseling capacity as a Student Affairs case manager at a public 4-year institution in the Mid-Atlantic region. Natasha noted that she struggles to reconcile the political and bureaucratic background of student affairs. She explained:

> That has been interesting, that has been interesting coming from solely like the mental health worldview, just a different worldview going into like, oh, student affairs is, wow, this is different. And so, navigating that, like the politics of it, figuring out all of these things, that I, you know, had no idea because I'm coming in thinking, Oh, I'm a mental health professional. I'm doing this role within, you know, on a college campus within the

student affairs office or Dean of Students Office. And it's like, oh, no, I also have to be a student affairs professional. What is that?

Determining what student affairs is has been a challenge for Natasha, particularly regarding the work culture and hours. She said:

> Student affairs often is making you feel like you have to give everything to them. And it's like, no, I can't do that. Um, my family comes first, my children come first and again, because I don't want my child to be the one that's up here.

In addition to the struggle to acclimate to what she considers the norms of student affairs; she has also struggled on a campus where she feels marginalized as a Black woman. Sadly, she said:

> It's nothing where we are explicitly being oppressed in any ways, but there's so many messages on our campus there are so many things that are just, you just know when you come in here you better act a certain way and I have felt that from day one.

Even with all that, Natasha still considers the students and connections with them to be one of her main draws for staying in Student Affairs, although she is looking to transition to more of a counseling background. This transition will help give her a better work-life balance as the mother of an 11, 6-year-old, and 2-week-old during our interviews. Natasha declared:

> I have to work. But if I'm going to be away from them, I want to be away from them doing something that at least I feel like is meaningful, that is worth it. And that definitely has shifted in that last year of like, this whole rut the [COVID-19 Pandemic and work], you know, just the whole work in and we all do it and everybody does it, and you do it for 30 to 40 years or whatever. I want to try to shape this in another way that at least I'm

> fulfilled at the end of the day, that I'm not coming home angry, that I'm not feeling like what was all it is eight hours for, you know, and I'm away from you all.

Natasha hopes to transition back to mental health counseling and focus on that aspect and less on the student affairs and political aspects of the job; however, she recognized that she will still have to navigate some of negative aspects she finds in student affairs and campus politics as long as she is working on a college campus.

Black motherhood.

Learning that she was pregnant with her daughter was a transformative moment for Natasha. She talked about the moment she realized she was having a daughter as truly pivotal for her own identity development and sense of self. She described her transition like this:

> She [Natasha's daughter] changed the trajectory of my whole life. Like at that point, especially once I realized she was a girl. It was like, oh, you got to get your life together. Like we, this is all of these issues, they start with you. Because that has been one thing that I'm very big on is that I want to stop what I call generational curses or just things that we pass down. And so that shook me when I one was pregnant and then two and it was like oh, this is a girl. Like I said, I gotta get myself together. She will have her own issues, but I will be darn sure that she will not have mommy's issues and her issues. So changed my whole life.

Breaking generational curses requires work, and Natasha is committed to ensuring that trauma is not passed down to her kids. This includes some of the trauma that comes with being Black in America and is often not discussed out right but is something that many Black mothers do unconsciously. She shared:

> Just having to prepare them for things. That just doesn't seem fair because it's just like when you look at the entitlement that you see and feel from other people, and it's like, you know, you [they] don't have to think about anything. You [they] just live your life free. You [they] can make mistakes you can be, you can do anything like all of these different things, you [they] can make, go to jail, you [they] can be nasty, you [they] can just live your life. But for us, it's always a parameter. It's always a sentence, always a BUT, okay, so yeah, you can be free, but don't do this. Or you have to be careful, or, you know, just all of those little things where it's just like, oh, that's exhausting. And we do it. But I think even now, it's even more exhausting.

Regardless, Natasha emphasizes the importance of addressing the trauma as a way to move forward and she is hopeful that change will eventually make this part of Black mothering easier.

Dr. Panther

Dr. Panther is a 35-year-old administrator that works at a flagship institution in the Southeastern United States. Married with three kids, at the time of our interview, she had been in her current position overseeing student affairs for an academic department for three years.

A former high school teacher, Dr. Panther, entered the student affairs field when she was looking to work with an older student population. When searching for a student affairs position, she encountered trouble because many of the positions in the largest Metro area/capital city were paying $30-40 thousand a year, which was well below what she was earning as a high school teacher with a terminal degree. She finally landed a position, but it required her to move within the state and commute 45 minutes to work. The commute was necessary to ensure that her children could attend a *"*good school district with resources where they could thrive."

Working in student affairs.

Dr. Panther's position in student affairs is less student-facing than many others. While that is something she dislikes, she still uses her "educator heart" to be a mentor and pave the way for other Black women to achieve leadership roles on their campus. Noticing that there were only 12 Black people in leadership roles in her seven-story building was sobering yet gave her motivation to do her best work. She talked about doing her best work and paving the way for others:

> I want to continue to push forward and do the very best that I can so that when I leave my current role, they will consider allowing another person I might even say a person of color, I'm gonna say Black person, they will now another Black person to enter because they will have seen Oh, she was so successful, this is what she did. The next person can take it to the next level.

As a Black student affairs professional, she feels that she often struggles with asking for the support she needs, while fighting attempts to be superwoman and further perpetuate the strong Black women stereotype. She shared:

> As a Black mother, you see people get away with other stuff you wouldn't dare ask because you either are too scared or you don't feel like you could ask, or you feel like they'll use that as a tool to fire you. So, I think like those conversations of like us not reaching out for what we need to be successful not only as mothers, but in our roles, in general, we tend not to, but we are different from that in our home setting because I'll ask my husband for what I need, but I won't do that at work.

While being out of the classroom is difficult as she misses engaging with students, working in a non-student facing role in student affairs provides the flexibility that she needs as a

mother. This is in contrast to her days as a secondary educator, where being late or absent required advanced notice and planning. Now she has the flexibility to work from home as needed. “I have always worked in places where people have understood I’m a mother, and I have young children.”

One challenge Dr. Panther faces as a student affairs professional is tempering the other mothering pull that is common for many Black woman educators. For Dr. Panther, this meant working hard to not be too involved with the students. She explained:

> [The hardest part is resisting] the urge to over-parent other people’s kids and vice versa, because I’ve seen here, we have students that vape in school and do all types of foolishness. And so, I hear that, I see that. And so, I have to come home and be hard on my son about something he’s not even thinking about, like, you better not be vaping at school, he’s like, why would I be doing that? You know, so that mindset of like, this is what I’m seeing young adults do is also helping me have him better prepared, like, hey, I saw this student that came in today. And they didn’t know what this, this, this was, look. So now let me tell you what this is.

Focusing on the Black identity development of her kids in today’s society is also important to Dr. Panther. She works hard to ensure her kids understand their history and their culture. Affirmations, particularly around hair and skin tone, are important. Hair had an important role in her identity as a Black woman. Specifically, choosing to wear her hair natural was a huge push to her identity as a Black woman, and working to instill the importance of maintaining your crown is important for her daughters and her sons. “I make sure the males in the house tell her how beautiful it is.” She also works to combat other negative stereotypes, such as colorism issues. Dr. Panther’s career goal is to become a college president, but she recognizes

that will have to wait until her kids are older. Delaying career aspirations which include a less flexible job is a sacrifice she is willing to take to be more present for her children while they are younger.

Artifacts

During the recruitment phase, I asked each participant to bring a personal item to the interview that represented their motherhood, career journey, or was impactful to them as a Black woman. (See Appendix A). The goal of the inclusion of the artifacts in this study was to gain rapport and help build a deeper connection with the participants, which was accomplished. I only used the artifacts if they contained a strong connection to the narrative. All participants except one provided an artifact, with most participants providing two. The most common artifacts provided were pictures (or descriptions of pictures) of the participants' family or their children, specifically. Due to privacy and confidentiality concerns, I did not ask participants to email the pictures to me. Instead, they showed them on screen and provided a description, as well as the meaning and significance of the photo. I noted the participants' emotions and how they reacted as they were sharing the pictures of their families and their children.

Most participants became immediately lifted, smiling and excited to share those pictures and what motherhood or their children meant to them. In addition to family pictures, the participants also shared pictures, or descriptions of their degrees. The participants described their feelings and what the attainment of that degree meant to them and for their family, both their family of origin and their current family. Other artifacts included vision boards, or what I call motivational collages, and pictures of quotes that were significant to the participant. Discussing the artifacts allowed for a deeper connection with the participants. This connection facilitated deep reflection by the participants and increased their ability to make meaning of the story or

experience behind the artifact. As the participant showed pictures of their children, they talked about how their children had given meaning and motivation to their lives. The artifacts also allowed me to connect with how the participants defined motherhood, which is discussed further as a theme.

Themes across participant narratives

The participants in this study had many things in common that provided an understanding of the rich experiences that Black mothers in student affairs face. The data and themes described in the following section provided significant themes and information about the experiences of the participants. While the themes described assisted in answering the research questions, there are also additional themes that are discussed.

In answering the first research question, how do Black mothers experience student affairs as a career, three themes emerged: (a) "People that look like me": Reasons for staying in student affairs (b) "I am just going to call you auntie", participants' experiences with other mothering. Another theme that emerged was (c) Participant's experiences with microaggressions at work. A subtheme of microaggressions, was "Black women and our hair, am I right?" The first two themes answered the research questions, while the subsequent themes emerged from that data analysis.

Theme one: "People that look like me": Reasons for staying in student affairs".

Almost every research participant used some variation of this phrase to describe why they entered the field of student affairs and why they stayed despite low salaries, lack of flexibility, and even work environments with microaggressions. Monica reflected:

> There have not been many people that have looked like me at any place that I've worked, or that I went to school. And the people that didn't look like me, those are the places that

> I hung out, because I felt like that, you know, that was my safe place. And so, I wanted to be able to be that same person to the students that, you know, I work with.

Dr. Laila reflected on how in her undergraduate experiences, she missed out on having a connection to campus that offered additional resources and opportunities. She asserted:

> I didn't necessarily connect the offices that I was working in as an opportunity to be a resource or network for me, I didn't have someone say, hey, do you wanna, you should study abroad, you should join this organization, you should take this class, you should do this, you should consider being an RA or orientation leader. I didn't have that. And so, I absolutely want to be that person, for somebody else, particularly for people that look like me…. and when I don't see people that look like me, it definitely it could be frustrating. And discouraging sometimes. Because then it's like, well, who do I seek out for mentorship to help me get to this next level? So those are the few things that I definitely consider.

Similarly, Dee talked about how she sees herself as a mentor for students who have had a background or journey similar to hers. For her, many of the students enter college without having seen a positive representation of themselves and being able to be that person for her students motivates her.

Being able to connect with students that have had similar journeys, and even for student who may come from a slightly different background, is important and she still finds ways to connect with them.

> First gen, I'm a first-gen college student. And so being able to connect with those students to help in their journey. I think remaining in the field that has been a driver because, a lot of times, our students, just like under the K - 12 system, our students don't

> see individuals who look like them at their institutions. And so, I think that has been a motivator for me to just stay sort of in the field because I enjoy it but also because I feel like it's a way for me to help and guide and mentor other people who look like me and might have similar or maybe not so similar experiences.

Centennial shared a similar sentiment as she reflected on the population of her home state and, at the public institutions represented:

> You know, like, I don't remember seeing people like me. I don't know what you know, I just don't remember. And so, or people even operate in an arena that looked like me. So, I wanted to [work at] the institution I'm at right now, it's like, I want to if I'm gonna stay in [Midwest State] because [Midwest State] is not so diverse in the institutional world. So, any institution here is really not diverse.

Centennial's comments reflected her desire to be a positive representation of a Black woman at her institution. Likewise, Esther reflected on her desire to be reflected in the diversity or lack of diversity of her institution:

> And so, but when we think about enrollment, and our enrollment numbers are down, that's often the population that we're talking about. How do we recruit more students of color? How do we recruit more students of color, but we have to think about how are we supporting them when they get here? Right? What is the reason for them to come here, because we can't just have like that one staff member that is a person of color, trying to hit all of all the high schools to recruit our students of color, right? When they get to campus, we can't expect that they're going to be, you know, happy and feel safe and feel welcomed, if they don't see a faculty of color, or a faculty member that looks like them, until their senior year.

Even those in non-student- facing positions such as Dr. Panther, felt that they were still providing a face for other professionals, to aspire to:

> When I see and hear things like that, I want to continue to push forward and do the very best that I can so that when I do leave my current role, they will consider allowing another person, I'm gonna say Black person, they will allow another Black person to enter because they will have seen, oh she was successful. This is what she did.

This theme reflected the importance of shared identities and how Black women often seek to provide positive representation for their students as well as for future Black women. The phrase, "people who look like me," is a part of the uplift theme that leads many Black women into the education profession. While the uplift theme is the formal name derived from Booker T. Washington's works (Hill-Brisbane, 2005), the quote "people that look like me" was repeated several times by the study participants and provides a modern feminist approach to this idea.

Theme two: "I'm just going to call you Auntie." professional identity, sense of self and mothering.

Othermothers are a tradition in Black communities derived from the broken communities and families that emerged during slavery and racism. Othermothers is defined as "women who assist blood mothers in mothering responsibilities" (Collins, 2000, p.178). Other mothering has expanded from a relationship between women and children to a school relationship that encompasses students and teachers/educators (Guiffrida, 2005; Hirt et al., 2008). Collins (2000) identified this theme as something that many young Black girls are groomed for from a young age. Participant Monica elaborated on this preparation for other mothering when she discussed "being a mother, before becoming a mom" describing the nurturing and care she provided to her nieces and nephews. Several participants talked about

mothering their students or resisting the urge to over-mother their students. Laila described it as the following:

> I definitely bring my mothering into my work…. We're not only advisors and mentors, to the students that we work with both, we're their mothers and their aunties. You know, a lot of my students, I'm like, Come on, baby. Like, did you eat today? Are you hungry? I'm looking at my desk for a snack, taking them out to get food downstairs in the cafeteria.

Jasmin spoke about it as a reason for her continued work in student affairs; "The mothering that a Black woman does, that we had to take care of everybody. Maybe that's also why I felt compelled to stay in the work that I'm doing."

While this form of community mothering keeps Jasmin engaged in her work, she also spoke of the challenges it brings:

> I think it's hard when you have babies in your own house and you have babies in your school right, that like are your students are your babies too, it's hard turn off the mothering at work so that I can be a full-time mother at home.

Similarly, Dr. Panther remarked that she is constantly working hard to "try not to over parent other people's kids."

Monica shared how the students gravitated to her office and looked to her and looked to her as an othermother "And so, they were just like, well, we're just gonna start calling you auntie."

Theme three: Microaggressions in the workplace.

The majority of the participants shared incidents of microaggressions in the workplace, and each shared an impactful lived experience as Black women in student affairs.

"Black women and our hair, am I right?"

Almost every participant talked about hair as a strong manifestation of their identity as Black women. Some participants discussed their hair when discussing salient experiences from childhood when they first became aware of their Black identity. Angel shared an incident when she first realized that her hair was different from her peers:

> It wasn't until I actually started making friends in elementary school and realizing that there were people who look different from me. And had an actual incident where I had a friend who convinced me to cut my bangs with scissors. Because they wanted to see how my hair cut differently from theirs. And I did it and I realized I shouldn't have done it afterwards. But it was my first encounter with being of a different background and having different hair than somebody else.

Esther remembered the first time she used chemicals in her hair to make it straight and to achieve the Eurocentric ideal of long, straight hair, she recalled:

I remember too, I believe that was actually the year or maybe a year before where I relaxed my hair. Right. And so even just trying to, I remember my mom has put a big barrette in my hair and ribbons. And that's how it was every day. That's how I was going to school. And then finally I begged my mom, and she was willing to do it where she relaxed my hair. And so, it was all of those things that I was doing to try to get myself to look more and more like those girls in my class that I felt Johnny would actually like.

As adults, hair continued to be a source of one's Black identity. This led to the identification of this subtheme regarding hair as a part of professional Black identity. Specifically, this subtheme relates to how the participants chose to approach the transition to wearing their hair natural at work. This transition was often a source of apprehension and fear,

but eventually this decision came to define their authenticity or their identity as Black women. The participants spoke with pride about their decision and their hair, despite disparaging comments by co-workers and supervisors including other Blacks. Dr. Panther relayed her decision to go natural like this:

> I think that within the last 10 years, especially going natural [hair] like that was a major thing for me. When I first went natural, like no one, it was natural. It's like 11 years ago, and I will go out and guys that want to touch my hair and tell me how beautiful it was because they were tired of like wigs and weaves and stuff.

Dee talked about how she has attended meetings wearing Afrocentric head wraps or different styles and even her partner questioned her decisions regarding her choice of hairstyles. Dee's comment that "my hair does not define what I bring to the table, or what I have to say" offers an important commentary on the importance that Black women's hair can have on their identity. She said:

> Black women and hair, right? And what you're comfortable with, what's professional, what's not, I will honestly say that being here, I've never gotten any ill feelings, comments, or even felt like the way I've decided to express myself via my hair or dress was an issue. Even during the pandemic, like even my husband would be like, you're wearing your head wrap in the meeting. And I'm like, Yeah, why not? Like, I've been on a call with my camera on with the Dean of our college with a head wrap on. And it did not impact what I had to say, the work that I do, and I appreciate that.

Laila discussed her transition from chemically straightened hair (known as a relaxer) to wearing her hair in its natural state. For Black women, this transition often entails a lot of apprehension, as one goes from wearing a hairstyle that is perceived as professional and

appropriate to wearing natural hair that may have negative, political, professional, or social connotations (Thompson, 2009). Laila described how several of these connotations were part of her experiences going natural:

> So, I have been transitioning since 2016. And it was a struggle. I think I am finally at the stage where all the relaxer is gone. That's a good five something years. And so, learning how to take care of my hair at that time was a challenge for me, because I was still getting used to the idea that being natural could be beautiful. But they [white coworkers] just come into work in, you know, getting a lot of questions about my hair. And, you know, how did you get your hair to do that? Or to sit that way? And no, can I touch your hair? Oh, your hair was long yesterday, because I had on a week wig versus Oh, now your hair is this today, like it grew so fast. And, um, I would look at my calendar every day. To determine like, okay, I have led a meeting with this person. So maybe I need to tone my hair down a little. So, I wasn't quite comfortable with that. And just going through the transition phase period is, is a stressor in itself. And so, just me being comfortable in my own body and trying to figure out what I deemed as professional. And I think now I'm getting to the point where I'm really starting to challenge myself and push back on this idea of professionalism.

Natasha also talked about her transitions and the resulting microaggressions regarding her hair in the workplace:

> I remember for the longest time, no one said anything to me about this, but when I first start, I was nervous to wear my hair even in braids or like in "Wash and go" where I just would curl it and let it out and the very first time, I did that, like people were like, oh, look at you. Oh, and it just was weird because I was like, so are you trying to say it's cute

or are you. And then one of the staff members in our office is just always on me and my hair, and it's just little things like that.

Hair is a large part of Black women's professional identity. For most of these women's lives, they had conformed to Eurocentric standards. After transitioning their hairstyle, they found freedom and newfound authenticity in being able to wear their hair in a style that was comfortable for them. Even while doing so, many still had to deal with microaggressions regarding this choice.

Microaggressions at work.

Two main subthemes emerged from the shared narratives of the participants' experiences with microaggressions at work. The first, Invisibility, was feelings of not being heard or acknowledged as Black women in the workplace. Monica described feeling unheard at work:

> I can say something or even my other colleague, who is a Black woman, can say something, and our supervisor will completely speed over what we said. But if a white woman in that same room shares the same thing, can say in the same way what we have said it.

Another participant described a similar experience with microaggressions. For Centennial, this was feeling overlooked and not valued. She said: "Sometimes you feel you're not respected that your opinion does not count. Um, and you feel not seen, not heard?" Centennial also described experiences of being called the names of other black women in her division:

> But I'm getting called the wrong name. So, you don't make it a point where I'm not seen. You don't know…. but I'm just a face. I'm just another Black face. I'm not just Centennial. Now I'm someone else.

Other microaggressions included being stereotyped or labeled as the angry black women. Many of these microaggressions have also come from other Black coworkers or supervisors. Jasmin recalls being warned by a Black mentor:

> In one of my first professional roles, a Black mentor who I deemed was a mentor of mine was like, don't be the stereotypical Black woman in this role. You don't have to be loud. You don't have to show how you're feeling in meetings. You don't have to speak up about this or that. And that was kind of like, huh, that didn't really sit right with me, you know? So, I feel like in some ways, like my experiences have been Black men wanting me to conform to like this one thing that they have like, don't outshine me is what it later what I figured out what that meant was like, don't outshine me, don't be smarter than me. Don't be more creative than me in these meetings.

Maya noted the alienation that she experienced as a woman working in Diversity and Inclusion. She often works in a one-person office and while that is one reason for loneliness, it also speaks to the fact that these offices are often understaffed. In addition to working in a small office, she has to navigate how others perceive and judge her based on her position. She shared:

> For me, one of the most challenging I've been at smaller institutions, and mostly been like an office of one and a half, maybe two. Right now, I'm one and it's very lonely. It's a huge weight to carry when you don't have a team you can just be with. Because sometimes you need to just be you when you get out of a meeting, and someone has said something ludicrous to you, or come at you a certain type of way, because they don't appreciate the title you have coupled with the identities that you have.

Even when not working in a solo office, participants still spoke of feeling lonely for being one of only a few Black women or Black employees on campus.

Mothering while Black

Three main themes emerged in response to research question number two - how does race intersect for Black mothers in student affairs? The themes are: (a) strategies for navigating working while mothering, and (b) raising kings and queens. Subthemes emerged when discussing their strategic choices in raising their children; where participants described their involvement in their children education. In addition, while not an official theme, the participants defined what motherhood means to them during the discussion of the artifacts.

Theme one: Strategies for navigating working motherhood

Raising children is a full-time job within itself. For mothers who work outside the home and in certain fields, there are additional aspects that can add to their workload both inside and outside the home. The participants spoke of being exhausted and seeking more flexibility to help balance their work-life responsibilities. To achieve that balance, the participants mentioned several strategies they used to navigate working while raising a family.

Bringing children to work.

Raising children while working in student affairs required some skills that are often not discussed in working mother literature for other professions, such as bringing children to work. While everyone did not use this strategy, particularly those in non-student facing positions, those in student-facing positions often mentioned it. Bringing their kids was important both as a way to spend time with their children but also as a way to link their work to their family lives.

Dr. Laila shared her experience of bringing her kids to work as a way to include them and spend time with them. She stated:

So, I try as much as possible to include them so that they can see why mommy works so hard. So that they can see that. You know, yes, I'm your mother. And you all need me. But these students need mommy too, in a different way.

Monica also used this unique strategy. Although the COVID-19 pandemic made it even less ideal, she still utilized this strategy:

> Then sometimes the events that we have on campus are past their bedtime. So, they're sleepy, they're whiny, they're, you know, they're ready to go home. So, you know, but in order and this is probably not necessarily so fair to me, but in order to be able to spend just even a little time with my family, it's a matter of bringing them up to the college.

On the contrary, Esther attempted to bring her kids to on campus events to extend her time with them but found it did not work for her at the current time, largely due to her kids' young ages. She added:

> While it works for some women, some mothers in higher education, for whatever reason, it doesn't really work for me… me just being able to just like bring them to an event. It's like, I have to think about well, do they have a snack? What's going to entertain them? What if they're not entertained? What if none of the students there are willing to kind of take hold in, like, care for them and stuff? Right? So, it's not as easy for me as it is or like so my colleagues.

The ability to bring children to work as Esther discussed, is still not a popular topic, nor is it included in the literature on working mothers in student affairs.

Taking a step back; pausing or delaying career advancement.

In addition to spending time and connecting their families and work lives, many mothers also discussed taking a step back and not pursuing advancement opportunities to maintain

flexibility. Esther disclosed having to consider the effect any new career opportunities may have on her family and her ability to be present as a mom:

> In my role as Mom, I have to be there. I want to be there. And there's not too much leeway in regard to if I want to pursue a different part of my career or a new career. There's not that leeway to just be able to do that, without taking into consideration; how does that now impact my ability to be present?

Likewise, Dee also spoke about taking a step back from her career progression to ensure that she had work-life balance:

> Prior to having kids, like I had all these dreams and aspirations about where I wanted to see myself in higher ed and what goals I had, and now, you know, my focus has shifted, and so I'm looking for something like I'm okay with being content, I guess, and in a role, that as long as it's not high stress, as long as it's flexible, as long as it pays me what I am, you know, I'm okay with or I feel like it's paying me more than, you know, what I've made thus far. It allows for a nice work life balance.

Laila also made it a priority to look for jobs that allowed her to keep her focus on her career and work separate from her home life. She realized that this might require her to stay at a certain level position-wise to avoid taking on additional responsibilities that would upset her work-life balance. She shared:

> The higher I climb professionally, the less interaction that I'll have with students, and the less flexible my time may be until I do not have a desire to go any higher than a director. And I'm saying that now. I just want to make sure that I am in a position where all the things don't fall on me as a decision maker. To the point where I have to consider my

kids. As I'm making a decision at work I don't, I don't want my children to be a factor if at all possible.

Once participant, Monica, spoke about taking a step back out of working all together to focus on her family. She declared:

> So, you know, I think that is what has really influenced me [to want to plan to become a stay at home mother] because there are moments, or I think about like, during our Welcome Week of events that happened at the school, it was also the first week of classes for my son, they had all of these different types of activities that went on that week, I missed every single thing, because I had to be here, for our Welcome Week of events. I just don't want to miss those moments anymore. Not to collect a paycheck. And I mean, granted, God knows that we can all use our pay. But I think you know; I know that my husband is in a position where he can cover us. And so, while he's doing that, ensuring that I can be there for my family.

Taking a step back was not always a conscious decision. It was often the result of navigating the worlds of a working mother and wife, and done after much soul searching to determine what would work best for the women and their families.

Theme two: Raising Kings and Queens; carefully cultivating experiences and Black identity development

Another important theme was the importance of overseeing aspects of their children's Black identity development. Whether this includes affirming their culture or ensuring that negative thoughts and habits did not occur, this act encompasses a large part of Black mothering. Natasha recalled telling a friend how hard it was to navigate all the pieces of raising kids while working, working on herself and being a good mother. Natasha remembered being told "It's

because you are raising your kids." This act of raising kids encompasses several themes shared by the mothers in the study. The mothers in this study all spoke about the importance of their roles as mothers and the job of raising strong Black kings and queens. Monica highlighted this in her statement about raising her two sons:

> I also build them up. We call our sons our little kings. And so, I let them know all the time that you are little kings. I don't want anyone else in society to be able to define who they are. They're there, they are able to, to define who they are, but their definition starts with mom and dad. I'm raising two Black kings.

Sometimes cultivating their children's Black identity development included working to raise their children differently than they were raised, using a gentler or open parenting style. Open communication, an important component of this theme, ensures that their children know and understand their value and importance. Mothers, especially Black Mothers, are very intentional about these conversations, often based on fears of "society defining them" or projecting negative stereotypes. Angel shared how she uses any opportunity to instill positive words and values:

> So, any chance that we get that we can get him to open up to words, and just talk about life and things and things that he's experienced, is an opportunity for us to interdict those little things, to help him boost his confidence.

Encouraging their kids to take up space and use their voice was also important to these mothers. Many of these women feel denied these opportunities at work and push harder with their own children. Centennial shared how she wants to ensure her kids know how to use their voice, particularly since historically the voices of Black kids have not been heard:

> You know, most Black people are not taught to, you know, we're taught to, you know, just you don't ask questions, don't talk back. I encourage my kids to do that, because we want to have that dialogue, you know, what is the saying that kids supposed to be seen not heard the whole thing, and I want my kids to be heard, they have a voice.

Dee imparts this message to her children as well:

> I think, just helping them understand that in some people's eyes, they have a double strike. And so, learning to embrace who they are both of their cultures and to take up space to just, you know, be aware of the world around them, and to hopefully impact it in a positive way.

Several mothers in the study also spoke of trying to ensure a brighter future for their kids. Often their careers helped them do this, starting with the tangible aspects of financial security, as Esther explained:

> Like he talks about legacy, like he is ready to leave that generational wealth for our kids. And I'm all about that. I'm like, yes, right? Leave them with a legacy of understanding, you know, finances and really being successful and pursuing your dreams and making that.

Beyond wealth and legacy building, using their connections as higher education professionals was also mentioned by several participants. Esther and Dee shared the benefits of their children attending school debt free or even learning how to navigate the systems as a result of their parents working at or for a similar institution. Dee specifically stated that she was ready to leave her position, but the benefits gave her somewhat of a pause:

> So, if I do stick around, likely I do. Because guess what, my kids might be able to go to school for free. They won't have to ask, "where do I get my scholarships from." You

> know, all of that stuff. I'll be able to be up to date with what? The FAFSA process, right? Because you know, that's a ridiculous thing. Or how to communicate and articulate to your advisor what's in your best interest for the classes that you take, right? Instead of blindly going with whatever they recommend, so, like, everything kind of shifted, where I'm like, okay, like everything that I do, how does this play back to benefiting my babies? Right? How does that play back into benefiting my kids?

Having children resulted in many mothers in the study altering their view of their profession to include seeing it as a future benefit for their children. This became a motivator for them to remain in the field despite its challenges.

Educational involvement.

"Every decision that we make as a Black mother is impactful" is how Maya described being a black mother. Decisions that may seem simple, such as books to read or toys to buy often requires more time and attention to ensure that Black children see themselves positively portrayed and safe. This concept was quite prevalent when discussing where the participant's children would go to school. Almost all the participants spoke about their struggles finding, navigating, or anticipating navigating the K-12 school system. They based some of these conversations or fears on their own struggles in the K through 12 system. Jasmin discussed how her education was "instantly racialized" after experiencing racism and microaggressions in kindergarten. She describes:

> My first day of school in kindergarten was like marked by the little girl can't stay on the bus with me because her mom found I was Black and then later… Like, why is the teacher not calling on you when you're raising your hand and nobody else is raising their hand?

Currently, Jasmin is concerned about the controversy over teaching critical race theory in schools. This controversy became a focal point in United States politics during the summer of 2021 and continued as these interviews were occurring in September 2021 (Ray & Gibbons, 2021). While Jasmin was thankful her state and city were not considering a ban on critical race theory, she was still worried about the effect on the U.S. education system and society overall.

The participants also spoke about the importance of where their children spent their formative years. They recognized that where their children spend eight plus hours a day makes a significant impact on their lives as Black children. They worked hard to ensure and to structure their lives in ways that they could play active roles in determining or being involved in that education. For Dr. Panther, this was choosing to move to a place where her children "could thrive" even though it meant a 45-minute commute to her campus job, since she did not feel like the schools near campus were sufficient for her children.

Esther and her husband moved their child to a public charter school, making sure that she and her husband showed up the day before school started to introduce themselves to the teacher and the principal and to present themselves as a united force in their child's education. She declared:

> I told Noah, like we got to go into the school before he goes in, because we have to show our faces in a way that's like, we're not those types of absent parents, where you can say into anything about our son, and we ain't gonna be there. So right before he starts on that Friday, he started on Monday on that Friday, we was up in that school meeting his teacher, talking to the principal, letting them know we're here we see you, we raise our son. Right? And we've been doing that since these kids have been in school. Because, um, we know like, there are already assumptions in already things placed on our kids. So,

> one thing you got to remember about our children is that you know, their parents don't play. We don't play, so you see our face now. You will see it again if there are issues both to the principal and to the teacher.

For Maya, this involvement meant purposely choosing schools where her children were not the only Blacks and there were Black teachers. Maya noted:

> Like they send their kids to all-white schools, I'm like, that's not an option for me. Where we send our kids to daycare, starting it, it, you know, 12 weeks old, mattered to me, but having to go to work and still function, I could not have done that, if I didn't have the daycare I had, because when I, when I left my son, my most precious, just like, right, I don't want to feel like I own him. But you know, like, that's my, my flesh and blood…. And when I showed up that day, to see the look in the Black faces looking back at me as teachers, without even saying a word, you just knew what you were feeling and what and to know that they understood everything. I couldn't have left him, and then gone and taken care of the students who needed taking care of and the faculty and staff on campus who needed community and, you know, so much support. I didn't know that she had Black teachers and Black women who were there who were feeling the same things as me. So, I feel like my identity as a Black woman infiltrates and matters to every aspect of my life.

Even though Dee chose to send her oldest child to a predominantly white school, she was heavily involved and always made a point to be there and voice the needs of her children, and the needs of all Black children at the school. She recalled:

> I think another challenge is just being a strong advocate. Like I said, in every circumstance, whether it's education like my son, for example, he goes to a white private

> school and I make it a point I mean, I wouldn't have chosen the school if I didn't feel comfortable and I didn't feel like the school was making significant positive steps to you know, just embrace diversity, and really make it a point of the learning curriculum and to bring more students of color into the school, attract more students of color. So, I do really like his school, but I also make it a point to also take up space and volunteer and you know, when there are surveys, provide feedback, because it's important to make these institutions of education more aware of their impact on students. And so, whether it's hiring more students or more teachers who look like students of color, whatever the case may be, it's just making sure that I'm a voice for my kids. In every sense.

Ensuring that they give their children a solid foundation in life was a cornerstone of mothering experiences for the Black women in the study. From education to guaranteeing that their personal work choices provide safety, security, and support now and in the future guide many of the choices these mothers make daily.

Motherhood is…: participants define motherhood.

This theme emerged primarily from the discussions pertaining to the artifacts during the interviews. Most participants showed pictures of their families and children. When asked to share the significance of the picture, many shared what being a mother meant to them and how it impacted them. Several commonalities emerged, such as being a mother is no easy job. The words the participants used to describe motherhood reflected that definition. However hard and "exhausting" it was, it was also a blessing, and all the participants considered it a privilege and a huge responsibility. This responsibility was an opportunity to create a better world through their children.

Summary

The narratives of these Black mothers elaborated on their experiences as Black women in student affairs and demonstrated how race impacts their experiences both at work and within their families. Several themes emerged that highlighted the differences and experiences of Black women that are unique to them. Navigating raising their children in a sometimes-hostile society is not easy. Many times, the participants shared how the boundaries between work in education and raising their kids are blurred. These women often worked to prepare their children by anticipating their needs based upon what they saw their students struggling or encountering. Additionally, these women spend a significant amount of time working to foster Black identity development while navigating working, microaggressions and often inflexible work environments.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Black mothers who work in student affairs. This study utilized Black Feminist Thought framework to make meaning of the stories of Black mothers who work in the student affairs profession. Several themes emerged from the data. Upon completion of analyzing the findings, several new themes emerged from the data. These broad themes include references to many of the themes mentioned in chapter 4. The first theme "I do this for a reason" centers on the career decision-making process for Black women, developing and maintaining an identity in that profession. Black women enter the student affairs profession and stay despite the challenges of loneliness, isolation, and other microaggressions. Another reason for staying in their positions that participants identified was to provide representation to students and other employees; so that they can "see people who look like them" and have a positive representation for students on their respective campuses and in their lives. Last, the participants shared commonalities in what they deemed important when raising their children. As mothers, they highlighted the importance of choosing and being involved in their child's education and in paying careful attention to their role in raising the next generation of Black children. As student affairs professionals, all participants also struggled with achieving balance in their careers and undertook several strategies to succeed in their work and family lives.

Discussion

Theme one: "I do this for a reason."

The purpose of this study was to explore the career experiences of Black women working in student affairs. Utilizing career theory is helpful in understanding many aspects of how some

women and mothers experience their careers. One such career model, The Kaleidoscope Career Theory, is useful for analyzing the career trajectory and experiences of mid-career women. According to the Kaleidoscope career model, many mid-career women often focus on achieving balance in their work-family lives. Balance refers to an individual's wish to have quality experiences in both work and family domains (Cabrera, 2007; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2008; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008). Similar to the Bailey (2011) study which used the KCM, many of the participants in this study spoke at length about the desire to achieve this balance once they became mothers. Many spoke about how, as their children aged, they anticipated the need to increase this balance and questioned if working as a student affairs professional would allow them to achieve balance.

Strategies for achieving balance.

The participants found different strategies to help achieve balance. Two of the most popular strategies mentioned were choosing positions that allowed them to restrict work hours to what worked for their lives, even if it slowed their career progression. Slowing down career progression is a well-researched phenomenon, which the KCM defines as "off-ramping." This strategy is consistent in the literature on working mothers, both Black and white. The Barnes Daniel (2015) study on Black professional women, termed "strategic mothering," as the decision that women make regarding specific positions or institutions or remaining in positions long term simply because it allowed balance in their work and family lives. One participant specifically chose to work in two-year institutions because it allowed her to restrict her work hours to 8-4:30. Other participants indicated they slowed down their career progression to focus on their families.

There is a significant amount of literature that focuses on highly educated white women leaving employment to manage their families. However, recent literature has questioned if opting

out is as significant of a phenomenon as once stated. Current literature has instead focused on women being pushed out rather than opting out, due to inhospitable and inflexible work policies (Barnes Daniel, 2015; Cabrera, 2007; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2008; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008). Many working mothers, both Black and white found the workplace environment unfriendly for raising a family (McKinnon-Crowley et al., 2021).

None of the participants in this study opted out of their careers, but two explicitly mentioned considering the possibility. One spoke about the desire to opt out and mentioned staying home or working part-time to achieve balance. Another participant mentioned an intense desire to opt out of the workforce and becoming a "domestic engineer." When discussing this decision, the language used was also important. The use of the term domestic engineer by one participant highlights how the biases that exist for mothers who pause or quit their careers to care for their families. Another participant who noted her own previous biases against women who stayed home and how that changed after she experienced being a stay-at-home mother for herself. Since many Black women take pride in their education and using it to help uplift their community, there is often a perceived stigma attached when Black women decide to opt out of their careers.

Cabrera (2007) found that approximately four percent of women used entrepreneurship as a strategy to achieve balance in their careers and family lives. One participant in the study shared her newly created business opportunities that she hoped would become a method for achieving financial stability and balance on her terms. Other participants shared their experiences in higher education to start their consulting businesses to help achieve flexibility.

One of the most notable strategies for navigating work-life balance that was shared in the narratives during the study was bringing children to work for after-hours events. This theme is

absent in much of the literature on working mothers, as most jobs do not allow this as a realistic option. Student affairs offers a unique medium where this can be accomplished since many student-facing events occur in the evenings and on weekends. As student affairs professionals, these mothers are often tasked with lining up their partner's schedule to ensure childcare after school/after regular daycare hours. Due to the nature of some of the student programming, bringing children is feasible and, for some participants, offered them an opportunity to spend time with their children while working long hours.

Staying authentic.

While balance was important, as Black women, authenticity was also identified as being important. Authenticity is defined as individuals' need to behave and demonstrate their attitudes in accordance with their genuine inner selves (Cabrera, 2007; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2008; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2008). Several of the participants discussed the need or the ability to be authentic in several of their identities at work. Authenticity was also related to their identity as mothers and proudly displayed their commitment as both mothers and student affairs professionals. Several participants spoke candidly about not feeling the need to apologize or feel guilty for being working mothers. As Maya stated, "It should be reasonable for an employee also to be a parent, especially if we are in the business of college students because if I do not have kids, y'all have no college."

Not all participants felt free from the guilt. Jasmin (the youngest participant) spoke of struggling with guilt. She talked about feeling guilty "for feeling connected to work and being physically absent for her family." Another participant spoke of the steps they took to ensure that colleagues honored her role as a parent by blocking out time and not accepting meetings requests for a time-blocked school drop-off. This authenticity was related to how they wore their hair,

which will be discussed further below. This authenticity also relates to Black Feminist Thought and self-definition and rejecting the controlling images as they seek to define who holds the power in a situation. In the realm of BFT, self-definition is the journey from "victimization to a free mind" (Collins, 2000 p. 112).

Theme two: Black at work; experiences with microaggressions

The participants in the study reported experiencing microaggressions, racism, and sexism in the workplace, similar to the findings noted in many other studies (Baker, 2013; Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Henry, 2010; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Jones Boss & Bravo; West, 2020; West, 2017; Williams, 2019). Racial microaggressions are defined as "brief, commonplace, daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental slights, and indignities… often committed automatically and unintentionally (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). Many of these microaggressions come from racist thoughts and stereotypes and result from the controlling stereotypes and images of Black women displayed in the media (Collins, 2000; Sue et al., 2007). Common microaggressions discussed included experiencing feelings of isolation and being ignored.

"Black women and our hair, am I right".

One of the most common topics for microaggressions is related to the participant's hairstyles and how they choose to wear their hair. Hair might seem like a simple afterthought, but it is often a serious consideration for Black women. "For the vast majority of Black women, hair is not just hair; it contains emotive qualities that are linked to one's lived experience" (Thompson, 2009 p 831.).

Black women have long reported discrimination in the workplace due to their hairstyles. They have often experienced issues with hiring, promotion, and termination for wearing their hair in natural, Afrocentric styles, as opposed to straightened hair that is often promoted and

valued (Donohoo & Smith, 2020). The hairstyles of Black women have a long history in the United States of being politicized and are often highlighted in negative terms in the society. This has also led to negativity regarding natural or Afrocentric styles within Black culture. According to Thompson (2009), a "fundamental question that all Black women, irrespective of skin tone, hair type, and socioeconomic class have asked themselves at one point in time is: what am I going to do with my hair?" (p. 839). Deciding what to do with their hair means that Black women often spend nine times more financially and a disproportionate amount of time on their hair than women of other ethnicities (Pitts, 2021; Saran Donahoo, 2021). The Black hair care industry in the United States is worth approximately nine billion dollars (Pitts, 2021; Saran Donahoo, 2021). This time and money underscore the importance of hair as an integral part of many Black women's identities. Several states and municipalities have recently passed or attempted to pass the CROWN Act to end hair discrimination. CROWN, an acronym for "Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair," aims to make discrimination illegal based on hairstyles and textures (Pitts, 2021).

The stories relaying how important hair is to the participants' identities, and the historical explanations, help make this discrimination visible and tangible. Black Feminist Thought highlights the importance of exploring "how the prevailing standards of beauty affect Black women in everyday life" (Collins, 2000, p. 90). Hair and the way that it is often portrayed is also a controlling image that contributes to the oppression of Black women (Collins, 2000). First, hair is one major way Black females are devalued (Greene, White, & Whitten, 2000). Many of the participants struggled with and considered the impact of the decision to wear their hair "natural' rather than the use of harsh chemicals (known as relaxers) or the use of high heat to create Eurocentric hairstyles that are considered "professional." This choice opened them up to

experience negative comments, people touching their hair without permission, or even the possibility of negative consequences from their supervisors. Despite the negative experiences with other, the choice to go natural often gave these women greater confidence in their own identity, particularly once they became mothers and realized that they had the opportunity to impart these ideals, both consciously and unconsciously, to their children.

"We are raising Kings and Queens".

Black mothers in the United States have long been tasked with ensuring their children's physical, mental, and emotional survival in a world that marginalizes them (Collins, 2000; Lorde, 1984). As mothers, imparting positive representation of Black identity development and then using their experiences to guide that development was a major theme identified in this study.

The job of preparing children to navigate a world where racism and sexism may exist in every interaction and ensuring that children are prepared to navigate these interactions is what Hughes and Johnson (2001) have coined racial socialization. Racial socialization seeks to instill cultural values while preparing children to encounter discrimination. Racial socialization is a practice in many cultures and plays an important role in a child's (racial) identity development and wellbeing. Studies have indicated that racial socialization promotes higher self-esteem, more favorable in-group attitudes, higher grades, and feelings of efficacy (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Racial socialization is exercised more commonly among parents who experience racial bias in the workplace, women, and married parents. This description fits all the participants in the study. (Hughes & Johnson, 2001).

Racial socialization has four tenets: Cultural Socialization, Preparation for Bias, Promotion of Mistrust, and Pluralism (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Cultural socialization includes

teaching children about one's own culture, history, and heritage (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Preparation for Bias focuses on preparing children to experience incidents of Bias and discrimination (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Promotion of mistrust focuses on communication to teaching caution, includes in-group, and lastly, Pluralism focuses on teaching about diversity and awareness of other cultures (Hughes & Johnson, 2001).

The participants described engaging in several of the tenets of racial socialization, including teaching their children about the potential in-group and out of group discrimination and increasing their knowledge about positive cultural practices. Mothers engaging in racial socialization to prepare and protect their children is important because research has shown that Black girls are often viewed as "less innocent and are adultified" or looked at as if they are older than they are. Black girls are often chastised and criminalized for meritless infractions, including having "too much attitude," chewing gum too loudly, and talking "unladylike" (Epstein et al., 2017; Hines & Wilmot, 2018). Black boys often experience similar stereotypes of being seen as older and aggressive. To combat these negative stereotypes, participants used affirmations and terms such as referring to their children as kings and queens. The affirmations provided positive representation and affirmation of Black culture, in an effort to combat the negative stereotypes often seen in the media or experienced at school, from becoming internalized. Participants expressed this work as breaking generational curses saying, "I don't want my child to have the same color complex that I do."

In addition to racial socialization, this theme corresponds with the theoretical framework of BFT; the actions of the participants attempt to change the controlling images of Black girls and boys that are often depicted in the media. Racial socialization that seeks to impart positive affirmations to children's Black identity development is an example of BFT in action. (Collins,

2000). Since many of the prevailing themes have seeped into Black culture with issues such as colorism and hair, positive racial socialization was necessary for the participants. One participant noted telling her child, "You will get it from both sides." Both sides refer to experiencing negative racial comments from whites as well Black people who may impart negative stereotypes regarding skin complexion and comments regarding hair.

Many of the participants spoke of issues within their upbringing that they wanted to change, and several used the term breaking generational curses to denote this theme. Colorism and other issues within the Eurocentric beauty standard stood out as issues that these mothers wanted to address, along with developing their children's Black identity. This was particularly evident after many of the participants spoke of struggling with wanting to be lighter and succumbing to the Eurocentric ideals of beauty themselves. Therefore, they ensure that their children have strong Black role models, starting with themselves, working on open communication, and affirming them in their Blackness.

In addition to their Black identity development, the mothers in the study also discussed their jobs and providing their children with a leg up and a better life. This is a common theme for Black mothers (Collins, 2000). Many participants spoke about staying in the profession long term to take advantage of potential free tuition opportunities for their children so that they would not have to worry about finances, scholarships, or incurring debt to finance a college education. Even without the financial peace, working at a university provided Black mothers with a form of socio-educational capital that they hoped to extend to their children.

Educational involvement.

Another theme was the importance of school choice, and school involvement for Black families. Parental involvement is a significant indicator of success for children, regardless of race

or socioeconomic status (Wilder, 2014). However, for the mothers in the study, their choices and involvement regarding their children's schools were much more profound. Research shows that Black students targeted for disciplinary action in the greatest numbers (Johnston, 2000) are statistically more likely to be suspended than their white counterparts (Irvine, 1990). Further, research indicates that teachers punish Black children more harshly even when youths of other races engage in the same unsanctioned behaviors (Skiba et al., 2000). Inequities in school discipline are most pronounced among boys (Ferguson, 2000). With statistics like these, it is clear to see why school choice and school involvement were commonly cited as a critical area for mothering for the participants. Even without the statistics, it is not surprising since these women are also educators, and many had a background in early childhood or secondary education, with three of the participants having direct experience in teaching or working in the public school system. Regardless of their background, as student affairs professionals working with college students, they see the outcomes of the K-12 system daily.

Some participants also indicated that their involvement was intended to disrupt negative stereotypes regarding Black parents and children and to send a message that "we are not those types of parents." This disruption of stereotypes also aligns with the tenets of Black Feminist Thought in that it challenges the negative stereotypes and seeks to impart positive representation (Collins, 2000). Regardless of the source of their experience, the participants understand the importance of being involved in a system that was not designed for them, yet plays a pivotal role in their growth, development of their children, and their future.

"They are all our children".

The students becoming their children was a common sentiment shared by the participants. This type of mothering is common among Black women, and Black girls are

groomed for this type of role starting at a very young age (Collins, 2001). Many of these women were mothering long before they had their kids because they were mothering the students coming through their offices or programs.

Collins (2000) titles this unique relationship between Black students and educators, "mothering the mind." Unlike traditional mentoring or educational relationships between teachers and students, the community's othermothers tradition exhibited by Black women is much deeper. Typically, it seeks to build a community in hostile environments and to build and move the community and the children forward. Black women also tend to refer to Black children using family language and collective reference "of our" children (Collins, 2000). Several participants used this when discussing their students and referenced how they used the same family language with the term auntie. As student affairs professionals, many become de facto mothers and aunts in their relationships with the students.

Themes across time and place

A common element of narrative analysis is the re-storying of stories across time and place. The narratives of the participants took place during a unique time period within U.S. history. Some scholars have coined the term double pandemic to acknowledge both the Covid-19 pandemic and the pandemic of racism that impacts the lives of Black people in the United States. The participants in the study all spoke about the effects of not just the Covid-19 pandemic, but the murder of George Floyd and racial tensions that escalated during the summer of 2020 that added to their fatigue and exhaustion. These events likely played a large role in many of the themes that emerged due to the proximity of their occurrence to the interviews. Furthermore, the interviews also occurred during the midst of the Great Resignation where large numbers of people, particularly women exited the labor force or changed jobs. The phenomena also had a

close proximity to many of the themes. Particularly the intent to leave their jobs, which several of the participants shared.

Another common shared narrative was how Black identity was stronger than any other identity piece, including being a student affairs professional. As one participant's stated, “being Black affects everything I do, every decision I make.” The events of the last few years, from Trayvon Martin to Michael Brown to George Floyd who we watched call out for his mother as he lay dying at the hands of Minneapolis police officer put that in the faces of Black women each every day. As they raise their children they must confront and address a system. This legacy, which Collins (2000) defines as a legacy of struggle, is one of the core standpoint themes of Black Feminist Thought.

The response to the struggle is not the same among all Black women. Even within this study, some mothers sought out “the best schools” to educate their children in while others eschewed a school that was not filled with Black teachers and students. Regardless of the individual response, the common thread was that their (the participants) Black identity was at the center of the viewpoint and that their jobs as Black mothers was to confront this system to create a better world for their children. This thought process which focuses on disrupting the status quo to create an identity for themselves and their children larger than the one society seeks to impart is the power in self-definition for Black women. Rather than accept and exist, the collective action of Black mothers seeks to change the world through their children.

Implications for practice

The importance of creating a diverse workplace where Black mothers can balance their family and be authentic in their identities as both mothers and Black women was one of the most significant implications of this study. Yet, this can often be a double-edged sword for many

reasons. First, many of these mothers spoke about focusing on their family; they took a step back and slowed their career progression. In doing this, they limited the pipeline for more mothers and Black women and the representation of Black women in leadership positions.

There is literature that focuses on how both identities, mothers, and Black women, are often pushed out of the workforce (Williams, 2019). Working mothers are often pushed out of the workforce because of inflexible work policies and difficulties choosing between being an ideal worker, a good mother, or being present for their children. Black women are often pushed out due to microaggressions. Many of the participants spoke about receiving negative feedback or issues regarding their hair or feeling lonely. The fact that both identities are constantly pushed out of the workforce creates difficulties with these women being represented on their campuses. The participants provided their thoughts and ideas on what a more supportive work environment would like. Many of those ideas have been enacted on smaller scales, or the participants have had the opportunity to experience them and noted how helpful they were. These ideas include flexible work policies, supportive supervisors, fostering an environment where employees can feel authentic in their identities and creating mentoring programs or mothering circles and normalizing work life integration. Implementing one or more of these policies can go a long way toward making the workplace inclusive to Black mothers.

Flexible work policies.

One critical juncture for this work is making family-friendly policies. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to undo years' worth of strides that women made, as many have had to drop out of the workforce because of childcare issues. Institutions must continue their advancement of gender equity and family-friendly policies. Much attention has been paid recently to the lack of parental leave in the United States, and recent attempts to create paid parental leave programs

and universal childcare has failed to become a reality as of the time of publication (Konish, 2022). There needs to be a continued push for this. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the need for other parental social support, such as universal childcare, flexible work, hours, and arrangements can also offer benefits to an organization by allowing them to recruit and retain mothers.

Research has found that flexible work schedules offer many benefits to both the employee and the organization. Among these benefits are increased employee perceptions of autonomy and feedback, resulting in increased productivity, job satisfaction, satisfaction with schedule, and reduced absenteeism. Flex work schedules also reduce employee stress and increase work-life balance, including reducing work to family conflict by allowing employees to attend to family needs. Research has also found that giving employees control when (and where) they work is beneficial to the organization because it provides an increased perception of organization support, which in turn increases organization commitment (Choi, 2017; Spreitzer et al., 2017; Waples & Brock Baskin, 2021)

Many assumptions regarding the nature of student facing roles being less flexible or not suited to teleworking have been debunked. Additionally, many of these roles continue to function and successfully serve students as students and staff were at home during the early part of the pandemic or during continued quarantine periods. These benefits are not just for working parents but can also include all employees and specifically those who are engaged in caregiving roles. Creating gender-neutral flexible work arrangements benefit everyone (McKinnon-Crowley et al., 2021).

Supervisor Support.

The participants in this study often spoke about supportive supervisors as essential to keeping them engaged and in the workforce. Having supervisors who are parents and who understand the demands is essential to supporting working mothers (McKinnon-Crowley et al., 2021). Poor supervision and its associated adverse outcomes are a well-researched problem in student affairs (Marshall et al., 2016). These adverse outcomes include low morale and retention issues (Marshall et al., 2016). Despite the importance placed on supervision by professional organizations and employees, most student affairs professionals believe they were not prepared for this task through their graduate preparation programs (Marshall et al., 2016, Shupp & Arminio, 2012). Student affairs graduate programs and institutions must work to fill this knowledge gap and adequately prepare supervisors for leading diverse teams.

Safe spaces.

Closing the achievement gap between men and women and Black women is under scrutiny as many companies made pledges to increase their diversity efforts in the summer of 2020. Continuing these diversity efforts, including the CROWN act, can assist more Black women in feeling authentic at work. Authentic efforts toward diversity and inclusion can also assist the workplace in limiting microaggressions. These efforts include making sure diversity, equity and inclusion are part of the core value of the organization and are displayed and acted upon and not simply a statement for hiring someone in a position. Employees and management must also receive training on these topics and unconscious and implicit bias, as well as microaggressions and how to avoid and respond to these incidents (Holder et al., 2015).

Mentorship and representation.

Mentoring and representation are issues that matter to all in the workplace. Seeing people in a leadership position and representing marginalized identities and guiding the younger generation is often a goal of mentorship. This type of representation and mentoring in the workplace has produced positive outcomes for marginalized populations in student affairs (West, 2017). Several participants mentioned feeling as though there was a lack of mothers/parents and Black women in leadership positions and the need for mentoring for mid-level professionals and mothers. Participants spoke of the desire to see how others manage these roles.

Research has shown mentoring is beneficial for workers (Nielson et al., 2001), Black women (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; West, 2017) and new mothers (Demirdjian, 2009). Seeing parents in leadership positions has been identified as helpful to the participants. In addition to mentorship, expanding the idea of sister circles to mothering circles or mothering support groups at work can be beneficial, and has shown promise in the corporate sector (Demirdjian, 2009). Institutions should work to create mentoring programs and other initiatives that work to explicitly address issues of diversity, equity, and work life balance. Women of Color should also be part of the creation and management of these programs to provide representation and the design of the program to ensure that they are relevant and beneficial.

Normalizing work-life integration.

Society and leaders in higher education need to normalize aspects of work-life integration within the workplace and graduate programs. Providing the opportunity and space to discuss the issue can become an essential topic for all students, employees, and institutional leadership to consider as they plan their careers. This early and open discussion could also eliminate the idea that work-life conflict is a women's problem but a social problem. It is also important that any

polices, or ideas consider the implications of how race and class impact work-life issues for women of color.

Implications for future research

This study sought to explore and share the experiences of Black mothers in student affairs. Future research could focus on specific policies or strategies that mothers used to navigate institutions, such as bringing their children to work or the impact of flexible work arrangements on mothers. The participants in this study were all heterosexual and married. Future research should incorporate diverse sexual and gender identities and family types, such as multigenerational, single, and co-parenting families. As previously discussed, reframing work-life conflict as a gender-neutral problem and not just a women's problem would be beneficial. Consequently, there is a need for research that focuses on general parenting or Black fathers' experiences, particularly Black fathers' experiences as student affairs professionals. The consistency of stories shared regarding the participants' experiences with how they choose to wear their hair and its impact on professional identity is also an area where more research is needed, both in general and within the student affairs profession. Also, the importance that the participants placed on their children's education as well as the importance placed on racial socialization provides a context for a future study that explores Black college students whose mothers work(ed) in student affairs and their experiences during college.

One area I hoped to address was the effects of multiple children on Black mothers' experiences. All participants had multiple children, with the average being three children. Some comments addressed how adding more children changed things a little more. However, the more common sentiment was that as their kids got older, things would change. Therefore, research

focusing on specific ages, such as only mothers with school age and older children, might provide a distinct set of experiences.

This study took place during the fourth wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic and amidst the Great resignation. Research that examines the effect of these two events on the student affairs profession and working mothers would be timely. Looking at the impact of flexible work arrangements for student affairs, particularly in a post-COVID-19 environment, is also an area for future research. Remote work is often touted as the future in the post-COVID-19 world and, as many colleges work to attract and retain talent, it is important to understand how these programs affect mothers in the workforce.

The participants highlighted how other mothering is a common practice for them as Black student affairs professionals. There is some literature on the effects and the importance of other mothering at HBCUs or involving faculty (Guiffrida, 2005; Hirt et al., 2008; Walker, 2018) but not much on how student affairs professionals specifically can use it in their practice or at PWIs.

Conclusion

This narrative study on the experiences of Black women who work in student affairs sought to add the voices of Black women to the literature on working mothers in student affairs, a group often missing from the literature. This study provided insights into how Black mothers view their jobs and experiences. This study also provided knowledge on how Black mothers work to prepare their students and their children to navigate college and society. The work that these Black mothers engage in attempts to provide positive representation for the students and their children. This study also provided insights for institutions and those who supervise or work with Black mothers on how to better support them in the workplace.

The first aspect of supporting Black mothers working in student affairs is to listen to their stories. While each story is unique, the themes by the participants in this study provide a starting point for addressing the unique challenges and inequalities that Black mothers face while working in student affairs. Working while black and working while mothering provided two sets of unique challenges. The participants in this study identified their struggles and examined how their experiences were borne out of the systemic racism that Black women have experienced in the United States. However, the participants in the study have developed strategies that allow them to navigate and excel in an environment that often does not listen to or support them. Working in student affairs offers many of these women a chance to give back and further provide positive representation for the students at their institutions while continuing to provide for their families and use the social and cultural capital gained from working in the environment to ensure the success of both their biological children and their students, the community children.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Flyer

Research Participants Needed

Black Mothers in Student Affairs

I am conducting a research study on Black mothers who work in student affairs. You are eligible to participate if you:

- Identify as a Black or African American woman
- Identify as a mother (through birth, marriage, adoptions, or legal guardianship) to at least two minor children ages 1-13
- Currently employed full-time in a mid-level role in Student Affairs at an institution of higher education in the United States.

Eligible participants can complete a 5-minute demographic survey. Those selected for an interview, will participate in a 60-minute interview via zoom.

Complete the prescreen survey at or by clicking on the QR Code.
https://ugeorgia.ca1.qualtricsMyrickBlackMothersinSA

For more information contact Alicia Myrick, Doctoral Candidate
aliciamyrick@uga.edu or
Dr. Georgianna Martin, Chair glmartin@uga.edu

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APPENDIX B

Recruitment Email

Dear Participant,

Thank you for being interested in participating in my dissertation study on the experiences of Black mothers in Student Affairs. Based on the answers to the prescreening questionnaire, you qualify to participate in this study.

If you choose to be part of this study, you will participate in a 60-minute interview. The interview questions will invite you to reflect on how motherhood has affected your career development and discuss how race and gender have impacted these experiences. Interviews will take place via Zoom.

The information you share in the interview will not be connected to you individually. I will use a pseudonym instead of your real name, and other identifying information about you share will be masked to maintain your privacy.

Prior to the scheduled interview, I will contact you to provide instructions on providing a visual artifact that has meaning to you as a mother, student affairs professional, and/or a Black woman. You will send an image of this artifact to the researcher prior to the interview – this artifact will be used during our interview to discuss further what that the item represents for you and your journey.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can accept or decline my invitation, and you will be free to drop out at any time during the study. If you are interested, the next step will be to please complete this doodle poll with your availability. If none of the days or times listed work for you, please let me know so we can work to find an agreeable time. After the interview, you will receive a $15 Amazon gift card to thank you for your time.

https://doodle.com/poll/bcggxktsdsgcuuct?utm_source=poll&utm_medium=link

Once we have set up a time to meet, I will forward you a copy of the Consent Form.

Thank you,

Alicia S. Myrick
Doctoral Candidate, Student Affairs Leadership
University of Georgia
770-314-4523

APPENDIX C

Prescreen Survey

Prescreen Survey https://ugeorgia.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bj9xbwHZUeJK47A

Black Mothers in student affairs Prescreen

Q1 Thanks for expressing your interest in participating in my qualitative research study titled Black Mothers in student affairs qualitative study. This pre-screening form confirms your eligibility for the study and should take about 3 - 5 minutes to complete. The expectation is that you participate in a one-time interview. This interview should not exceed 60 minutes. For convenience, this screening and enrollment form collects information about you to confirm your study eligibility. If you are eligible, you will receive an email confirming your enrollment and instructions for your next steps. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher and provide your contact information here. Otherwise, please proceed to answer the following questions to screen for your eligibility for enrollment in the study. Thank you for your time.

Q2 How do you identify your gender?

- ☐ Woman (1)
- ☐ Man (2)
- ☐ Non-binary / third gender (3)
- ☐ Other- Please specify (4) _____

Q6, do you identify as Black/African American?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q4 Are you currently employed at an institution of higher education in the United States?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q10 How many years of professional experience (postgraduate degree) do you currently have in student affairs?

- ○ 0-2 years (Entry Level) (1)
- ○ 3-5 years (Mid-Level) (2)
- ○ 5-10 years (3)
- ○ 10-20 years (AVP/Senior Level) (4)

Q5 Are you currently a (biological or non-biological) mother who resides in the same home full-time as your child/children?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q3 How many children ages 1-13 currently reside in your household?

_____

Q7 Name

_____

Q8 What is the best email address to contact you at?

_____

Q9 What is the best phone number to contact you at?

_____

End of Block: Default Question Block

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol Thank you for your time and consideration.

Purpose of Interview: This interview aims to explore the career experiences of Black mothers who work in student affairs through the lenses of race and gender.

1. Discuss steps taken to protect anonymity
2. Review the consent form and ask if they have any questions about the consent form.
3. Discuss the contact after the interview for a member check.
4. Ask the participant if there are any questions before beginning the interview.
5. Begin zoom recording now (Record start time): _____

    1. Tell me about yourself?
    2. Thank you for bringing some personal items to the interview. Could you comment on their meaning and significance?
    3. Can you tell me about your childhood growing up as being Black and a girl?
    4. Can you share an experience when you first came to realize what being a Black girl meant?
    5. Can you talk a little bit about your family dynamic growing up?
    6. How would you say race and gender shaped who you are today?
    7. Talk about your career journey, including why you chose student affairs as a profession.
    8. What keeps you in the student affairs profession?
    9. Do you expect to stay in student affairs? Why or why not?
    10. What are your long-term career goals?

11. How has being a Black Woman impacted your career choices and career path, if at all?
12. Describe your experiences as a Black female working in student affairs.
13. Can you share an impactful career experience about being a professional Black woman?
14. Talk about being a mother and what motherhood means to you?
15. Talk about the role of the family in your life.
16. How does your family dynamic influence your career decision-making at different points in your life?
    i. In college
    ii. Grad school
    iii. Post-Grad
    iv. Post Motherhood
17. In what ways does being a mother influence your career choices and career path?
18. And, more specifically, your career-related decisions and career path as student affairs professional?
19. Describe a typical workday for you in your role as both a mother and a professional.
20. What challenges do you face as a mother and working in student affairs?
21. How do you see your role as a mother changing over time related to your career decision-making in general and your work in student affairs?

22. Is there anything that I have not asked you that would be important for me to know about you, your role as a mother, and/or your role as a student affairs professional?

APPENDIX E

IRB Consent

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
CONSENT FORM
Black Mothers in Student Affairs

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this form will help you decide if you want to be in the study. Please ask the researcher(s) below if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

Principal Investigator: *Dr. Georgianna Martin, Associate Professor*
Counseling and Human Development Services
glmartin@uga.edu

Co-Investigator: *Alicia Myrick*
Doctoral Candidate, Student Affairs Leadership
alicia.myrick@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study:
I am interested in learning more about the experiences of Black women as mothers who work in student affairs at an institution of higher education in the United States.

Study Criteria:
You are being invited to be in this research study because you are a Black mother with one or more children between the ages of 1-13, and you self-identify as working in student affairs at an institution of higher education in the United States.

Study Procedures:
If you agree to participate in this study, you will participate in a 60-minute virtual interview. The interview questions will invite you to reflect on how motherhood has affected your career development and discuss how race and gender have impacted these experiences. Additionally, you will be asked to bring an artifact to the interview that represents your professional or personal identity.

Incentives:

Audio/Video Recording:
The interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes.

Taking part is voluntary:
Participation is voluntary. You can refuse to take part or stop at any time without penalty.

Risks:
Some questions may make you uncomfortable in self-reflection on career experiences and experiences with race.

Benefits:
Your responses may help us understand better how to support Black working mothers in student affairs.

Privacy and Confidentiality:

We will take steps to protect your privacy, such as using a pseudonym instead of your real name, and other identifying information will not be disclosed to maintain your privacy. Any notes, recordings, or transcriptions will be kept secure. The files will be encrypted, and password protected. The recordings will be destroyed after the transcription is complete.

I may continue to use the de-identified transcripts for future studies.

Questions:
Please feel free to ask questions about this research at any time. You can contact the Principal Investigator, Alicia Myrick, at *404-661-7618, alicia.myrick@uga.edu,* or Chair, Dr. Georgianna Martin, at glm@uga.edu. If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the IRB at 706-542-3199 or by email at IRB@uga.edu.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below:

Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please keep one copy and return the signed copy to the researcher.