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An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Lived Experiences and Mentoring Relationships of Black Women Student Affairs Administrators

Tiffany Shawna Wiggins
Old Dominion University

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AN INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES

AND MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS OF BLACK WOMEN STUDENT AFFAIRS

ADMINISTRATORS

by

Tiffany Shawna Wiggins
B.S. May 2006, Christopher Newport University
M.A. January 2009, The George Washington University
Ed.S. August 2010, Old Dominion University

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Approved by:

Felecia Commodore (Director)

Dana Burnett (Member)

Angela Eckhoff (Member)

ABSTRACT

AN INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES
AND MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS OF BLACK WOMEN STUDENT AFFAIRS
ADMINISTRATORS

Tiffany Shawna Wiggins
Old Dominion University, 2017
Director: Dr. Felecia E. Commodore

Contemporary literature regarding the experiences of Black women in higher education administration is scarce, and that which does exist, often focuses on those who serve in teaching faculty roles, and/or fails to provide a holistic perspective on the lives of those who makeup this group. Utilizing an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach, this qualitative investigation explored the lives of Black women college administrators from their perspective. Grounded in the theoretical framework of Patricia Hill Collins's *Black Feminist Thought,* this study aimed to uncover the lived experiences of Black women student affairs administrators as they relate to their professional demands and pursuits as well as their personal obligations and interests; in addition, the study also sought to acquire new knowledge about Black women student affairs administrators' mentoring relationships with other women college administrators.

To better comprehend this phenomenon and address the research questions, data were collected via three interviews with each participant, as well as from audio- or video-recorded reflective journal entries completed by the participants. Four themes emerged from the researched data: Hyper-awareness of Self, Importance of Relationships with Other Black Women, Opportunity to Give Back Through Work, and Negotiating Demands of Personal and Professional Life.

I dedicate this dissertation to both my angel in heaven and my angel here on earth.

To my mother, J. Annette Wiggins…If it were not for you instilling the importance, value, and power of higher education into me from the very beginning, this would not be a reality. Thank you for showing me what it is to be a strong Black woman, a fearless and dedicated mother, and an overall good person. I carry you with me every day, like you once carried me. My only hope is that I make you proud.

To my daughter, Zara…You are and continue to be my motivation to be and do better every single day. I thank God for allowing me to your mother. Your kindness, intelligence, love, resilience, and beauty amaze me each day. I thank you so much for being patient with me and loving me through the many evenings that "Mommy had to do work". Despite the number of hours, sweat, blood, and tears that I poured into this study, you are by far my greatest masterpiece. I love you to the moon and back! xoxo

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To all of my family and friends who supported me by contributing the purchase of my regalia…I am so humbled by your generosity, and thank you sincerely for giving to me in such a special way. I will wear my regalia with honor and pride, knowing that with it I carry much love, appreciation, and responsibility. I would like to acknowledge you all by name so that you are recognized: Kathleen Brown, Vicki Bonner, Terri Miller, Sheila & Andre Eaton, Adriane

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"Understanding why the experiences of African American women are different from those of other women and those of African American men is steeped in the historical progression and ideology of black people in the United States". -Howard-Hamilton, 2003

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

To understand the true condition of Black women in today's America, we first have to understand the harsh realities of their experiences since first arriving in this country. Black women have long been relegated to the margins of the American social structure as minorities in both race and gender. Within a patriarchal society that does not openly honor their social identities, Black women have been subjected to the double jeopardy of racism and sexism--a dual oppression specific to their subordinate role within society that has been both "assumed and enforced by white and black men as well as white women" (Beal, 1969; Beal, 2008; Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 19).

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston (1937, p. 16) described the position and perception of the Black woman through the insight of the character, Nanny:

> Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don't know nothin' but what we see. So de white man thrown down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see".

In referencing Hurston's impactful words, Collins (2000) acknowledged that "being treated as 'mule[s] uh de world" lies in the heart of Black women's oppression" (p. 45). Often plagued by the evils of racism, sexism, and pervasive negative stereotypes that target their distinct identity, Black women's sheer existence is compounded by the need to manage the layers of oppression that penetrate most aspects of their daily lives.

In particular, Black women have made meaningful contributions to the educational systems of this country in effort to advance their race and support their communities, despite the historical and systematic obstacles laid before them. During slavery, Black people were forbidden to read and write; however, many Black women taught themselves how to do so and used their knowledge to help their families and others reach freedom and safety (Becks-Moody, 2004). After the Civil War, when most Blacks were permitted to learn, Black women played a vital role in ensuring that other Blacks had the opportunity to gain these basic skills (Littlefield, 1997, as cited in Becks-Moody, 2004). In 1793, Catherine Ferguson, a former slave who bought her freedom, founded the Kathy Ferguson's School for the Poor in New York City. With 48 students, Ferguson "became the first known Black [woman] teacher and administrator" (Lerner, 1972, as cited in Mosley, 1980). In 1850, Lucy Session earned a literary degree from Oberlin College, making her the first Black woman to obtain a college degree (Littlefield, 1997, p. 165, as cited in Becks-Moody, 2004). And in 1862, also at Oberlin College, Mary Jane Patterson became the first Black women to obtain a Bachelor's degree from an American institution (Becks-Moody, 2004; "Oberlin history", 2017). After graduating from Oberlin, Patterson accepted a teaching position at the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia where in 1869, Fanny Jackson Coppin[1] was named principal and the first Black woman to lead an institution of higher learning in the United States (Becks-Moody, 2004). Patterson and many other Black women who later obtained college degrees set out to make social change by increasing social literacy and promoting "racial uplift" in the Black community by serving as educators (Becks-Moody, 2004).

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[1] In 1926, a teacher training school in Baltimore, Maryland was named the Fanny Jackson Coppin Normal School in Coppin's memory; today, this school is known as Coppin State University. ("CSU history", 2017)

Three historical and notable Black women figures in the history of higher educational leadership are Anna Julia Cooper, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Lucy Diggs Slowe, renowned for their rich contributions to the twentieth century educational landscape for Black Americans. Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964) was a lifelong educator who served as the President of Frelinghuysen University in Washington, DC from 1931-1943. Frelinghuysen University—a non-traditional institution that provided "social services, religious training, and educational programs for the people who needed them most"—became an early model of the community college under Cooper's leadership, vision, and community activism (Moss, 2014; Keller, 1999, p. 58). Like Cooper, Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955) was a Black woman leader committed to the educational advancement, social justice, and equality of women (Moss, 2014). A firm believer that "education had transformative power", Bethune founded Daytona Beach Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls in 1904 (Moss, 2014); this school later became what is now known as Bethune-Cookman University, a co-ed four-year, private historically black university in Daytona Beach, Florida ("About B-CU", 2017). In like manner to Cooper and Bethune, Lucy Diggs Slowe (1885-1937) also contributed to the equality and advancement of Black women. One of the first Black women to be trained in college student personnel, Slowe advocated for the "self-determination, respect, and advancement of college students" as the first Black woman Dean at Howard University in Washington, DC, from 1922-1937 (Moss, 2014; Perkins, 1996). During her tenure, Slowe not only changed and instituted policies that would advance the social position and academic readiness of Black college women, but she also created a community of Black women college administrators to encourage collaboration, share knowledge, and pool resources as the first president of the National Association of Collegiate Women (Perkins, 1996).

To the benefit of the profession and generations to follow, Cooper, Bethune, Slowe, and others like them made great strides in advancing higher educational leadership in this country, and paved the way particularly "for contemporary [women] and Black higher education administrators" (Moss, 2014). However, despite the great accomplishments of their foremothers, Black women college administrators continue to face dynamic challenges— "of racism, sexism, isolation, lack of trust and support, and tokenism"—as they attempt to navigate the complexities of their personal and professional roles (Becks-Moody, 2004). While the body of literature on women in higher education has begun to expand, few studies focus on the experiences of Black women college administrators (Rusher, 1990; Tedrow, 1999).

Mosley (1980) conducted one of the earliest studies on Black women in higher education administration, looking specifically at those who worked at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). From the results of her study, Mosley concluded that,

> In white academia...Black women administrators are, for the most part, invisible beings. Their status in higher education is a reflection of their status on the national scene—at the bottom. They are isolated, and their academic opportunities are limited by barriers that have nothing to do with their preparation, qualifications, or competency. They have no models, no mentors, and little psychological support. There is no one with whom they share experiences or with whom to identify. The Black female administrator must create herself without model or precedent. She is an alien in a promised land, obscure, unwelcome, and unwanted. (1980)

Mosley referred to Black women administrators at this time as "an endangered species", whose numbers in the field were shrinking due to their experienced *double jeopardy* of racism and sexism, as well as the lack of power they held and deficit in support received (1980, p. 308).

Support in the form of mentoring has long been a struggle for professional women, due to the historically paternalistic nature of most workplaces (Tessens, White, & Webb, 2011). Research shows that mentoring provides immense professional advantages to those who are engaged in such relationships (Allen, Jacobson & Lomotey, 1995; Ballenger, 2010; Kram, 1985); however, without the benefits of mentorship, women have been victim to lesser pay and job promotion than their male counterparts (Blackwood, 2010; Scanlon, 1997). The *glass ceiling* reference has been used to symbolize the invisible barrier to certain levels of career advancement that is often experienced by women; however, Black women have faced even more severe barriers due to the double bind of facing a "dual race and gender bias" (Allen et al., p. 411). Instead of the invisible glass ceiling acknowledged mostly by White women, Black women refer to a *concrete wall* or *concrete ceiling*—an impenetrable boundary that has prevented their ability to advance professionally—as their reality in job advancement and promotion (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Higginbotham, 1999, as cited in Pompper, 2011).

Twenty-seven years after the publication of her study, Mosley's projection of Black women administrators' fate within higher education has not entirely been realized; however, the condition of Black women administrators as it relates to the intersection of their personal and professional worlds, receiving mentoring, and their feelings of general support and assumed self-identity require further investigation to gain a better understanding of their present-day experiences. Using interpretative phenomenological analysis, this study delved into the personal and professional lives of Black women administrators, as well as created an opportunity for their experiences with mentoring relationships to be recognized.

Statement of the Problem

Successfully managing the demands of both the profession and the personal continues to pose challenges for those who work in the field of higher education (Gatta & Roos, 2004). Much of the existing research about work/life integration within the postsecondary arena focuses primarily on the experiences of academic faculty (DeZure, Shaw, & Rojewski, 2014; Eaton, Osgood, Cigrand, & Dunbar, 2015; Gatta & Roos, 2004). Due to the stark differences in role and function between college faculty and administrators, it is reasonable to suggest that the need to navigate the complexities of work life and personal obligations varies greatly between the two groups. While literature on college and university administrators is limited, that which underscores the experiences of women—and more specifically Black women administrators—is even more sparse.

Higher education administration as a profession has experienced a continuous rise in the service of women over the last several decades—an increase likely attributed to the passing of Title IX in 1972, which, among other mandates, forced educational administration college programs to admit women (Mertz, 2009). However, despite the strides made to equalize and advance the rights and opportunities for women, the influence of traditional gender roles and a paternalistic workplace culture continues to infiltrate most aspects of contemporary society (Cullen & Luna, 1993; Jo, 2008; Searby, Ballenger, & Tripses, 2015; Tessens et al., 2011). In particular to the workplace, studies find that women benefit from engaging in mentoring relationships as they are significant contributors to career success and equitable treatment (Blake-Beard, 2011; Dunbar & Kinnersly, 2011; Kram, 1985; Ragins & Cotton, 1999); yet, women often face barriers to mentoring that include lack of access to informal networks, resistance, discouragement, and discrimination from those in positions meant to assist in their

development (Searby et al., 2015). As a result, women often find themselves at a crossroads as they strive to fulfill and exceed professional expectations while also maintaining their personal responsibilities and obligations beyond work (Cameron, 2011; Jones & Taylor, 2013; Perkins, 2011).

For Black women in particular, these challenges are compounded by the harsh realities of the double oppression that they endure as a racial and gender minority in almost every space they occupy. Particularly within the administration of the American higher education system, Black women have long struggled to reconcile the prevalent misogynoir with their professional pursuits within the academy and their personal obligations as mother, partner, sister, daughter, and friend. As underscored by the lack of scholarship focused on this particular group, the need to understand the experiences of Black women college administrators, from their own perspectives, is great and necessary. To address this problem, a qualitative, interpretative analysis was conducted in order to give voice to and gain insider knowledge regarding the unique perspectives of Black women college administrators, to include their experiences with mentoring relationships with other women administrators (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to give voice to the lived experiences of Black women college administrators within the American higher education system while gaining understanding of their experiences from their individual perspectives. The secondary purpose of the study was to examine how Black women college administrators experience mentoring relationships with other women college administrators, to include how they perceive the value of those relationships in their personal and professional lives. Thirdly, the purpose of this research was to enhance the understanding of Black women administrators'

experiences with the intention of promoting positive changes in the ways in which current and future Black women administrators are acknowledged within a profession where their perspective and influence is often suppressed.

Theoretical Framework

This study promoted the significance of Black women's perspectives in understanding their experiences—both personally and professionally—as college administrators working within the American higher education system. Black Feminist Thought (BFT) was utilized as the theoretical framework to facilitate this understanding and guide the investigation. Patricia Hill Collins' theory of BFT is a post-structural approach to feminist standpoint research that enables systematic and critical examination of the pluralities of power relations that exist specifically for Black women in this country (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 270). BFT provides a foundation for understanding the unique perspective and identity of Black women as they navigate their lives, subject to oppression and marginalization as a dually minority group in this country (Collins, 2000).

Black Feminist Thought is grounded in the notion that only Black women can produce and clarify (or self-define) the standpoint of Black women's experiences, despite its portrayal through mediums produced by the dominant culture. Touching on most aspects of Black women's identity and existence (i.e., family, work, motherhood, relationships), Black Feminist Thought examines the complexity of the ways in which Black women are perceived by others as well as themselves, and presents it in a way that is accessible and real. As relevant to this research, BFT also highlights the ways in which Black women intellectuals are treated within academic spaces, which are traditionally dominated by patriarchal ideals and influence. Despite their existence in and contributions to the academy and their institutions, Black women in these

settings often feel out of place and marginalized because of their skin color and gender—experiences that were underscored through the narratives provided by the Black woman administrators who participated in this study (Collins, 2000). Black Feminist Thought aims to give Black women a platform to use their voices to speak their truth in all aspects of their daily lives (Collins, 2000). As such, BFT aligns with the goals of the research, which were/are to allow Black women college administrators the opportunity to unveil their true and lived experiences, professionally and personally, as they navigate the intersection of Blackness and womanness.

The theoretical framework of Black Feminist Thought will be further discussed in Chapter Two, Literature Review.

Research Questions

The following research questions were utilized to guide the research in an effort to uncover true and unfiltered insight about the lived experiences of Black women college administrators within the United States:

Q1:   In what ways do Black women college administrators experience their lives as they relate to their professional demands and pursuits, and personal interests and obligations?

Q2:   How do Black women college administrators describe their experience(s) with mentoring relationships with other women college administrators?

Q2a: In what ways, if any, does the mentoring relationship add value to Black women college administrators' perception of their personal and professional lives?

Significance of the Study

This topic is an important area of study as the findings may inform future practice, policy, and research regarding the experiences and needs of Black women college administrators.

The research outcomes may be useful to policymakers, campus human resources offices, and institutional executive leadership members who, in practice, could use the data to recruit, adequately support, and retain Black women in mid-level administrative roles. Such effective changes can be made through the design or redesign of benefits packages, work/life programs that better meet their needs, as well as policymaking and environmental changes that are inclusive of distinctive cultural and gender considerations required by this group. In addition, the findings could also influence personnel policy and law changes that more accommodating to the unique career-related and personal needs of Black women administrators.

Furthermore, it is important that the experiences of Black women administrators be further investigated as their presence on college campuses directly links to the enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of Black students; this is especially true of the campuses of predominantly white institutions, where the numbers of Black students are comparatively much lower and the identification of shared backgrounds and cultural understanding appears less prevalent. As supported by Patitu & Hinton (2003), "When minority students see [Black] and other minority faculty on campus, they believe that they can also succeed and hold professional positions" (p. 80).

Additionally, this study shall serve as an impetus for additional research related to Black women administrators. The scarcity of research on the lived experiences and mentoring relationships of Black women college administrators highlights a gap in the literature on a significant group of individuals who contribute extensively to a field and profession that seldom acknowledges their realities or their impact. Researching their experiences not only creates the opportunity for their voices to be heard, but also facilitates the opportunity for further inquiry on Black women administrators. Directions for future research will be discussed in greater detail in

Chapter Five.

Finally, this study is significant as it may increase the overall social awareness of the experiences of these Black women administrators. College administration is a profession that is often seen, but hardly understood by outsiders; through the results of this study, those outside of the profession will have the opportunity to not only gain more knowledge about the field of higher education administration, but have a deeper understanding of the lives led specifically by Black women who work within this profession.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of providing clarity and transparency, the definition of certain terms, as it relates to this study, has been provided:

- **Black –** refers to a people and identity; typically includes those of African descent or whose background falls within the African diaspora.

- **Women** - plural of woman; used as a social construct to describe individuals who identify with the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes of what society associates with being female.

- **Student affairs administrator or administrator –** Those professionals who fit the description of current members of NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (2017), which includes: "a full range of professionals who provide programs, experiences, and services that cultivate student learning and success in concert with the mission of our colleges and universities"; these professionals include "the vice president and dean for student life, as well as professionals working within housing and residence life, student unions, student activities, counseling, career development, orientation,

enrollment management, racial and ethnic minority support services, and retention and assessment" ("About NASPA", para. 2).

- **College –** refers to four-year degree-granting public or private institutions of higher education

- **Mid-level -** those who "occupy space between entry level professionals and senior student affairs officers", with five to fifteen years of professional experience post-Master's degree (Ackerman & Roper, 2007, p. vii)

- **Student affairs** - the area that "support[s] the academic mission of the institution through the facilitation of programs and services outside the classroom" (Cameron, 2011).

Organization of the Study

This study on the lived experiences of Black women college administrators was organized in five chapters. Chapter One, the Introduction, consists of the background of the topic, the problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the research, introduces the theoretical framework, and provides the research questions that will guide the investigation. Chapter Two provides a thorough review of the literature, as well as discusses the study's theoretical framework. Chapter Three details the methodology used to implore the research, to include the sampling method, data collection strategies, and data analysis techniques. Chapter Four summarizes the study's findings; and, Chapter Five provides discussion of the study's outcomes, implications for practice, and recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to give voice to the lived experiences of Black women student affairs administrators within the American higher education system as they navigate professional demands and personal obligations. This study also examined how Black women administrators experience mentoring relationships with other women college administrators. It was intended for the reader to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences specific to Black women college administrators, as perceived through their own interpretations of their individual lives.

The research questions used to facilitate this study were:

1. In what ways do Black women college administrators experience their lives as they relate to their professional demands and pursuits, and personal interests and obligations?

2. How do Black women college administrators describe their experiences with mentoring relationships with other women college administrators?

2a: In what ways, if any, does a mentoring relationship add value to Black women college administrators' perception of their personal and professional lives?

To further the understanding of the lived experiences and mentoring relationships of Black women administrators, the theoretical framework of Black Feminist Thought was used to support and guide the research, data analysis, and interpretation of the findings.

Literature Review

While there is a paucity of literature available to that directly conceptualizes the lived experiences and mentoring relationships on Black women administrators, a review of the literature provided insight on topics that are relevant to the purpose of this research. This section

provided an overview of the current scholarship on the following areas: Women in the

Workplace, Double Jeopardy: Black + Woman, Women in Higher Education/Student Affairs,

Black Women in Higher Education administration, Mentoring in the Workplace, Women's

Experiences with Mentoring, and Black Women's Experiences with Mentoring. The literature

review concludes with a detailed recount of the study's theoretical framework, Black Feminist

Thought.

Women in the Workplace

Upon first entering the workforce in the 1900s, women held primarily sex-typed jobs,

such as teaching, nursing, and administrative roles. However, as educational and legal reforms

occurred, the women's movement picked up speed, and the economic conditions took form in the

1960s, the woman's position in the workplace not only increased, but also expanded into roles

that were traditionally reserved for men (Cullen & Luna, 1993). By 2008, more than half of the

women in the United States worked outside of the home (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). Not

only have women taken on many of the jobs that were originally designated for their men

counterparts, the number of those serving in positions of leadership have also increased over the

last few decades (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). In the 1980s, women in the United States

only made up 17% of managerial and professional roles (2009). However, by 2014, women in

management, professional, and related occupations made up over 50% of the U.S. workforce

(Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

Despite the increase of women in presence and role, discrimination against women

continued to persist throughout society. One of the most powerful and pervasive methods used as

an obstacle against women in the workplace was the notion of *the glass ceiling*, an invisible

barrier that can be used to prevent women from obtaining higher ranking positions and higher

pay within the organization (Cullen & Luna, 1993). However, Morrison, White, & Van Velsor (1992) detailed yet another phenomenon faced by women who actually broke through the proverbial glass ceiling, "a wall of tradition and stereotype that separates [women] from the top executive level…. the inner sanctum of senior management" (p. 14). This wall served as an "impenetrable barrier that is outside the scope of federal regulations" that are in place to protect the rights of women in the workplace (Scanlon, 1997, p. 40). Because of the glass ceiling, the wall, and other forms of institutional sexism, gender inequality in the workforce remains a topic of great concern and in need of further research and policy.

Within the field of higher education, the gender gap between men and women college administrators is a prevalent issue. Per Hamilton (2004), women occupy approximately 40% of faculty and administrator positions on college campuses, and only 30% of college and university presidencies are held by women (American Council on Education, 2017; Cook, 2012). The disparity in the number of women in administrator roles has the potential to impact the diversity of the institution, the career advancement and opportunity of women in the field, as well as the retention of women administrators who could create pathways for more women administrators in the future (Blackwood, 2010; Jo, 2008).

While the literature is sparse regarding women college administrators' position and experience within the American system, a number of articles and studies are beginning to provide insight into various pockets of this population's complexities across institution type and across the globe (Bates, 2007; Cullen & Luna, 1993; Dahlvig, 2013; Dahlvig & Longman, 2014; Dominici, Fried, & Zeger, 2009; Jo, 2008; Jones & Taylor, 2013; Nguyen, 2012; Seay, 2010; Tessens et al., 2011; Wallace & Marchant, 2011).

Women managing multiple roles. Although the concepts of work and family have evolved over the last several decades, women still maintain the bulk of the responsibilities associated with the traditional woman role (Polasky & Holahan, 1998). Williams (2004, p. 20) states that "all women, non-mothers as well as mothers, are disadvantaged by a workplace that enshrines the ideal worker who starts to work in early adulthood and works, full time and over time, for forty years straight". Barnett (2004) showed that between 1977 and 2002, women's time spent doing household and childcare tasks remained the same, despite the fact the number of women working outside of the home increased throughout this period. In his 1989 work, Arlie Hochschild, coined the term *second shift,* referring to women who, after working their full-time jobs, came home to also fulfill household activities, which include cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and tending to their children's needs. Research finds that "women who work while maintaining a home and family operate under stress, guilt, time constraints, [and] cultural and self-imposed expectations" as they are typically responsible for household duties and taking care of the children in addition to their professional responsibilities (Dindoffer, Reid, & Freed, 2011, p. 282). For many women who work outside of the home, they are not only burdened by the responsibilities of being a mother and maintaining the household, but also that of caring for aging parents, and "doing the intimacy and/or wifework" (Cummins, 2012, p. 3).

Morris's longitudinal study followed women Harvard 1973 MBA graduates, and found that women struggled with their decisions to fulfill traditional women roles while attempting to climb the corporate ladder (1998); this study compared to Derrington and Sharrat's 1993 and 2007 studies, in which the women participants revealed that home and family responsibilities created significant barriers to their desires of career advancement and promotion (2009). Cummins (2012) shared that working mothers "have a 'natural' time barrier--their children--that

prevent them from staying late at work or cause them to leave meetings before they are complete (p. 4); however, women without children are often expected to work longer hours in the office to finish work tasks. In both cases, women expressed feeling that all their time is spent trying to achieve tenure or promotion, leaving hardly any time for them to network, have fun, or to date (Philipsen, 2008).

Carroll & Malizio's 1993 study and Philipsen's 2008 work emphasize that the professional demands of working in higher education is like that of corporate America. Young (2004) stated that women within higher education are under similar pressures as those in corporate roles as they work towards tenure and climbing the administrative ladder. Perkins (2011) warned that women whose "roles continue to increase and intensify" while trying to maintain the status quo, will be at-risk to such side effects as exhaustion, divorce or separation from a partner, or "deterioration of mental, emotional, and/or physical health" (p. 17).

Double Jeopardy: Black + Woman

For Black women, the burden of trying to manage both their work and personal needs are exacerbated by the social ills that plague their existence. Frances Beal described the condition of Black women within American society as *double jeopardy*--dually plagued by the marginalization associated with racism and sexism (1969, 2008). Beal explained how Black women's position is unlike that of others within the social structure, and the perception of their experiences is riddled by a "wall of grave misconceptions, outright distortions of fact and defensive attitudes on the part of many" (2008, p. 166). In 2010, Black feminist scholar, Moya Bailey, coined the term *misogynoir* while a graduate student at Emory University to describe "the ways that anti-Blackness and misogyny combine to malign Black women in our world" (Anyangwe, 2015; Bailey, 2014). Intended to describe anti-Black sexism experienced by Black

women, *misogynoir* "is informed by a specifically Black experience, not just because of racism and White supremacy, but because of anti-Black projections from non-Black people onto Black people and thereby internalized and proliferated by Black people" (Trudy, 2014).

Racism and sexism. Black feminist, bell hooks, wrote "Ain't I a Woman", which took an in-depth look at the effects of racism and sexism on Black women in America, from slavery to 1970s (1981). hooks posited that the intersection of racism and sexism (which first occurred) during slavery not only created pejorative stereotypes for Black women, but it also contributed to Black women having the lowest social status of any other group in America; these effects continue to impact the experiences of Black women in contemporary society. In describing the unique position of Black women in America, hooks (1981) stated,

> No other group in America has so had their identity socialized out of existence as have black women. We are rarely recognized as a group separate and distinct from black men, or as a present part of the larger group "women" in this culture. When black people are talked about, sexism militates against the acknowledgement of the interests of black women; when women are talked about racism militates against a recognition of black female interests. When black people are talked about the focus tends to be on black men; and when women are talked about the focus tends to be on white women. (p. 7)

In the workplace, Black women also have different experiences from their non-Black women counterparts. While the *glass ceiling* is a common term used to describe the invisible boundary preventing women from advancing beyond a certain level in the workplace, Black women's experiences with such discrimination and mistreatment has been likened to other, more severe, terms, to include the *concrete ceiling*, *concrete wall*, and *acrylic vault* (Cullen & Luna, 1993; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Higginbotham, 1999, as cited in Pompper, 2011; Kern-Foxworth,

1989; Scanlon, 1997). The use of the term *concrete* emphasizes the impenetrable nature of the boundaries placed before Black women seeking to advance within their career (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Higginbotham, 1999, as cited in Pompper, 2011). The acrylic vault misnomer refers to Black women as products of *tokenism*, on display, within their organizations (Kern-Foxworth, 1989).

DeLany & Rogers (2004) analyzes Black women's approach to leadership and learning, considering the challenges of racism and sexism that often get in the way of their ability to serve their communities. Through the analysis of two studies, DeLany & Rogers found that when Black women did take on roles of leadership, it was "not because of situated power that it afforded them, but out of an externally- and internally-induced obligation to distribute scarce resources in a manner that considered those most in need as well as the good of the collective" (2004, p. 103). Furthermore, Black women were not as concerned with the leadership level or educational advancement they would earn by taking on these roles as they were with "fulfilling their advocacy responsibilities" (DeLany & Rogers, 2004, p. 103).

Pompper (2011) examined the intersectionality of ethnicity, age, and gender among American professional women of color who held positions in upper management. The findings indicated that "women of color paradoxically resist and accept master narratives of 'less than' in striving to change organizations and achieve their maximum potential" (Pompper, 2011, p. 464). Specifically for Black women, the research showed that Black women honored elder members of the organization and community, have strong social networks, and embraces "giving back" and the "lifting as we climb" mantra (p. 469). Moreover, Black women showed to be politically active and use their positions to "mobilize their communities" (p. 469).

Black college women. While there have been efforts made to expand the literature on

Black women administrators, the research is still lacking in substantial evidence surrounding their experiences related to their personal and professional realities. However, studies on Black college women and students have provided insight on what it is like to be Black or a Black woman within the American higher education system.

Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso's study examined how the impact of racial microaggressions affected the experiences of Black college students and the overall campus racial climate at institutions of higher education (2000). Through focus groups with Black students at three universities, the study found that "racial microaggressions exist in both academic and social spaces in the collegiate environment" (2000, p. 60). Solorzano et al. (2000) explained the negative effects of racial microaggressions in both academic and social spaces:

...the most obvious of which are the resulting negative racial climate and [Black] students' struggles with feelings of self-doubt and frustration as well as isolation. This means that the [Black] students on the campuses studied must strive to maintain good academic standing while negotiating the conflicts arising from disparaging perceptions of them and their group of origin. (p. 69)

Zamani (2003) analyzed the experiences of Black college women, by looking at the "historical legacy of exclusion and struggle for inclusion by [Blacks] in higher education and... the impact of race and sex on educational participation" (p. 6). Examining historically black colleges and universities as well as single-sex institutions, the chapter provided insight on how various types of higher education institutions "appear to afford [Black] women a sense of agency in meeting their educational needs" (Zamani, 2003, p. 6).

In 2011, Henry, Butler, & West discussed the plight of Black college women who were outpacing their men counterparts as well as other groups in degree attainment, but were still

severely underrepresented in comparison to their white (men and women) counterparts. The study examined some of the psychosocial issues "that diminish the psychological and physical health of young Black college women and impeded their success in college" (Henry et al., 2011, p. 137). The study found that Black college women are affected by *interpersonal issues* (to include, microaggressions, racial hostility, inequitable treatment, and limited access to role models and mentors); *environmental issues* (due to the "lack of critical mass" and "cultural incongruity" that results from attending a predominantly white campus, and can negatively impact the retention of Black college women) (p. 143); *self-identity issues* (which are born out of negative stereotypes that "infiltrate the psyche of these women and damages their self-concept") (p. 144); *psychological issues* (to include, anger, anxiety, and depression); as well as *health issues* (such as obesity, eating disorders, and sexually transmitted diseases) (Henry et al., 2011).

  Controlling images and stereotypes. As part of the racism, sexism, and microaggressions that Black women experience, controlling images and stereotypes also plague their identity. Two of the controlling images that are often associated with Black women are *mammy* and *matriarch*. Collins (2000) describes the mammy as the "faithful, obedient domestic servant" --the first controlling image given to Black women in the United States (p. 72). This stereotype grew out of the economic exploitation of Black women as house slaves during slavery, when Black women were expected to care for White children and families, better than their own. Loving and nurturing in character, the role of the mammy "represents the normative yardstick used to evaluate Black women's behavior" and personifies the perceptions of the ideal Black woman from the standpoint of the White elite (Collins, 2000, p. 72). Mammy knows her place as an obedient servant and has accepted her subordination within the social structure. While the image of the mammy was first derived centuries ago, its impact sustains in current time. Howard-

Baptiste (2014) provides critical commentary on how the mammy trope infiltrates the halls of higher education, shaping the experiences of Black women professors. For Black women in academia, the mammy image creates "arctic spaces", leaving them feeling "disrespected, not acknowledged, and questioning their own intellectual ability" (Howard-Baptiste, 2014, p. 764).

As with the mammy image, the matriarch figure is also "central to intersecting oppressions of class, gender, and race" (Collins, 2000, p. 76). While the mammy image is connected to the Black mother figure in White households, the matriarch refers to the Black mother figure within Black households. A more recent stereotype than that of the mammy, the matriarch image evolved from the increased number of Black households led by Black women; while the mammy represents the "good" Black mother, the matriarch represents the "bad" Black mother (Collins, 2000, p. 75). Collins (2000) shared the thesis that was argued on Black matriarchy from a government report titled *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action*:

> [Black] women who failed to fulfill their traditional 'womanly' duties at home contributed to social problems in Black civil society (Moynihan, 1965). Spending too much time away from home, these working mothers ostensibly could not properly supervise their children and thus were a major contributing factor to their children's failure at school. As overly aggressive, unfeminine women, Black matriarchs allegedly emasculated their lovers and husbands. These men, understandably, either deserted their partners or refused to marry the mothers of their children. From the dominant group's perspective, the matriarch represented a failed mammy, a negative stigma to be applied to [Black] women who dared reject the image of the submissive, hardworking servant. (p. 75)

One of the more common and pervasive stereotypes of Black women in mainstream

American culture is the "angry Black woman" (Ashley, 2014; Griffin, 2012). This negative label

and myth characterizes Black women as "aggressive, ill tempered, illogical, overbearing, hostile,

and ignorant without provocation" (Ashley, 2014, p. 27). According to Ashley (2014), Black

women perpetuate the characteristics of the angry Black woman trope "in response to external

stressors and historical factors" that are specific to their experiences (p. 27). Knowing how

damaging these stereotypes can be for their educational and professional aspirations,

contemporary Black women strive to resist and dismantle these negative typecasts. Using focus

group interviews to collect data, Scott (2013) explored the communicative strategies used by

Black women "as they cross cultural borders to predominantly White environments and furthers

understanding of how and why they enact specific strategies" (p. 312). The findings revealed that

the participants implored such strategies in an effort to dispel the negative stereotypes that have

historically troubled Black women, as well as exhibit their competency in spaces where they are

the minority (Scott, 2013).

    Black hair. For many Black women, their identity is closely linked to their own feelings

about and the external perceptions of their hair. Dating back to the ancient Nile Valley

civilizations of Africa, "hair has maintained a spiritual, social, cultural, and aesthetic significance

in the lives of [Black] people" (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014, p. 87). Historically, Black hair has

been used in a variety of ways—to denote age, religion, social rank, and marital status; to convey

cultural and political messages; and to strengthen the potency of different medicines and healing

potions (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014). With its ability to be "molded and sculpted into various

shapes and forms", African textured hair is unique in its appearance and its display of different

types of hairstyles (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014, p. 87). Contrary to its rich connection to African

and Black culture, Black hair has also been symbolic to the oppression and repression of Black

people, particularly those within the United States. When African slaves were brought over to America, the Europeans shaved their heads upon arrival "in an effort to dehumanize and break the African spirit"; by shaving their heads, the Europeans were able to erase traces of the slaves' African identity (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014, p. 87). In America, textured Black hair was deemed unattractive and offensive, was likened to animals' fur, and was referred to as wool or woolly. On the plantations during slavery, Blacks had to either "emulate White people or cover their heads in effort to not offend Whites, a concept that carries into present society, in a somewhat more nuanced manner" (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014, p. 88).

In present-day America, where Black hair continues to be contentious topic, especially when it comes to Black women's identity and their ideals of beauty. Due to Eurocentric standards of beauty that pervade American culture and the reverberating negative connotations associated with natural Black hair, many Black women have taken steps to alter the texture of their hair by straightening it, either chemically or thermally (Hargro, 2011). To gain a better understanding of the impact of the natural hair aesthetic on today's Black women, Hargro (2011) examined the ways in which society has influenced Black women's perception of their natural hair, and how media and advertising reflects the negative perception of natural hair.

The personal and the professional. In seeking to manage the demands of their personal and professional lives, Black women have faced unique obstacles. Lewis (2011) conducted a qualitative ethnographic study to "determine if work/life balance concerns were relative to the underrepresentation of professional Black women in managerial and leadership positions in the United States workforce" (Abstract). The study resulted in the following seven themes related achieving balance for Black women: Work/life balance is important; Communication affects the level of work/life balance; Job satisfaction, work performance, motivation, commitment, and

turnover are perceived to affect work/life balance; Supervisory support is perceived to affect current work/life initiatives; The concrete ceiling is perceived to be prevalent in the lives of Black women; Black women and opt out phenomenon; and Black women and Generation X characteristics.

Barge's dissertation added the missing voice of Black women to the dialogue on work/life conflict (2011). By taking a phenomenological, narrative approach, Barge interviewed 30 Black women about their personal and professional experiences. The findings "confirmed that relationships, discrimination, ageism, workplace dynamics, and wellness were among the competing priorities impacting [Black women's] abilities to achieve sustainable balance at home and work" (Barge, 2011, p. xiv).

Taking into account that Black women face issues related to racism and sexism in addition to the same work/life struggles shared by other women, Hall, Everett, & Hamilton-Mason (2012) explored the work-related stressors that affect the lives of Black women, and the strategies they use to cope. The five themes that emerged from the research were: being hired or promoted within the workplace, defending one's race and lack of mentorship, shifting or code switching to overcome barriers to employment, coping with racism and discrimination, and being isolated and/or excluded. The findings indicated that the participants in the study managed their work-related stress by imploring emotion- and problem-focused coping responses (Hall et al., 2012).

Women in Higher Education Administration

Despite the increase of women in administrative roles in the higher education system, only a small number of them are rising to the ranks of senior leadership at their institutions. Some question the cause of this disparity, considering the level playing field of educational

preparedness for men and women to qualify for such positions. Oakes (1999) provides three areas of concern for women in higher education administration with regards to inequity between them and their men counterparts: salary discrepancies, leadership traits, and multiple time commitments. Survey data from upper-level administration showed that 80% of senior-level women administrators did not engage in salary negotiations upon hiring, and 60% of them felt as though they were being paid lower than their male counterparts. Regarding leadership traits, it was found that women leaders are more likely to utilize an ethic of care when dealing with professional matters, while males and those in positions of upper-leadership most often utilized the ethic of justice in such instances. This difference in approach may influence the way in which women leaders in college administration are viewed from those they lead and work alongside. Lastly, most women administrators are tagged with fulfilling long hours and handling multiple responsibilities in the workplace, while also being expected to manage the demands of their family, household, marriage, social and personal life. According to Oakes (1999), "[T]he long, irregular hours usually required of administrators often lead to a lack of sufficient time for family", and vice versa (1999, p. 60). Such a negotiation of time and attention often leads to feelings of guilt, confusion, and isolation for women administrators seeking upward mobility within the field (Oakes, 1999).

Black Women in Higher Education Administration

Published in 1980, Mosley conducted one of the earliest studies on the experiences of Black women administrators. Prior to this time, most of the research on Blacks working in higher education centered on the Black man. Mosley's study was intended to ascertain information regarding the number of Black women occupying administrative roles at PWIs, and the types of roles they held; determine the overall status of Black women in these roles; learn the professional

and personal traits of Black women administrators; and "determine the extent of their inclusion in decision making in their respective institutions" (1980, p. 296). As a result of her research, Mosley determined that Black women administrators working in "white academe" were an *endangered species*, shrinking in number across the profession (1980, p. 296). In addition to being treated as tokens, the Black women in Mosley's study were mostly in positions adjacent to the "policy- and decision-making core of higher education" (1980, p. 296). When asked about their general status in their roles as administrators, the women in the study described being "overworked, underpaid, alienated, isolated, uncertain, and powerless" (Mosley, 1980, p. 296). However, the most disappointing finding from the study was that the Black women expressed feeling the most non-support, desertion, and isolation from their Black men counterparts (Mosley, 1980).

As Mosley's study outlined the need for additional research on Black women administrators, Williams (1989) followed Mosley's recommendation by conducting such research via survey inquiry and follow-up interviews with Black women who worked in middle-management roles at different colleges within the City University of New York system. The data produced from Williams's study provided more in-depth knowledge regarding the various aspects of Black women administrators' lives in the mid-1980s. As a result of the findings, Williams (1989) provided recommendations for Black women college administrators at predominantly white institutions to better their work conditions, increase their power and authority on-campus, and to attract more Black women into the field.

Due to the dearth of scholarship on Black women faculty and administrators in higher education, researchers began to add to the paucity of research on Black women by conducting additional research on this group. Kandace G. Hinton examined the professional realities of

Black women administrators at predominantly white institutions for her dissertation (2001). The study's findings suggested that Black women administrators continued to face race- and gender-based discrimination in higher education. Those who were in a same-sex relationship "endure[d] great stress as a result of homophobia" (Hinton, 2001, p. vi); the participants felt they were either accepted or rejected by others based on the tone of their skin; and finally, the women expressed relying on their spirituality and faith in God for coping, support, guidance, and survival in both their personal and professional lives (Hinton, 2001). Building off of Hinton's dissertation study, Hinton in partnership with Carol Logan Patitu conducted a study, exploring the areas of concern, and the overall experiences of Black women faculty and administrators (2003). As related specifically to Black women administrators, the participants of the study cited racism, sexism, and homophobia to as their top concerns (Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

Miles (2012) examined the status of Black women in higher education administration, comparing their experiences with college administrators of another race and gender. Using a web-based instrument to gather data, the study's findings indicated that Black women administrators earned significantly less and were less likely to hold senior-level administrator positions than their counterparts, even when they possessed similar qualifications (Miles, 2012).

Using a qualitative approach, Choates (2012) sought to understand how Black women obtained leadership positions within higher education. Through narrative inquiry, the study aimed to uncover how the influence of mentors impacted the participants' career paths, as well as how race and gender manifested in their career paths (Choates, 2012). Choates found that the women rose to the level of senior administration as a result of early preparation in their careers, gaining as much experience as possible in many different functional areas, volunteering or serving on community boards to obtain additional experience, taking on additional assignments,

shadowing others in higher positions, and "obtaining a doctorate for credibility purposes" (Choates, 2012, p. 125). The participants expressed that mentors impacted their career paths by offering support, encouragement, and advice during their journey to leadership, as well as by providing them with opportunities to develop and gain skills that would beneficial to them in leadership roles. While the women did convey the importance of mentoring and its impact on their careers, they did note that there was a lack of Black women to serve as mentors (Choates, 2012). Finally, the women in the study shared experiences encountering racial and gender discrimination while seeking leadership roles in higher education administration. Due to their race and gender, the women discussed working harder than their colleagues, being overlooked and feeling invisible at work, and the need to "shift of conceal their cultural identities to fit into the mainstream culture to become accepted members of the academy" (Choates, 2012, p. 128).

Understanding the experiences of Black women administrators is important because they inform the recruitment and retention of Black women administrators, and ultimately their likelihood to advance into senior-level positions. *The American College President Study (ACPS)* by American Council on Education's Center for Policy Research and Strategy (CPRS) "is the premier source of demographic data, tracking college and university presidents from public, private, and for-profit accredited, degree-granting institutions" (2017). The 2017 edition of the ACPS revealed that while the percentage of women and minority college presidents has increased over the last 30 years, women of color are the most underrepresented group among college presidents, only making up 5% of college presidents in the country (American Council on Education, 2017).

Mentoring in the Workplace

The concept of mentoring will be explored for this investigation, as it, or the lack thereof,

can have significant impact on the experiences of women college administrators as they reconcile their professional and personal lives.

There is limited available research dedicated to the "mentoring phenomenon of women", and that which does exist is not fully conceptualized or conclusive (Cullen & Luna, 1993). However, contemporary literature provides insight on the topic of mentoring in the workplace, particularly as it relates to women. Dunbar & Kinnersley (2011) define mentoring as "the process whereby a more experienced individual provides counsel, guidance, and assistance to another person, serves an essential function in helping younger or newer employees to develop leadership skills and advance within the organization" (p. 17).

Over the years, the practice of mentoring has emerged as a strategy to provide support measures and strategies for women to achieve career promotion, retention, and success in senior leadership roles (Blackwood, 2010). Scanlon (1997) asserts that "mentoring may be a powerful resource for breaking through the invisible barriers preventing the advancement of capable women". Research has shown that the existence of mentoring can have a significantly positive impact on the earnings and promotion potential of those that are involved in such relationships. It is also suggested that instituting mentoring programs within academe help eradicate some of the inequities that women specifically face in both their pay and career advancement (Hubbard & Robinson, 1998).

The roles of a mentor. According to Bogat & Redner (1985), the mentor is a person with more experience who guides and facilitates the professional growth of their inexperienced protégé. Kram (1985) claimed that mentors provide two primary functions – career development behaviors and psychosocial roles. In the realm of career development, mentors provide coaching, sponsorship, offer challenging assignments, and facilitate positive recognition and visibility for

their protégés. (Kram, 1985). In their psychosocial roles, mentors provide personal support, friendship, acceptance, counseling, and role modeling. Scandura (1992), however, suggests role modeling is a separate third role, different from the psychosocial role.

The mentoring relationship. Searby et al. (2015) describe the evolution of the mentoring relationship over the last three decades. In 1985, mentoring referred to a dyadic relationship with one mentor paired with one protégé; however, more recent literature on mentoring discusses the concept of a developmental network of mentors, in which the protégé has several people, or mentors, who "take an active interest in and action to advance the protégé's career by providing developmental assistance" (p. 99-100).

Various factors contribute to the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship. According to Dunbar & Kinnersly (2011), mentoring relationships are most fruitful when the mentor and protégé share commonalities, such as values, background, experiences, and outlook; these relationships may look like women finding other women to serve as their mentor, and minorities finding mentors of the same ethnic background. In addition, studies show that mentoring relationships that develop organically are much more beneficial than those that are forged through a formal process or program (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). In a study conducted by Tessens et al. (2011), participants expressed their need for peer and supervisor support and networks (2011).

Women's Experiences with Mentoring

The literature suggests that mentoring contributes to the professional success of women college administrators. Dunbar & Kinnersly's study examined the impact of a mentoring relationship on 239 women college administrators in the state of Tennessee (2011). Of the total women surveyed, 64% of the respondents said they had a mentor. Eighty-eight percent of the

women in the study were Caucasian, and engaged in mentoring relationships with mentors who were also Caucasian. In most cases, the mentor and protégé worked at the same institution, and the mentor was in higher ranked position than the protégé. The protégés that were in more informal mentoring relationships found that their mentor provided more "career-mentoring functions" compared to those who were in more formal mentoring relationships (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011, p. 22). These findings were supported by previous research (Blake-Beard, 2001; Ragins & Cotton 1999).

Benefits of mentoring. There is significant evidence to support that mentoring benefits women in their career aspirations. Ballenger (2010) found that women higher education leaders who were engaged in mentoring relationships as a protégé (to either a man or woman mentor) experienced significant career advancement. This repeated notion throughout the literature on mentoring may be a testament to the combination of functions and services that the mentor provides to their protégé. As a result of the mentoring relationship, the protégé is in a position to receive counseling, coaching, acceptance, and friendship; all the psychosocial functions that mentors provided added value to both the personal and professional lives of their protégés (Kram, 1985).

The mentoring relationship not only yields positive results for the protégé, but also for the mentor, through diversity, intrinsic, and organizational outcomes (Ragins, 1997). Diversity outcomes are achieved when the mentor is involved in a relationship with a protégé of a background different from their own; here, mentors "should gain knowledge, empathy, and skills relating to interacting with individuals from different power-related groups" (Ragins, 1997, p. 508). In terms of intrinsic outcomes, the mentor may (a) gain a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment as a result of contributing to growth and development of a younger administrator; (b)

become rejuvenated in their own job and career as a result of the "youthful and creative energy of their protégés" (Ragins, 1997, p. 509); and, (c) receive peer and organizational recognition as a result of the success of their protégé(s). It is believed that the combination of diversity and intrinsic outcomes for the mentor may lead to organizational outcomes as "the mentor may essentially receive a boost to his or her own career that may lead to improved job performance, and heightened job and career satisfaction" (Ragins, 1997).

Barriers to mentoring. Although the data supports the idea that engaging in a mentoring relationship provides significant benefits to women administrators, barriers exist that make it difficult for such relationships to develop. The most common obstacle faced by women administrators is "finding mentors and access to informal networks of advice and support" (Searby et al., 2015, p.98). These women sometimes face resistance and discouragement from those who are in a position to promote them to leadership positions (Searby et al., 2015). Even today, many women administrators remain excluded from the 'boys' clubs' or 'old boys' networks' that exist on many college campuses; this practice keeps women administrators out of the career development loop that is critical for career advancement and promotion (Carr, 2012; Rhode, 2003).

The lack of women in senior leadership roles within higher education also creates barriers for those seeking mentoring relationships. Due to the comparatively fewer number of women "in the upper echelons of higher education leadership", it can be challenging for more junior or mid-level administrators to find a mentor that is more relatable (Searby et al., 2015, p.98). Furthermore, as a result of this disparity, oftentimes the women aspiring to advance within the organization experience discrimination or adversity from women who are in higher ranks within administration; Staines, Travis, & Jayerante (1973) labeled this behavior as the *Queen Bee*

Syndrome in their work on women executives in the workplace. This "syndrome" is most apparent when the more high-ranking women does not want any competition with other women and/or blocks other women striving to reach the same, or similar, levels of success (Scanlon, 1997). Cummins (2012) delved deeper into the Queen Bee Syndrome, and discussed the presence of Princess Bees and Phantom Bees who may also cause hardship or challenges for other women in the organization. Cummins supports the notion of the Queen Bee Syndrome by stating that the Queen Bee believes that "she got to the top by her own fortitude [and savviness]" and can be described as non-mentors and non-supporting of their women colleagues (2012, p. 84). The Princess Bee, however, will provide support to other women if they do not threaten their position or "violate her territory" (Cummins, 2012, p. 84); she is a mentor, but typically to those who work in areas that are not associated with her own. Lastly, the Phantom Been is one who is in a position of power, but "will not facilitate finding another woman for a work position", thus perpetuating the obstacles that women face in the workplace about access to better professional opportunities (Cummins, 2012, p.84).

Such negative behavior by senior-level women leaders consequently can lead to a lack of sponsorship for women--when the mentor nominates or advocates on behalf of their protégé for promotions, lateral moves, and other recognitions; this can also create roadblocks to professional development and career advancement for women college administrators (Searby et al., 2015). Historically, women in administrative roles, even those with exceptional credentials, have found great difficulty in rising through the ranks of a given profession without the sponsorship of a male in a position of power (Moore, 1982). Moreover, with male senior administrators dominating the field, women administrators simply do not have as much access or exposure to other women who are in a position to sponsor them (Searby et al., 2015).

Drawbacks to mentoring. While mentoring is known to have a positive impact of those who engage in such relationships, some women experience negative consequences from such involvement. Scanlon (1997) provided some examples of when women suffer as protégés in mentoring relationships:

> Some protégés face the problem of being guided by mentors who work primarily to further their own careers or who are destructive, exploitative, domineering, or possessive...mentors who leave an organization, who experience loss of status, or who are ineffective in their mentoring will negatively affect their protégé as well. (p. 44)

Moore (1982) discussed "role entrapment" and "tokenism" as other problematic aspects of mentoring experienced by women (p. 8). *Role entrapment* is when the women serving as the protégé realizes they will never be anything more than their mentor's "bright young protégé", and that their mentor is not actively helping to develop them or expose them to situations that will benefit their professionally or personally (p. 8). *Tokenism*, on the other hand, takes place when the woman protégé is the "token female", or only woman in a male-dominated field or office; in these cases, the *token female* is only called upon to check the organization's box, either to show diversity, or provide a differing perspective on an issue or initiative. At times, tokenism can ignite a "sense of specialness or exceptionalism" in the token female, thus encouraging her to want to keep other women outside of group, further perpetuating the barriers to mentorship for women (p. 9).

Difficulties acquiring mentors. Another major barrier to mentoring that many women face is their inability to acquire a mentor to guide them through the professional/administrative pipeline. With males dominating higher education administration, it can be difficult for a woman administrator to find a mentor because of what is perceived as "the unwillingness of men to share

power with women, or to select women for mentoring because women challenge the 'unspoken law of homogeneity'" in roles of leadership (Moore, 1982, as cited in Scanlon, 1997). There are, however, some men who are open to mentoring women administrators, but fear a loss of credibility from their male colleagues or the possibility that "a successful [woman] may replace them at the top levels of management" (Scanlon, 1997, p. 45). Women in senior-level positions who were surveyed about the barriers they faced as they aim to rise through the ranks of administration stated that "they felt powerless at times, feeling the need to work harder than men to be considered credible and finding it difficult to be recognized and promoted" (Scanlon, 1997, p. 45).

While some women administrations have been lucky enough to be mentored by men at their institutions, many of the women say that they prefer to be mentored by another woman. Unfortunately, due to the relatively small number of women in high-level administration, there are just not enough women mentors for the number of women seeking mentors. And, those who are in positions to mentor other women, often "too busy proving themselves capable of maintaining their newly acquired positions to exhaust themselves on the needs of protégés" (Scanlon, 1997, 45-46).

Research on the topic of mentoring suggests that women themselves sometimes create their own barriers in finding a valuable mentor. Scanlon (1997) suggests women have a tendency to believe that they are unworthy of mentorship and/or professional guidance and influence. Thus, they fail to seek positions of senior leadership or a mentor to help them get there. Scanlon (1997) explains that "one barrier created by lack of socialization is the ignorance of women regarding the games and rules of work" (p. 46); in addition, women's uneasiness in situations

that require competition, argumentation, and ambition at times makes it difficult for women to acquire a mentor, and ultimately achieve professional success (Scanlon, 1997).

Black Women's Experience with Mentoring

The benefits of a mentoring relationship for women cannot be disputed, and the research shows that "a lack of mentorship or sponsorship can stand in the way of promotion" (Allen, Jacobson & Lomotey, 1995, p. 411). Black women, however, face a "double bind"—a dual race and gender bias—when seeking mentors from the traditional "old boy network" (Allen et al., 1995, p. 411). According to Shakeshaft (1987), Black women "[suffer] doubly in sponsorship' because White men tend to promote other White men" (as cited in Allen et al., 1995). Erroline Williams' 2007 dissertation explored the intersections of race and gender in relation to the mentoring relationships and the career advancement of Black women administrators in higher education. In the qualitative study, in which 11 Black senior-level women administrators were interviewed, Williams (2007) found that not only did the administrators credit their career advancement to having a mentor, but that it was necessary for the mentor to have a "vested interest for the relationship to be beneficial and that both mentor and protégé must be committed, stay connected, and accessible" (p. 132). Moreover, the participants mentioned that it was important for those administrators seeking mentorship to identify potential mentors who could help with their career advancement, instead of waiting to be mentored (Williams, 2007). This notion supports Bridges (1996), which encourages junior-level administrators

> to identify [Blacks] who have reached the higher administrative levels in academia and ask them how they reached these levels. Identifying the characteristics of successful Blacks in education provides valuable information that aids young Blacks in their quest toward success. (p. 749).

In addition, the participants in Williams' study found that their mentor was beneficial in helping them to navigate the political arena of their institutions and within the field of higher education (Williams, 2007).

When asked about the influence of the gender and race of their mentors, the participants in Williams' study reported that "neither race nor gender of the mentor was a significant factor in the developmental relationship" (2007, p. 111). Instead, for them, the influence and positional power of the mentor had a more direct impact on the protégés perceived effectiveness of the relationship. This notion is supported by Ragins' model of *diversified mentoring*— "mentoring relationships composed of mentors and protégés who differ in group membership associated with power differences in organizations" (Ragins, 1997, p. 482). According to Ragins, cross-race and cross-gender relationships reveal important distinctions that should be considered regarding the mentoring process and its expected outcomes (1997).

Using a qualitative approach, Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson (2014) interviewed Black student affairs administrators who work at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) about their lived experiences and factors that enabled and inhibited their career success. Among other factors, mentoring relationships--regardless of the gender or race of the mentor--served as an enabler to their career success. Moss's (2014) dissertation explored the role of mentoring and career advancement for Black women mid-level community college administrators. From the study, Moss found that Black women mid-level administrators preferred informal mentoring relationships as opposed to formal mentoring relationships, and for them neither gender nor race of the mentor were factors of importance. However, they did prefer psychosocial support from their mentors over career development support (Moss, 2014).

Alternate approaches to traditional mentoring. While sparse in relationship to Black

women administrators, more current works show that Black women have begun to develop alternate methods for leveraging the intended outcomes of traditional mentoring relationships to which they often face obstacles. Apugo (2017) explored the use of peer relationships among Black women millennial graduate students. The participants of the study said that though informally constructed, their peer relationships were "purposed...to fill a void often through formal mentor relationships" (Apugo, 2017, p. 347). The women in the study also utilized their peer relationships for academic, professional, and emotional support to help them to "process instances of perceived negative race-related behaviors" (Apugo, 2017, p. 347).

Croom, Beatty, Acker, and Butler (2017) investigated the motivations for undergraduate Black womyn[2] to engage in "sister circle"-type organizations. The study found that sister circles, or "groups that center race and gender", allowed the participants to observe how Black womyn co-existed, find role models with similar experiences to provide guidance, and find a space to discuss and be more of themselves (Croom et al., 2017, p. 1). As with the peer relationships with Black women graduate students that Apugo (2017) described, sister circle organizations allowed undergraduate Black women "to find and create spaces where they can resolve [the] negative experiences and messages" perpetuated via the interlocking systems of oppression (Croom et al., 2017, p.1). Moss's (2014) research supports the need for Black women's support networks, stating that they were "necessary and offer tools for the survival of the [Black woman] mid-level administrator" (p. v).

Theoretical Framework: Black Feminist Thought

This research study is grounded in the theoretical framework of Patricia Hill Collins's

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[2] The term "womyn" used in Croom et al. (2017) is a nonstandard spelling of women, developed by feminists to avoid the world from ending in -men and to de-center men for the identity of the woman gender.

Black Feminist Thought (BFT). This theory provides the foundation for understanding the

perspective of Black women and their daily struggles with oppression and discrimination within

various forums. Black Feminist Thought is predicated on the idea that only Black women can

produce and clarify the standpoint of Black women's experiences, despite its portrayal through

mediums produced by the dominant culture. BFT also highlights the ways in which Black

women intellectuals have been marginalized within academic spaces, which is underscored by

the narratives provided by the participants in the study. This theory, therefore, is relevant to this

topic as it aligns with the goal of the research, which is to allow Black women administrators to

share their lived experiences within both personal and professional spaces.

Specifically, Black Feminist Thought consists of the following distinguishing features

(Collins, 2000):

1. Black women's group location in intersecting oppressions produces commonalities
   among individual Black women.

2. Black Feminist Thought emerges from a tension linking experiences and ideas.

3. Black Feminist Thought is concerned with the connections between Black women's
   experiences as a heterogeneous collectivity and any ensuing group knowledge or
   standpoint.

4. Black Feminist Thought is concerned with the essential contributions of Black women
   intellectuals.

5. Black Feminist Thought is concerned with the significance of change.

6. Black Feminist Thought is concerned with its relationship to other projects for social
   justice.

   In addition, BFT involves five key concepts that relates to the unique experiences of

Black women: outsider-within, intellectual activism, matrix of domination, controlling images, and self-definition. *Outsider-within* refers to the status of Black women in which they are "invited into places where the dominant group has assembled, but they remain outsiders because they are invisible and have no voice when dialogue commences" (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 21). *Intellectual activism* involves the reclaiming of "Black women's intellectual traditions", allowing the production of intellectual work by Black women, artists, and activists to be considered and accepted as more than objects of study, but as scholarship and social action (Collins, 2000, p. 17). Collins describes the *matrix of domination*--in opposition to intersectionality which includes the "particular forms of intersecting oppressions" —as the way in which the intersecting oppressions are actually organized (Collins, 2000, p. 18). *Controlling images* include negative stereotypes that have been placed on Black women by the dominant group in order to sustain their position as a subordinate group; According to Collins, "mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot momas helps to justify U.S. Black women's oppression" (2000, p. 69). In response to the controlling images placed upon Black women, Black Feminist Thought promotes *self-definition*, which is "the power to name one's own reality" (Collins, 2000, p. 300). When Black women use their voices to define their truths, it shifts the power of Black women's identity from the dominant group back to themselves.

Summary

While there is a variety of literature available to support the study of Black women administrators, gaps in the scholarship that fully address the lived experiences and mentoring relationships of this population remain. A review of the literature identified the areas of research peripheral to the research topic, highlighting the need for additional study on Black women administrators' lived experiences and mentoring relationships. In addition to the literature

review, the theoretical framework, Black Feminist Thought, was discussed in further detail. The next chapter, Chapter Three: Methodology, outlines the methodological approach utilized in this study to capture the unfiltered interpretations of Black women administrators' personal and professional lives, as well as their mentoring relationships.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter of the dissertation provides information regarding the research design, population, sample, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures of this study. This qualitative research investigation utilized an interpretative phenomenological analysis as its primary approach to allow the participants to fully and deeply express their interpretations of their lives as Black women college administrators. The participants were selected and invited to participate in the study based on a selection criteria that was implemented in order to create a homogenous sample. Semi-structured interviews and reflective journals were used as data collection sources to capture the experiences of the participants as it relates specifically to their personal and professional lives, as well as their mentoring relationships with other women administrators.

The primary purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to give voice to the lived experiences of Black women college administrators within the American higher education system, while gaining understanding of their unique experience from their individual perspectives. The secondary purpose of the study was to examine how Black women college administrators experienced mentoring relationships with other women college administrators, to include how they perceived the value of those relationships in various aspects of their lives.

Pilot Study

In 2016, I conducted a pilot study on the topic (but focused broadly on women instead of Black women) as a way to explore the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach utilized in this research. The outcomes of the pilot study informed the research design and helped to refine the data collection methods for this investigation. Specifically, as a result of the pilot study, it was decided that each participant would be interviewed 3 times instead of twice, with

the third interview taking place as a follow-up after the submission and review of the reflective journal entries. Additionally, the pilot study helped me to determine that it was better to have the reflective journal entries conducted via audio- or video-recordings, and not have written or typed reflective journal entries as an option for the participants.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the research to uncover both relevant and uncommon themes, while gaining insight into the lives and mentoring relationships of Black women college administrators:

Q1:   In what ways do Black women college administrators experience their lives as they relate to their professional demands and pursuits, and personal interests and obligations?

Q2:   How do Black women college administrators describe their experience with mentoring relationships with other women college administrators?

Q2a: In what ways, if any, does the mentoring relationship add value to Black women college administrators' perception of their personal and professional lives?

Research Design

The lived experiences of Black women college administrators, including their experiences with mentoring relationships with other women administrators, was explored via a qualitative, interpretative phenomenological research study. Qualitative research aims to generate knowledge through description, attention to process, and "collaboration within in a social structure and with its people" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 4). Due to the richness of the data that can be gathered through qualitative research, this type of methodology was chosen for this

topic as it allowed for an in-depth investigation that could yield extensive data on a topic that is currently scarce in the literature.

A phenomenological theoretical tradition was utilized for this study, because it allowed me to approach "[the] phenomenon with a fresh perspective, as if viewing it for the first time, through the eyes of participants who have direct, immediate experience with it" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 50). This definition aligns with the intention of this investigation, which was to gain a more in-depth understanding of the intersection of the professional work and the personal priorities of Black women college administrators within the American higher education system. This approach supported the goal of obtaining rich, first-hand data from the participants regarding their experience, highlighting their contributions as expert knowledge (p. 50). The phenomenological approach was most fitting to this investigation as it incorporated the actual experiences of the participants to understand the essence of the phenomenon, precluding my experience, perspective, and judgment from the data collected, and utilized both "universal and divergent aspects of [the] experience itself" (p. 45).

The interpretive paradigm was the best suited perspective for this study as it "is based on the human need to understand self and others" (Humble & Morgaine, 2002). "Developing interpretations of the meanings that constitute life's realities is the focus of this paradigm", which took place when the participants "organize[d] their lives through 'defining the objects, events, and situations which they encounter'" (Blumer, 1956, p. 686 as cited in Humble & Morgaine, 2002). In this study, I interpreted the interpretations (or meaning making) of the Black women college administrators' lived experiences, to include their experiences with mentoring relationships with other women administrators.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as the research approach for this investigation. Phenomenological in nature due to its "[concern] with exploring experience in its own terms", IPA allows qualitative researchers to investigate how others make meaning of significant life experiences (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1). Smith et al. (2009) describes Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as idiographic, due to its "commit[ment] to the detailed examination of the particular case" (p. 3). In addition, IPA employs a double hermeneutic, meaning "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 53). IPA was ultimately chosen for this study to gain an in-depth understanding of how Black women college administrators make meaning of their personal and professional lives, as well as their experiences with mentoring relationships with other women college administrators.

Population

The population to be examined through this study will be mid-level, Black women student affairs administrators, who work at four-year public institutions within the American higher education system. Within the context of the American higher education system, student affairs typically refers to the area that "support[s] the academic mission of the institution through the facilitation of programs and services outside the classroom" (Cameron, 2011). At some colleges and universities in the country, administrators are classified as administrative or professional faculty (George Mason University, 2014; Old Dominion University, 2015). As noted, for example, in the Administrative and Professional Faculty Handbook of a large public four-year institution in the mid-Atlantic region of the country, "administrative faculty and professional faculty are normally referred to collectively, as both require advanced learning

acquired by prolonged formal instruction and/or specialized training and work experience"

(George Mason University, 2012); however, they are typically two distinct employment types.

Different from the role and scope of academic faculty, administrative faculty and professional

faculty generally "perform work related to the management of the educational and general

activities of the university, for at least fifty percent (50%) of their work" (George Mason

University, 2012); these individuals usually serve in an executive leadership capacity, such as a

vice president, provost, or dean. On the other hand, professional faculty positions "require the

incumbent to regularly exercise professional discretion and judgment and to produce work that is

intellectual and varied and is not standardized"; these roles "may support education, research,

University Life and other such activities" (George Mason University, 2012).

Although "the hierarchical nature of distinguishing mid-level professionals from other

administrators is the commonly accepted practice or measure in the student affairs profession", it

is difficult to universally define *mid-level* with relation to student affairs administration

(Cameron, 2011). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, a mid-level administrator (or

administrative or professional faculty) will refer to those who "occupy space between entry level

professionals and senior student affairs officers", with five to fifteen years of professional

experience post-Master's degree (Ackerman & Roper, 2007, p. vii).

Sample

A purposive sampling method was used to identify potential participants for the study,

"because they can offer a research project insight into a particular experience" (Smith et al.,

2009). Potential participants were identified via *opportunities*, or from my own contacts, to

ensure the participants met the sample criteria (Smith et al., 2009). In an effort to create a

homogenous sample, as recommended for IPA studies, individuals who fit all of the following

parameters were invited to participate in the study: a Black woman, served in professional/administrative faculty role, currently employed at a four-year public institution of higher education, holds a Master's degree or higher, and has at least five years of full-time work experience as a college administrator (Coordinator-level or higher). In addition, IPA studies focus more on the "detailed account of individual experience[s]", where quality is celebrated more than the quantity; therefore, a small sample of six participants was utilized for this study (Smith et al., 2009, p. 51).

To initiate participant recruitment, a list of at least ten potential participants who fit the selection criteria was created. An email invitation for study participants was sent to a closed group of six (of the ten pre-selected) Black women administrators requesting their participation in the study, which included a link to a private Google Form survey that asked questions that verified their adherence to the selection criteria. I continued to invite potential participants from the original list to create the intended sample size of six Black women administrators. The email invitation included the purpose, description, data collection methods, and approximate timeline for the study (see Appendix A for email recruitment invitation). Once the six participants were confirmed, I shared additional information about the study, to include the reflective journal protocol (see Appendix B) and availability to schedule the first interview.

As outlined in the Informed Consent Forms, no compensation was offered or provided to the participants in exchange for their participation in the study.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data gathering instrument. As such, "the researcher's role is to present questions to participants that can elicit detailed, subjective responses" (Scherzer, 2015). For this investigation, my role as research was to develop and

facilitate the interview protocol as well as create optional prompts for the video- and audio-recorded reflective journal entries. Furthermore, as an IPA researcher, I also engaged in a double hermeneutic throughout the data collection and analysis phases of the research study, which required my interpretation of the participants' interpretation of their experiences. Smith et al. (2009) elaborates on the IPA researcher's role in detail:

> The researcher is making sense of the participant, who is making sense of x. and this usefully illustrates the dual role of the researcher as both like and unlike the participant. In one sense, the researcher is like the participant, is a human being drawing on everyday human resources in order to make sense of the world. On the other hand, the researcher is not the participant, she/he only has access to the participant's experience through what the participant reports about it, and is also seeing this through the researcher's own, experientially-informed lens. So, in that sense, the participant's meaning-making is first-order, while the researcher's sense-making is second-order. (pp.35-36)

It is important to note that, as the researcher, I shared the same baseline characteristics of the sample: serve as a mid-level Black women college administrator, currently employed at a public, four-year institution of higher education within the American higher education system, holds a Master's degree, and have more than five years of full-time experience as a college administrator. Due to these congruencies, it was highly likely that I would share similar life experiences as described by the participants; therefore, it was important that I did not project my own personal feelings and perspective on the participants or throughout the research process. In an effort to avoid researcher bias and ensure confidence in the findings of the investigation, I incorporated multiple strategies of trustworthiness, to include reflexive journals, field notes, and member checking. These methods will be further discussed later in the chapter.

Furthermore, it was my responsibility, as the researcher, to protect the participants from risks throughout the duration and beyond the conclusion of the study. I conduct this study, I sought the approval from my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB application served as the first of several steps taken to protect the rights and privacy of the participants throughout the research process. The participants were granted anonymity as all identifying information was either replaced with pseudonyms and removed from the data to protect their identity. Data collection began upon receipt of approval from the IRB at my institution of study.

Data Collection

To obtain relevant and significant data for this study, I employed both semi-structured interviews and reflective journals completed by the participants. These methods of data collection provided the critical information necessary to better comprehend this phenomenon and address the research questions.

Interviews. I invited six Black women college administrators from a select public, 4-year institutions of higher education in the southeastern region of the United States, to participate in a total of three (3) one-on-one, semi-structured interviews for the primary data source for this study. Each of the interviews were conducted in-person with the participant on the campus of the university at which they worked. The first interview with each of the participants focused on research question #1, which involves the participants describing their lives as they experience it with relation to their professional demands and pursuits, as well as the personal responsibilities and interests. The second interview, which took place approximately 2-3 weeks after the initial interview, focused on research question #2, highlighting the participants' experiences with mentoring relationships with other women college administrators. The third interview took place at the conclusion of the reflective journaling period to allow for follow-up questions and provide

the participants the opportunity to share any final thoughts, stories, or reflections from their experience being involved in the study.

The purpose of the interviews was to gain in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences as Black women college administrators as they experience both their personal and professional lives. In these instances, I facilitated the conversations with a series of questions to which the participants were asked to respond honestly and thoroughly. Throughout the interviews, I wrote field notes, and audio-recorded the interviews to avoid recall errors; the interviews were transcribed after each session to later coding and analysis.

Reflective journaling. In addition to being interviewed, the participants were also asked to complete reflective journals to elaborate on their personal and professional experiences, from their perspective, as a secondary data source. I provided prompts to which the participants had the choice to use for their reflective journals. The participants were also given the choice to either audio- or video-record their reflective journal entries; they were given 4-6 weeks to record at least 4 reflective journal entries. The reflective journals allowed the participants the opportunity to document their honest and uncensored interpretations of their professional and personal lives as they experienced it.

Measures

Prior to the start of the individual interviews, I gave each participant an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix C), for which they were given time to read, sign, and return. The participants were also given a description of the study with my contact information to keep for their records.

Interviews. The interview discussions began with the me dictating the opening interview script (see Appendix D). To avoid potential recall issues and for later transcription, the interview

sessions were audio-recorded via an audio recorder application on my password-protected iPad. The recordings were saved as a password-protected file on a USB drive that was stored in a locked drawer in my work office. The transcription of each interview was sent to the participants upon completion to review of accuracy. The respondents were asked to respond with any changes or clarification to the transcription within 72 hours of receipt. All personal identifying information was either replaced with pseudonyms or not included in the transcripts in order to maintain the participants' anonymity.

As researcher, I developed the questions used for all of the interviews (see Appendix E for questions used in Interviews 1 & 2[3]). Utilizing the literature review of the topic, the research questions, as well as my own personal experience as a Black woman college administrator, the interview questions are derived in a manner to not lead participants into answering in a specific way, but to allow them to share their true and unfiltered experiences in order to obtain data that would be analyzed to help fill the gap in the literature on this topic.

Reflective journals. The researcher provided each participant with a Reflective Journaling protocol, which outlined the purpose, direction, and intended timeline for the reflective journals. Writing prompts, which I developed, were provided to the participants to help evoke thought, memories, and experiences; however, the participants were not required to use the prompts. The participants were allowed to speak freely about anything that they felt was relevant to their experience as a Black woman college administrator. To store and protect the data, I created a folder in password-protected Google Drive account, which was shared only between the individual participant and myself, for each of the participants to upload their

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[3] The 3rd interview with the participants was a follow-up interview to their preceding interviews as well as their reflective journals. Each list of questions for Interview #3 was unique to the participant's data.

reflective journal files. The participants were given approximately 4-6 weeks to complete at least four journal entries. In addition to the interview transcripts, the transcribed video- and audio-recorded journal entries were coded for emergent themes for content analysis.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of the data collection, the data gathered from the series of semi-structured interviews and reflective journals were analyzed in accordance to the data analysis steps specified by Smith et al. (2009) for IPA studies. The steps of IPA data analysis include: (1) "immersing oneself in the original data" by *reading and re-reading* each transcript as well as listening to the audio recording of the reflective journals (p. 82); (2) *initial noting* by "examining semantic content and language" of the transcript to identify anything of interest (p. 83); (3) "analyzing exploratory comments" from your initial level of analysis to *develop emergent themes* within the case (p. 91), (4) *searching for connections across emergent themes* by utilizing abstraction, polarization, contextualization, numeration, and function (pp. 96-98); (5) *moving to the next case* to repeat the aforementioned process; and finally (6) looking for patterns across cases.

Assumptions

Several assumptions were made in order to effectively conduct the interpretative phenomenological analysis of the lived experiences and mentoring relationships of Black women college administrators. The first assumption was that the data collected from the study's participants would provide sufficient information to not only understand their lived experiences with regard to their professional and personal lives, but also the manner in which they make meaning of those experiences.

The second assumption is that the participants provided honest, in-depth responses to the interview questions as well as in their audio- or video-recorded reflective journal entries. To facilitate full disclosure and meaningful responses, the Informed Consent form outlined voluntary participation in the study, opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time, as well as methods for participant anonymity throughout the study.

The third assumption is that the participants would fully commit to the investigations' data collection process, by participating in all three interviews and providing at least four audio- and/or video-recorded reflective journal entries over the allotted 4-6 week timeframe. The combination of primary (semi-structured interviews) and secondary (reflective journal entries) data sources for this study were incorporated in order to capture comprehensive interpretations of the lived experiences of Black women college administrators in addition to their experiences with mentoring relationships with other women college administrators.

Limitations

The primary limitation of the study was the generalizability of findings. This investigation is qualitative in nature; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to apply to the entire population. The small sample size used in this IPA study also poses a limitation to this research. With only six participants involved in this study, there is no way that the experiences of the women in this study encompasses all of the nuances of the experiences of Black women student affairs administrators. However, the IPA approach suggests small sample sizes to allow for intensive case-by-case data analysis, which was conducted for this investigation to gain a better understanding of how individual Black women college administrators made meaning of their mentoring relationships and lived experiences. Furthermore, I was the sole researcher for this study; I collected the data, conducted the analysis, as well as determined the codes and

themes. While I did engage in bracketing in an attempt to eliminate researcher bias, the human element was present, and may have influenced the outcomes of the study. At the same time, outside perspectives, which may have allowed for alternate or additional themes to be developed, were not included and may have limited or changed the outcomes of the study.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this investigation referred to the sample used to answer the research questions. Utilizing the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach, the participants for this study were delimited to: being a Black woman student affairs administrators, working at four-year, public institution of higher education within the United States of America, holding at least a Master's degree, and having at least 5 years of full-time experience as an administrative/professional faculty position. Moreover, the data collection method of reflective journaling was be delimited to audio- or video-recordings, and did not include written reflective journal entries.

Strategies for Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness in the study, credibility was established in four primary ways: member checking, researcher reflexive journaling, field notes, and methodological triangulation. Member checking, "a strategy for maximizing trustworthiness", took place throughout and at the conclusion of the interviews (Hays & Singh, 2012). During the interview, I probed the participants for clarity on specific points that were made; after each of the interviews, I sent the participants copies of the transcription to review for accuracy. In addition, I took field notes during the interviews to capture the contextual elements of the experience and any noteworthy moments or feelings that emerged throughout the process Moreover, due to my shared experiences with the participants as a Black woman college administrator, I engaged in

reflective journaling throughout the data collection process as it "is a strategy that can facilitate reflexivity, whereby researchers use their journal to examine 'personal assumptions and goals' and clarify 'individual belief systems and subjectivities' (Ortlipp, 2008). Lastly, methodological triangulation—which involves using multiple data collection methods—occurred through semi-structured interviews with each of the participants in addition to the participants' reflective video- and audio-recorded journals (Denzin, 1978).

Summary

The primary purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to give voice to and gain understanding of the lived experiences of Black women college administrators within the American higher education system. This study will also examine Black women college administrators' experience with mentoring relationships with other women college administrators, including include how they perceive the value of those relationships in various aspects of their lives. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was utilized as the research approach for this inquiry as it allowed the lived experiences of participants to be unearthed in an manner that provided rich data through subjective perspectives. The homogeneous sample--as dictated by the IPA approach--included six Black women college administrators, recruited via my personal contacts. Data were collected via 3 semi-structured interviews with each participant, as well as from the participants' audio- or video-recorded reflective journals.

At the conclusion of data collection, I followed the steps of data analysis for an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, as outlined by Smith et al. (2009). Each of the interviews and reflective journals were transcribed to allow for the development of emergent themes from within each case, and ultimately across cases. Having utilized the interpretative analysis of the participants' unique lens on the topic, this study yielded rich, in-depth insight into

the phenomenon, which will help to fill the gap in the existing literature on the lived experiences and mentoring relationships specific to Black women college administrators.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative, interpretative phenomenological investigation was to give voice to the lived experiences of Black women student affairs administrators within the American higher education system; in addition, the study was also designed to examine how these women experience mentoring relationships with other women college administrators. The analysis was conducted based on the interpretation of the researcher using the process outlined by Smith et al. (2009) for data analysis of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis studies.

This chapter discusses the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews and reflective journals, then outlines the findings resulting from the data collection and analysis processes. Chapter Four includes brief descriptions of each of the six participants to allow the reader to gain a better understanding of each woman's unique perspective, and provides a space for each of their voices and experiences to be acknowledged and honored as contributions to this research as intended in phenomenological work. Following the descriptions of the participants, the emergent themes are discussed in detail, using excerpts from the participants' interviews and reflective journal entries to support the justification for each theme. A summary of the main points is provided at the conclusion of the chapter.

The Participants

Due to the phenomenological approach used for this study, the participants' contributions were critical to the research process (Smith et al., 2009). A sample of six Black women student affairs administrators was used for this study, as Smith et al. "suggest that between three and six participants can be a reasonable sample size" for an IPA project (2009). The following summaries are intended to provide background information about each of the participants to allow the reader greater insight into who they are as individuals and student affairs professionals.

Table 1 provides demographic information for the six participants. To protect their privacy, the

participants' actual names are replaced by pseudonyms throughout the study.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Name*	Marital status	Children	Years of full-time experience	Student affairs functional area
Nia	Single	None	6	Diversity and inclusion
Jade	Married	None	7	Student Success and Retention
Alex	Married	None	6	Student Success and Retention
Simone	Single	None	10	Student Support and Advocacy
Harper	Single	No biological; Temporary custody of 2 nephews	5	Health Promotion/ Student Advocacy
Cameron	Married	1 child	5	Student Leadership Development

*Pseudonyms are used for the real names of the participants to protect their identity and privacy.

Participant #1 – Nia

Nia is a Black woman from the Midwest of the U.S., between 25 and 35 years of age. She

is the only child of her parents, an African father and a Black American mother. She has 6 years

of experience as a full-time student affairs administrator, and has worked in full-time

professional roles at three different institutions in three different states. She serves as

an Associate Director in her office. She is unmarried, but in a committed relationship[4], with no

children. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Communication Studies from a public, four-year

university and a Master's degree in Higher Education from an Ivy League institution. Her work

has primarily centered on multicultural affairs, social justice, and diversity and inclusion.

Participant #2 – Jade

Jade is a Black woman from the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S., between 25 and 35 years

of age. She currently serves in a Director-level role at her institution. She is the only daughter,

and youngest child of her mother. She has an older brother, and two nephews. She has been

married for seven years and has no children. Jade has been a full-time college administrator for 7

years, and has worked at two different institutions in the same state. She holds a Bachelor's

degree in Human Services from a public, state university and a Master's degree in Counseling

Education from a private religious-affiliated university; she is also a National Certified

Counselor. Jade is currently pursuing her doctoral degree. Most of her experience has centered

on advising, student success, and retention.

Participant #3 – Alex

Alex is a Black woman from the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S., and is between 25 and

35 years of age. She currently serves in an advisor-level role at her institution, after formerly

serving as a Director at her previous institution. She is a newlywed with no children. She is her

parents' only daughter, and she has an older brother. She has 6 years of full-time experience as

an administrator, and has worked at two different institutions in full-time roles. Alex holds a

Bachelor's degree in Human Services and a Master's degree in Counseling Education. Alex has

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[4] In this case, "committed relationship" refers to a romantic couple in which both parties are exclusively dating each
other, with the intention of getting married in the future.

experience in career development, as well as student success and retention.

Participant #4 – Simone

Simone is a Black woman from a metropolis in the northeast region of the U.S.; she is between 25 and 35 years of age. She has about 10 years of full-time experience in student affairs administration, and has worked at four different institutions in three different states. Simone serves as a manager at her current institution, at which she has worked for a little more than 1 year. She is first-generation American, and the only child of a Caribbean-born mother. Simone holds a Bachelor's degree in Health Science and a Master's degree in Social Work from public, state universities. She is not married and does not have any children. The majority of Simone's work experience involves housing and residence life, student conduct, and now student support and advocacy.

Participant #5 – Harper

Harper is a Black woman from the southeast region of the U.S., and is between 25 and 35 years old. She has five years of full-time experience in student affairs administration, and currently serves in a dual Assistant Director role at her current institution. She has worked at two higher education institutions, both in the same state in which she currently lives and works. Harper is single, with no biological children, but has temporary custody of her two nephews. She is the youngest child to her mother, and has two older siblings - a sister and brother. Harper holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and a Master's degree in Higher Education. She will begin her doctoral studies soon. Harper's work centers on health promotion and student support and advocacy.

Participant #6 – Cameron

Cameron is a Black woman from the Midwest, and is between 25 and 35 years of age.

She has five years of full-time experience in student affairs administration. She has worked at three different institutions, in three different states. She has been married for 3 years, has one young child and is currently pregnant with her second child. She currently serves in a Coordinator-level role, after serving as a Director at her former institution. Cameron holds a Bachelor's degree in Human Development and Family Sciences, as well as a Master's degree and Doctor of Education degree in Adult Education. Most of Cameron's professional experience has involved sorority and fraternity life as well as student leadership development.

Results

This investigation was guided by three research questions, designed to elicit in-depth and unfiltered responses from the participants. As the researcher, I performed all of the data analysis (with the exception of transcribing the interviews and audio-recorded reflective journal entries), to include the development of emergent themes. After my initial and second round of coding, I imported the transcripts into Dedoose software to help me develop the themes; through the use of visual aids and charts, I was able to see and quantify which codes were the most prevalent per participant as well as across all of the data sources. Following Smith et al.'s (2009) outline for data analysis, the codes were derived via thorough and repeated review and noting of each participant's' transcripts and reflective journals. This step allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of each of the participants' experiences and perspectives, as well as interpret the meanings of their sentiments. This step was repeated for each of the participants' data sources, followed by analysis across the cases to identify identical or similar codes across all of the participants (see Appendix F for the presentation of codes). Of all of the codes derived throughout the analysis process, four themes emerged as the most telling of the participants' experiences and the most consistent across the six cases, while addressing the research questions.

Themes

Analysis of the data and its subsequent theme development yielded four themes that related to the research questions and the areas of focus within this study. The four themes, unearthed from the interpretative analysis of the transcribed interviews and reflective journals, are listed below. Contextual information to support each of the themes, to include excerpts from the participants' data sources, is also provided.

1. Hyper-awareness of self

2. Importance of relationships with Black women

3. Opportunity to give back through work

4. Negotiating demands of professional and personal life

The following presents a detailed description of the thematic findings as determined through an in-depth analysis of the participants' interviews and reflective journal entries. Through the use of direct quotes that are representative of the general coding, the participants' experiences will be highlighted to support each of the described themes.

Hyper-awareness of Self

The theme, *Hyper-awareness of Self*, derived as a result of the participants' recurring expressions of how they think about themselves in relation to the perceived expectations that others have of them, and how they engage in certain behaviors in order to meet such expectations or avoid perpetuating certain stereotypes. Throughout the data collection process, each of the participants talked about an intense awareness of self that they often experience as Black women in their professional roles; it is an ever present and consistent cognitive process which involves repeated questioning of how they are presenting themselves in their work environment. Due to their intersecting identities of being both Black and a woman, the participants expressed the

unspoken need to make conscious decisions about their physical appearance (to include, attire and hairstyles), their demeanor, their spoken and written communication, as well as their professional output on a daily basis; this is done in order to fulfill the expectations that these women perceive others have of them as Black women in this field, and to prove their competence and professionalism as a student affairs administrator. Here, Jade describes how others' perception of her as a Black woman administrator impacts her thoughts and behaviors.

> Yeah, I think professionally...a challenge for me is that I'm always aware. I always want to be aware of how I'm perceived by others, again based on my appearance, my tone. If I'm going to a meeting, I want to prepare extra because I don't want it to seem like, 'Oh, she didn't know her information. Oh, she's not qualified. Why are we paying her?' I think probably being a Black college administrator affects me more professionally because I feel like I take a lot of effort before going out, or going to a conference, or being around a certain group of people. (Jade, Interview 1, January 25, 2017)

When asked how they felt about their perceived need to make those types of daily decisions about their appearance and behavior, Jade responded, "Oh, its ridiculous. It's absolutely ridiculous. And, it's tiring to have to think that hard about— I know White people aren't doing that. They get up and wear whatever they put on" (Interview 3, May 25, 2017). Nia felt similar to Jade in that,

> ...it's hard because you never know. You could walk into a space where people are very inclusive and just love your hair in locs[5], or you could walk into a space and they're like 'Oh, what are we going to do? We don't understand that and we don't like it. We don't

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[5] "Locs" refer to dreadlocks, or sometimes referred to as *dreads* - a hairstyle that is typically worn by people of African descent that involves ropelike strands of hair formed by matting, twisting, or braiding.

want to give her that opportunity'. I think just the fact that you have to guess becomes

tiring, because you never do know. Some people are totally fine and even more

supportive than even people who share my backgrounds of different styles and different

things I could do. That guessing game is definitely tiring, but, I don't feel like I have

another choice. (Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

Desire to be perceived as professional. It was evident through the interviews and

reflective journal entries that the hyper-awareness experienced by the participants was fueled by

their desire to be perceived as professional and competent by their colleagues and leadership

team. These desires caused the women to feel as though they need to prove themselves as being

qualified to be in certain spaces, perform certain tasks, and be considered for advancement

within the field. As a result, these women spoken of holding themselves to higher standards by,

what they suggest, is working twice as hard as everyone else. Nia talked about how, as a Black

woman, she feels the need to ascribe to the dominant culture's definition of professionalism,

which relies heavily on outward appearance, in order to be received as professional by her co-

workers.

Do I wear my pearl earrings today because that would make me look slightly older than I

do? Do I pull my hair back? Also, the way that I dress and things like that. I try, in some

ways, to dress in a way that other people deem as 'professional' so that they don't say

'Oh, she doesn't know anything. She doesn't even know how to—'. Which, I think a lot

of that stuff is all the -ists anyway, in terms of our norms being very White supremacist

and hetero-normative. Those things are very— What people deem as professional, to me,

is very arbitrary and senseless but I also know that it's very real to some people,

especially generationally. There are things you do and don't do in a work space, so I try

to make sure I abide by the rules that I am aware of to the most part, without compromising who I am. (Interview 1, January 19, 2017)

In addition to having to fit the mold of what others deem as professional, the Black women administrators in the study also felt that they have to prove that they belong in the space. Harper explained how such proof plays out at work:

...there's this level of proof, you know? I have to prove more. Most of that really just comes from experiences working with people and feeling like my ideas are not valued from the top...I have to prove that I have something to say and something worth you listening to… I have listened to the most insane of scenarios in these meetings that come from people that are not Black women, and it gets attention. I'm just like, 'What's wrong with y'all?!' They didn't have to prove that they belonged in that space. Some people have actually managed to prove that they don't belong in that space, but just because there is a privilege of being a male or a White female, it's almost like it doesn't exist. That level of proof does not exist [for them]. Pretty much, the expectation is you're going to have to really fail to not have a seat at this table, whereas I have felt that I have to really prove myself to get a seat at this table. Once I had the seat, I had to fight to keep it. Like, any one wrong move could make people look at me differently. (Interview 1, January 31, 2017)

The angry Black woman. For the participants in the study, the *angry Black woman* trope is a reality that they work diligently to not perpetuate, especially while at work. Their awareness of the negative consequences that are attached to Black women who are labeled as such created another reason for the participants' hyper-awareness. In an effort to avoid being associated with the pervasive stereotype, which emerged "in response to external stressors and historical factors"

specific to the experiences of Black woman, the women in the study felt the need to contain their true emotions when reacting to certain situations or triggers (Ashley, 2014, p. 27). Harper and Nia discussed how the angry Black woman image conveys a sense of control over their true selves as Black women:

I do feel that because there is this stereotype of Black women in the workplace, or even outside the workplace, I do go the extra mile to be extra pleasant, because I don't want to be categorized as the angry Black woman. (Harper, Interview 1, January 31, 2017)

...the fact that some Black women don't have the ability to get upset without being labeled something right away is part of the oppression. (Nia, Interview 3, May 22)

Further, Jade provided an account of how the "angry Black woman" stereotype has played out on her campus, which validated her perceived need to alter her instincts so that she does not fall victim to similar name-calling:

There's another person at our institution who is a Black woman who is in a position of leadership and I hear it all the time. 'She's so angry. She's this. She's that.' Could any of that have anything to do with her being a Black woman speaking her mind? I don't know, maybe not. Maybe she truly is angry. I'm not sitting at those tables. But, it's interesting that those words are used to describe her, whereas I feel like white women who, at our same institution, who may still bitch and moan about stuff, I don't feel like they're angry and they're this, they're that. They assign these harsh words to her. She's a Black woman who knows her stuff, at the same time...She has it together. So, I definitely feel like when I hear those types of things that, to me, is a subtle message like 'Uh-oh, stay in line because you don't want to be another angry Black woman'. (Interview 3, May 25, 2017)

Cameron also shared her direct experience with a former supervisor who often mistook

her passion for students for being angry:

> He was like 'Well, why do you have to always have an attitude about something? You're always angry about something?' and mentally I heard 'angry Black female' and I said, 'My tone is that of passion, not of anger. There may be hints of frustration, yes, but it's totally passion and I'm looking out for my students'. (Interview 1, January 27, 2017)

Self-monitoring. The women cited ways in which their hyper-awareness manifests in their daily lives. The participants described how they feel the need to monitor themselves in various ways, which include how they use the tone of their voice, the way in which they show up in a room, whether they reveal certain aspects of their identity.

Cameron and Harper elaborated on the idea of self-monitoring by providing examples of ways in which they do so.

> Depending on what meeting or office you're walking into or what situation you're in, trying to navigate, 'Okay am I going to be a Black female today or am I going to be a female of color? Which one comes first then.?' Trying to react based off of what I did and other people will see first. It's a challenge to navigate all those things. We're complex people on top of being a mom and wife. Caregiver. All those other things definitely add to who you are in the workplace. (Cameron, Interview 3, May 17, 2017)

> I'm really extra careful about how I deal with people. In those moments where I feel like, you know, a little extra sternness is warranted, I am even more careful about how I respond. I don't want to be ineffective at getting my point across when necessary, either. (Harper, Interview 1, January 31, 2017)

Codeswitching. One of the ways in which the participants conveyed their self-monitoring as a part *hyper-awareness of self* was through codeswitching. Cameron defined codeswitching as:

the ability to shift your identity, so to speak, depending on the environment you're in, whether it's the language you're using, whether it's the experiences you're bringing to the table. Just being aware of your environment and your surroundings and who you're talking to and knowing which hand to play. (Interview 3, May 17, 2017)

As administrators, the participants interact with faculty, staff, and students daily. The women explained how they engage in codeswitching depending on who they are around. Nia illustrated how code switching has played out for her around her colleagues:

Of course, there's code switching that happens. I'll greet you differently than anyone else, not someone who doesn't share my same identities in terms of race and gender. So, I'm mindful of that. I'm mindful of if you and I are talking and there's a person there, we'd talk differently. You know? That's something that every word that comes out of my mouth technically has to be thought of or changes or switched. I don't know if everyone has to think about that all the time. (Interview 1, January 19, 2017)

Slightly different from Nia's experiences, Simone explained how she exhibits codeswitching when working with college students:

Sometimes I have to code switch with students, too, and be like, 'Look, bro. We're going to have a real conversation right now'. I'm rolling with that. Or, the conversation can go, 'Now, how does that make you feel? How can I be helpful to you?' Or, I'm doing that! (Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

Unlike the others, Harper did not feel the need to engage in codeswitching in her current

role as an administrator; however, she did question whether not doing so would have negative consequences for her future career.

> ...I do wonder how this will play out for me because I don't code switch when it's time for me to move higher up, how is that going to be perceived? Because it's not like I'm on either extreme, I'm somewhere in the middle of codeswitching, I feel like I'm somewhere in the middle anyway. I also feel like if I were to code switch it just wouldn't be authentic. (Interview 3, May 31, 2017)

A different world. Furthermore, through their own reflections and observations, some of the participants discussed incidents when they recognized that their hyper-awareness of self is a state of being that is not shared with their non-Black and/or non-female colleagues. This further emphasizes the disparate experiences that Black women student affairs administrations have in comparison to those with whom they work alongside. Due to her work in social justice/multicultural affairs, Nia was very aware of her perceived place in the world, and was able to articulate how her experience as a Black woman administrator differs greatly from those who do not identify the same:

> I'm also very attuned to the -isms of the world, I think. Working in this [field], I see it. I have to read a lot of articles, I see a lot of stuff, and I'm like man, 'if you are a person of color, who is a woman, who is not able-bodied, who is like all of these things, it's like why do you even wake up in the morning?' It's hard to go through that, whereas if I was a banker, that wouldn't even be in my sphere, but every day I wake up and it's like "What has happened to my people today?" That, also, I think has an effect on how I view my place in the world, whereas if I was a White male I don't think I would feel as powerless

as sometimes I do, knowing that I'm attuned so much to all the diversity issues.

(Interview 1, January 19, 2017)

Jade also provided two examples highlighted how her reality as a Black woman has been different than (and judged differently than) her men and White women counterparts.

I don't feel like my White counterparts have that same pressure. There's a good [colleague] of mine who's White. She's awesome, she's great, she's known for like her hair being all funky colors. It's what she's known for...sometimes it's pink, sometimes it's green because of Christmas. She changes her hair all the time and that's definitely her, but even my boss when she talks about her hair, she's like, 'Oh isn't it just crazy what she does with her hair?', like almost in a positive light. But I know if I were to come in with green hair it would be ... Like I would never ever do that because I feel there would be a completely different tone. She's a professional, she's great at her job, but if I had purple hair or pink hair like she has, I think I would definitely be seen as more unprofessional. Maybe because of the texture of my hair, maybe because I feel like Black people are held to a higher standard so it's just hard...The fact that the standards are different, it is exhausting. So the thing that really resonated with me is being Black is really beautiful, but also really painful, because sometimes it is. Some days it is. (Reflective journal 2, n.d.)

I would definitely say I feel like my male colleagues may not have the same pressures that women have. I don't know that they're given the same question about "Are you going to have kids? Are you going to do this?" I feel like men can kind of in a sense have it all. They can work late. They can travel a lot. They can do things and not really be concerned because if they're single, they're single. If they're not, they probably have a

partner or spouse that's going to pick up the slack. But women, I just feel like society in general are judged a little bit harshly like if you're traveling, who's taking care of your kids? God help, the kid is with their dad. How long are you going to travel? You were gone a while. Even just last year when I was gone kind of back to back for a conference and another trip, someone made a comment 'Is your husband going to be okay?' and I'm like 'He's an adult. He's fine'. But when he's gone for work, no one ever says anything. People don't think twice about it. I definitely think men may have it a little easier in that respect. (Interview 1, January 25, 2027)

Black. Woman. Through the participants' responses to the various interview questions about their lived experiences, *hyper-awareness of self* showed to be directly attributed to their experiences of simply being Black and/or a woman. The external messages that the women received on a consistent basis about their Blackness and for being a woman contributed to their feelings of oppression, unfair treatment, and discrimination; this reality served as a motivation for their hyper-awareness as student affairs administrators. The participants elaborate on what it is like for them to be Black women in their profession:

...if I'm going to a retreat or even a meeting, sometimes, where my boss's office is, I'll be careful about how my hair looks there. Just because, at the end of the day, I'm a Black woman and [the appearance of my natural hair] can be unkempt for some. (Jade, Interview 3, May 25, 2017)

I don't like it, but again, I don't have another experience so I can't have nothing to compare it to, to be honest. I do think it contributes to racial battle fatigue and just being burnt out or tired or upset that the different various systems exist in the way that they do. The fact that someone in power can deny me a job because they don't like how I was

dressed or how my hair was at the interview. The fact that the power dynamic is imbalanced in that way, I think it's frustrating, but it's my life. It's my experience until America is much better than it is right now. That's what I feel like I have to do. (Nia, Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

When I'm in these spaces where it's mainly White males who are in power, then I don't feel like it's the most fun experience or I don't feel respected in the same way. It's ...things people say and ways people look that show me that I'm not on equal footing in those particular spaces. (Nia, Interview 1, January 19, 2017)

Microaggressions. Most of the women recounted their experiences of being subject to microaggressions that relate to their race and/or gender, or in some cases, blatant sexism and racism; some of the microaggressions that the women experienced referenced their hair, dress, and speech.

...sometimes not being paid as much or being honored or promoted in the same ways as your colleagues depending on what that looks like. Not having your academic research or your scholarship respected in the same ways, sometimes based on the topic. Sometimes if it's about Black students, "Okay, well, you're Black, you work with Black students, we got you." It's not valued in the same way as other research is. I think the microaggressions, the struggles of not having your whole self be welcome in all spaces, based on the things we talked about before of having to change your image or your perception, your physical appearance, or even just your language in the way you speak or your personality. (Nia, Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

But it comes at least once a day. Even if it isn't from your immediate coworkers, necessarily, somebody is going to say something at some point and you're just like hmm,

here we go. Where's this going?'...[I get it from] Everybody. Faculty, parents, students, other staff members. Sometimes even other people of color. It's, you know, for instance … when I think about some things that happened or, if … From everybody. It's so ingrained in me to just deal with it unless it's something that really got to me that day because my shell was down at that moment—. (Simone, Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

Actually, I don't even know if it was a micro-aggression or just outright aggressive...my boss has said she wanted me to be in certain aspects of orientation 'because I'm diverse'. That was the way she phrased it. I'm like, 'Okay, because I'm Black'. (Jade, Interview 3, May 25, 2017)

They told me that they like my hair a certain way. I have had somebody tell me 'Good girl'. I had to ask them not to call me a girl. 'Good girl' is like you're talking to a dog. I've had that happen...I've [also] had people tell me before that my hair looks better when it's straight. (laughs) Isn't that terrible? (Alex, Interview 3, May 25, 2017)

When asked if she had experiences with microaggressions or other forms of bias, Nia explained how they are common encounters in her daily life.

[From] many people, all the time. Yes. The answer is definitely a yes. From people who, usually in my experience they're White people. White men and women actually. Usually who are older, some in positions of power and some not, in terms of my position, but everywhere. In meetings, in personal conversation. (Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

Harper shared an incident she experienced while working in Housing when she was forced to deal directly with a student's use of microaggressions against their roommates.

They're so hard to pinpoint but just little condescending things. And I will say I had a really tough experience. There was an experience that was tough. I worked in

Housing and I had a student who didn't want to live with, he had Black roommates, he didn't want to live with Black people. So, he was saying really racist things to his roommates so his roommates were retaliating and everything. And it got so bad that we had to find him a new space. And I had to help him find a new space. And that was tough. But interestingly enough, because I was helping him he didn't say anything bad to me but I still had to feel the energy of him being that way. And it was almost as if I was not Black to him. (Interview 3, May 31, 20127)

Judged more harshly. The participants explained much of their hyperawareness stemmed from their wanting to avoid receiving consequences for their actions or behaviors that were more stringent or severe than what others would receive for the same or similar circumstances. These experiences validated the women's reality of feeling the need to monitor their behaviors and appearance in order to avoid negative attention or professional consequences.

I've definitely noticed there are times where people can make mistakes who do not share my background and their mistakes are looked over or more lenient whereas if I were to make those same mistakes, I don't feel like I would get the same response. It may be for a number of factors. It may be that people hold me to a higher standard than some of those other folks, but I do see or have seen in the past that there's a differentiation between what's important to people. Because again, there's that chance that I could be scrutinized more or looked at harder or whatever for a number of factors based on my identity... (Nia, Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

I have natural hair[6] so I'm really cautious about even if I'm at a conference, I've

got to put my hair up or put it back in my interview. I don't want to be seen as 'Oh, she's

the wildlife woman, she's an amazon woman'. I feel like especially when I'm initially

meeting people, I have to be very cautious about my appearance, how I talk. You know?

We have our personas that we put on that's very different than when I'm with my friends

at lunch. I feel like being a person of color, we just have to do that. We've always had to

do that. (Jade, Interview 1, January 25, 2017)

Unheard voices. In addition to experiencing microaggressions, the notion of not having

their voices heard or being judged more harshly than others emerged as a common experience

amongst the participants. Nia spoke of times when she felt that her contributions were not

listened to by others in the room, and she attributed such treatment to be a result of her identity

as a Black woman, or either as a woman or as a Black person.

...but I can see that there are spaces where I will say something and then it's kind of

brushed over, and then the next meeting another person of another— a male person or a

white person says the same thing and it's like 'Oh, good idea!' What? I said that y'all,

three times. I think there are times where I don't feel heard as much, or my decisions are

questioned in a different way or not even given a chance … for a number of reasons.

(Interview 1, January 19, 2017)

When asked whether she felt as though she was "at the table" professionally, Nia

expressed her experience with concepts that related to not having her voice be heard:

I also think that not everyone at the table, their voices aren't valued in the same way.

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[6] Natural hair refers to hair that is not chemically treated by a relaxer or texturizer. Natural hair for Black women is often textured by curls, coils, waves, and/or kinks.

Sometimes even being at the table is not the end all be all of success because you can be there and people just be like 'Oh, ignore you completely' or ignore what you have to say and make fun of you, or have the meeting before the meeting and they have already decided whatever they wanted to decide, or you're there as a token and so everybody knows that and it's kind of weird. So, I don't want to be at the table in that capacity. (Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

In my previous position, it was male-dominated. In addition to me being the only Black person in the meeting there were like two females, two or three. I felt like, talking to some of those white men, I felt like I was being dismissed or maybe second guessed or not really taken, like they have to check behind me like I don't know what I'm talking about or something. I have had those experiences. (Alex, Interview 1, January 18, 2017)

Because if I said something once, and you don't heed me, and you've ignored my opinion, and I say something again and you've ignored my opinion again, why am I going to keep having this conversation because you've told me that I do not have a place at this point in your mind where my opinions matter. (Simone, Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

Harper provided insight on her own personal experiences with feeling unheard as well as encounters that she has witnessed with other Black women:

I would be in meetings and I would say something that made sense and no one would listen until someone who was White, a White woman or whoever, would say the same thing and get the attention of the whole room. I'm like… Did y'all here me? What's happening? ...It happened so many times. It got to the point where I would be in meetings and it's almost like I did not have a voice and wasn't even in the meeting. That's how bad

it got. It came from whoever was there, even my supervisor. It was a lot. (Interview 1,

January 31, 2017)

I think it's a combination of me being Black and a female that does that. And I see

it all the time with other Black females, it doesn't matter how high up you are, it doesn't

matter how many degrees you have. Unless you're extremely like (slaps table) 'I'm laying

the hammer down on y'all' you sometimes are going to be silenced. It's not in my

personality to be, aggressive is not the word I want to use because it's not, assertive is

probably more. And you have to have a proven track record of being right all the time

and you have to consistently be assertive. And they have to know that you're going to

professionally come for throats if people come at you wrong. And that's just not my

natural, do I know that I have to develop that? Yeah, if I want to move up. I have to.

(Interview 3, May 31, 2017)

Importance of Relationships with Black Women

All of the participants described the significant impact that relationships with other Black

women had on their lives. Due to their shared identities and perspectives on life, the women

described these relationships as valuable assets to them, both personally and professionally.

Forming a connection and building community with other Black women on all levels--from

undergraduate students to senior level administrators--appeared to be critical to the participants'

development and success, as well as reiterated feelings of familiarity and comfort.

Simone shared her perspective on why connecting with other Black women is meaningful

to her:

But when you see someone that looks like you, you know their experiences may be

similar. It doesn't necessarily mean that it will be, but you know that the possibility is

there, and that when you are speaking about something from your own lens, that that person will understand it a little bit more. (Interview 2, February 21, 2017)

The women also provided examples of how their relationships with other Black women have provided them a unique level of support.

Usually, the greatest amount of support or the greatest amount of just even fun and camaraderie or break from work type of stuff is with [other Black women]...I do place a high level of value, probably the highest level of value in terms of those relationships at work...I also lean more towards Black college administrators and females because they also understand the work and being Black and female, but other people are like 'Oh, yeah, that's cool', but you don't understand the trials and tribulations. (Nia, Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

I don't have like a huge friend base. I don't associate with a lot of Black females, but I have just kind of my core three or four friends that we've been friends forever. We have just great comradery and are able to understand each other and are able to talk about different issues dealing with work, family, friends, relationships, that kind of thing. I enjoy those relationships. I value those relationships. Especially when I can't talk to my husband or my mom. I enjoy having that other kind of outlet. (Alex, Interview 3, May 25, 2017)

I have a very close group of friends like 2 or 3 that I truly feel that I can trust and I will call them in a quick moment or send a quick I.M. or text message like 'I need to talk, I just need your ear'. (Jade, Reflective journal 1, n. d.)

I would say, when I look back through my professional career, every mentor that I've had for the most part, they have been Black females because I think our experience

is so unique. I think … I believe that we get what we need right before we need it, if that makes any sense. (Harper, Interview 2, February 24, 2017)

But in terms of like being a Black female and how people perceive me or perceive my hair that's natural or the angry Black woman thing. [My White woman mentor] is not going to get it because it's not her reality. Whereas if I talk to a Black female administrator that's on on-campus who I consider a mentor...she talks about how [when] she goes to meetings, she doesn't wear her hair out because she's not sure how people will perceive that. I get that conversation. I get that because I'm in the same boat. My white colleague that's a female...She doesn't get that. So, I think that's a difference. (Jade, Interview 2, February 9, 2017)

As a finding of this research, relationships cultivated between Black women have shown to be beneficial and crucial to the success of all parties involved. For the administrators in the study, the relationships that they developed with all other Black women—from students to senior-level administrators—were important for their mental and emotional well-being, due to the shared understanding of their experiences as Black women in the realm of higher education.

The relationships between Nia provided insight about how cultivating relationships with Black women college students has shown to be equally beneficial to both parties.

I do think that I am able to connect with students, especially female students, in a different way than if I were a male because I share an identity on some level. I'm able to say I have some experience that maybe they've had similar experiences. It's a stronger connection there. It's also, I have a capacity for caring. It's okay, I have people who cry in here all the time. Not to say that a male couldn't understand what to do if someone is crying, but I do have that emotional capacity as well, that I think is brought to me by

being a woman more than being Black, I would say...But, also, to have that kind of 'Quit playing games'. I don't know what that's called, but that ability to be firm or to offer guidance and not back down from that, based on their response. I think that also comes from the way my mother parented me. That's very— There's a line. We have fun but there's a line...And because a lot of our leaders here are Black females, so it's super easy to connect with them who are also often looking for mentors and looking for guidance from people who reflect their backgrounds. (Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

I think with the students that I work with, I think I'm viewed positively. A lot of times students will say I'm their big sister or whatever because I'm an older person but I'm not old as they say, or as an old administrator so they don't have to see the same barriers with me. I also am a person who tries to be as authentic as possible so I'm not showing them— I'm not going to show them some kind of fake facade, I feel like students can see that. Especially the students who I work with who are the ones— Usually they're… I work most closely with our Black students. It's like, they know. *Girl, stop playing, we know you're tired...Yeah, I'm tired.* They know. I'm not going to play with them in that way so I think there's a level of respect there. I think students also, once they find out...I went to Harvard, it was like 'Oh my gosh! Wow, you're Black and you're young and you're cool and you went to Harvard?!" That kind of stuff. That was inspiring to me, to see them be inspired. Like, wow, I can do that. I have students where I'm helping them with their stuff now and they're only applying to Harvard because I applied to Harvard. In real life, I applied to Harvard because my friend applied to Harvard that I knew. It's that same cycle. I think that there is a level of appreciation that I find with [Black women] students. (Interview 1, January 19, 2017)

Cameron's description of two of her relationships with other Black women illustrates how important it is for Black women to feel comfortable in another's presence.

> So, whether [my Black women student mentee] was in my office, which I always try to make very homey and comfortable, or I was in [my Black women mentor's] office, my other committee member, it was just welcoming. They made you feel welcome coming into the office and even with [another Black woman colleague]. Just the environment itself was warm and welcoming, whereas in [my committee chair, who was a White woman's] office there were books and papers everywhere. You couldn't see her desk, you could barely see her computer. It just wasn't welcoming. (Interview 2, February 7, 2017)

Positive relationships with Black women. The women shared instances where they were involved in positive interactions with other Black women and how that added value to their lives.

Harper shared a story about a previous supervisor giving her some words of wisdom as she transitioned to a new job and institution.

> So, before I left, she pulled me to the side and she gave me a talk about how there is a challenge to being in higher ed, any field, as a Black woman. I'm like 'That's not going to happen, because I'm going to [this university]'. You know, that's not going to happen, there's going to be no challenges. She's like 'There's going to be times when people don't take you serious. There's going to be times. And you're young', and she said 'You look younger than you are. People are going to really try you'. I did not believe it. For like, six months I didn't believe it. Then, I had no choice but to believe it...What ended up happening that helped me through that was [a senior level Black woman

administrator] really took me under her wing, like right before she left...She's like 'Okay, this is what you need to do'. It really helped me to really develop a voice that you couldn't ignore. (Interview 1, January 31, 2017)

Cameron discussed the evolution of one her relationships with a Black woman on her campus as she was working on her dissertation.

She was an interim staff member on campus but she was also just completing her dissertation. I think she was about to defend when we first met. I looked at her as that big sister but also professional because she was interviewing at the time for full time employment. I really went to her to say, 'Okay, this is what I need. Can you do this for me? Can you serve this role for me?' She was able to assist me with edits for my dissertation. In terms of applying for jobs, she assisted me there. Then, because we were still technically graduate students there was still that level of friendship and camaraderie there. I got it from both ends and when she became a full-time staff member, I totally… I don't want to say readjusted my focus but I put her on a higher pedestal because she was now Dr. So-and-so and she was a staff member, so I kind of elevated her. I don't want to say to a higher level of mentorship but I looked at her differently. I respected her a lot more. (Interview 2, February 7, 2017)

Sister circles. The topic of "sister circles" emerged throughout the data collection process with the participants. When Simone advocated for Black women administrators to find a sister circle—a professional counterspace of women who share similar backgrounds, that can serve as a refuge from the discrimination that they experience—on their campuses. The women referred to sister circles in a relatively similar manner, and shared about the role that sister circles serve in helping them navigate their lives.

Alex described a sister circle as "friendship, collaboration, love, affection, camaraderie. Blackness". She continued by sharing that,

I guess [they] motivate me, kind of inspires me. I like to learn from other experiences, too. It kind of, I guess, makes me feel like I have a connection or a home space or something. Another just kind of outlet. (Interview 3, May 25, 2017)

For Jade, her sister circle provided a safety net for her. It was composed of a group of women who she felt just "got it" without much explanation. In the sister circle, she felt that she could let her guard down and not be afraid to be her authentic self, "whereas outside the circle, maybe not". (Interview 3, May 25, 2017)

Simone shared how she experienced a sister circle at a previous institution at which she worked:

You know, so whenever there were people of color that started to work on campus, we had a stronger bond. Especially when it was women of color. We made it a thing where we would particularly get together either once a month or once every two weeks and sit and just discuss what we were doing, which was good because it allowed me to maneuver through this new system and there were people that were here for years (Interview 2, February 21, 2017).

Harper, on the other hand, described her experiences with feeling the support of a sister circle even when the relationships with the other Black women on her campus are not as close:

Even though I feel like I haven't built these really tight-knit relationships with people at work at all really, I still feel like I have that. I still feel like I have that circle of support, especially from Black women. That's how I would name it. Just support. (Interview 3, May 31, 2017)

Negative experiences with Black women. While many of the relationships that the participants cultivated with other Black women were positive in nature, to their dismay, they also described instances with Black women that were challenging.

Some of the relationships I have had with Black women who were in a level that was above mine had - were some of the ones where I've seen characteristics and I've seen how they are treated and perceived and I said, 'whoa I don't really want that'. (Nia, Interview 2, January 27, 2017)

Then there are some that I haven't had good experiences with because I felt like there was a sense of competition from them, so it was just kind of put off. So, it can go either way. I feel like I never know how it's going to go when I meet another Black female administrator. I'm like, is she going to be cool? Or is she going to hate me? Are we battling or are we on the same team? That's real. (Jade, Interview 3, May 25, 2017)

People look out for who they look out for, and if I'm not on anybody's list then I end up at the bottom. I think I look to them like 'Wow, look at this person who is in this position that I aspire to be in... Let's be excited. We're going to talk about hair. We're going to have sleepovers!' I don't really do that. I have been excited, and unfortunately … several times, I've been disappointed and that has not been the case. It's kind of been, people have been hardened like, '*This is how you've got to survive. We can't be together. Let's walk down the hall separate because we don't want them to think we all hang out together'.* It's like that kind of stuff where it's like, not been as welcoming or like the fun environment. I mean, supervisor-employee boundaries are there, but it hasn't been a positive experience like I imagined it to be.... I've been excited. I will still continue to be excited, I think, but not because I had such a positive experience. Just because I hope in

my heart, yes we can. It's the last day of Obama[7]. Yes, we can. That's how I think. (Nia, Interview 1, January 19, 2017)

When I was seeking other members of my [dissertation] committee, I came across a Black female in an outside department and I reached out to her and she responded immediately. We met that same week and I was like, "Ooh, yes, someone that looks like me that's doing work in the field that I want to do work in." And very quickly, I was shown that just because you look like, me doesn't mean you have my best interest at heart. I talked about the relationship being collaborative. Where I wanted D.Ed[8] behind my name, she wanted AKA[9] next to hers. (Cameron, Interview 2, February 7, 2017)

Mentoring relationships with other women administrators. To address the second research question of the study, many of the questions posed to the participants involved their perspective on mentoring relationships with other women. Through those discussions, it became evident that mentoring relationships, specifically with Black women, was an area about which they had many thoughts and aspirations.

Simone shared how she was paired with a Black woman administrator as her mentor at a previous institution.

Well, it started off when I was [at my previous institution] they had a buddy program.

Because I was new at that point, they basically put me with a buddy with the only other

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[7] The day the interview took place with Nia was the last day of the Obama administration.

[8] D.Ed. refers to a doctoral degree, also known as a Doctor of Education degree; the institution that Cameron attended used the D.Ed degree designation as opposed to the Ed.D designation used at other higher education institutions.

[9] AKA is an acronym for Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., which is one of nine Black Greek-letter organizations. The participant, Cameron, is a member of AKA; in the quote, Cameron is suggesting that the women, whom she thought would be her mentor, was motivated to help her due to the woman's desire to join and Cameron's affiliation with, the organization.

woman of color that was within student affairs at the time. I think that was helpful because she was also the director of diversity there, so kind of irony there, right? ...It was one of those things that I got to know her as a mentor because of the fact of work, but then it turned into other things of just how you make it through winter months here, and your family is all the way somewhere else and you're one of the few that looks like you and all that other stuff that comes with it. (Interview 2, February 21, 2017)

Desires to be mentored by Black women administrators. When it came to mentoring relationships with other women, overwhelmingly, the participants all expressed a desire to have a Black woman as their professional mentor.

I always looked at myself as not being up to par maybe, like going into these meetings where its mostly White men where I'm the only Black person in the room. I think it would have been helpful if there - If I had a Black female mentor that had that similar experience and just hearing her perspective or how she dealt with that type of thing. (Alex, Interview 2, February 2, 2017)

I do feel like I have a special connection with a Black female just because they get certain things that maybe a male colleague or a female colleague of another race wouldn't get. I know I can definitely relate to them a lot easier, so it is really important to me and I think all people of color want to see someone that looks like them going where they're trying to go. That s motivational, that's inspirational. So, I feel a lot of the time we just help each other through that process and I don't know that I get that from a male colleague or someone of another race. So, it is important. (Jade, Interview 2, February 9, 2017)

I would like to have a mentor that is a Black female. I am not opposed to having others. Yes, because … there is this shared history. This "I've been where you are or where you're trying to go, so let me help you figure it out." I want someone who has paved the way and has then reached back to pull me along but can also share with me the mistakes that they made, the challenges that they had so I know either how to deal with them when it's my time or how to navigate my way around them so I don't have to deal with them. I'm not sure that another race could give me that benefit. (Cameron, Interview 2, February 7, 2017)

Challenges to mentoring relationships with Black women. While the women did express their desires to be mentored by a Black woman administrator, the participants did acknowledge that there can be some challenges associated with being involved in such a relationship.

I've also done different things to seek out mentors, Black female mentors and some of those efforts have returned and some have not. Or once I got to know that person I realized they don't have qualities I want to pursue or want to envision in myself so I don't need them as a mentor. So that has happened as well. I've only had very few of my mentors have been Black women. (Nia, Interview 2, January 27, 2017)

Well I think, this is just in my experience but I do think that sometimes Black women we don't really help each other. We don't ... Doesn't go for everybody because certainly I have developed some great relationships with other Black females at my current institution, but I think a common theme amongst us when we talk or brainstorm or even like about our boss or whatever; it's always like the Black women who are above us are kind of catty. They're a little petty. You can't talk to them about everything or they

think you want their job. They are threatened by you. That's been a really big challenge

for me because it should not be that way. (Jade, Interview 2, February 9, 2017)

In addition to the obstacles presented above, another common challenge presented by the

participants was the lack of Black women in senior-level administrator roles to serve as mentors

to them and their colleagues.

Sometimes I feel like I have issues or insights... It would be nice to get from someone

who's more senior. You know, 'How do I approach this? Should I talk to my boss? She's

an AVP. How should I approach this with her?' I think in any work environments there's

always politics. So, a lot of times navigating that political climate from my level is a lot

different than if you are an AVP level or something else. So, I would say the main

drawback is not having someone senior to provide that information. (Jade, Interview 2,

February 9, 2017)

Because the participants expressed not currently having a Black woman administrator as

a mentor, during an interview, they were asked what types of topics they would like to discuss

with such a mentor, if ever granted the opportunity to get one. Nia provided a list of topics that

she would discuss with a senior-level Black woman mentor if she ever had the opportunity to

have one.

I think career advancement. The ways to navigate different spaces professionally and

personally, or in the personal as a professional for example. Ways to continue to grow in

terms of my personal development and things that I want to work on. There are times

where I contact mentors about their logistical, like I need to negotiate salary. Is this high

enough? Is this what I should say? Those kind of tactical logistical things, I think are very

important to have somebody to ask because most people in my network have never had

that experience or don't know anything about higher ed so it's hard to have that. With a hypothetical person, I may talk about family or balancing my relationships in terms of maybe even personally, just like, hey, you're married. I want to be married. How do I get there? Or, I'm married, I have kids, how do I keep my job going while I maintain those things? It could be on multiple levels. Things like my resume. Things like career advancement, that all kind of goes into that. Also, sometimes there's conflict or there's outlier situations or awkward situations that I haven't encountered yet so understanding how to communicate/deal with difficult situations at work is something I'd also like to be able to ask them. (Nia, Interview 2, January 27, 2017)

So, I'm learning but I'm still in progress and I definitely welcome any opportunity to get feedback from other female college administrators or even administrators of color because I think our experiences are unique to the student body. Especially considering the university has now been deemed a minority serving institution. it's no longer considered a predominantly white institution. So, knowing that our student body is starting to be more diverse, having people in place to be that sounding board to our incoming students is definitely something that's needed. So, I'm working on it and we'll see how it goes. (Cameron, Interview 2, February 7, 2017)

She's one of the few Black women administrators that's like, 'Oh, yeah, I'll help you. Let's have lunch once a month and try to connect'...She's become a friend so you know we talk about life, vacations, plans over the summer, work. I talked to her about going back to get a PhD because she has one. So, I would say there is one, who is a woman of color who is more senior that's a mentor to me. But the rest for sure are more peer--so not traditional--mentorship. (Jade, Interview 2, February 9, 2017)

Opportunity to Give Back Through Work

A recurring theme that underscored the participants' contributions was their feelings of gratitude directed toward their work, and their responsibility to give back to others as a result of their own personal experiences navigating life.

Nia spoke very poignantly about her desire to give to others, and how it was reflected through her work daily:

...I do believe that *when you get, you should give. When you learn, you should teach*. I do think there is some level of responsibility for everybody. Some people take that on, some people don't. I do think knowing that we are in a space where we sometimes are underrepresented, I do think it is important, at least in my life, to reach back and try to assist others. If their goal is to be in the same space or if I can have something to share to be a resource to them, I want to make sure that I am doing that. Especially if I can help people and give them a heads up on 'You might face this, here's what you do'. Because, again, I wish that somebody had done that for me, or would do that for me, even today, right now...I do think that's a responsibility. Responsibility is a strong word, but I do think it's something that people should do if they can do it. (Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

I think part of it is because I don't have it in the way that I would really fully conceptualize it so I want to help people however much I can. I also feel like well I don't know a lot but I know some things. I've been through something so I want to offer. That's also again part of my nature, of like even how I was raised...My favorite quote, Maya Angelou, 'When you learn, teach. When you get, give'. So, I feel like even if I have my two pennies, I'll rub them to together and hell, give somebody something you know. That's kind of where my philosophy is on life. Of that, I think people should help people

whenever they can. As long as it doesn't hurt you, harm you, or cost you a lot of money,

then you should. I'm also grateful and thankful that my experience is able to help

somebody. (Interview 2, January 27, 2017)

Both Nia and Jade shared their perspectives on how they give back through their work

with college students.

I've been able to give back to a lot of students, which was one of my main reasons for

getting into higher ed, so I have accomplished and continue to accomplish one of my

main goals in life. (Nia, Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

I feel like it's my duty in some ways to give back and always to have that spirit of

helping someone else. If I can do that at my job every day I feel like I'm gaining

something. It's rewarding when you know maybe if the student just says thank you or

they appreciated it. Sometimes they will send me an email and say, 'Oh I went to tutoring

thank you so much', or 'I followed through with this, thank you so much'. Sometimes I

talk to parents about their student situations to help them navigate or make referrals. So, I

know what we do on college campuses does make a difference. You know, it made a

difference for me and my experience, so I definitely want to give that back to someone

else that's trying to go through with it. (Jade, Reflective Journal 3, n. d.)

Some of the participants discussed how their personal experiences as young college

students motivated them to give back to the students with whom they engage each day. Nia

explained how her upbringing contributed to the work that she does to help others.

I know that my path would have been completely different had I not had the opportunity

to go to college and to go to college for free for my undergrad. For me, it was really like

"Wow, look at, how did I make it through? All these people who helped me. What do

they do?" I didn't grow up saying I wanted to be a higher education administrator. I

didn't know anything about it. In college, I was very involved and people were like "Did

you know you can do this for your life?" What?! Yes! For me, it's a way to give back to

students who are just like myself or who come from communities that are similar to mine,

being lower SES, being primarily communities of color as well. (Nia, Interview 1,

January 19)

Once a first-generation student herself, Jade discussed how her work with at-risk students

is rewarding to her, as she sees it as a way to give back.

So, with my work with at-risk students, I feel like I'm helping them. I got a lot of support

in college and assistance, especially navigating things that I wasn't well versed in like

financial aid or packaging and residence hall life. I just didn't know a lot about that...So I

feel that with the students I have now at least I'm some sort of support for them, some

form of encouragement or whatever they need to get through that moment in time. I feel

like that adds value to them...It's frustrating a lot of times and I think anyone can tell you

that sometimes it feels like they're not listening or they don't get it, and we're working so

hard for what, but I truly feel like I'm giving back to people. Especially when I think

about students of color that just have it a little bit harder. You know Black males aren't as

likely to graduate as their counterparts. So, I really have like, a tugging to help students

of color—male and female— just because someone did it for me. (Jade, Reflective

Journal 3, n. d.)

Nia shared how she gives back through community work, and Jade talked about how she

gives back through mentoring fellow administrators.

Even in my personal time, volunteering or working with kids. I've done Big Brother, Big Sister, that kind of stuff. I will still give back in some way because education is my real passion and helping college access is a real passion of mine. There's no way I could do my life without giving back to that in some kind of way. (Nia, Interview 1, January 19, 2017)

Yeah. I try to mentor when I can. Even the people I supervise, I try to be somewhat of a mentor to them with regard to professional development. One asked me to day about going back to school. What are the challenges of that so I shared some of that with her. We had a higher ed fair where some students in the Higher Ed program came up to me after the fair to ask questions. I gave them my card, my number so we could sit down and talk. It motivates me just because I don't ever want to be that person who forgets where I come from. At one time, I was a student and I didn't know that to do. I probably didn't do everything right just because I didn't understand the culture or how to even search for a job or present myself. That took a lot of trial and error but also people helping me. So, I don't want to, not do that, for someone else. I'm like, how dare you not do that for someone else when people have done it for you. So, I try to do it in any way that I can. I try to be helpful and a resource. I don't know everything, but I will pick my friends' brain about something to help someone else. (Jade, Interview 2, February 9, 2017)

As it relates to her desire to give back through her work, Cameron talked about her motivation to give back through her work as an administrator, while also describing a very personal relationship that she developed with a student that evolved into one that has added value to her own life.

[Mentoring] definitely added value personally. There's a connection that you have with students, and I find everywhere I go there is always one student that just connects themselves to you and you can't get rid of them. She totally was that person. Now that she's a colleague, we have something additional to talk about. Although I'm no longer in Greek life, we still can bounce ideas off of each other in terms of programming. It totally adds value because it just makes the connection that much better. To see someone...to see them grow from a freshman and watch them matriculate through college and then become a colleague, our conversations have changed. The dynamics have changed, yes, but there is just a connection and now she's connected to my family. She's connected to my daughter. I'm connected to her family--This is my girl. I don't know how to put it into words. There's just a connection that is just indescribable. (Interview 2, February 7, 2017)

Negotiating Demands of Personal and Professional Life

The focus of this study was on the way in which Black women administrators in student affairs perceived their professional and personal lives; therefore, many of the questions posed to them through the semi-structured interviews focused on this idea. In response, the women were able to be vulnerable and share their honest interpretations of their lives. A constant negotiation between the demands of their personal and professional lives is what emerged from the participants' sharing.

Cameron, the only participant who was both a wife and mother, provided explicit details regarding her life as a determined professional who has to balance the needs of her family with her career aspirations.

I feel like I was prepared in terms of being a wife. Then second shift duties - taking care

of home because I saw my mother do it...what I wasn't prepared for was how the dynamic of husband and wife was going to change once a baby came into the picture. Everybody says enjoy being married first and don't rush, but then you have doctors saying, 'If you wanna—you're getting up there in age, you may not want to wait too long'. Then I also sacrificed my personal life for my education because I knew I wanted to get this [doctoral] degree. I told [my husband] when we were dating, I need a break. I will allow you to be a distraction so once I - the day after I defended I called him and everything was back to back to back. Found out we were pregnant...a month before our first anniversary. Really understand what this football wife or coach's wife life is like, and how to navigate that being a professional myself. But also, then being a mom, that brought its own set of challenges. Not only am I doing second shift but I'm doing it alone for pretty much all of the spring semester. (Interview 3, May 17, 2017)

One thing that has been a challenge for me in terms of his professional career is that whenever he gets a new job, we leave. We go where he goes. That kind of thwarts my professional aspirations and what that looks like for me and me trying to climb the ladder. Of course, having some of the same— Having our career interests line up a little bit closer, kind of opens up more doors for me in the athletic realm. I have considered that but, you know, when people look at my resume and you were here for a year and you were here for a year and a half, why are you changing jobs so much? Well, my husband is a football coach. Those are things that he doesn't have to deal with. (Interview 1, January 27, 2017)

I knew when I applied here that in terms of title, it was a step down for me. In terms of title, pay, responsibilities, it was a step down. But, it also allowed me to be a

mom. I'm comfortable with that right now. (Interview 1, January 27, 2017)

Harper talked about her unique experience of recently becoming a custodial parent to her two nephews, while maintaining to her dual role at work.

> I have custody right now of my brother's two boys. They are six and seven. Balancing that is a real challenge, especially since I really just got kind of thrown into it. It's kind of trial by fire. That's my main responsibility. In or out of work, that's my main responsibility. Thinks … I mean, really, outside of that I enjoy writing. I do a lot of writing. I do freelance writing when I get a chance to do that. Mostly nutrition and health topics. But, yeah, that's about it other than regular family obligations. (Interview 1, January 31, 2017)

> I do everything myself. My mom helps with the boys and sometimes she cleans when she's at my house. I have thought about getting someone to do housekeeping but the cost just doesn't make sense to me, in my head. (Interview 3, May 17, 2017)

During the interviews, Simone, who is currently single and has no children, expressed the desire to one day be a mother and have a partner. Through her assessment of other women in the field, she shares her perspective on what that life may entail.

> You're taking care of everybody else. You're taking care of work, which is for other people. You're taking care of the home, which is for other people. But what happens if you be like, 'I'm out this weekend. Daddy—' (and I say daddy because that's my orientation) '— you got the kids. I'm out. Don't call me unless fire, flood (laughs), somebody ill that's not like a small fever.' But, you know, I feel like even though you can do it all, something has to give and the question is what is that? (Interview 2, February 21, 2017)

Nia, who is single and a recent transplant to the city in which her university is located, gives a descriptive account of how her professional life often interferes with her personal obligations.

If I worked a 40-hour-a-week job or if I didn't specifically work in higher ed. So that somewhat puts a strain, because a lot of times my dad will call me— I have to say, I don't like where my family lives either, so they see me once a year and then every time they call I'm still at work. It's 10:00, and I'm still at work. "*Oh, I work Saturday, I can't*". So that kind of thing. Because I don't have as many social connections or friends here, that's not really an issue. The people I know are also busy and most of the people I know work at [my institution], so they also have to work the same events or they're just not around on the weekends anyway, so that's not a huge— Physically, that's not a huge thing. In terms of connecting, even virtually with people. Even if I'm not at work at 10:00, it's like, "*Dang, I just got home at 9:30. I'm tired, I don't want to engage*". Or on weekends, I really want my Sunday to just be my Sunday. I don't even want to say hello to anybody, that kind of thing. I'm an introvert, too, and a lot of what I do is talking to people all day and all that stuff, so when I get home I like really need my zone to be there, which leaves less time for friends and family in that way. It also dictates kind of when I can leave and when I can travel. There are months where I cannot leave, whether it's unspoken or explicit. That affects my schedule because, 'Oh, if you want to plan something, you better plan in May because that's the only time I don't have something to do'. There also is, you know, my family; my dad is Nigerian. We're from the Edo tribe. The Edo people have a convention every Labor Day weekend….It's like a bad time, especially at my previous institution where we did programming right during that time so

I could never, ever go to this convention which, of course, limits my connection to my father/my people who I am already not as connected to. Those are effects in terms of the schedule and the job. (Interview 1, January 19, 2017)

Black woman superhero. Beyond the attempts to find balance between the dichotomy of their lives, the participants were also vocal about feeling as though they, specifically as Black women, are expected to be all things to all others, to have "superhero powers" by caring for everyone else and handling all matters placed before them.

Simone passionately provided her insight on the expectations she feels are unjustly placed on Black women, whether from internal or external forces.

This might get a little political but as a Black woman, you know, I said to my friends, sometimes you have to be the damn superhero for everybody. You know? We show up for everybody else when we see some kind of other injustice. Sometimes it feels like people don't show up for us. You know? ...To me, it's kind of important to have that camaraderie even just outside of your work day because I feel like as Black women, we have to hold up the world sometimes...Without showing our own vulnerability. [We] make sure everybody else is okay. Sometimes you need someone else to be like, 'Can you hold this edge of the world today, because my shoulders are tired'. You know? I think that's why it's important...The idea of support. For this purpose...other Black women will understand what I'm saying a little bit more than if I was talking to a non-person-of-color. (Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

As an administrator, sometimes it's really hard for me to articulate what it is, but I think some of it, you know, [is] that mammy syndrome shit. Like, you take care of your kids but you've got to take care of their kids, and you're better off where people don't

respect you for what you've been able to hold up and do on your own. (Interview 2, February 21, 2017)

Simone also spoke directly to the idea of Black women being superheroes when it comes to being available to help everyone around them.

It goes back to the saying of sometimes I feel Black women have to be superheroes. Black Girl Magic sounds better, as a hashtag, but it stems from that whole idea. You know, I read an article after this past election where the title was something like, 'Black woman tries to save America again' and it was about 94 percent Black women voted Democrat, for Hillary Clinton. 94 percent! And, 13 percent African-American men voted for Donald Trump, and I was like, that's a lot of Black men voting for Donald Trump. That's a lot of Black women voting for Hillary Clinton. Where'd that come from? Is there a bigger picture that a Black woman sees all the time? (Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

I think what some people don't realize is that when you have the hardest shells, we are the softest people on the inside. Right? I think you see that a lot with Black women, because they feel like you have to do everything. I don't know if that's something that the world puts on us. I don't know if that's something that we put on ourselves, or even if it's a little bit of both. (Interview 3, May 22, 2017)

And then now, taking care of everybody else. You know what I mean? I'm trying not to put my radical hat on but it's kind of like American Black women have been taught that you have to take care of everybody else. I do think that women in general have been taught that, but there's a different undercurrent with it. Right? (Interview 2, February 21, 2017)

In addition to trying to manage the demands of her professional position and role of new mother and wife, Cameron also helps her husband in his recruitment efforts as a college football coach.

> Just being a new mom, there are so many things that I have to worry about that they don't. The first time my daughter got sick, I was like 'Oh, God! Do I take off work? Do I bring her to work with me? What do I do?' I had just started working here and I was like 'I don't want to be that person that's calling off all the time because my daughter is sick'...I don't want to be that person. I remember one particular day, my daughter had a fever at night and I was just praying to the Lord like, *Please let this fever break, she has to go to school tomorrow. I have workshops. I have meetings that I can't miss.* Sure enough, I looked at the caller ID and it said...Child Learning Center and I said 'Crap!', and I went and talked to my supervisor...and that got us into this long conversation about things that we have to worry about that men don't. (Interview 1, January 27, 2017)

Emphasizing the complexities of her personal and professional lives, Cameron also explained how her knowledge and expertise as a student affairs administrator bleeds over into her personal duties as a wife.

> It's worked out well that [my husband and I] been at the same institution both times. It gives him another opportunity to engage with his students, with his players, because while he's impacting them on the field, then you have me on this side making sure that they're staying engaged. Making sure that they're going to class. Not saying that he doesn't do that, but it's just an added benefit. During the recruiting process for them, you know, I'm at the recruiting dinners and because I'm there talking to the mothers and reassuring them "Hey, your son is going to be just fine. I'm going to make sure I stay on

them." I have parents that call me on my cell phone making sure that their child is eating. Making sure that their child is going to church. They just need a reassuring voice, especially when their child is coming from so far away from home, just to know that they have someone here that's looking out for them that's not necessarily connected to football. (Interview 1, January 27, 2017)

And then whenever we invite [the football players] over to the house, my husband always tells them, 'You need to go talk to my wife. You need to go talk to her'. If they have some kind of problem, 'You need to talk to my wife'. If they didn't do so well in their classes for the semester, he'll call them and he'll give me the phone. It's like I'm the enforcer because my husband is not a yeller. ...He relies on me to make sure the guys are doing what they're supposed to do. (Interview 1, January 27, 2017)

For Harper, she felt as though she is always called upon to clean up the messes, whether it is at work or within in family.

Like, in my family, I'm the one that keeps things together so I have to be very structured. Very… If something's going to pop off, where is [Harper]? Things that are popping can calm down. That's kind of how I'm viewed from the family viewpoint. Some of that translates into work...When there are just weird issues that pop up, 'Oh, let's put [Harper] on this committee because I know that she's going to be thinking about what students really want. How can we meet them where they are?'...I think some of that translates into work in certain situations but definitely at home, in my family. It's like 'Oh, something's going on. Where is [Harper]?' (Interview 1, January 31, 2017)

...it is my expectation of myself to do more in what I'm supposed to be doing but people have put this expectation on me to do more and more on top of that and expect it

to turn out well. Yeah, so, and then there have been times when I feel like I'm sinking and they give me more on top of it and I'm like, "Don't you guys see me sinking?" And they're like, "You got it". So, I feel like that's been what's happening here. (Interview 3, May 31, 2017)

So, then they say, oh, this is a hard problem, let's put [Harper] on this committee. Or let's see if [Harper] can do this and that. And then all my focus goes to those special things and it's taken away from things that I am supposed to be doing. So, I will say, yeah, even though I'm like let's go above and beyond, since I've been doing above and beyond people say, "Oh, she's doing well doing that". People give me more responsibilities and the expectation is for me to do those things well. in addition to things that I already do. So I feel like the expectation is for me to always do more even though sometimes I just want to do my job and mind my business. (Interview 3, May 31, 2017)

Summary

This chapter provided detailed summaries of the six study participants to allow the reader to become better acquainted with the women about whom this research is framed, and their distinct perspectives of their experiences as Black women college administrators. In addition, this chapter revealed the thematic findings that were developed as a result of the data collection and analysis process as outlined in Chapter Three. The responses from the participants' three semi-structured interviews and reflective journal entries yielded the following four themes: Hyper-awareness of self, Importance of relationships with Black women, Opportunity to give back through work, and Negotiating demands of personal and professional life. Each of the themes were supported by excerpts from the participants' data material.

The next chapter, Chapter Five, provides a discussion of the findings as it relates to the

research questions, the theoretical framework, and the scholarship connected to the topic. In response to this study's findings, recommendations for Black women college administrators and leaders of institutions of higher education are offered. Suggested directions for future research will also be discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a discussion of the research study and the conclusions drawn from the findings presented in Chapter 4. Specifically, it provides a synopsis of the research questions, discussion of the themes, connections to the theoretical framework, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research. The experiences of Black women student affairs administrators are scarcely acknowledged within the literature, despite their significant contributions to the field of higher education, student affairs administration, and society in general. Despite being disproportionately subjected to racism, classism, and sexism, Black women still persist in most aspects of their lives -- with and without the help or influence of outside entities. For their male and non-Black counterparts, such help and influence often manifests through mentoring--a proven social or professional tool that can lead to career advancement, higher wages, and professional recognition (Ballenger, 2010; Kram, 1985; Scanlon, 1997). However, with a dearth of senior-level Black women administrators in positions to provide mentoring, in addition to other factors and obstacles that impact these practices, Black women administrators engage in non-traditional formats of mentoring in order to garner the benefits. This research, which was intended to fill the gap in the existing literature, created new data on the lived experiences and mentoring relationships of Black women student affairs administrators. Grounded in Patricia Hill Collins' theory of Black Feminist Thought, the study utilized an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach to gain an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon.

The participants in this study were given the opportunity to use their voices to share their true and lived experiences of being at the intersection of Blackness and womanness while working in the realm of student affairs administration within the American higher education

landscape. The research also delved into the participants' experiences in mentoring relationships other women college administrators, and how they perceived said experiences added value to their professional and personal lives.

<div align="center">**Discussion of Research Questions**</div>

This section provides an overview of the findings and the findings' relationship to the research questions that directed the focus of the study.

Research Question 1: In what ways do Black women student affairs administrators experience their lives as these experiences relate to their professional demands and pursuits, and personal interests and obligations?

The Black women student affairs administrators who participated in this study expressed the ways in which they experience their lives in four emergent themes: *Hyper-awareness of self*, *Importance of relationships with Black women, Opportunity to give back through work*, and *Negotiating demands of professional and personal lives*.

Black women administrators who participated in the study appeared to share a unique experience of striving to achieve success while dealing with the complexities of their personal and professional lives. Faced with the pervasive double bind of being both Black and a woman, the participants provided unfiltered accounts of how they navigate their experiences at and outside of work. With their Blackness serving as their most salient identity (self-reported), the women who participated in the study expressed feeling as though they were constantly under watch and critique by those with whom they work--a feeling that was not as prevalent in social settings. This perception, conjoined with feelings of oppression, has created an ever-present need for them to constantly check or question their appearance, speech, tone, body language, and professionalism. This "hyperawareness" dictates how they show up in various spaces, but

particularly in the workplace. As a result, they feel the need to work twice as hard as their male and non-Black counterparts and without error, for fear of receiving inequitable consequences. Though subject to microaggressions and overt racism and sexism at times, the Black women in the study discussed feeling as though they must take on superhero qualities such as saving everyone and everything around them, while simultaneously feeling voiceless and unrecognized.

Participants discussed how important it is for them to have relationships with other Black women due to the unquestioned understanding of their shared experiences and need for support when dealing with the aforementioned challenges and pressures. These relationships--which evolve with mentors, colleagues, peers, and even students--are essential to their ability to maintain their mental, emotional, psychological, and professional wellness.

Through their work as student affairs administrators, most of the participants described their work as a way of giving back to their communities, to their institution, and to their "people"[10]. Attributing much of their own success to the help and support of others, most of the women in the study felt that it was their duty to give back (by replenishing resources to a community to which they once belonged) or pay it forward by helping students (especially those who are also Black) through their college careers or serving as a mentor to younger or less-experienced women in the field. From their standpoint, the success of those with whom they help contributes to their own personal success.

In addition to the existing pressures that come with their administrative roles, the participants also described their personal obligations and pursuits, which at times conflict with the demands of their jobs. Generally, most professional roles within student affairs come with the

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[10] In this case, "people" is a colloquium used by members of the Black community to refer to those of which they identify with as sharing a common race, culture, and/or social experience.

expectation of evening and weekend obligations, which can interfere with their personal responsibilities. In addition, there is a personal aspect of the field that involves working closely with young adults (at times, outside of the standard workweek hours) who are also trying to navigate their lives and make decisions that have long-lasting impact. Managing these unconventional professional expectations--in conjunction with personal relationships, parenting and family obligations, and other outside pursuits--the women often find themselves negotiating between the demands of their two worlds in an effort to keep everything in order.

The participants described their experiences navigating the demands of their professional and professional lives as complicated paths to which they strive to achieve a sense of balance. In their professional roles, the women in the study are student affairs administrators whose professional duties are to support and serve college students as they navigate their own academic and personal trajectory; personally, they are wives, partners, mothers, aunts, daughters, sisters, and friends. However, due to the intersection of their marginalized identities of being both Black and a woman, Black women also face various degrees of oppression, racism, and sexism -- systematic interferences that impact the way in which they view themselves, engage in certain behaviors, observe their world, and seek advancement. The amalgamation of these competing and multi-layered realities create a unique set of circumstances for Black women college administrators that can be difficult to manage.

Research Question 2: How do Black women student affairs administrators describe their experience(s) with mentoring relationships with other women college administrators?

The Black women student affairs administrators who participated in this study described their experiences with mentoring relationship in the two emergent themes of *Importance of relationships with Black women* and *Opportunity to give back through work*. Recognizing the

importance that mentoring can have on the direction of their careers, participants discussed their experiences with mentoring relationships. The mentoring relationships that were shared varied greatly between the women in the study; there was a combination of experiences with male, non-Black, peer, and Black women mentors.

When looking specifically at the mentoring relationships that the participants had with other women administrators, most of their experiences were described either in a positive manner or as nonexistent. At the time of data collection, at least half of women shared that they did not currently have a woman mentor in their lives. Most of their experiences with a woman mentor was in the past, or would not be considered a consistent or current relationship. Three of the participants described mentoring relationships with males, which they found to be more directly advantageous to their careers. While the women mentors were helpful in offering advice, being a listening ear, or encouraging their pursuit of certain goals, the male mentors served more in the capacity of a sponsor than simply a mentor. As a sponsor, the male mentors invited the women to attend meetings, highlighted the women's talents to their colleagues, connected them with other leaders, and nominated them for certain projects and recognition. None of the women in the study mentioned having any experience with a woman serving as a sponsor for them.

While the participants shared some of the benefits they received from being mentored by other administrators, they explicitly expressed their desires to receive mentoring from a woman who looks like them, who shares some of their socio-cultural identities, understands their personal and professional challenges, and who can talk with them from a real place about how to overcome obstacles that are unique to the Black woman experience, and still achieve success. They were clear about their intense desire to receive mentorship from a senior-level Black woman administrator, which many of the participants had not yet experienced in their careers. Of

the six women in the study, five said that they did not currently have a mentor who was a Black woman administrator. Unfortunately, due to the lack of Black women in senior-level student affairs administrator positions, the likelihood of them obtaining such a mentor is low. For those who had access to more senior Black women administrators for potential mentorship shared their experiences that turned out to be much different than what they expected. In Nia's case, she found the potential mentor, a Black woman who served as Vice President, to be hardened by her path of rising through the ranks to her current position. According to Nia, the woman did not seem open or available to cultivate such a mentoring relationship with a junior-level administrator. For Jade, she simply never felt welcomed by the Black woman who served as the Director of her functional area at a previous institution; Jade described often feeling at odds with her Director, as if the woman was threatened by her presence of being another Black woman working in her domain.

As a way to overcome the challenges faced with seeking mentorship from senior-level Black women administrators, the participants talked about ways in which they use their own experiences and talents to contribute to the funnel of success for Black women in higher education by serving as a mentor. Cameron explained that she will continue to seek a Black woman mentor in the field; however, in the meantime, she will aim to cultivate relationships with others who can also be beneficial to her development and growth as a professional and as a person. Nia and Jade described their willingness to mentor young Black women who are either thinking of entering the field of higher education or are new professionals; both of the women also talked about the power of peer mentorship and how their experiences with such relationships have also been beneficial to their professional endeavors as well as their mental well-being. In addition, Simone was very adamant about the need for sister circles for Black women

administrators; she explained how the support and love that she has given and received as part of various sister circles has helped her at every institution she has worked over the last decade.

Overall, the women in the study shared that their mentoring relationships with other women college administrators were positive experiences, and have helped them to either advance within or navigate through the profession of higher education/student affairs. For a number of reasons, many of the women administrators were not involved in a mentoring relationship with another woman administrator; however, they all desired having such a relationship with a senior-level Black woman administrator, due to their shared experiences and understandings of cultural identity and social oppressions that Black women face. Despite the generally positive sentiments of the participants regarding mentoring relationships with other female college administrators, Black women administrators face some challenges in this area; as a result, the participants discussed alternative ways in which they have sought the outcomes of mentoring, which include sister circles and peer mentoring.

Research Question 2a: In what ways, if any, does the mentoring relationships add value to Black women student affairs administrators' perception of their personal and professional lives?

The Black women student affairs administrators who participated in this study expressed the ways in which their experienced mentoring relationships added value to their lives solely through the thematic finding, *Importance of relationships with Black women*. The participants provided examples of ways in which their mentoring relationships with other women administrators added value to their professional lives. Nia gave credit to one of her mentors for helping her to secure the job that she currently holds through using the power of her network, and to another woman who financially invested in her professional and personal development

when she was younger. Jade explained that one of her mentors is a great resource in helping her strengthen her management skills due to the mentor's previous work experience in the corporate world. Alex explained that it was her mentor that encouraged her to submit program proposals and present at conferences in order to build her professional repertoire and become more invested in the professional community. Harper said that it was a previous woman mentor that prepared her for the harsh realities of being young, Black, and a woman while working in higher education. The participants did not discuss much regarding how these mentoring relationships impacted or added value to their personal lives; however, when asked what topics they would like to discuss with a Black woman administrator mentor if provided the opportunity, more than half of the participants stated that they would ask how to create balance between their personal and the professional lives while simultaneously navigating the racism, sexism, and politics that exist within the American higher education landscape.

The participants of this study found that engaging in mentoring relationships with other women administrators add value to their professional lives. While they expressed a preference of wanting to be mentored by another Black woman administrator, they all found that having another woman administrator, regardless of race, proved to be beneficial to them, specifically as it related to their career goals and responsibilities.

Discussion of Findings

Chapter 4 outlined the study's findings, highlighting the four themes that emerged from the data analysis process. Excerpts from the participants' semi-structured interviews and reflective journal entries were provided to illustrate the themes' relevance and consistency throughout the data collection. Here, each theme is discussed in further detail, elaborating on their meaning as it relates to the women's lived experiences and mentoring relationships, its

connection to the relevant literature, and its alignment with the theoretical framework of Black Feminist Thought. In addition, the connection between the implications of, and recommendations as a result of, the findings are discussed.

Theme One: Hyper-awareness of self

The double jeopardy of being both Black and a woman creates a distinct experience for the participants in the study. With both identities subject to social and professional marginalization, the participants as Black women are constantly faced with discrimination as it relates to their gender, their race, or the intersection of the two. Never knowing by which identity they will be judged (or if they will be judged at all), Black women feel the need to accommodate the preconceived notions or automatic thinking that may be associated with their likeness. As a Black person, they are subject to the stereotypes that they are lazy, dirty, unprofessional, ignorant, and/or inarticulate. As a woman, they are subject to the idea that they are inferior to men, undeserving of recognition or respect, do not hold power, do not belong in the workplace, are mothers and caretakers, are emotional, and are ineffective decision-makers. As a result, Black women are faced with outright racism and sexism, as well as microaggressions. In an effort to combat these perceptions, the women attempt to adopt certain behaviors that they feel will be more acceptable by the dominant culture and allow them to be recognized as professional and competent administrators; such behaviors include dressing in a specific manner, styling their hair in a certain way, and/or speaking in a particular tone.

One particular way that the women in the study expressed their *hyper-awareness of self* that differ from other women was with regards to their hair. When discussing their perceived need to check themselves constantly, the concept of Black hair and how they presented theirs specifically within the workplace came up repeatedly for the participants. In particular, Jade

mentioned the trials that come with having natural hair, Nia and Simone made references to their 'locs and how they can be received by others, Cameron shared how her hair was often the centerpiece of conversations with some of her former colleagues, and Alex talked about instances when her non-Black colleagues told her how they preferred for her to straighten her tresses. In each case, the women illustrated that their hair had meaning to not only them but to those around them as well. Johnson & Bankhead explained why hair has such a significant connect to Black women's identity:

> For Black women and girls, identity is inextricably linked to their relationship to and presentation of their hair... For African people, hair is deeply symbolic, and its meaning extends into multiple dimensions of Black culture and life. The meaning is both deep and wide; in other words, hair may have spiritual and religious connotations. It may play an essential socio-cultural role and at other times its meaning may serve as a method of self-expression. (2014, p. 86)

For the participants, the way in which they display their mane directly connects to an array of emotions and preconceived thoughts. While Black women often use their hair as a form of expression, it also comes with varying degrees of judgment from those around them. Because of this, the women often feel that they have to consider, and reconsider, the way in which they should display their locks so that it does not become a distraction, offensive, or misunderstood to others, while also striving to remain true to themselves as proud Black women. Both Nia and Jade talked about how they question whether they should wear their hair up or in a bun when going into certain spaces or around certain individuals; Alex talked about the times in which she altered her hair by straightening it from its naturally textured tresses when going on interviews--

all for the perceived comfort of others and the pursuit of being recognized as professional and competent.

Connection to literature review. Henry, Butler, and West (2011) explain that Black women experience the "double jeopardy" of being both Black and a woman, two marginalized identities that cannot be "fragmented and ranked"; instead, it places these women in a group all by themselves where they are faced to deal with oppressive treatment of which they are unsure is triggered by their race, their gender, or both. To provide context for the experiences of Black women, several researchers found that when relating to Blackness, Black men are typically acknowledged, and when referring to femininity, it is white women who are most times referenced (Myers, 2002; Woods, 2001; Zamani, 2003); this ultimately leaves Black women feeling "relegated to the periphery and ignored by the dominant culture as well as [by] Black men" (Henry, Butler, & West, 2011).

A study of the psychosocial issues of young Black college women found that the three major psychological issues experienced by its participants were anger, anxiety, and depression (Henry et al., 2011). Similar to the experiences shared by the Black women administrators, the college women's anger "stems from the continuous stress and strain caused by the oppression that exists within the campus environment...they [feel] invisible to the campus community. Because they represent Blackness and femininity, they are regarded as insignificant" (Henry et al., 2011, p. 144). As a way of coping with such rejection, these women may "take on an intimidating persona to mask their hurt and to distance themselves from their oppressors" (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Consequently, this persona can manifest into the characteristics of the "angry Black woman" stereotype with which Black women administrators adamantly try not to identify or perpetuate (Mosley Anderson, 2011).

The anxiety experienced by the young Black college women directly links to the theme of hyper-awareness of self that reflects the experiences of the Black women administrators in this investigation. Henry et al. (2001) used Johnson (2006)'s definition of anxiety as "the feeling of uneasiness and trepidation that disrupts the normal psychological state of an individual". Based on this definition, it can be said that these administrators also have dealt with the psychological issue of anxiety as a result of being a Black woman in higher education. Both the young college women and the college administrators in the two studies shared feelings of not fitting in with the dominant culture on their campuses (i.e., for the administrators, this includes codeswitching, wearing in a bun, etc.), feeling silenced or ignored, dealing with social phobia (i.e., Jade mentioned dressing or wearing her hair a particular way based on where her meetings may be held on campus or who she may run into throughout the day), as well as internalized negative social experiences (such as excessive scrutiny, disregard, or stereotypes) that result from "adverse occurrences within the college environment" (Henry et al., 2011). Furthermore, Black women administrators and students face anxiety in their efforts to combat assumed negative perceptions, and prove that they are competent and are deserving of their positions on the campus (Henry et al., 2011).

In addition, Black women on campus also deal with depression as a result of the discrimination, sexism, and racism that they experience at their institutions. Although the Black women administrators did not explicitly state that they were depressed or dealing with feelings of depression, they conveyed similar experiences to the young college women in Henry et al.'s study, and may also suffer from the psychological issue as a result. As with anger and anxiety, "depression is manifested as a result of feelings of alienation, cultural incongruence, perceived

racism and sexism, and invisibility in the campus community"—all of which are experiences that the Black women administrators claimed to have also dealt with (Henry et al., 2011).

The data related to the participants' connection to and relationship with their hair adds to the limited, but emerging scholarship on Black women and Black hair. As discussed in Johnson and Bankhead (2014), hair for Black women holds deep symbolism and historical relevance that dates back to the Ancient Nile Valley civilizations of Africa. Johnson and Bankhead explained that [i]In Africa, hair was used to denote age, religion, social rank, and marital status as well as other status symbols" (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014). However, upon the arrival in colonial America, Europeans shaved the heads of the enslaved West Africans "in an effort to dehumanize and break the African spirit" (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014, p. 87). The juxtaposition of the ancestral connections of the hair with the oppression attached to it with the influences of European culture has created a complicated relationship for many Black women with their hair. In 21st century America, the significance of hair for Black women remains a sensitive subject for many. Different from other types of hair, Black hair or "kinky hair grows upward and away from the scalp instead of downward like looser textures" (Hargro, 2011). Brina Hargro's 2011 study examined how societal influences have impacted how Black women perceive their own natural hair. The study's findings revealed that "[s]ociety has influenced [Black] women's perception of their natural hair by implying or declaring that it is unattractive and unsophisticated" (p. 37) . According to Hargro, outside of the civil rights era when the Afro was symbolic for Black pride and political empowerment, the media has not promoted the images of Black women with natural hair as a sign of beauty or idolization (2011). The lack of representation of Black women's natural hair in media outlets correlates to the participants' heightened awareness regarding the presentation and reception of their hair, particularly in their work environment.

These findings relate to the responses of the Black women administrators in the study, as it validates their subconscious need to question or analyze the way in which they style their hair or how they may be judged by others because of it.

Relationship to theoretical framework. The premise of this study was to give voice to the true and lived experiences of Black women college administrators, using the double hermeneutic process of interpretative phenomenological analysis. As a result, the findings of the research uncovered the realities of the six women who participated in the study. Primarily due to the participants' intersecting identities of being both Black and women, Patricia Hill Collins' theory of Black Feminist Thought directly aligns with the intended outcomes of the research. Black Feminist Thought was born out of the notion that Black women's experiences are distinctly different from others', and should be shared only from the standpoint of Black women. Self-definition, as defined by Collins (2000), refers to Black women's "power to name one's own reality", thus rejecting the definition of the Black woman's experience by the dominant group and the negatively controlling images that plague their identity.

Collins (2000) explained that the controlling images, or negative stereotypical representations, are a significant component of the BFT framework, as they are used as a way to continue the oppression of Black women through the perpetuation of the dominant group's definition of the Black woman and her role as a subordinate figure within the social structure. These controlling images--such as the *angry Black woman*, being lazy, or unkempt--did show to be impactful on the way in which the Black women in the study lead their lives and show up on their campus. In an attempt to not be boxed into these negative stereotypes, the women engage in a *hyper-awareness of self* as it relates to how they dress, wear their hair, speak, and convey professionalism.

Black Feminist Thought also addresses the plight of the Black woman in academic settings, a place in which they have occupied in marginalized positions for an extended amount of time (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). It is in this space where the "outsider-within" status of Black women is most prevalent; Hamilton-Howard (2003) describes this form of marginality as a situation in which "black women have been invited into places where the dominant group has assembled, but they remain outsiders because they are still invisible and have no voice when dialogue commences" (p. 21). This sentiment was expressed repeatedly by the women in the study; Harper, Simone, and Nia specifically described countless incidents of sitting in meetings where their insight fell on deaf ears, only to be acknowledged as "a great idea" when their stolen contributions were repeated by a member of a more dominant group.

Through their interviews and reflective journal entries, the women defined their own experiences as Black women who work in student affairs administration, while further contributing to the collective shared and distinctive experiences of the Black woman.

Theme Two: Importance of Relationships with Other Black Women

The participants of the study expressed the importance of cultivating and maintaining relationships with other Black women. On a personal level, it is beneficial for the women to have the opportunity to share their experiences with someone else who also understands the unique challenges and oppressions they face as Black women. Professionally, it is encouraging to not only have the support from other Black women and the opportunity to share strategies for success, but to also see other Black women in positions in which they aspire to reach. The Black women in the study shared how their experiences with other Black women on all levels of the campus community have added value to their lives.

Connection to literature review. By looking at lives of various types of Black women, the literature provides insight on the derived theme of *Importance of Relationships with other Black Women*. The findings of said research, though not all directly linked to Black women college administrators, draws several commonalities to the experiences of those in the study; the shared experience of being a Black woman transcends their status or position. The participants shared the significance that their relationships with other Black women had on their personal and professional lives. Miles' (2012) qualitative study examined the current status of Black women in higher education administration. When the women administrators in Miles' study were asked about their support network, most of them cited their faith in God as well as their relationships with other Black women. For them, the "Black women in their lives [provided] a safe space to laugh, cry, and pray about their experiences" with racism, sexism, and homophobia (Miles, 2012, p. 21).

Although most of the administrators in the study desired to be mentored by senior-level Black women administrators, they shared alternative ways that they have sought to achieve outcomes similar to that of traditional mentoring--such as peer mentoring and sister circles. While the literature specific to Black women administrators is especially limited, studies on Black women college students provide some insight into the distinct experiences of Black women on college campuses. Cameron, Jade, and Nia all referenced forging peer mentoring relationships with colleagues who are also Black women administrators in the absence of having a more senior Black woman administrator to serve as their mentor. With scarce literature discussing the role of peer mentorship among Black women administrators, Apugo (2017) explored the role and impact of these relationships among millennial Black women graduate students. The participants in Apugo's (2017) study described their peer relationships as "multi-

purpose sustainable outlets" (p. 347). As with the Black women administrators, the Black women graduate students in Apugo's study "purposed their peer relationships to fill a void often satisfied through formal mentor relationships" (2017, p. 347). The Apugo study found that peer mentoring relationships not only served as support systems for the graduate students, but they also "play[ed] a significant role in helping them process instances of perceived negative race-related behaviors" (2017, p. 347). Additionally, some of the participants in the Apugo's study associated referred to their peer relationships as "sistah gurl" relationships, where the "sister gurl" peer was typically the person that the women graduate student went to for emotional support, "which included helping them to process and validate race-related encounters (2017, p. 362). This type of peer relationship coincides with Jade's stories about communicating her peers throughout the workday to unpack incidents that she had experienced and perceived to have centered on her Blackness. Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso (2000) studied the impact of racial microaggressions that take place in academic and social settings. Their research found that the experience of microaggressions directly impacted the academic and social lives of its recipients, and led to the formation of counterspaces (Solarzano et al., 2000). Defined as "sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained", counterspaces allow members of marginalized or oppressed groups to establish community in a comfortable and welcoming environment that is void of potential racial or sexist trauma (Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 70).

The Black women administrators in the study referenced their establishment and involvement in "sister circles" as being their professional counterspace. As Black student unions, sororities, and Black women support groups provide "a safe haven" for Black women college students, sister circles provide the same degree of familiarity for Black women administrators

who seek a sacred place to be unapologetically themselves (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 23).

Croom, Beatty, Acker, & Butler (2017) explored the motivation of Black undergraduate

womyn's engagement with "sister circle" organizations. The three main themes derived from the

study were observation, role models, and being whole; with the exception of observations, the

other outcomes of the study mirrored the sentiments of the Black women administrators who

talked about their connection with sister circle-like groups at their workplace. Regarding role

models, one of the prominent narratives of the study was that "minoritized students need to see

people who look like them in order to create a perception that they, too, are capable of

achievement in that environment" (Croom et al., 2017, p. 7); the same feelings held true for the

Black women administrators who collectively stressed their desire to have a senior-level Black

woman administrator as their mentor. In terms of being whole, the Black college women in

Croom et al.'s study found that the college women "could be more of their whole selves" in these

counterspaces; they were motivated to engage in these types of organizations because "they

needed a place where they could talk about race/racism, gender/sexism, age/ageism, and

sexuality/heterosexism" (Croom et al., 2017, p. 8). The college women's experiences with sister

circles directly aligned with the administrators who expressed how ridiculous and exhausting

they feel as a result of their hyperawareness, constantly policing themselves to ensure that their

Blackness and womanness is in check when in the presence of more dominant groups.

Relationship to theoretical framework. Within the context of "The Power of Self-

Definition", Collins provides insight about Black women's relationships with one another

serving as a safe space for them "to construct individual and collective voices" (2000, p. 102).

These relationships--which can take on various forms, to include friendships, colleagues, and

familial connections--are cultivated and exist based on a "shared recognition of who [they] are in

the world" (Clarke et al, 1983, p. 114, as cited in Collins, 2000) and "the need to value Black womanhood" (Collins, 2000). In the study, the participants described their individual lives, often within the context of their relationships with other Black women. Cameron shared her experiences getting through her dissertation process based on a relationship that she had developed with a Black woman staff person (who had recently earned her doctorate degree) on her campus; Jade discussed how her involvement on a panel at work led to her connecting with two Black women graduate students who she intends to mentor; Harper explained her transition from her former institution to her current institution by highlighting the advice provided to her from her former supervisor, a Black woman. Collins simply and significantly provides support to this theme by explaining that "[i]n the comfort of daily conversations, through serious conversation and humor, African-American women as sisters and friends affirm one another's humanity, specialness, and right to exist" (2000, p. 102).

Theme Three: Opportunity to Give Back Through Work

When describing their roles as student affairs administrators, the participants in the research often referred to their work--specifically the aspects that involve working directly with college students or mentoring new, young Black women professionals--as a way in which to give back. While the Black women administrators in the study are compensated for their professional contributions, they see their careers as an opportunity to repay the metaphorical debt that they owe for achieving their own level of success. When speaking about students of color specifically, some of the women felt as though it was their obligation to do whatever it takes to help these students succeed. Nia was very passionate about using her expertise and influence to give back through helping young college students. Specifically, she stated:

My favorite quote is from Maya Angelou. 'When you learn, teach. When you get, give'.

So, I feel like even I have my two pennies I'll rub them to together and, hell, give

somebody something you know... I think people should help people whenever they can.

As long as it doesn't hurt you, harm you, or cost you a lot of money then you should. I'm

also grateful and thankful that my experience is able to help somebody. (Interview #2,

January 27, 2017).

Both Nia and Jade mentioned that without the help and guidance of others when they were in

college, they would not be where they are today.

Connection to literature review. A thorough review of the literature on Black women

student affairs administrators did not yield many results that related specifically to the theme of

The Opportunity to Give Back Through Work. The findings revealed from the six Black women

administrators who participated in this study will help to fill this void in the literature on this

topic as it relates to the lived experiences of this particular group. Of the limited relevant sources

uncovered, however, DeLany & Rogers (2004)'s article explores Black women's leadership and

learning through the lens of community. When describing the influence of family on Black

women's leadership, the subjects discussed the expectation for them to "become politically

astute in order that they would distribute scarce resources in a manner that simultaneously

attended to those most in need and the good of the collective" (DeLany & Rogers, 2004). In

support of this notion, the following quote from a subject called WS was included:

[My parents] would say to us, 'When you have the opportunities, you're supposed to help

other people. When you become educated, then you can become a leader in your

community and you can help other people. That's your responsibility'. It was not

implied; it was made explicit many times. (DeLany, 1999, p. 100-101, as cited in DeLany

& Rogers, 2004)

Here, WS validates the perspective of the Black women administrators to give back to

others through their work when they have been afforded the opportunity to do so.

Relationship to theoretical framework. The idea of giving back through their work

aligns with the concept of community othermothers within the Black Feminist Thought

framework. Collins (2000, p. 178) describes 'othermothers' as "women who assist bloodmothers

by sharing mothering responsibilities". Two of the controlling images that continue to plague the

representation of Black women are the "mammy" and "matriarch", both of which connect the

narrative of Black women to the role of a mother-figure to both their biological children and

other people's children (Collins, 2000). The idea and practice of fictive kin within the Black

community extends to the college campuses on which Black women administrators work. These

women take on the role of a mother-like figure to the students (especially Black students) with

whom they support. As an "othermother", they share the responsibility of helping these students'

bloodmothers in helping them to be successful in college, though many times they have never

met the students' actual parents. This notion, in conjunction with their innate desire to increase

the value of Black womanhood, also touches on the mentoring role that these mid-level Black

women administrators assume with younger, less-experienced Black women administrators. In

neither case did the participants in the study explicitly refer to themselves as serving in a

mothering role to the students or younger professionals; however, through their socialization of

being a Black woman, such relationships and behaviors can be inherent. Collins (2000) explains

that for Black women "[e]xperiences both of being nurtured as children and being held

responsible for siblings and fictive kin within kin networks can stimulate a more generalized

ethic of caring and personal accountability among [Black] women" (p. 189). Therefore, Black women not only feel accountable to those with whom they are related through bloodlines, but "they experience a bond with all of the Black community's children" (Collins, 2000, p. 189). In this case, the Black community children are the college students and fellow administrators to which the study's participants seek to help by giving back through their professional work.

Theme Four: Negotiating Demands of Personal and Professional Life

The administrators in the study each expressed ways in which the demands of their careers interfered with the lives outside of work. The work of student affairs administrators often requires after-hour and weekend obligations and responsibilities. More so, due to the personal nature of the work, these professionals often deal with real-life issues that deeply impact college students' lives (such as homelessness, substance abuse, abusive relationships, sexual assault, mental health), which may cause emotional or mental strain that does not shut off at the end of the business day. For some, there are on-call hours that they are contractually obligated to work, and for others, it can be late night movie showings on-campus. Nia vividly described the dilemma she faces in trying to fulfill her conflicting responsibilities as an administrator, partner, daughter, and friend. For Cameron, despite her having a doctoral degree, she explained how her career trajectory is dependent on the transient nature of her husband's athletic coaching position and her responsibilities as a mother. Simone contemplates what her life will be like when or if she does have a family, considering the demands of her job. Alex is settling into her new position, which is a step-down from her previous Director role, which took a significant toll on her mental and emotional wellness. When you consider these aspects of the job, combine them with outside responsibilities, then couple it with the racial and sexist oppression that Black women administrators experience on a consistent basis, it creates a system of negotiating

priorities, that is not always simple to articulate or easily understood by those who do not work in the field or exist in the world as a Black woman.

Connection to literature review. In seeking balance between their professional and personal lives, most women share similar struggles. Much of the research on working women's attempts to gain work/life balance cite instances of working long hours, exhaustion, depression, career stagnation, and familial sacrifices (Carrol & Malizio, 1993; Cummins, 2012; Derrington & Sharrat, 2009; Dindoffer et al., 2011; Hoschild, 1989; Morris, 1998; Perkins, 2011; Philipsen, 2008; Young, 2004). However, due to Black women's unique social position, their experiences often involve additional elements that impact their struggle in a slightly different way.

> While all women struggle with issues related to work/life conflict, missing from this
>
> dialogue are the voices of African American women who compose one of the largest
>
> demographic groups in organizations. Despite evidence that work is a significant domain
>
> in their lives, researchers have limited information about their career experiences or how
>
> they integrate the world of work with their personal lives. (Barge, 2011, p. 3)

Review of the literature on this topic provides some insight into why Black women administrators must negotiate the demands of their often-dueling lives. Lewis (2011) surveyed 31 African-American women in Generation X about their experiences with work/life balances. There were two notable findings that speak to Black women's experience: (1) "[T]the concrete ceiling is perceived to be prevalent in the lives of African American women", and (2) most African American women did not participate in the Opt Out phenomenon (Lewis, 2011). The *concrete ceiling* refers to Black women's belief that "the barrier to senior positions could not be penetrated" (Lewis, 2011, p. 188); as such, some of the women in Lewis's study decided not to

pursue leadership or managerial positions either due to unspecified personal reasons or because they felt that they could never rise above a certain level within the organization (2011).

The Opt Out phenomenon applies to individuals who choose to leave the workforce for personal reasons (in this case, due to dissatisfaction with achieving work/life balance) with no intentions of returning (Lewis, 2011). The Black women in Lewis' study who did not opt out, shared that providing for their family was of greatest importance; therefore, "they had to endure the hectic schedules and missed opportunities in order to make the commitments of their work and personal life... leaving the workforce was never an option" (2011, p. 189). Unlike many of their non-Black counterparts, Black women relied on their income to maintain "their desired lifestyle or standard of living for their family" (Lewis, 2011, p. 189). For the participants in the study, opting out of the workforce seemed to only be a potential option for Cameron, who was the only married mother in the group. Due to the transient nature of her husband's football coaching career, she stopped working for almost one year after having her first child. And now that she's expecting her second child, she may leave the workforce indefinitely after giving birth, due to financial challenges with childcare and the uncertainty of her husband's contract renewal. The others, however, did not speak explicitly about opting out of the workforce as an option for managing their desired work/life balance; they all—both partnered and single—relied on their employment to support themselves and their families. Instead, a few of the women spoke about the possibility of leaving student affairs for careers that do not consume so much of their time in order to achieve such. Nia, in particular, who is unmarried and does not have any children, was very open and candid about seeking opportunities that would afford her a more balanced lifestyle. In a committed relationship with hopes of becoming a mother one day, Nia discussed making intentional career decisions now that will allow her to be successful both at work as well

and her personal life. The outcomes of this study reveal that the *work/life balance conversation* must shift in order to accommodate the cultural and social distinctions in the experiences of Black women. This affirms the importance of continuing the study and application of intersectionality and Black Feminist Thought with regard to current societal matters.

According to Pompper (2011), achieving balance between their work life and personal life was a difficult challenge for women of color. Pompper (2011)'s study captured the experiences of women of color as it related to work/life balance, and for many of the participants, it was perceived that the organization often times did not support "a woman's desire to manage a career and family" (Pompper, 2011, p. 477). When faced with the challenges of feeling unsupported in their desires to play critical roles at work and at home, the women were more likely to seek other employment opportunities or go into business for themselves (Pompper, 2011).

Barge (2011) interviewed 30 African American cross-generational women in a phenomenological study to uncover how competing priorities impact their lives while striving to achieve work/life balance. The three central themes that evolved from this investigation were: (a) Priorities are fluid and a "spirit of flexibility was a mandate" as they attempt to be present and responsive in all aspects of their lives; (b) The workplace culture is at the center of work/life balance; however, for Black women, the workplace is the most challenging to navigate because "they bring to the game a holistic perspective of what it takes to be successful while maintaining their self-respect as women of color, often in a workplace culture that neither values nor understands their uniqueness. [Black women] know they have to do more and be more than their peers"; (c) To achieve work/life balance, the women understand that they must incorporate themselves into the equation, which is something that they rarely do; Black women often put

themselves at the bottom of their priority list, regularly attending to the needs of everyone else

ahead of themselves (Barge, 2011). Another notable finding in Barge's study was that for the

Black women who participated, their faith, faith community, and their family were said to be key

influencers on the way in which they approached work/life balance; for many of the women in

the study, "their discernment process included reconciling career moves with family priorities"

(Barge, 2011, p. 77). For those with family support, they felt more willing to take on added

responsibilities or special assignments at work. For those with little to no family support, they

often felt left behind professionally as they remained in lower-level positions that would allow

them the flexibility to be more available for their children (Barge, 2011).

      Relationship to theoretical framework. Collins's Black Feminist Thought (2000)

begins to explore the concepts of Black women's paid and unpaid labor. The paid labor,

obviously, is for the work that she does outside of the home, that generates income as a result of

providing a good or service; the unpaid labor, however, references the work that she does for her

family and/or community. At the core of it all, it is these two types of labor that are in conflict

regarding Black women's negotiation of the demands of her personal and professional lives.

Collins posits that "a less developed but equally important theme concerns how Black women's

unpaid family labor is simultaneously confining and empowering for Black women" (2000, p.

46). Some scholars even venture to suggest Black women see this unpaid labor, or contributions

to their family's well-being, as more of "a form of resistance to oppression than as a form of

exploitation by men" (Collins, p. 46).

      Perhaps even more challenging than the dissension between the two types of labor in

which Black women participate, is the definition of *family* as it relates to the Black woman.

Family, as defined and perpetuated by White American elites, involves ties bound by bloodline

or marriage, heteronormative coupling, racial homogeneous couples and biological offspring, led by a father-figure who can provide for said family through this work outside the home, while the wife tends solely on work of the domestic sort (Collins, 2000). Using this definition, Collins professes that "everything the imagined traditional family ideal is thought to be, African American families are not" (2000, p. 47). The two primary issues of this definition of family for Black women is that: (a) they often do not and cannot split between the "public" sphere of work and "private" sphere of home, as these two elements are typically wrapped into one package in their experiences, and (b) the ideal that "real mean work and real women take care of families" is not representative of the way in which their families operate, and creates a deficient perspective of gender. As Collins states, "Black women become less 'feminine', because they work outside the home, work for pay and thus compete with men, and their work takes away from their children" (2000, p. 47).

Unexpected Findings

The focus of this study was to unveil the true experiences of Black women college administrators from their perspectives, specifically regarding the intersection of their professional and personal lives. While the thematic finding of *Negotiating the Demands of Personal and Professional Life* was derived through the analysis of the data, it was surprising to find that the women, when discussing their experiences, focused more on their professional lives than they did their lives outside of work. In comparison, the women talked more about their lives in terms of their work than their personal roles or responsibilities. It seems that is their work life that impacts their personal life, more so than the reverse; they make more adjustments to their personal lives to accommodate their professional work, than the opposite. Simone, who is single with no children, discussed thinking about how she would be able to care for a child in the

future, considering the demands of her work as an administrator. Jade shared a story about missing a dear friend's going away party due to heavy work-related travel.

It was evident from the women's responses that it is their professional work that makes them feel the most marginalized, the most in need of having their voices heard. Perhaps, it is due to their feelings of oppression as it relates to their work that they felt the need to talk more about those experiences. Nia used words such as *trauma*, *oppression*, and *racial battle fatigue* to illustrate the invisible toll that she and others like her carry daily being Black women in higher education. However, this finding could result from the fact that the majority of the participants did not have children, and had more flexibility in their lives to dedicate more time toward their careers as opposed to their lives outside of work.

Engaging in IPA Methodology

An interpretative phenomenological analysis was selected for this study because of it allowed me to not only capture the true experiences of Black women student affairs administrators, but it also highlighted the participants' meaning making as it related to their lives. By utilizing the ideographical components of IPA, I was able to gather in-depth accounts of each participants' interpretation of their personal and professional lives; in doing so, I was able to contribute to the self-definition of Black women student affairs administrations, as promoted by Patricia Hill Collins' Black Feminist Thought.

While this methodology was impactful with regard to the intended and actual outcomes of the research, my experience with IPA for this study is worth noting for future studies implementing this approach. I found that conducting a pilot study using interpretative phenomenology analysis prior to the dissertation research to be very helpful and informative. Through the pilot study, I was introduced to some of the nuances of the IPA approach as well as

the intensive time commitment required to carefully analyze the data; also, as a result of the pilot study, I made some changes to the methodology of the dissertation to create a more thoughtful research design, which included limiting the participants to only audio- and video-recording their journal entries, adding the third interview with each of the participants, and conducting the follow-up interview after the submission of their final interview. While I believe this restructuring strengthened my research design, it did lengthen what is already an arduous data analysis process. Because a detailed case analysis is completed for each participant prior to moving on to the next participant, as the researcher, I had to wait until the conclusion and transcription of each participants' final interview before undergoing a full analysis and overall theme development. This process, which followed the data analysis steps for IPA as outlined by Smith et al. (2011), was quite time-intensive and required intentional and dedicated time to complete in an acceptable timeframe.

I did, however, encounter a few other challenges while engaging with my methods—particularly as it related to the reflective journal data collection—that I find to be beneficial in sharing. I decided to incorporate reflective journals as a secondary data source as an alternative method for capturing the real-life circumstances that the participants experienced as it was happening that may not have been revealed through the interviews. I gave the participants 4-6 weeks (depending on their schedules and availability) to complete at least four journal submissions, with the intention that they would complete at least one entry a week. However, based on some of the feedback that I received from the participants, I learned that more than half of women in the study completed all of their entries around the same time, which was usually close to the posted deadline. By completing all of the journals at approximately the same time, some of the mindfulness and carefulness of their stories were lost—their true feelings, emotions,

and reactions were not always reflected in their journals. And as a result, I was not able to obtain much data from the reflective journals rich enough to contribute to the data analysis and theme development.

One participant did not complete any of her entries by the deadline and was granted an extension to complete and submit her journals; upon her submission, I found that she only submitted three of four journals, and her journal entries were in written form, as opposed to the dictated audio- or video-recorded form. Because of this, I questioned how I would proceed with this participant's involvement in the study. After much thought and consideration, I decided to keep her as a participant in the study because the data gathered from her interviews were rich and provided enough perspective to contribute to the outcomes of the study in a valuable way.

Overall, there was variation in the length and depth by which the participants completed their journals. There were some journal entries that were as long as 15 minutes, while others were only four minutes. Some participants were very dedicated to their journal entries, in terms of the topics by which they discussed and how they expressed their feelings about certain situations; others kept their journal entries very surface-level and provided more of a diary of their day's events as opposed to revealing their personal connection to what may have been going on or how such situations made them feel about their lives as Black women student affairs administrators.

Based on my experience with reflective journals being used within the IPA approach, my suggestions for future IPA studies incorporating reflective journals as a data collection source are as follows: be extremely explicit in the expectations of the participants agreeing to engage in the study; explain to the participants the importance of their reflective journals and how their entries will be used to inform the outcomes of the research; determine how you will handle non-participation of data collection and/or data that does not meet the expected protocol, and clearly

articulate these expectations to the participants at the commencement of the study; and, allow the participants to share their reflections in ways that are more personal and true to who they are (i.e., a vlog or blog, song, poem, short story, etc.).

Implications for Practice

One may ask why the lived experiences and mentoring relationships specific to Black women in student affairs administration is a necessary topic to explore. How does gaining this new knowledge have an impact on the field of higher education? The future of the academy is lost without the individuals who sustain its mission, its values, and its purpose. Once forbidden to walk the hallowed halls of predominantly White higher education institutions, Black women now make up the most educated group in the United States, and hold every position from front office assistant to the President/Chancellor on today's college campuses (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Despite their successes, their journeys have not been easy, and continue to be riddled with obstacles primarily due to the intersection of their gender and race. This section will outline the implications for practice as a result of the study's findings via recommendations for both Black women administrators and the leadership of institutions of higher education at which they serve.

Recommendations for Black Women College Administrators

To define their own realities and become more engaged activists for their experiences, Black women working in student affairs administration have the responsibility to enact positive and effective changes that will better than experiences both within the workplace and in their personal lives. In response to the shared experiences of the participants of this study, I have provided recommendations for Black women student affairs administrators to employ, in an effort to shift the narratives and perspectives of Black women within this profession:

To combat the negative cognitive activity associated with the *hyper-awareness of self* experienced by the women in the study, I recommend that Black women student affairs administrators remain (or become) confident in your talents and abilities to perform successfully in your jobs, present themselves in way that is true to who they are as both individuals and professionals, and address or report all instances of bias that fall outside of what is perceived fair or equitable. Most of the participants discussed their perceived need, as Black women, to work harder than others and to be over-prepared in order to be recognized as competent, professional, and worthy of being in certain spaces; by engaging in this behavior, the women exhibit awareness of the special contributions and preparedness they bring to their respective offices and/or departments. However, instead of engaging in repeated questioning and codeswitching in order prove themselves within the dominant culture, the Black women administrators should be confident in themselves that they are worthy and the work that they produce is deserving of recognition. Possessing confidence will not only lessen the impact of their hyper-awareness, but it will allow them to transfer the energy that they use in assuming others' perceptions of them to being more productive in their professional pursuits and personal obligations. They do not need to overthink what they are doing or how they should speak or what clothes to wear; they already possess the tools to achieve excellence. As it relates to the hyper-awareness surrounding their physical appearance, these women should be true to themselves, and express themselves in an authentic manner; doing so will aid in building their confidence as well as strengthen the ways in which Black women shape and define their own realities. Furthermore, the hyper-awareness experienced by the Black women in study can be at least partially attributed to the misogynoir of which they are both consciously and subconsciously subjected. By addressing and reporting all instances of bias against them, the women will increase the awareness of the unique challenges

they deal with as Black women, as well as help shift the culture in a way that eventually normalizes inclusivity and equity for all members of the community.

The participants in this study discussed their perceived need for and reliance on the relationships that they have with other Black women. From these relationships—which include mentoring—the women gain support, advice, familiarity, and an unspoken understanding of shared experiences that proves beneficial to their success and self-efficacy. To foster these relationships and improve the conditions of this particular group, I recommend that Black women student affairs administrators, seek or create spaces (or sister circles) on-campus, in the community, or virtually for Black women to come together and fellowship around their experiences, provide support and encouragement, and enjoy each other in a space that is free of oppression. For Black women in student affairs, being a part of such groups or sister circles will not only strengthen their confidence in themselves and their work, but it will also allow them the opportunity to advocate for themselves and other Black people and/or women when or if instances of bias arise or policies are created that do not consider their unique cultural, racial, or gendered needs.

Understanding the benefits of having a mentor and having personal connections with other Black women, the participants in the study all discussed their desire to be mentored specifically by Black women in senior-level student affairs positions; however, due to the lack of Black women in these roles, the participants acknowledged the challenges they face of having their desires met. Therefore, I recommend, specifically to Black women in senior-level positions, to be intentional about providing mentorship and sponsorship to mid-level Black women administrators. Seek out younger Black administrators that you believe have a promising future or who need some guidance and become a resource to them or use your influence to be a

sponsor; make time in your busy schedules to spend time with younger Black women administrators and provide advice, find out what is going on in their worlds, or simply show support for them in their endeavors. It was very important to the women in the study to not only see other Black women in positions to which they aspire, but also to be mentored by them. However, in the absence of senior-level Black women administrators or other Black women on-campus to serve as peer mentors, it is recommended that Black women student affairs administrators still seek opportunities to be mentored and sponsored by others and to pursue professional development opportunities that will contribute to their career advancement. Despite of the lack of Black women administrators to serve as their mentor, it is crucial that Black women continue to gain the benefits and opportunities that come from mentoring relationships, even if it does not come in the package they desire. Black women student affairs administrators must acknowledge the value in the tips, support, and advice that others can impart on them, and take from it what they can to apply to their lives. And to take it a step further, it is recommended that Black women student affairs administrators do their part by serving as a mentor, peer mentor, or sponsor to others, especially Black women students and less experienced Black women professionals in the field. Doing so provides an opportunity to give back in a way that leaves the field better than how it was found. It increases the availability of Black women serving as mentors, and creates a pipeline for future senior-level Black women administrators to serve in the mentoring roles that they aspire to have now. It is vital that opportunities to lift others, while rising (albeit slowly), are taken in order to recruit and retain Black women in student affairs administrator roles; this can be accomplished by cultivating a climate that is welcoming and honors their distinct perspective.

Recommendations for Leaders of Institutions of Higher Education

For student affairs administrators, the institution holds a significant portion of the responsibility for their professional experiences. In this case, the institution consists of the senior leadership team, the departments of human resources and equity/diversity, and all of the agents that contribute to the overall culture and operations of the campus. The following provides recommendations to the leadership of higher education institutions to implement in order to create a workplace that is more equitable, comfortable, and fulfilling specifically for Black women administrators.

To facilitate the cultivation of sister circles and the connections between Black women student affair administrators, it is important for institutions to provide or allow spaces for Black women administrators to congregate in order to network, express their shared experiences, provide support to one another, and engage in mentoring. Moreover, it is just as critical that these spaces be recognized and supported by the institution, and not questioned regarding their need or significance to the group. Institutions can do this by: allowing administrators to reserve space on campus that is not attached to a student group, budget code or business meeting; allowing for the creation and functioning of affinity groups for administrators on-campus; providing opportunities for funding for these groups to fulfill their mission and goals; as well as recognizing the positive work and outcomes that come from the group's opportunity to convene regularly.

Institutions of higher education, and specifically divisions of student affairs, must make it a priority to hire and promote Black women for leadership positions in higher education/student affairs administration. In doing so, the institution will not only show "its commitment to promoting and advancing equality for women despite racial, gender, and cultural differences", but it will also provide more mentors for its younger or junior administrative staff (Choates,

2012). The cultivation of mentoring relationships benefits not only those involved in the relationship, but the institution at which they work as well. Administrators who engage in mentoring relationships are more productive in their work, more aware of campus operations and policies, connected to the university, exhibit more leadership skills, and are more resilient to campus culture shift and organizational change. In addition, by showing intentionality in the hiring of a more diverse workplace, Black women administrators are more likely to buy-in to the idea that the institution at which they work values diversity and inclusion, and recognizes their needs as a person of color on the campus. Institutions can show that this is a priority for them by using clear language in their anti-discrimination clause, as well as in their job postings by stating that "women and persons of color are encouraged to apply". Also, the campus human resources/recruiting offices can solicit nominations for vacant administrative positions from current administrators who are minorities/women to increase the pool of applicants that are from diverse backgrounds.

As a way to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, instances of bias experienced by Black women (and other underrepresented groups), institutions should provide mandatory training and professional development to its entire workforce related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Such trainings should bring awareness to various degrees of microaggressions, automatic thinking, and intolerance that occurs and their impact on these populations. Such training, which can be administered online through the campus's human resources or equity/diversity office, should be given at least once per year and required for every employee to participate. Moreover, institutions should also provide leadership development programs that are required for those who are seeking to advance professionally**.** Having an institutionalized leadership program allows

everyone the opportunity to receive the same training and development, and creates a more equitable system for promotion, advancement, and recognition.

In addition, institutional leaders need to ensure that their policies, practices, and campus culture are considerate and inclusive of the minority groups that work on its campus. Incorporating a zero-tolerance policy on the campus for discriminating behavior is necessary, and it as well as the consequences for violations should be clearly communicated to all members of the community. Moreover, institutions of higher education should also review their policies and procedures for reporting and investigating bias incidents, to ensure that they do not create any barriers or violate anyone's rights.

Lastly, as a way to address the negotiation that Black women student affairs administrators make regarding the needs of their personal and professional lives, institutions of higher education should create policies that promote balance between work responsibilities and personal obligations. Considering the unconventional schedules held by most student affairs administrators in addition to the emotional and mental work that is often required of these roles, it is important that the overall wellness of student affairs administrators is encouraged and supported. Creating policies that are more accommodating to the needs and well-being of student affairs administrators will allow them to continue to do great work for the institution and for the students they serve. In order to create policies that will promote such balance and be beneficial to the groups they are intended to help, the campus or university system should solicit the perspective, insight, and suggestions of those most greatly impacted either through surveys or focus groups to ensure that the outcome of the policymaking corresponds to the intention.

Directions for Future Research

Due to the limited number of studies related to the experiences and mentoring relationships specifically regarding Black college administrators, the following recommendations for future research will expand the pool of relevant and necessary scholarship on this topic.

To expand the type of research conducted on this phenomenon, studies which incorporate non-phenomenological qualitative approaches, quantitative inquiry, or mixed methodology would gather additional data on the experiences and perspectives of Black women administrators. Also, using various sampling techniques to identify subsets of this population (e.g., those working at different types of institutions, those working within specific functional areas, those working in specific geographical areas, those with spouses/partners, belonging to specific cultural or social groups, etc.) would not only increase the degree of scholarship on this topic, but it may also diversify the findings, allowing for more breadth and depth of new knowledge on this topic.

Due to the small sample size used in this study, the experiences of Black women student affairs administrators were limited and restricted to a homogenous selection due to the use of the IPA approach. More research on Black women in student affairs administrator roles on a larger scale is needed in order to obtain a better understanding of these women's lives and experiences. Using a larger sample of Black women administrators would yield greater input on this topic.

The sample used in this study all worked at the same institution; therefore, the likelihood that they were all subjected to similar or the same interactions from colleagues, oppressive environment of the institution, treatment from leadership, and/or human resources practices and policies is high. Studies on Black women administrators at different types of institutions (i.e., community colleges, HBCUs, small private, Ivy League, etc.) will allow for more research on

the topic of Black women college administrators, while also allowing for the diversity of their experiences to be captured.

Only one of participants in this study was both a wife and mother; these identities come with additional experiences, expectations, and perceptions that compound that of their Blackness and womanness. Research that focuses primarily on Black women administrators who are mothers (single or partnered) would also be a welcomed addition to the scholarship on Black women administrators, as well as provide an opportunity for further reevaluation of institutional practices, policies, and procedures.

To address the oppression experienced by Black women in higher education, there is room for more research to be conducted that will investigate the psychological impact that racism, sexism, and misogynoir has on the personal and professional lives. Currently, there is very limited scholarship that delves into these factors, particularly for Black women in administrator roles.

From the results of this study, the expectations and manner in which Black women are socialized to give and receive mentoring showed to be different from traditional mentoring practices. Additional research on the mentoring experiences and practices of Black women administrators is warranted, in order to learn more about this group's experiences and/or alternative methods used for mentoring, as well as determine more suitable methods for supporting their success and well-being on a personal and professional level.

More qualitative research that compares the experiences of Black women at the administrative level with their white women, Black male, and white male counterparts would be powerful in highlighting the inequities that exist amongst these groups within the field of higher education/student affairs administration. Even more, the results from such research may provide

substantial evidence that could result in more equitable practices and more inclusive

environments, specifically for those who manage our campuses from the middle.

Conclusion

Mid-level Black women student affairs administrators are faced with an assortment of

challenges and demands simply by living their lives. Personally, they are subjected to both the

composite and individual effects of racism and sexism for being Black and a woman.

Professionally, they are plagued with microaggressions, feelings of being unheard and

unrecognized, given extra assignments, and receiving harsher repercussions—all while striving

to produce high-quality output and position themselves for career advancement. Outside of work,

these women also manage other matters—such as personal relationships, families, educational

pursuits, outside business ventures, and hobbies—that fill their time and take a toll on their

mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

The purpose of this study was to capture the true and lived experiences of Black women

student affairs administrators, looking specifically at the interplay of their personal and

professional lives as well as their mentoring relationships with other women administrators.

Through this investigation, I was able to capture the experiences of six Black women mid-level

administrators at a minority-serving institution in the southeastern region of the United States.

They shared what it is like to be a Black woman college administrator from their perspectives;

from their experiences, there is now new knowledge to be added to the scant literature on this

population. Through this investigation of their lives by way of semi-structured interviews and

reflective journal entries, the women in the study were given the opportunity to have their voices

not only heard but honored as a true contribution to the research and to field. While this study is

but the tip of the iceberg in unlocking the lived experiences of Black women in higher education

administration, it does provide a perspective that is not typically considered or acknowledged in higher education policy, procedures, and operations. It is my sincere hope that the outcomes of this research will initiate critical conversations on college campuses across the nation regarding campus culture, institutional policy, and senior leadership development specifically as it relates to Black women on the administrative level. But even more important to me is that this study will not only serve as an impetus for more research on the experiences of Black women administrators, but it will empower these women to find the strength to be unapologetically themselves, to support and uplift each other throughout their journeys, to allow themselves to be their own priorities, and to continue to author their own narratives in the name of self-definition and Black womanhood.

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Appendix A:
Study Recruitment Email Message

Hello,

As a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education program at Old Dominion University, I am conducting a research study which aims to investigate the lived experiences of Black female college administrators, to include their experiences in mentoring relationships with other female college administrators. Because of your role as a mid-level, female student affairs administrator at a public, four-year institution within the American higher education system, I would like to invite you to participate in this research.

The study includes four parts: 1) an initial interview, 2) a second interview 2-3 weeks following the initial interview, 3) 4-6 weeks of reflective journals about your life as a female college administrator, and 4) a third/final interview, as a follow-up to your reflective journal entries. Responses to the interview questions as well as the journal entries are strictly confidential and any identifying information will be removed prior to publication.

I ask that you please complete the short survey (link below) to inform me of your decision to participate or not, no later than Friday, January 13th, 2017. More information will follow to those who agree to participate in the study.

<u>Complete Survey Here</u>

Feel free to contact me via e-mail (twigg009@odu.edu) if you have any questions about the methodology of the research study. If you have any concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact my Dissertation Committee Chair, Dr. Felecia Commodore at Old Dominion University, at fXXXXXXXX@odu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Petros Katsioloudis, the current chair of the Human Subjects Research Committee, at 757-683-XXXX or the Old Dominion University Office of Research, at 757-683-3460.

Thank you,

Tiffany S. Wiggins, Ed.S.
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education
Old Dominion University
tXXXXXX@odu.edu

Appendix B:
Research Study Participation Information

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my dissertation research. This email will outline very important information regarding your participation in the study.

As you may already know, I'm a PhD student in the Higher Education program at Old Dominion University, and I am currently conducting a qualitative research study on the lived experiences and mentoring relationships of Black female college administrators.

The purpose:
The purpose of the research study is to uncover the lived experiences of Black female college administrator as they navigate both their personal and professional lives, as well as gain better understanding of the role that a mentoring relationship with other female college administrators plays in the lives of such women.

Data Collection:
The study includes four parts: 1) an initial interview, 2) a secondary interview 3) 4-6 weeks of reflective journaling about your life as a Black female college administrator as well as your mentoring relationships with other female college administrators, and 4) a final interview, at the conclusion of your reflective journaling, to follow-up on your journal entries and for final thoughts. The interviews will be semi-structured, and conducted in person (or via Skype or Google Hangout if necessary) with me, the researcher, as well as audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis.

The reflective journaling--which may occur in either audio-recorded or video-recorded form--consists of the participants speaking freely about their experiences as a female college administrator (similar to blogging or vlogging). Prompts will be provided to the participants to help evoke thoughts for their journal entries, if needed; however, the participants are not required to use the prompts and may share whatever they feel is important to discuss regarding their experience as a female college administrator. The participants are asked to audio- or video-record at least 4 journal entries within a 4-6 week time period.

Responses to the interview questions as well as the reflective journal entries are strictly confidential and any identifying information will be removed prior to publication.

I have also attached a copy of the Informed Consent form for your reference and protection. You do not need to sign and return the form to me.

I would like to start data collection very soon. To schedule the first interview, please complete the Doodle at the link provided: [hidden for privacy]. The interview should take approximately 1 hour. If you do not have any availability during the times listed in the Doodle, please email me separately and let me know your availability for the week of January 23rd. I may also be able to accommodate interviews after 5pm and/or via Skype, FaceTime, or Google Hangout.

There will be more information to follow regarding the reflective journaling data collection method in a separate email.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate. If things have changed, and you are no longer able to participate in the study, please let me know as soon as possible.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you,

Tiffany S. Wiggins, Ed.S.
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education
Old Dominion University

Appendix C:
Reflective Journal Protocol

Research Study: *An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of the Lived Experiences and Mentoring Relationships of Black Women College Administrators*

Researcher: *Tiffany Wiggins, Old Dominion University*

As a part of the data collection for the study, the participants are asked to complete reflective journaling in the form of audio- or video-recordings that will be shared solely with the researcher.

For the reflective journaling, the participants are asked to:

Discuss any current, previous, and/or anticipated experiences you have as it relates to both your personal and professional life as a Black woman college administrator. Share your thoughts, feelings, challenges, successes, etc., as it relates to how you experience life as it relates to your professional demands and pursuits as well as your personal interests and obligations. You may also discuss your experiences with receiving mentoring, or the lack thereof, from other women college administrators throughout your experience. There are no boundaries or limits on the topics, length, or frequency of your journal entries—simply "journal" until you feel you've provided sufficient context.

It is requested that, as the participant, you complete at least four (4) audio- or video-recorded journal entries between Wednesday, January 18, 2017 and Wednesday, March 1, 2017; however, you are permitted to complete as many journal entries as you'd like. A Google Drive folder, shared solely by the researcher and you, has been set up for you to upload your reflective journal files for easy and secure transfer. (You should have received an email to your ODU account linking you to the shared folder; please let me know if you have any issues accessing the shared folder).

***The video- or audio-recorded reflective journals may be recorded using your phone or any other recording device that you may have, that will allow easy file upload to the shared account. Please let me know if you have difficulty in securing a recording device.

Below are a few prompts that may be used to help evoke some thoughts for your reflective journals; however, it is not required that you use these prompts.

1. Describe how you manage your work life in conjunction with your personal life? Are the two "lives" in balance? Does "work/life balance" or "work/life blend" exist for you?

2. With regard to my life as a Black woman college administrator, I feel the most misunderstood/challenged/appreciated when…

3. Discuss a time when you made a major personal choice/sacrifice due to a professional obligation or pursuit. Discuss a time when you made a major professional choice/sacrifice due to a personal obligation or pursuit.

4. For me, my mentor provides/I wish my mentor provided…

5. If I was not a college administrator, I would be/pursue…Why?

6. If … were in place, my life would be so much easier/rewarding.

7. When I compare my experience to my male counterparts, I feel/think…

8. When I compare my experience to my women counterparts of (an)other race(s), I feel/think…

9. My life as a woman college administrator is rewarding because…

10. Discuss a positive experience you had with a mentor who was a woman college administrator.

11. Discuss some challenges you have faced with seeking mentorship from a woman college administrator.

Appendix D:
Interview Opening Script

Thank you so much for agreeing to interview with me today. As you may already know, I am Tiffany Wiggins and I am a PhD student in the Higher Education program here at Old Dominion University. As indicated on the informed consent form that you received, today's interview will be on the research topic of "The Lived Experiences and Mentoring Relationships of Black Women College Administrators". Participation in this interview is voluntary, and you may withdraw yourself from the study at any time. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis purposes. I will be taking notes throughout the interview.

The objective of this interview is to gather your experiences and perspective as a Black woman college administrator. I will ask a series of questions related to this topic. You are encouraged to share whatever you feel is appropriate to answer the questions. The interview is expected to last no more than one hour.

Appendix E:
Sample of Interview Questions

Interview #1:
1.   Outside of work, what are your personal obligations? Your personal interests?

2.   How would you describe the demands of your role as a college administrator?
        a.   What are some of your professional pursuits?

3.   What factors contributed to your decision to pursue a career in college administration?

4.   How does your role as a college administrator make you feel about yourself?

5.   With regard to both your professional and personal roles, how do you feel other people see you?
        a.   How does your partner feel about your role as a college administrator?

6.   Can you talk about how your position as a college administrator affects your relationships with your family and/or non-work friends?

7.   In terms of both your personal and professional life, describe for me a good day.

8.   Can you please describe some of the personal and professional challenges you face as a Black woman college administrator?
        a. Have any of these challenges forced you to make changes to the way in which you manage or organize your life? If so, please explain.

9.   How do you see yourself in the future? Have you ever thought about changing professions?

10.   Do you have anything else that you would like to add with regard to your experience as a Black woman college administrator and how it plays out in your personal life?

Appendix E:
Sample of Interview Questions

Interview #2:
1. For the record, are you or have you been involved at least one mentoring relationship with another woman college administrator?
2. How do you define mentorship?
3. How would you describe that/those relationships?
     a. What role do you have in the relationship(s)?
4. What role does the other person(s) have in the relationship?
5. Have you ever been involved in a mentoring relationship with a male college administrator? How has that relationship differed from mentoring relationships with other women college administrators?
6. How did your mentoring relationship(s) evolve?
7. How does it make you feel to be in mentoring relationship with another woman college administrator?
8. How important is to you that your mentor also be a Black woman? Why?
9. In what ways does the mentoring relationship add value to your—personal and/or professional—life?
10. What do you gain from the relationship?
     a. What motivates you to maintain your mentoring relationship or to seek other mentoring relationships?
11. What do you feel, if anything, is missing from the mentoring relationship(s) you've had with other women college administrators?
12. What are some drawbacks or challenges that you've experienced as a result of being in a mentoring relationship with another (Black) woman college administrator?
13. From your perspective, what challenges do you perceive Black women college administrators experience with regard to receiving mentoring from other women (Black) college administrators? Provide an example.
14. Describe a time where being a mentoring relationship with another women college administrator proved beneficial to your personal life.
15. Describe a time where being a mentoring relationship with another woman college administrator proved beneficial to your professional life.
16. Have you ever been involved in a mentoring relationship with a male college administrator? If so, how does this relationship differ from your mentoring relationships with a (Black) woman college administrator?
17. Have you ever been involved in a mentoring relationship with a non-Black woman college administrator? If so, how does this mentoring relationship differ from your mentoring relationship with a Black woman college administrator?
18. Do you serve (or have you served) as a mentor to other women college administrators? What motivates you to engage in the role of a mentor?
19. In what ways is involvement in a professional mentoring relationship encouraged by your institution?
20. Do you have anything additional to add regarding your mentoring relationship with a woman administrator(s), and/or your role as either a mentor or mentee?

Appendix F:
Presentation of Codes

INITIAL CODES	CATEGORIES		THEMES
	Emergent Codes	Category Name	
Being superwoman/taking care of others	Dealing with blackness	Being a black women in student affairs administration	Hyper-awareness of self
Challenges of mentoring relationships	Double-bind of being both black and female		
Codeswitching	Experiences of microaggressions/-isms		
Dealing with blackness	Voice not heard/presence ignored		
Desire/effort to be perceived professional and/or competent	Judged more harshly		
Desires for mentoring relationships with women	Desire/effort to be perceived professional and/or competent	Having an ever-present awareness of self in relation to others' perceived expectations	
Desires to advance within the field of higher education/student affairs	Higher expectations of self		
Desires to be mentored by black female administrators	Self-monitoring (clothes, hair, body language/gestures, speech)		
Desires/ideals of mentoring relationships	Codeswitching		
Double-bind of being both black and female	Need to prove self		
Experiences of microaggressions/-isms	Desires to advance within the field of higher education/student affairs		
Experiences with black women - negative	Maneuvering through the system		
Feel that work in student affairs is a way of giving back	Forming relationships/connecting with other black women is critical to their development and/or success	Building community with other Black women	Importance of Relationships with Other Black Women
Forming relationships/connecting with other black women is critical to their development and/or success	Sister circles/support systems		
Higher expectations of self	Positive experiences with black women		
Interest in mentoring others (students and younger administrators)	Desires for mentoring relationships with women	Mentoring relationships with other women administrators	
Judged more harshly	Challenges of mentoring relationships		
Lacking black women in senior leadership roles	Lacking black women in senior leadership roles		
Maneuvering through the system	Desires to be mentored by black female administrators		
Motivated to help students who look like them	Desires/ideals of mentoring relationships		
Need to prove self	Experiences with black women - negative		
Positive experiences with black women	Motivated to help students who look like them	Desire to give back through professional and community work	Opportunity to give back through work
Self-monitoring (clothes, hair, body language/gestures, speech)	Feel that work in student affairs is a way of giving back		
Sister circles/support systems	Interest in mentoring others (students and younger administrators)		
Voice not heard/presence ignored	Being superwoman/taking care of others	Negotiating the demands of work life and personal life	Negotiating the demands of personal and professional life.

VITA

TIFFANY S. WIGGINS, PH.D.

Old Dominion University

Darden College of Education

Educational Foundations and Leadership

4301 Hampton Boulevard, Norfolk, VA 23529

EDUCATION

Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia   December 2017
Ph.D., Higher Education
Dissertation: *An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Lived Experiences and Mentoring Relationships of Black Women Student Affairs Administrators*
Chair: Felecia E. Commodore

The George Washington University, Washington, DC   January 2009
M.A., Human Resource Development

Christopher Newport University, Newport News, VA   May 2006
B.S., Business Administration