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## **Gender And Work: An Analysis Of Mid-Level Women Administrators In Student Affairs**

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**GENDER AND WORK: AN ANALYSIS OF MID-LEVEL WOMEN  
ADMINISTRATORS IN STUDENT AFFAIRS**

by

**EBONI N. TURNBOW**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

2019

MAJOR: SOCIOLOGY

Approved By:

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Advisor

Date

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## DEDICATION

To *Ceola*, for always telling me I could be the President of the United States and meaning it.  
To *Betty*, for the sacrifices and early lesson that a strong work ethic sets you apart from the rest.  
To the *Culture*, for representation matters as I stand on shoulders for the next Black girl to climb.

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I could not have finished this without the constant support and uplift of my family, partner, and close friends to keep going. Thank you for text messages to check on me during late nights, the impromptu coffee purchases, and celebration of small victories along the process because it helped re-energize my motivation. My inspiration was simply to make you all proud, so take ownership in this degree with me because it is ours as I didn't do this alone.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In the mid-1800s, academics at colleges and universities changed dramatically as faculty focused primarily on their research specialties versus mentoring and developing undergraduate students (Long 2012). In the 1920s, the first administrator was hired as the “Deans of men” to focus explicitly on student matters (Long 2012). In 1937, the American Council on Education issued the *Student Personnel Point of View* publication which stamped the new division in higher education that emphasized the development of the students as a whole (Long 2012). This new division, now known as student affairs, provided support to academic divisions of the university, and focused on developing students outside the classroom via an array of services (Manning, Kinzie and Schuch 2006). Departments such as Housing and Residential Life, Career Services, Student Success, Counseling and Support Services, and Cultural Centers are examples of areas within the larger student affairs umbrella. Over the years, university programs have changed to serve students more effectively, particularly as campuses began to grow in diversity (Long 2012).

Like other positions in the academy, the work culture of student affairs tends to be patriarchal, and encourages long workdays, often spilling into evenings and weekends (Dale 2007; Nobbe and Manning 1997). Women primarily constitute entry and mid-level administrative positions despite more women earning numerous advanced degrees (Jones and Komives 2001). Similar to other organizational structures in the academy, such as academic affairs, student affairs on most college campuses produce comparable outcomes on women. For instance, in 2011, only 42% of faculty members were women, and men outnumber women in tenured faculty positions (Curtis 2011; White, Berheide and Walzer 2014). From 1993 to 2013, women faculty almost doubled that of men (Flaherty 2016). Yet, the gendered structure of academic careers limits their access to senior and tenure positions. Faculty women have been primarily increasing in part-time capacities, or non-tenured appointments; in fact, tenure track positions for faculty women have



dramatically declined in the last 20 years (Flaherty 2016). In both student affairs and academic affairs, women increased numerically within the profession but reached a ceiling either preventing them, or slowly allowing them to ascend into senior leadership on the hierarchical spectrum.

Although the number of women in senior-leadership positions in student affairs is slowly increasing, men still outweigh women significantly across the board in Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO) positions. *She Figures* (datasets from the European Commission on women in tertiary education) (2009) reports that throughout the 27 countries in the European Union (EU), 13 percent of institutions in the higher education sector were headed by women; only 9 percent of universities that award PhD degrees were headed by women. The highest shares of female rectors (vice-chancellors) are recorded in Sweden, Iceland, Norway, Finland, and Israel (*She figures* 2009). In contrast, in Denmark, Cyprus, Lithuania, Luxembourg, and Hungary, no women headed a university when *She Figures* reported in 2009 (Morley 2013). Similarly, King and Gomez (2008) find women only lead 14 percent of doctorate-granting institutions. For positions of Chief of Staff and Chief Diversity Officer, women served in 62 percent and 56 percent of positions, yet; only 16 percent served in Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer positions (King and Gomez 2008). The lack of women in senior capacities affirm that women are globally under-represented in regards to critical decision-making platforms including committees, boards, and the executive meetings (Morley 2013; Bierema 2016); therefore, the expertise of a compelling component of the higher education workforce is under-utilized. The lack of women senior leadership in more institutional roles is concerning too as positions such as these are identified as pathways to the presidency (King and Gomez 2008).

***Purpose statement***

Research clearly shows gender shapes the acquisition of senior administrative positions in higher education institutions (Morley 2013; De Welde and Stepnick 2015; Britton 2017). Using a gendered work organization theoretical framework, the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of mid-level women working in non-academic departments (i.e., student affairs) within four-year universities. I analyze how, what, and why certain gendered dynamics affect their experiences around career advancement.

My central research question asks: How do non-faculty mid-level women administrators experience career advancement in higher education institutions? To answer this question, I (1) investigate the workplace structure with a specific focus on identifying women's experiences, (2) explore the elements of advancement in the student affairs, (3) examine the impact of student affairs as a helping profession on work-family conflict, and (4) consider how these factors intersect with gender and other identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age) to shape women's workplace experiences. I compare these four elements (workplace cultures, advancement, work-family conflict, and intersectionality) among women who work at four-year colleges/universities.

### ***Contributions***

This study contributes theoretically and empirically to our sociological knowledge on work, gender, and intersectionality. Empirically, this study focuses on an understudied group to shed light on the dynamics that shape gender disparities in higher education for women in student affairs. At the time of this study, few sociological studies existed on the experiences of non-faculty mid-level administrative women in student affairs in higher education. This project builds on the research based on faculty women by extending it to analyze non-faculty women in student affairs. The even representation of men and women at the SSAO level is relevant practically because critical voices and perspectives of men and women are present to make significant decisions.

College campuses across the country consist of young men and women students, and it is essential all voices are represented at the table. The analyses from in-depth interviews provided a greater understanding of the daily experiences of women in student affairs, and insight as to how these experiences affected their careers.

Theoretically, this study extends our knowledge on gender and work specifically within administrative academia and how gendered components are engrained in the organization's culture. The data from this study help us understand how identified gender barriers are integrated and directly affect administrative women in higher education. For example, departmental cultures and behaviors between work and intersectionality expose how these respective intersections shape non-faculty women's daily work experiences and career advancement. Last, this study provides insight on the development of workplace policies to address the inequities among non-faculty women administrators. For instance, senior level administrators in higher education benefit from this data as it provides a better understanding of ways to improve their work-structures and cultures within their departments. Administrative positions in higher education play an intricate role in the mission and vision of institutions. Therefore, in order to continue to advance higher education institutions forward, it is important to retain quality student affairs administrators.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In this chapter I provide an overview of the theoretical framework I use to frame my study: gendered organizations. I explain through interactions and cultural behavior in workplace organizations, as well as institutional practices, gendered mechanisms are reproduced. I also discuss how women in workplace institutions are negatively impacted by the ideal worker norm a key component that perpetuates gendered organizations. Next, I build on this framework and provide an in-depth review of literature of themes that are directly connected to my study on gender and work in the academy: workplace culture, elements of advancement, work-family conflict in a helping profession, and intersectionality among these mechanisms. These areas lay the foundation for context of my study and the questions that were developed for the interviews. Last, I provide a synopsis of literature on women in the academy in regard to ranking and positionality in comparison to men.

### ***Theoretical Framework: Gendered Work Organizations & the Ideal Worker***

Feminist sociologists argue that various gendered facets within a work organization's culture negatively affect women and their level of career advancement. The *gendered organizations* framework provides a lens as to how work organizations perpetuate inequalities between women and men. Identifying an organization as gendered means that "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (Acker 1990:146). Acker's theory of gendered organizations transitions the focal point from individualistic gender behavior to the structures within organizations. Utilizing a multilevel framework, Acker (1990) identifies four levels of analysis for gendered organizations. The levels include the gendering through culture, the reproduction of gender through policies and practices,

the creation of inequality from interactions among colleagues, and the incorporation of gendered identities for employees through their work (Britton and Logan 2008). For instance, the implementation of practices and policies in the workplace inform the gendering process of the work organization and its culture (Acker 1990).

Simultaneously, the gendering of organizations occurs through various interactive processes such as the division of labor, symbols and images that express and reinforce those divisions, and interactions among women and men (Acker 1990). Britton (2000) asserts that these characteristics are present in most bureaucratic organizations arguing that presumed distinctions between masculinity and femininity produce gendered differences. The reproduction of these masculine and feminine outcomes creates a hegemonic scale of which characteristics are more valuable within the organization, causing bias within performance evaluations (Britton 2000). These integrated biases within the culture of work organizations influence interactions amongst colleagues and socializes what is and what is not acceptable behavior. This serves as the work organization's true culture and logic. Further, Acker (1990) argues the "ideal" worker is not a disembodied, gender-neutral worker, but rather the abstract worker is a man (Williams 2000). Thus, women are funneled into lower and mid-level positions, as they are less likely to meet the masculine credentials associated with senior management. Therefore, gendered organizations negatively impact women as they fall short of ideal abstract workers, which assumes paid work is the only or primary responsibility of employees (Mennino, Rubin, and Brayfield 2005).

The *ideal worker norm* reinforces gender inequality in the workplace (Bierema 2016; Brumley 2014; Kelly et al. 2010; Misra, Lundquist, and Templer 2012; Williams 2000). The norm asserts that women, particularly mothers, are less likely to uphold the expectation to work long hours, arrange their lives around their jobs, and travel as necessary to display commitment to their

masculine embodiment of the abstract worker. Therefore, men are ideal and abstract workers, as they seem readily available to work long hours, prone to more visible busyness, and have a quicker response to unplanned work (Kelly et al. 2010). Whereas women typically have family obligations, men have the distinct advantage to capitalize on economic rewards associated with the ideal worker image (Bierema 2016; Blair-Loy 2003; Kelly et al. 2010; Misra et al. 2012; Williams 2000). Through hegemonic practices in work organizations, men have been able to monopolize senior positions in corporations via the policing, excluding and discrediting of women. These gendered dynamics allow men to maintain the most powerful positions in bureaucratic contexts as their behaviors in work organizations become the prototype (Acker 1990; Martin 2001).

### **Gender, Work, and the Academy**

In this section, I explicate the four components of my study, paying particular attention to the empirical work that illustrates these concepts generally, and the literature focused specifically on gender and work, as well as in the academy.

#### ***Workplace Culture***

Workplace environments are reflections of larger societal ideals, especially in relation to gender (Walker and Aritz 2015). Work organizations adopt societal ideologies, such as the separation of domestic work and the market, thereby gendering the work culture through policies and practices (Mennino et al. 2005). Work organizations operate in a manner that implies paid work takes precedence over labor in the private sphere; therefore, behavior such as working extended hours and willingness to relocate for work demonstrates a commitment to the work institution (Blair-Loy 2003; Kelly et al. 2010). This cycle is an example of the ideal worker norm, which enacts masculinity and protects hierarchical positions at work and at home for men (Kelly et al. 2010). Organizations have implemented flexible workplace policies as an attempt to address

competing demands of work and family spheres. However, the policies are not sufficient, and require the institutions to change the culture of the workplace to truly support all employees (Kelly et al. 2010; Mennino et al. 2005). In this section, I provide a literature review on work life balance in the work organizations particularly in regards to institutional flex policies and extensive work hours. I also discuss how workplace support from supervisors and colleagues related to interactions and bullying too impact the culture of workplace organizations for women.

### *Long Hours and Separate Spheres*

To attempt to alter organizational perception, new policies have been created to help employees balance environmental culture between work and family, yet the organizational culture of acceptance in employing these policies do not always align (Kelly, Moen, and Tranby 2011). When work institutions implement environments that embrace work life balance policies, compared to just the existence of formal flexible policies, men and women manage to balance work life dynamics easier as they are free from stigmatization (Mennino et al. 2005). Unfortunately, this is easier written than implemented as most workplaces still employ an informal expectation of work first and external obligations second (Mennino et al. 2005). This logic is consistent with other research asserting that work organizations prefer employees with fewer familial obligations as they focus more on the company and managing their career growth in order to climb the hierarchal ladder (Blair-Loy and Wharton 2002; Kelly et al. 2010; Misra et al. 2012). These findings demonstrate how the creation of a policy does not equate to its implementation nor does it support the actual usage within a work organization's logic (Kelly et al. 2011). This form of cultural gendering in the institution perpetuates the ideal worker as men considering women are automatically deemed primary caregivers in the home and perform the majority of the domestic

tasks including laundry, cleaning, and meal preparations (Acker 1990; Mennino et al. 2005; Misra et al. 2012).

More workplaces are becoming intentional about incorporating schedule flexibility in the workplace in an effort to retain and recruit talented employees. Catalyst, a global nonprofit that expands opportunities for women in businesses, conducted a survey in 2013 on MBA graduates who work full time and found: (1) 81 percent of participants reported their work organization offers some form of flexible work arrangement (FWA), (2) 52 percent reported FWA's were very important to them, and (3) 64 percent of men and women reported they used FWA's for either arrival or departure frequently throughout their career. While changes such as these ideally should help shift the tone within the culture of organizations, the utilization of these policies across the board are predominantly used by women and in low percentages (Misra and Strader 2013). For instance, 39 percent of women, compared to 29 percent of men, reported they telecommute very frequently, and men were also twice as likely compared to women to have never telecommuted (Beninger and Carter 2013). This is consistent with Belkin's (2013) finding that 58% of women indicate a flexible work schedule was the most important factor in their job choice.

According to Williams et al. (2013) the use of flexible policies in the workplace results in wage penalties, decreased promotions for employees, and work evaluations that are more negative. This is a prime example of how Acker's gendering processes for work organizations can be interdependent among one another (gender through culture and the reproduction of gender through practices for instance). Essentially, the formal flexible policies look good for the work organization on paper, but the informal practices and usage of the policies creates what Williams et al (2013) identifies as the flexibility stigma. The flexibility stigma differs for men (gender non-conforming practices of not displaying 100% work devotion) and women (gender conforming practices of



needing leave for family responsibilities) (Misra and Strader 2013; Williams et al. 2013). Meaning, although the changes are slowly beginning in workplaces to help combat the intense work-life conflict, unfortunately the changes are (1) not occurring quickly enough nor across all organizational structures and (2) not always sufficient and often have negative repercussions when used. Therefore, O'Connor and Cech (2018) call for work organizations to use their resources to enhance FWA bias for all employees, and not just women, as they argue the penalty for using FWAs is not gender specific and impacts all staff.

The tension between long work hours and work life balance is an ongoing workplace dilemma in student affairs. The issue of work-life balance is a recurring program session at professional student affairs conferences as many SSAOs' discuss how they permit their professional lives to dominate their time or others no longer attempt to acquire work-life balance at all (Beeny et al. 2005). For instance, a research study on SSAOs in student affairs find women more than men agree to the traditional model of success in student affairs, which culturally devotes one's "entire being" to the success of the profession (Beeny et al. 2005). Yet, men SSAOs agree more strongly with the statement that if individuals did their job in 40 hours a week, then they were not doing enough. Supervisors and senior administrators, such as SSAOs, serve an intricate role in the development of organizational commitment; symbols and deeply engrained patterned behavior compose an organization's culture and directly influence perceptions administrators have about the organization they belong to (Boehman 2007). Therefore, research demonstrates why student affairs professionals have issues with working excessive hours as it is the expectation in student affairs through its embeddedness in the workplace culture that starts with senior administration. The workplace expectations of a workaholic lifestyle and demand for late night

and weekend work hours contribute to practitioners' level of commitment to student affairs (Boehman 2007).

### *Workplace Support*

Workplace synergy among colleagues and superiors within the institutional workplace culture too aids in preserving gender inequities and levels of commitment. Employees who do not feel they have workplace support tend to experience negative outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, especially in the academy (Taylor 2010; Tyson and Borman 2010). This pattern leads to a decreased retention of women in higher paying, and higher-level positions, in male dominated occupations particularly stemming from stereotypes of gendered interactions in the workplace (Taylor 2010). For instance, Berheide and Walzer (2014) find faculty at two small private men's and women's liberal arts colleges who are successfully promoted stress the significance of department collegial support, especially from department chairs. Women who face doubts from colleagues and superiors regarding their competence for day-to-day operations are typically gender typed, which explains why women in these situations report low levels of workplace support (Taylor 2010; Walker and Aritz 2015). Often, colleagues do not stray away from the organizational culture to support their women peers by advocating for them when needed as this breaks the cultural norm and colleague becomes subject to a similar hostility. Britton (2017) and Tyson and Borman (2010) refer to this as "chilly climate" when there is mistreatment and/or a lack of support in the workplace. In these situations structural and organizational bullying in gendered work environments is produced. The solution for overturning chilly climates is not individualistic, but rather involves the entire organization to create an environment where women can participate fairly (Britton 2017).

According to Simpson and Cohen (2004), 28.5 percent of women experience bullying in a higher education institutions versus 19.8 percent of men, and 67.5 percent of women witnessed the bullying of other women versus 29.4 percent of men. Specifically, the most common forms of bullying are unfair criticism, followed by intimidation and humiliation. Forms of intimidation are covert exclusionary practices among men in the workplace that grant work organizations the ability to perpetuate male hierarchies. Martin (2001) discusses how men's support of one another, dominating relationships with women, and expectations of women's feminized actions are all behaviors in the workplace that maintain men's power and hierarchy over women. The practice of men overtly socializing and networking with other men excludes women from the opportunity to build similar relationships that are associated with this practice. Some results of these practices are women possessing lower level positions in the academy, receiving less pay, and becoming more apt to verbal abuse (Simpson and Cohen 2004). Many forms of workplace bullying occur due to the pressure upper administration receives from outside factors, thus creating issues of power, control, and change within higher education (Simpson and Cohen 2004). With workplace bullying in academia, it is comprehensible why women opt not to pursue senior administrative positions to avoid the unjust scrutiny. Yet, as long as these behaviors are accepted in work organizations, the culture will perpetuate as Acker (1990) proclaims.

### ***Elements of Advancement***

A qualifier for promotion and career growth in non-academic departments is professional development. Professional development allows for leadership growth to enhance skillsets, as well as growth in specific areas within student affairs in higher education. Unfortunately, leadership characteristics are abstract perceptions that have cultural meaning, which reproduce normative expectations of what leaders should look like (Bierema 2016; Gallant 2014; Gipson et al. 2017;

Walker and Aritz 2015). Additionally, the expectation of leadership behavior also impacts job evaluations and career progression (Acker 1990). Gendered expectations are socialized in work organizations and directly reflect the gendering of organizations via practices rooted in presumed notions of masculinity and femininity. Below, I focus on the gendered aspects of leadership, professional development, and evaluations to display the effects these themes have had on women and career advancement.

### *Leadership*

One factor related to advancement is based on the actual actions and characteristics women display in leadership capacities; however, women receive negative perception ratings if these leadership behaviors do not meet the desired perceptions of how women should lead in the workplace (Bierema 2016). Videla (2006) discusses how five women workers from her study had been fired because they had been deemed “difficult” to get along with. Other women with fewer skills had been retained because they were considered “team players.” It is this sort of leveling of the seesaw women in student affairs positions have to balance to successfully obtain positive job evaluations. A recent trend in student affairs has emerged with the promotion of women into management positions, but frequently the positions are on the lower end of the management scale. According to Cocuzza-Dale (2007), of the 47.8 percent of women working in executive managerial ranks within student affairs, the majority of the positions are lower and middle management level. As it is progress, it is far from equality in the division of labor within senior level positions in student affairs as a whole.

Leadership characteristics typically ascribed to women include nurturing, warmth, and the innate ability to counsel others. When women do not display these qualities, they are at risk of judgement from coworkers and supervisors as this is outside their ideal expectations (Bierema

2016; Gipson et al. 2017). In this instance, the interactions among colleagues is the primary process of the gendering source within the organization (Walker and Aritz 2015). Due to this, Ramsay and Letherby (2006) argue that non-mothers are also adversely affected by the stereotyped leadership characteristics of femininity and maternal ideologies, regardless of having children. Non-mothers are expected to conform to expectations of womanhood, much of which is defined by motherhood, which also marginalizes their leadership style within the academy. For example, Burgess and Borgida, as cited in Benard and Correll (2010) state:

For a woman, success in a masculine-typed job thus signals both that she is competent and that she is in violation of prescriptive gender norms. As a consequence, people tend to assume not only that professionally successful women possess agentic qualities but also that they suffer from a deficit of stereotypically feminine communal qualities. (p. 620)

In this sense, women face a “double-bind,” particularly in high-status jobs, as they can display management traits that are seen as competent and not likable (presumed masculine characteristics), or be viewed as likable but not competent (presumed feminine characteristics) (Benard and Correll 2010; Bierema 2016). This gender behavioral association among men and women is directly tied to acts of gender expectations in work organizations (Walker and Aritz 2015). The prescription of performance behavior placed upon women in work organizations is detrimental to their career growth, as well as relationships within the workplace culture (Bierema 2016). The abstract worker, which is associated with masculine leadership dynamics, is the ideology women are often stuck within based upon expectations of men in the workplace

Women in senior leadership in the academy are no strangers to the gendered behavior expectations in the workplace as they are a minority in number (Eddy and VanDerlinden 2006; Knipfer et al. 2017). In 2006 women only occupied 23 percent of all college presidencies across the country, and the increase has slowed since the mid-1990s (Curtis 2011; King and Gomez 2008). Eddy and Cox (2008) find that women in senior administration at a community college have to

operate in a ‘tougher manner’ in the office in order to meet the expected masculine norms associated with leadership, yet had to be cautious not to appear too tough. The authors further explain how women college presidents are penalized for acting outside of the gendered expectations in their work environment, but are still judged against hegemonic male norms (Eddy and Cox 2008). For instance, the language and manner in which the women speak and the necessity for proper attire, such as glasses to appear “more serious,” are areas the women presidents identify as performing outside of feminine expectations. This data among college women presidents is a direct consequence of engrained gender behavioral dynamics within workplace logic of gendered institutions, specifically from interactions and expected behaviors. Senior women in administration in higher education are constantly navigating feminine and masculine behaviors within leadership positions in order to be successful, which men have the privilege of not having to do (Gipson et al. 2017; Knipfer et al. 2017). This ongoing micro managing of one’s behavior in the workplace according to gendered expectations serves as an additional barrier for non-faculty women administrators.

### *Professional Development*

Mid-level managers in student affairs also value professional development to enhance their skillset in order to be prepared for career advancement for next level leadership (Sermersheim and Keim 2005; Bacheler 2014). Higher education has numerous professional associations to continually foster best practices for professionals via professional development opportunities, such as conferences, which provide access to discuss and connect with colleagues, as well as training workshops, which are most sought from student affairs professionals (Sermersheim and Keim 2005; Janosik, Carpenter and Creamer 2007; Fey 1991); however, issues with these forms of development have expenses associated with them in addition to with the decrease of work

organization financial support (Sermersheim and Keim 2005; Bacheler 2014). For instance, two of the largest student affairs associations, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and American College Personnel Association (ACPA) set average membership fees in 2019 at \$87 for professionals at institutions with memberships, and \$210 for professionals at institutions without memberships, according to their national websites (naspa.org; myacpa.org). In order to attend their national conferences, the average registration rates for early registration in 2019 were \$467 for members, and an additional \$200 for non-members; this does not consider lodging, travel, nor miscellaneous expenses associated with attending national conferences.

Attendees for national conferences can easily incur expenses around \$2,500 as they seek to engage in professional development opportunities. Considering the low wage salary student affairs professionals make on average (\$50,284 was the average median salary for entry to mid-level positions in 2013 according to Inside Higher Ed), institution financial support is critical in order for many professionals to participate in these forms of professional development. Bacheler (2014) shows that financial concerns and workplace climate toward professional development are influential factors on whether or not professionals engaged in professional development. While some higher education institutions offer travel support, many departments do not, despite expecting employees to attend the conferences (Bacheler 2014; Johnsrud 1996; Sermersheim 2002). Department leads and supervisors sometimes lack awareness or interest in the development of their professional staff, which creates a workplace climate of indifference toward the career growth of administrators (Bacheler 2014).

### *Evaluations*

Acker (1990) indicates job evaluations are interpretive documents that contain symbolic indicators of structure, which describe the job and the way to evaluate it. Jones and Komives (2001) find women tend to be overly concentrated in entry and mid-level positions in student affairs, while men are typically concentrated in mid and upper-level administrative positions. Such a phenomenon is an example of Acker's (1990) assertion that job evaluations serve as biased and gendered interpretive documents that help sustain the monopoly women have on entry and mid-level roles. This gendered practice serves as a gateway for men to senior administration in work organizations. When the indicators on job evaluations are viewed through a masculine lens, women suffer from climbing the hierarchal structure within the organization because they do not meet the expected leadership image (Bierema 2016; Rivera and Tilcsik 2016). For instance, communal characteristics, ascribed primarily to women, focus on the care of others such as affectionate, helpful, sympathetic, and nurturant; agentic characteristics, ascribed primarily to men, describe more assertive characteristics such as ambitious, dominant, independent, and self-confident (Eagly and Karau 2002). Since the abstract worker is a man, sexuality and conventional control of emotions permeates work organization processes, controlling and stigmatizing women's bodies and eventually excluding them (Acker 1990).

Similar to Acker, Eagly and Karau (2002) state that prejudice towards women in leadership occurs in two dynamics:

(a) less favorable evaluation of women's (than men's) potential for leadership because leadership ability is more stereotypical of men than women and (b) less favorable evaluation of the actual leadership behavior of women than men because such behavior is perceived as less desirable in women than men. (p. 576)

The sexist parameters in this explanation stem from the patriarchal conceptualization of leadership behavior associated with men and masculinity compared to women and femininity; yet, they are also seen as important leadership traits which result in a negative perception for women



(Eagly and Karau 2002; Rudman and Glick 1999). If the senior administrative leadership appointments and application selections are based upon biased evaluations, a structural barrier is maintained causing difficulty for women to advance to senior-level roles. For example, Miller (2004) finds women in the oil industry are perceived as helpless when they carry purses in the field, and that gendered specific clothing distinctions are imperative for fieldwork versus office work. Similarly, in the case of Britton's study (1997), traditional gender expectations explain why women are assigned as secretaries in men's prisons, limiting their experiences with inmates and negatively impacting promotions. These studies align with research in the academy: promotions are determined via policy that is governed by hierarchical rules and oversight by the judgements of faculty members (Britton 2017; Knipfer et al. 2017). These examples underscore a lose-lose situation for women in gendered work organizations. These forms of evaluation and opportunity are grounded in gendered expectations of what senior leadership *should* look like and how it is difficult for women to be seen with these characteristics because the norm is assumed to be masculine.

### ***Work-Family Conflict in a Helping Profession***

Student affairs professionals often choose this career due to the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of college students, have the power to transform students' lives, and the challenge inherent in the work especially related to social justice (Manning 2000b). However, demands have increased substantially for student affairs professionals due to the ongoing necessities of college students, as well as the external pressure for higher education institutions to produce value beyond the degree (Burkhard et al. 2005; Carpenter 2003). Despite the intention to develop and impact the lives of the next generation, Briskin (1996) argues that the underworld, or alternate side, to the field of student affairs includes: (1) the emotional labor bestowed upon

administrators due to the helping nature of student affairs, (2) the impact intersectionality has on marginalized administrators, (3) as well as the work-family conflict student affairs administrators' encounter. In this section, I provide more in-depth insight and empirical data found in literature.

### *A Helping Profession and Emotional Labor*

Some elements that affect student affairs professionals as a helping profession include impatience with students and colleagues, workaholism and exhaustion, the risk of entering into codependent relationships, and a lack of balanced work and home life (Briskin 1996; Manning 2001). Manning (2001) elaborates on how these penalties came to be in student affairs:

As with any human service profession, student affairs administrators are inclined to enter into codependent relationships. In these interactions, a person can lose track of his or her needs in the service of another. It is difficult to set limits when a codependent educator sees himself or herself as the only person who can solve the problem, provide the answer, or complete the task. (p. 31)

Due to the organizational makeup of student affairs, many researchers classify it as a helping or service profession (Guthrie et al. 2005; Manning 2001; Reisser 2002) and too often, student affairs professionals forget to help themselves (Burke, Dye, and Hughey 2016). Consequently, the enhanced demand on helping professions, such as student affairs, endure inefficient balance of work and personal life from attempting to navigate the unrealistic expectations of work demands (Chick 2004; Guthrie et al. 2005). Reisser (2002) emphasizes this unique characteristic of helping professionals: "...as helping professionals we feel responsible for meeting the needs of the students, those of the frayed staff, and those of the organization itself" (p. 49).

Thus, many experience significant emotional labor, defined as the balance of feelings and emotions to display a public body or facial expression that is deemed acceptable (Hochschild 1979). These outcomes mentioned above serve as consequences to professionals working in

helping professions. In addition to the profession type, researchers have also demonstrated that women have higher tendencies for excess stress and emotional exhaustion in service work institutions (Berwick 1992; Brewer and Clippard 2002). More specifically for the academy, literature has increased over the years on the emotional labor, particularly with women and underrepresented faculty and administrators who are often doing this *invisible labor*, such as serving on tasks forces, excessive mentoring requirements, and informal advising (Social Sciences Feminist Network 2017). For instance, higher education institutions are recognized as student service providers (Gibbs 2001); therefore, service is delivered to students via academic staff which equates to the production of emotional labor (Dhanpat 2016; Gibbs 2001).

For student affairs administrators, the emotional labor stems from the care work they consistently have to administer for student development and support purposes. For example, Kersh (2018) finds that higher education professionals who manage student crisis issues, such as death of a student, suicide attempts, or dealing with a mental health issue, note their days to be excessively stressful. Fifteen years ago, Kitzrow had described how student affairs administrators had been investing a considerable amount of time and resources into dealing with student issues like suicide, eating disorders, academic issues, and a number of other mental health issues (2003). Today, student issues of this nature on college campuses are higher now than ever before. According to the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors Annual Survey (2018):

The most frequent concern for counseling center [college campus] clients was anxiety (58.9 percent), followed by depression (48.0 percent), stress (46.9 percent), specific relationship problems (29.5 percent), family concerns (29.0 percent), suicidal thoughts (28.4 percent), academic performance difficulties (28.2 percent), sleep disturbance (19.1 percent), social isolation/loneliness (18.5 percent), significant previous mental health treatment history (16.5 percent), and adjustment to a new environment (15.8 percent). (p. 1)

With the advancement of technology, additional student concerns have emerged that student affairs administrators have had to learn to navigate in order to best support the student. These include, “Had a student have a psychotic break—dealing with getting him help, communication of what we could communicate with other students, etc. Having a student make threatening remarks on Twitter regarding using guns and bombs (Kersh 2018:66).” This direct management of student crisis work impacts the emotional labor student affairs professionals disseminate.

The challenge for student affairs practitioners as agents within a helping profession is the difficult notion of trying to set limits when they view themselves as the only individual who can solve the problem or provide the answer (Manning 2001). Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, and Kicklighter (1998) explain student affairs professionals as embodying a "yes I can, yes I will" work ethic. The excessive work hours associated with such a work ethic leaves professionals physically and emotionally exhausted (Sandeem and Barr 2009). This is consistent with Tack's (1991) claim that student affairs professionals are “workaholics” and need to shift to a “work-to-live” motto, as this can help prevent “burnout” and help with attrition (Guthrie et al. 2005). Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors from unrealistic and excessive demands on the job with three key dimensions: overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job, and a feeling of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment (Guthrie et al. 2005; Maslach and Leiter 2016). This can stem from a lack of delegation, serving as a mentor to all students and colleagues in need, not saying no frequently enough, or the assumption that a sense of accomplishment is synonymous with exhaustion and fatigue (Guthrie et al. 2005).

Research on burn out in student affairs has increased over the years, and is most prevalent in women, new professionals, and introverts (Howard-Hamilton et al. 1998; Marshall et al. 2016;

Volkwein and Zhou 2003). For instance, Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) show that women student affairs administrators experience stress and burnout and that women leave the field due to the impossibility to reach senior positions from an inability to balance a family and working 50 plus hours per week. Volkwein and Zhou (2003) have found similar results from their study as they claim women in student affairs posed higher levels of emotional exhaustion and stress from working in student affairs and balancing work-family dynamics. Considering higher education is categorically one of the most stressful professions (Charlesworth and Nathan 2004) it is clear why many women in student affairs experience exhaustion, burnout and emotional fatigue.

#### *Emotional Labor on Marginalized Administrators*

Similar to the limited research on the experiences of student affairs administrators in higher education in comparison to faculty, there is also very limited research specifically on administrators of color in higher education. Research on women of color in student affairs asserts that Black women are confronted with institutionalized racism and gender bias, internal and external extreme expectations to perform, sense of invisibility, and an obligation to consistently provide support for students similar to that of extended family (Hughes and Howard-Hamilton 2003; Lloyd-Jones 2009). There is much more research on faculty of color in the academy in their experiences working at predominantly White institutions; but, a lack of research on faculty of color and emotional labor (Wong 2007). “We highlight that women of color instructors round out their primary reflections with discouragement, sadness, depression (ranked second), frustration (ranked third), and exhaustion and weariness (ranked fourth) as their key reflected themes”, said Moore et al. (2010). Wong (2007) also assert similar themes of anger, frustration, isolation, and passion among other emotions emerged from research on the experiences of minority faculty. The instructional work from faculty of color is burdensome via material conditions, such as the excess

time spent on classroom educating, as well as in emotional representation (Moore et al. 2010), which are at the root of their experiences. Specifically when working with students, faculty of color are culturally impacted by the black, or cultural, tax, which stem from the necessity to mentor students of color in highly tokenized environments (Cohen 1998).

This cultural tax is a price that faculty of color and women faculty pay additionally to the university to support the diversity mission by mentoring minority students and providing cultural expertise to colleagues and the university through service and committee work. It is a tax that white male faculty do not have to pay. (Wong 2007:9)

Also affiliated with the cultural tax, women of color perceive their academic journeys as an important mechanism of giving back to their cultural community. This combination of additional work for women of color contributes to the great deal of emotional labor related to diversity issues they engage on campuses (Wong 2007). As women of color connect and directly relate to other marginalized students and colleagues, an inherent pressure to support and guide is an emotional weight that women of color carry and are never able to get rid of. Due to these added cultural sentiments, women of color dispense greater emotional labor than their White colleagues in the profession.

#### *Student Affairs and Work-Family Conflict*

It is important to understand the implications of work-family conflict when discussing gendered organizations. For women, working a demanding job often creates a clash between work and family devotion (Blair-Loy 2003; Misra et al. 2012). Student issues, issues with technology, work overload, lack of financial resources, work-life balance, and general work concerns were among the top themes administrators deemed difficult within the academy (Kersh 2018). Marshall et al. (2016) have explored why student affairs professionals had left the field, citing burnout, work-family conflict, and loss of passion among the consistent themes. For instance, one participant specifically had shared how student affairs had sucked the life out of professionals as

they can give more and more and the profession will take and take (Marshall et al. 2016); there's little quality of life with a lack of role models and she found herself simply exhausted (Marshall et al. 2016). Due to these ascribed dynamics among women, there is often "double duty" responsibilities working women have to navigate.

Consequently, women are less likely to live up to the ideal worker norm. Employers judge mothers particularly harsh because of presumed stereotypes of familial obligations, rather than prioritizing work (Misra and Strader 2013). These same stereotypes enact a culture among work organizations that mothers are not able to respond immediately to company needs, travel on a last minute's notice, or consistently work long hours. Sarah Marshall, author of *Women Higher Education Administrators with Children: Negotiating Personal and Professional Lives*, studies how women manage living as a student affairs professional and having a family. She finds that many women administrators often choose to compromise their career by putting off advancing their education, only accepting positions that work with their families, or not getting involved in national organizations (Marshall 2009). These factors negatively affect a woman's ability to obtain senior level administrative positions within the academy, as these are basic requirements sought by advanced hiring committees. Similarly, according to a study by Scheckelhoff (2007), senior female administrators discuss the constant pressures of attending to their significant others, their children, and their responsibilities on the job.

According to Lynch, Grummell, and Devine (2012) higher education institutions reinforce gendered mechanisms by assuming those in management positions are able to work extended hours inhibiting them from primary care responsibilities in the home. Due to the responsibilities of work and family, frequently academic mothers have to negotiate time between both their work institution and family with limited support, time, and resources (Burkinshaw and White 2017).

This work-family conflict often forces academic women to advance in their careers at a slower rate than their male counterparts as they are more likely to have a non-traditional career path and work part-time (Burkinshaw and White 2017). For instance, Tyson and Borman (2010) show how department's cultures expect faculty to work nearly 80 hours per week. Unfortunately, the data suggests that unlike men, most women cannot have both a family and career success in academia (Mason 2011). This is an absolute indication of a gendered work organization, and integrating the private and public domains within departmental culture is critical for employee success (Tyson and Borman 2010). These sentiments of sacrificing work for family represent the essential core of the ideal worker norm.

### ***Intersectionality & Gendered Organizations***

The gendered organization's framework pays close attention to the organizational culture, practices, and expectations of the worker. However, women also often navigate multiple identities when working in these gendered institutions. Intersectionality, coined by Crenshaw (1989), argues that the intersecting experiences for Black women are greater than the sum of racism or sexism so both must be considered. Later, Britton and Logan (2008) expand her research and argue the gendering of work organizations is a dialectical process determined by structure versus the individual. Acker (2006) defines inequality regimes as interrelated practices, behaviors and processes that perpetuate class, gender, and racial inequalities in work organizations. Inequality regimes is a paradigmatic shift of gendered organizations to incorporate intersectionality (Britton and Logan 2008). Similarly, Lloyd-Jones (2009) argues that intersectionality evaluates how social and cultural constructs intersect, and provides an avenue to better understand the complexities of double jeopardy that Black women leaders in work organization experience. Nonetheless, there are instances when individual characteristics play a factor. For instance, Kanter (1977) suggests



any person of significant minority in number in an organization would face tokenisms from heightened visibility causing higher barriers to succeed; Kanter's theory was expanded noting tokenism was not experienced the same amongst men and women as men benefited from their tokenism.

These concepts hold validity although a major critique of Kanter's theory is a quantifiable increase of women representation will not account for the complex integration of gender discrimination in the workplace (Yoder 1991). From this ideology, Britton and Logan (2008) expand discussion on gendered organizations and the intersectionality paradigm, which focus largely on inequality regimes. For instance, workplace culture plays a larger role for women administrators of color. Women of color not only have to navigate gendered dynamics within work organizations, but racial components as well. From 1986-2006, the number of college presidents of color rose from 8 percent to 14 percent, including minority serving academic institutions (King and Gomez 2008). Simultaneously, professionals of color occupy 16 percent of senior level administrative positions (King and Gomez 2008). Dr. Henry, author of *African American Women in Student Affairs: Best Practices for Winning the Game* (2010) finds from her study on African American senior-level women that pressures to continually prove themselves more than other women and men colleagues is a huge workplace challenge. In organizational structures, the higher a professional's position, the higher the increase in pressure and expectation to perform. Women of color are held to enhanced performance scrutiny that may not be feasible or realistic, and frequently result in role flexing (Shorter-Gooden 2004). In some instances, Black women racially role flex in the work environment to appear less Black and in other instances they gender role flex to appear more masculine (Shorter-Gooden 2004).

For example, Misra and Strader (2013) discuss research on employer discrimination and find that organizations particularly discriminate against women of color as they are perceived as less committed or productive. Therefore, African American women have to not only be best in their roles, but also constantly prove they deserve the position obtained, whether said or unsaid (Henry 2010). For instance, faculty women of color report extreme subjection to tokenism and stereotype bias shaped from racial and gendered hierarchies from colleagues, which is intensified by chilly workplace environments (Turner and Myers 2000; Wong 2007). Outcomes for women of color in higher education from ongoing tokenized encounters include isolation, anger and alienation (Wong 2007), combined with the bittersweet rewards and affirmations of being a faculty member (Turner and Myers 2000). Similarly, but more negatively, Black women from Davis and Maldonado's (2015) study, report feeling invisible, voiceless, discriminated against, isolated, undermined, treated unfairly, oppressed, challenged and demoted from their tokenized status. These negative experiences of race and gender discrimination seemed to dominate the conversation when the participants reflected on their past experiences (Davis and Maldonado 2015).

Women of color have to decipher interactions and treatment as perceived from a sexist lens, or from a racial lens. Gender and race operate as interconnected social constructs that are inherently bound to one another, which are incapable of being separated (Collins 1990). Therefore, circumstances such as these can turn qualified candidates off, and deter them from dealing with added pressures of advancing their career. The intersectionality of the salient identities of these women are intricate to their interactions and experiences in the academy.

The concept of the *glass escalator* is also an example of how women are disadvantaged in the workplace, even when women are the majority. The glass escalator is a term that accounts for

the advantages that men receive when working in supposed women's professions such as nursing, librarianship and social work (Williams 1995; Wingfield 2009). Many critics argue that women experience workplace disadvantages due to their token status asserting numerical rarity as the true cause, not gender discrimination (Williams 1995). Adversely, numerical rarity does not have adverse consequences for men in supposed women's professions. In actuality, their masculine traits are more admired over associate feminine traits, granting them an advantage from their token status (Williams 1995; Wingfield 2009). In 2011, there was still a wage gap in nursing, elementary education, and librarians with men having higher salaries in all three professions over women (Williams 2013). As men in feminine workspaces tend to distance themselves from femininity, they are able to retain the privilege associated with masculinity thereby climbing the ladder faster and making more wages (Wingfield 2009). Race is closely associated with the glass escalator. For example, Black male nurses do not reap the same benefits as White male nurses on the glass escalator due to their racial status (Smith 2011; Wingfield 2009). White men supervisors that directly report to a person of color, or a woman, earn higher wages and receive better retirement benefits than their colleagues who report to a White male (Smith 2011). These findings corroborate Kanter's (1977) argument that men benefit from their token status if they are the minority, and still benefit from their hegemonic association in patriarchal organizations.

Other research examines the glass escalator more in-depth and shows how analyzing racism and/or classism separately is not enough to understand how some groups are more advantaged than others are. Pyke and Johnson's (2003) interview study on how young second-generation Asian American women practice Americanized femininity is one example of women of color navigating their intersectional identity. They find that many young Asian women distance themselves from racialized notions of "typical Asians" and gravitate towards White mainstream

femininity. Many respondents indicate they purposely display signs of assertiveness, confidence, and independence within White feminine spaces to show they truly identify as American versus Asian (Pyke and Johnson 2003). Another example is Wingfield's (2013) examination of Black men in middle-class professions (engineers, doctors, lawyers, bankers). Applying Kanter's theory of tokenism (1977) to these men, she argues that Black men are typically more invisible than the White male hegemonic workers, however; because of their shared gender they receive masculine privileges as their White male counterparts, coining the term partial tokenism (Wingfield 2013). Essentially, these men fall outside the urban failed Black male spectrum, and do not meet the elite status of Black men such as Barack Obama, so they fall between the lines of being invisible and exclusive. Wingfield explains how these men constantly maneuver their work identities to display professionalism, the importance of relationships and networking for their career success, and their connectedness to their minority counterparts and women over White men (2013). These examples illustrate how gender, race, and class intersect and serve as an intricate aspect as to how individuals experience their workplace culture in work organizations.

Assessing the experiences of mid-level administrative women at four-year public institutions via the gendered work organizations framework will affirm how Acker's gendering processes are prevalent and relevant to their career advancement in student affairs. The dynamics around gendered organizations, such as workplace policies and collegial interactions, may be plausible barriers for non-faculty women administrators advancing their careers. The focus on division of labor, performance evaluations, and workplace culture are still at the core of gender practices in the work world today. These practices reinforce the advantages of men in work organizations allowing them to dominate senior-level roles, while women hollow out at lower and mid-level positions. Acker tells us to focus on the organizational logic, the routines and practices

that the companies display to be able to understand the level to which the organization is gendered. This study uses an intersectional lens to be mindful of the ways in which other inequality regimes within the gendered organization may shape women's experiences at four-year institutions.

### **Women in the Academy**

The inclusion of women in faculty positions among research universities has consistently risen for several years. However, Flaherty (2016) notes that while women are increasing in numbers, their appointments to tenure positions are dismal in comparison to part-time (144 percent increase) or non-tenured (122 percent increase) appointments. Simultaneously, women within tenure-track positions actually decreased from 1993 to 2013 from 13 percent to 8 percent (Flaherty 2016). However, not all tenure positions are equal as the pay frequently depends on the status of the institution (Mason 2011). Women are greatest in number at community colleges (regardless of ranking) and lowest in number at doctoral institutions (King and Gomez 2008; Mason 2011).

There are far fewer women than men at the top of the academic hierarchy; those women are paid somewhat less than men, and they are much less likely than men to have had children. At the bottom of the academic hierarchy—in the adjunct and part-time positions—there are far more women than men, and they are disproportionately women with children. Women in adjunct jobs have children at the same rate as men but receive the lowest wages in academe. (Mason 2011:para 2)

Women only possess 28 percent of full professorial appointments, as they are overrepresented in contingent faculty positions (Curtis 2011). Due to women disproportionately placed into lower, mid-ranked, and non-ranked positions in academia, the pay gap has closed at a slow pace. According to Curtis (2010), “full-time faculty salaries in 1975–76, the overall average salary for women faculty members was 81 percent of that for men. In the 2009–10 report released in April, the proportion was...81 percent” (para 1). Although the gap is closing quickest at the community college level, the salary gap will continue to fall among (1) women holding lower faculty ranks, and (2) women at institutions with the lowest salaries (Curtis 2010; 2011).

De Welde and Stepnick (2015) identify complex factors between the micro and macro level relationships within institutional structures that create and sustain inequality for women in academia. They emphasize the disparity among the division of labor for women within varying institutional types in higher education. Specifically, De Welde and Stepnick (2015) assert that men at all ranks at all four-year institution types outnumber women, but women outnumber men at all two-year institution types. Thereby, women faculty only outrank men faculty at the least prestigious institutions, with the fewest resources and lowest salaries (Britton 2017; Curtis 2011; De Welde and Stepnick 2015). Not only are women in abundance at less prestigious institutions, they also possess less prestigious non-faculty administrative positions (Curtis 2011; King and Gomez 2008). Similarly, administrative roles are largely held by women at four-year institutions, but men monopolize senior level leadership (Britton 2017; Curtis 2011; King and Gomez 2008). According to the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (cupa-hr) 2017 research brief entitled *The Gender Pay Gap and the Representation of Women in Higher Education Administrative Positions: The Century Thus Far*:

Men occupy the overwhelming majority of executive positions in higher ed. They outnumber women more than 2:1 among presidents and chief business officers. They outnumber women 4:1 among chief information officers and chief athletics administrators, and more than 9:1 among chief facilities officers. The only position in which women occupy the overwhelming majority of positions is that of chief HR officer, where they outnumber men nearly 3:1 (para 5).

Slowly, women are increasing in number as executives, administrators, and managers within higher education; however, 79 percent of the women in these administrative positions are White (De Welde 2017; King and Gomez 2008). Like other industries, women's salaries are lower compared to men as women faculty experience wage gap disparities within the academy. In 2010, men and women's salaries at R1 (research intensive) universities had a wage gap of 78.3 percent (AAUP 2010; Curtis 2011; De Welde and Stepnick 2015). Academic organizations must

incorporate diverse considerations into their organizational policies and culture, otherwise hegemonic and patriarchal ideals will perpetuate the marginalization of women and minorities (De Welde and Stepnick 2015).

There are several inferences as to why women continue to lag behind men in senior level positions in academia. One explanation mentioned earlier is the expectation of behavior (Eddy and Cox 2008; Eddy and VanDerlinden 2006; Gipson et al. 2017; Knipfer et al. 2017). Higher education institutions frequently reward transactional leadership (masculine characteristics such as aggression and loudness) with advanced positions, yet these characteristics from women are deemed as negative behavior and a lack of emotional control (Bierema 2016; Burkinshaw and White 2017). Women tend to display transformational leadership characteristics (feminine characteristics such as enhancing the self-worth of others and openness), but evidence has shown that colleges and universities prefer and continue to reward transactional leadership styles (Bierema 2016; Burkinshaw and White 2017; Knipfer et al. 2017). These two performed leadership styles are unfairly judged via gendered lenses. These are examples of Acker's (1990) description of how an organization's logic and culture produces and reinforces gender inequalities via their practices and processes. This leadership misjudgment maintains the clustering of non-academic women in mid-level positions thereby perpetuating a stagnant status versus women climbing the administrative ladder.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### ***Study Purpose & Research Questions***

Qualitative research is a meaning-making process that allows researchers to inquire into concepts, feelings, and experiences of individuals that are unobservable (Patton 2015). The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of mid-level women working in student affairs at four-year higher education institutions. I analyzed what and how the perceived certain gendered dynamics affected their experiences around career advancement. This study is informed by a critical paradigmatic approach, which according to Hesse-Biber (2017) values experiences and creates understanding from a critical standpoint while also looking at how power and hegemonic discourses impact experiences. I used a feminist standpoint epistemology to examine the positionality of women in the context of higher education institutions in relation to sex-gender systems (Hesse-Biber 2017).

My central research question asked: How do non-faculty mid-level women administrators experience career advancement in higher education institutions? To answer this question, I (1) investigated the workplace culture with a specific focus on identifying women's experiences, (2) explored the elements of advancement in student affairs, (3) examined the impact of student affairs as a helping profession on work-family conflict, and (4) considered how these factors intersect with gender and other identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age) to shape women's workplace experiences. Interviewing women in mid-level roles provided insight to the experiences women encounter as mid-level administrators concerning managing and advancing their careers.

### ***Sample Criteria & Recruitment***

This study focused on non-faculty mid-level women administrators at four-year universities. Non-faculty administrators were defined as administrators who worked in student



support departments that typically fell within the classification of the division of student affairs sector of higher education (non-academic). The organizational structures and division layouts varied per institution, however; some commonly used student affairs divisional names included Enrollment Management and Student Life, Division of Student Development, Division of Student Services, and Division of Student Affairs. Some examples of departments that frequently fell within these divisions include but are not limited to Dean of Students Office, Housing and Residential Life, Career Services, Advising, Counseling Services, Multicultural Affairs, Library Services, Disability Services, Career Services, Veterans Affairs and many more. Departments such as these provided additional and holistic developmental support to college students beyond their academic necessities. To add additional structural context, I have included organizational chart examples as Appendix D.

In relation to mid-level administrators, I classified mid-level positions by the following (Mather, Bryan, and Faulkner 2009):

- Administrators with a minimum of five years of professional working experience in student affairs AND
- Positions that incorporate titles such as “Associate Director”, “Director,” “Assistant Dean” (without faculty retreat rights), or other positions deemed so by the institution such as those within the middle third of the institution’s organizational chart AND
- Administrative positions that supervise at least two professional staff members AND/OR
- Administrative positions that has three or more reports above them AND/OR
- Administrative positions that oversee department budget management.

I focused my sample on women at four-year universities in the upper mid-western region of the U.S. according to states identified by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). These seven states included Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. I excluded small colleges under 5,000 students and large colleges with 20,000 students or more. In addition to campus size, higher educational institutions had other

varying characteristics such as private versus public, or commuter versus residential. To illustrate sampling categorization, I created a sample guide of institutional characteristics per category titled Appendix A. This sample guide focused on Ohio and Michigan, two states in my target population, of all four-year mid-size classified institutions; other components are also indicated such as public or private, residential or commuter, and union or non-union. Appendix A was based on information provided from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions, College Simply, and the American Association of University Professors as of May 2018. It served as a guide to place other institutions within other states based upon the location the women were employed.

I incorporated three sampling strategies. First, I used my professional network within NASPA region IV-E to send an email describing my study to those constituents, soliciting women who met the criteria, and requested any referrals of individuals who were possibly interested in the study. The recruitment email is attached as Appendix E. To ensure the participant criteria was clear, I attached a copy of my Participant Screening Document (Appendix F) to the email for reading prior to a participant committing to being interviewed.

Second, I employed a purposeful sampling strategy to identify universities that were within my sampling frame; I established a list by searching via google, four-year universities per each state in my sampling frame. From this list, I cross checked the university's institutional website and the Carnegie Classification of Institutions website to verify information primarily regarding enrollment size, but was also able to obtain additional information such as residential and union status. After filtering and finalizing a list of institutions that qualified, I searched institutional websites for specific departments that traditionally fell under student affairs. I then went to each department website for a staff directory and established a list of women and emailed respective professionals who presumably were in mid-level positions within those departments. After this list

was compiled, I emailed the women the Appendix E and F documents inviting them to participate in my study if they qualified.

Third, I used snowball sampling from women who participated or had interest in my study. Snowball sampling is the identification of initial subgroup members from whom the desired sample, whom simultaneously served as recruiters to help identify other possible subgroup members to be included in the sample (Magnani et al. 2005). Snowball sampling helped increase my participation rate, as individuals were more inclined to participate in the study when they were referred by someone with whom they had a relationship.

The three combined sampling methods created the following final sample of women for my study: 34 possible institutions across seven states that met the institutional demographic criteria, and 72 potential participants. I completed the study with 32 interviews with the following breakdown per upper mid-western state:

- Ohio – 11 participants
- Illinois – 12 participants
- Indiana – 2 participants
- Michigan – 2 participants
- Minnesota – 1 participant
- Wisconsin – 4 participants

The remaining 40 women either inquired to participate but did not qualify or had continuous scheduling conflicts to conduct an interview. The racial demographics of the women participants included 18 Caucasian, 8 African American, 2 Hispanic/Latina, 2 Multiracial, 1 Asian and 1 American Indian. The sexual orientation demographics of the women included 26 heterosexual, 2 lesbian, 2 queer, 1 bi-sexual and 1 pansexual. The age demographics of the women included 4 baby boomers (1946-1964), 20 generation X (1965-1980) and 8 Millennials (1981-1996). Some additional interesting demographics were that 17 of 32 participants did not have any children, 22 were married and/or cohabitating long term, and the average income range was

\$60,937.50 - \$69,937.50. A complete graphic overview of demographic information can be found in Appendix H.

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Birth Year</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Child 1 Age</b>	<b>Child 2 Age</b>	<b>Child 3 Age</b>	<b>Child 4 Age</b>
Amanda	1983	Hispanic	Heterosexual	IL	Married	5	2	N/A	N/A
Josie	1980	Caucasian	Heterosexual	IL	Single	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nailah	1985	Caucasian	Heterosexual	IL	Single	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gwen	1986	Caucasian	Heterosexual	MI	Cohabiting	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Yvonne	1964	Caucasian	Heterosexual	IL	Married	16	N/A	N/A	N/A
Karen	1976	Caucasian	Lesbian	OH	Married	7	7	N/A	N/A
Amara	1956	American Indian	Lesbian	MI	Married	48	45	43	42
Olivia	1980	Caucasian	Heterosexual	IL	Married	15	N/A	N/A	N/A
Susan	1980	Multiracial-Hispanic/Latin X	Heterosexual	IL	Married	9	4	5 mths.	N/A
Maria	1973	Caucasian	Heterosexual	IN	Married	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
Angela	1975	Caucasian	Heterosexual	OH	Married	25	21	14	10
Delilah	1979	African American	Heterosexual	OH	Single	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Birth Year</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Child 1 Age</b>	<b>Child 2 Age</b>	<b>Child 3 Age</b>	<b>Child 4 Age</b>
Serena	1980	African American	Heterosexual	IL	Single	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Alexis	1978	African American	Heterosexual	OH	Married	14	11	8	N/A
Shawna	1984	African American	Heterosexual	OH	Single	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ciara	1968	Caucasian	Heterosexual	OH	Single	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Grace	1987	African American	Pan Sexual	IL	Single	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Stephanie	1986	Latina	Heterosexual	IL	Single	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chanel	1978	Caucasian	Heterosexual	WI	Married	11	9	4	N/A
Julia	1975	Caucasian	Queer	IL	Cohabiting	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Paige	1979	African American	Heterosexual	IL	Married	5	1	N/A	N/A
Brandi	1988	Multiracial Asian White	Queer	MN	Cohabiting	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Janet	1985	Caucasian	Heterosexual	OH	Married	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Taylor	1964	Caucasian	Heterosexual	WI	Married	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Faith	1978	Asian	Heterosexual	WI	Married	5	N/A	N/A	N/A

Pseudonym	Birth Year	Race	Sexual Orientation	State	Marital Status	Child 1 Age	Child 2 Age	Child 3 Age	Child 4 Age
Asia	1953	African American	Heterosexual	OH	Married	27	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sydney	1977	Caucasian	Heterosexual	OH	Married	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Breeana	1972	Caucasian	Bi-Sexual	OH	Married	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Karleen	1978	Caucasian	Heterosexual	IN	Single	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Meghan	1979	African American	Heterosexual	IL	Married	12	10	N/A	N/A
Erika	1977	Caucasian	Heterosexual	OH	Married	13	11	8	N/A
Robyn	1967	Caucasian	Heterosexual	WI	Single	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

### *Data Collection*

From the email invitation described, final days and times were established with each of the 32 women. Prior to the interview, the women were asked to return the completed Screening Document (Appendix F) via email to me to verify they qualified for the study. Additionally, I established an interview guide that was a semi-structured format, and all interviews took place via zoom video/phone system. Interviews were best for this study because the women were able to provide exploratory and descriptive data regarding their experiences working in higher education administration. As a mid-level woman administrator working in student affairs, I used my insider status to break the ice at the beginning of each interview and began building rapport with each

woman. This included questions such as, “how’s the summer break treating you in your office?” or “are you as crazy during back to school as I am?” In my opinion, this created a sense of validation of the work we do as well as appreciation for the time they were providing to be interviewed. To also focus on rapport building, I collected descriptive information at the end of the interview using a demographics form (Appendix C). All interviews were recorded and the average interview was between 90-120 minutes.

While video interview mechanisms are good supplements to in person interviews, I understood they were more prone to technical issues or external distractions that can affect the quality of the interview. Once the interview date and time was set for each interview, I thoroughly prepared in advance by testing the video links, checking the sound levels of the microphones and the recorded volume level of the speakers voices. I also made sure to be in an environment where I was alone, and was quiet to remove any distractions and of course not breach confidentiality. For all interviews, my primary ethical concern of maintaining the confidentiality of all participants remained the priority. An intricate component of this was ensuring the confirmation of consent. While in person interviews allow for physical forms to be signed, video interviews do not. Therefore, it was of highest importance to communicate clearly with the women the purpose of the study and obtaining their verbal consent after reading my oral consent script before we proceeded forward.

After consent was obtained, I used my interview guide to begin asking questions. The guide was formatted into four themes based upon prior research on gendered organizations, which served to explore two components of gendered work organizations theory. The two components of the theory I focused on were (1) reproduction of gender through policies and practices and (2) creation of inequality from collegial interactions. The four theme based areas to dive deeper into these

components were student affairs, workplace culture, culture of advancement, and work-family conflict. Within each theme, I was cognizant of intersectional dynamics that may have been present or impacted experiences.

The first group of questions I asked were in relation to *student affairs*, and I sought to understand (1) what student affairs meant from their perspectives, (2) the structure of student affairs at their institution, and (3) the gender overview of administrators in their department and/or division. Some questions I asked the women included: “How would you describe what it means to be a student affairs professional?” “Can you tell me how student affairs is organized at your institution?” “How many people work in your department? At what percentage would you estimate the ratio of women to men?” These questions were used to build general understanding around student affairs as a culture, and how the structure of student affairs was similar or different campus to campus.

The second set of questions were in relation to *workplace structure*, as I sought to understand (1) what they perceived the organizational logic to be at their institution, (2) types of continuous professional development and/or training, (3) interactions with colleagues and superiors, and (4) division of labor along gendered expectations ideals. Some questions I asked the women included: “Can you walk me through what a typical day may look like for you?” “If you knew someone who was going to start tomorrow, what would you say are the most important things to do, and not to do to be successful in your department?” “What has been your experience working with men colleagues at your current institution? Women colleagues?” From these questions, I looked for components such as, how and where gender was embedded in institutional practices, behaviors that were perceived to be connected to success, and outcomes from interactions with colleagues within the institution.



The third set of questions were in regards to *elements of advancement* as I sought to explore (1) the promotion practices at their, or prior, institution(s), (2) their visibility in the workplace, (3) how participants obtained professional growth, and (4) practices and interactions among professional networks. Some questions I asked the women included: “What kinds of professional development training are offered at/by your current institution?” “Describe how your current institution evaluates your job performance? How do colleagues outside of your department see your work skillsets?” “Can you describe what your support network consists of in regards to your career?” From these questions, I looked for components such as how promotions were implemented within the institution, characteristics and behaviors that were associated with professional career growth, and how professional networks were relevant/used for career management.

The last set of questions were in relation to *work-family conflict in a helping profession*, as I sought to explore (1) flexible work-place policies, utilization and/or benefits, (2) how the “second shift” concept was applicable, if at all, and (3) how the work and family dynamics impacted their career. Some questions I asked the women included: “Can you describe the company policies that support working families at your current institution?” “When you think about work and family, how does your work impact your non-work life?” “Who typically deals with childcare: homework, pick-up/drop-off, children’s school appointments, and so on?” From these questions, I looked for components such as the existence and usage of flexible work-family policies, familial/personal obligations impacting career advancement, and ways in which spousal support existed in the home, if at all.

Of course, the experiences of these women had *intersectional* pieces and I took an alternative approach with exploring these identities. While I conceptualized how intersectional

concepts, especially race, were vital to understanding the additional barriers women of color and other marginalized groups experienced, I structured the questions in a more broad way to discover which intersections were most salient to that participant, if any. It was important to me that additional identities would emerge naturally versus asking directly, as this could have come off as leading. Some questions included: “Have there ever been moments where you have seen coworkers treated differently than others? If so, can you tell me about this and why you think it occurred?” “Have you felt you have received an advantage or been disadvantaged over other colleagues?” “How have you seen your supervisor accommodate outside obligations with other employees?” By allowing intersectional themes to emerge throughout the interview, it was my mindset that the intersectional theme that influenced them most would be the primary focus. This looked at intersectionality as an entirety and not just by race. Due to this, during the interviews I paid extremely close attention to the question responses for possible intersectional categories. I made sure to probe whenever inequality regimes emerged to understand in what ways intersectionality was embedded in the processes, practices, and behaviors within the women’s experiences. The design explored intersectionality in a manner where the experiences of the women were sought holistically and emerged instinctively.

At the end of each interview the demographic information was collected. I always asked if they had any questions for me, and often the women would ask how much longer I had until I was complete as they were interested in reading the results of the study. Many of the women also appreciated the target population of the study, as rarely the voices of mid-level women administrators is the focus when it comes to research in student affairs. I genuinely felt good about each of the interviews, and that I was obtaining quality data that could be used to advance the profession. After I hung up with the women, I created their file, assigned a pseudonym, ensured

the interview recorded properly and saved it, and saved their demographic information and placed their information in their respective folder. To protect confidentiality of the women, their assigned pseudonym is how they are referred to in the results chapters.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data analysis is a process of systematically interpreting data via research techniques to illustrate, evaluate and accurately deduct meaning from the research results (Creswell 2003). Once the interview process began, I transcribed them in groups between five and ten until the study was complete. My data consisted of the transcripts from each interview, along with some memos that I took from recording as well. I transcribed five of the interview transcripts and the remaining 27 were transcribed by two professional companies. Once the transcripts were complete, they were saved to the respective folders per individual on my computer. When I reached ten interview transcripts, I began open coding those interview transcripts and still conducted additional interviews simultaneously. Open coding is a process that allows for connections to be ascribed throughout the data among emerging themes via an inductive analysis (Hesse-Biber 2017).

I open coded initially to explore what themes and concepts were beginning to surface from the data. I conducted this process in two ways: (1) printed interview transcriptions, highlighted commonalities in the same colors, and made notations of common words the data sets had related to one another; and I also (2) reviewed the interview transcript in the NVivo software, highlighted commonalities in the same colors within the software, and made comments of common words the data set had related to one another in the software. All paper transcripts that were open coded were transferred to the NVivo software. NVivo is a qualitative analysis software that allows for systematic identification and analyzation of patterns in research data developed by QSR

International. From this process, it became simpler to identify commonly related themes in the remaining interview transcripts once they were open coded.

Halfway through the study, I began to realize that descriptors of an anticipated core theme (work-family) were less prominent within the data set, yet; an unanticipated theme related to student affairs as a helping profession was more salient among numerous women in the study. In fact, concepts of the ideal worker norm were one of the consequences of this theme. I then decided to go back through the first set of transcripts I had open coded, approximately 15, and re-coded for themes related to student affairs as a helping profession since it was not initially identified on the first review. Once all interviews were transcribed and open coded, I went back via the NVivo software and began focus coding categorically the open codes that had emerged to create narrow and concise categorical themes. In NVivo I created nodes, a collection of data references for a specific topic or theme, for the focused codes. Any codes that were related to that node were then copied and pasted in that specific node. This analysis technique then created a node with all codes associated with it in one space; it then displayed a total number of codes, total number of participants who mentioned the code, as well as a percentage as to how many times a participant mentioned that specific code. Due to the compiled frequency of codes, I was able to identify the dominate factors and themes per category. An example description is below:

Workplace culture was a categorical theme identified and 34 nodes were coded within this folder. One node within workplace culture was “building relationships” which 24 women mentioned 44 times in varying capacities. An example of the way in which the data was organized, one of the 24 women, Nailah, made three of the 44 references regarding relationship building in student affairs.

From this analysis, I identified four analytical categories, three of which were significant to most of the women in the study. The three major themes include student affairs as a helping profession, culture of advancement, and workplace culture which will all be analyzed further in

chapters four through six; the work-family theme, the fourth anticipated category, will be analyzed within the student affairs as a helping profession chapter as it was found closely associated as a consequence to that category versus a standalone entity.

### ***Research Limitations***

This study was not free of its limitations. One limitation was the various institution types in the sampling frame. As my focus was to explore the experiences of mid-level women at four-year mid-size universities in non-faculty administrative roles in the upper mid-western region of the country, I understood within these parameters there were different institutional variables that would be captured. For instance, some universities were smaller mid-size institutions (between 5,000-9,999 students) compared to larger mid-size institutions (15,000-19,999 students). Other factors such as public versus private sectors, residential versus commuter campuses, or unionized versus non-unionized institutions all impact the workplace cultures of universities. As all institutional categorizations were determined based upon the Carnegie classification for consistency purposes, there may have been instances where the classifications did not exactly match the actual daily operations of the institution culture. Institutional demographic information was too captured on the demographics form from each interview, however; there were no discrepancies large enough to differentiate women's experiences based upon these institutional factors.

Another limitation to this study was limiting my prior knowledge and experiences as the researcher when I analyzed the data. It was critical for me to ensure the study's results were based on the experiences of the participants and not any researcher bias. Goodwin and Horowitz (2002) identified one issue from critics of the qualitative paradigm is the lack of distance between the researcher and the group or institution being studied. As a young woman with a career in the

student affairs sector of higher education, I had an insider status to some of the gendered dynamics currently in the academy. Even as an administrator, my ethical morals and considerations as a researcher allowed me to conduct an objective study. Goodwin and Horowitz (2002) asserted “although disagreement exists about the extent to which researchers should be involved in what they are studying...one traditional methodological standard remains: qualitative research requires long-term involvement that in turn allows access to the rich details and complexities of social life” (p. 45). My level of engagement with higher education increased my competence with some of the aspects that emerged from the study, which simultaneously enhanced the rigor of the study. To help display my professional competence, I incorporated reflexivity and reactivity of any inquirer bias within the analysis as an additional way to establish credibility (Patton 2015). I reflected on how my background could have affected the data, and discussed how I used my insider status to build rapport with the women as a form of justification as to how the study was conducted (Patton 2015).

## Chapter 4: Student Affairs Workplace Structure

A significant amount of scholarship shows that work organizations are gendered (Acker 1990, 2006), and that informal practices in the workplace culture and formal policies perpetuate this setting (Mennino et al. 2005). However, within any given work organization, there exists different workplace structures and cultures that may be unique to departments within that organization. For instance, in the academy, employees may feel judged and their careers penalized for not working long hours, or using extended leave time (Blair-Loy and Wharton 2002). In this case, the academic organization has formal policies that allow for extended leave, along with formal work hour expectations; yet, the structure of the work organization in daily operations tend to ignore these formalities thus enforcing inequitable practices that primarily negatively impact women employees. For women working in higher education these experiences lead to a lack of feeling supported as well as the questioning of their commitment to the work organization thereby creating a “chilly climate” workplace environment (Britton 2017; Tyson and Borman 2010). The chilly climate culture essentially reinforces the gendered patriarchal structures in the academy.

In this chapter I discuss the major findings in relation to workplace structure that directly impact mid-level women working in student affairs. I address three major themes. First, I focus on how the women describe the student affairs workplace environment, including the lack of respect and a culture of long hours. Women described their contracted hours around 40 hours per week, however the inherent expectation was to work well over 50 hours per week without additional pay. As student affairs administrators are majority women, this structural enforcement (1) decreases the wage per hour for mid-level women, and (2) perpetuates the gender wage gap in higher education. Simultaneously, while few women had formal flex policies for the additional hours worked, majority of women explained their institutions did not adhere to official flexing of hours. Despite

the excessive hours and commitment to their work, women still encountered diminishing of their work from other colleagues, particularly those in academic divisions. Structurally, the division of student affairs remains subservient in class status to academic affairs; therefore, mid-level women administrators also battled inferiority to academic division employees regardless of ranking and hours committed to the institution.

Second, I evaluate microaggressions in the workplace with specific regard to questions of intellectual capacity and hegemonic masculine practices. For instance, women described being belittled if they did not possess a terminal degree. Their competence was consistently questioned compared to that of their male colleagues who also did not have a terminal degree. In this instance, mid-level women encountered a double bind in two facets in the academy: the lack of a terminal degree structurally placed them in a lower class status within the work organization, and simultaneously their gender automatically associated their competence and intellect second class to men. Women also described microaggressive hegemonic practices in the workplace, such as male leadership deliberately working only with other male counterparts in the department even if the women served as the Director of that unit. As senior leadership are at the core of the structural practices in work organizations, the practice of senior men intentionally undermining mid-level women's authority and power with other male colleagues reinforces macro-level gendered structural inequalities.

Last, I analyze how intersectional identities shape the women's professional lives within the student affairs workplace structure. Race, age, and sexual orientation all emerged as intersectional identities that created additional barriers for the women. Racial stereotypes such as the angry Black woman, ageist biases such as inappropriate comments on physical appearance, and microaggressions from their sexual identity such as rude sexual references regarding their



intimate life are all examples to how intersectionality permeated student affairs workplace culture. These workplace practices are embedded within the work organization's structure due to societal stereotypes, which shapes structural practices that negatively impact administrators with intersectional identities.

### **Student Affairs Culture**

One of the commonalities among the women who work in student affairs was the expectation of long hours. Of 32 women, 27 mentioned working excessive hours on a consistent weekly basis, yet the majority of the women were hired under a contract or general understanding of working 37.5-40 hours a week. Despite these expectations, their average number of hours worked per week was 54. I asked the women why they felt the need to work the additional hours and Sydney replied "I know that is expected of me. If I want to proceed higher in my career, the higher up you go set hours are not as important as the work getting done or the student need being met."

Similarly, Nailah replied "we generally work more than our 37.5 hours but we know that coming in. I will say after nine years of higher education I was constantly at year one putting 70 to 100 hours in." The responses from the women clearly indicated an expectation to work well beyond the established hours. Nailah went on to discuss how the need to meet these unwritten expectations in order to move up the ladder of her career, and she is not alone in this regard. Taylor stated:

I think it's [working long hours] a habit that I started because I started in activities, and at that time the Director was, you know, he called 8:00am Friday meetings even though I would work until 2:00 AM the night before, he didn't care. I had to be there, right? I was seen as not being successful if I wasn't there. But I think part of it is there were habits that were started early on that I just have just embraced. And I think from a compensation perspective our university has no comp time policy.

Even when women surpassed work expectations, they still felt the pressure to be present in the office. Women were penalized when they were not consistently present as if they were perceived as not doing enough, yet they were penalized financially when they worked excessive hours.

Realizing long work days were engrained in the student affairs workplace culture, I asked the women how the extra work hours were compensated. Stephanie, replied “during the summer the understanding is that you have a little bit more leeway as far as using your comp time. So I would say maybe I get 20% of the actual comp time returned to me or used.” Likewise, Taylor, with a serious undertone jokingly, responded “I try not to compute (hours and compensation) to be quite honest. I learned about six years ago when I figured out I made less money than the morning worker at McDonald's that I would never do that again.” The question about compensation for extra hours worked also triggered a conversation Angela had with a colleague at her institution. Angela explained:

I was speaking with a department executive assistant in the office of student affairs. She is direct support for the vice president, and her understanding from communication of expectation is that you're here for 40 hours, but you're here serving the students. So if you work 60 hours, you work 60 hours. Again, there's not a comp time policy. So there's that.

There was a clear, consistent pattern of student affairs office cultures that worked long hours without proper compensation. As mentioned, the average income range of the women, mid-level administrators in student affairs in higher education, was \$65,000, therefore; each additional hour worked beyond their contracted or established weekly work hours decreased their value per hour rate. For some women, this placed them as low as \$21.15 per hour despite 31 out of 32 women possessing at least a master's degree. In an effort to elaborate on the amount of hours she worked weekly without compensation, Asia explained:

They [excess hours] are not compensated and you heard me say that I'm working over in Disability Services as well and that's not being compensated either. And I just do it. It's part of my work ethic and I always worked this way. So I don't see it as a difficulty. I do not like to answer questions about why I didn't do something or why something wasn't done and so I cover my bases. And so I prioritize, when I have a sense of what I might be asked. And so I'm always prepared.

It was apparent that Asia was doing the job of two full time staff and was deliberately not compensated for the extra work. At the same time, she was adamant about being prepared for any possible scenario her superiors could question her about to prove she was capable of handling the load successfully. Women felt the culture of excessive hours in student affairs, especially without extra compensation, led to burnout in the field.

Another aspect that was common among student affairs workplace culture was the gendered division of labor. In an office environment, there were numerous instances where mid-level women administrators felt they were deliberately assigned certain lower level responsibilities. Robyn explained:

Maybe I bring it upon myself, but you know, an example would be if the phone rings and our office associate isn't in, I'm usually the one who answers on the third ring...People aren't jumping to it or if someone walks in the door and the doorbell rings, I'm usually the one that jumps up and gets it. Or if snacks are brought into the office and they're left there, well I'm usually the one that cleans out whatever's left.

This was important as in her case she was never deliberately asked to assume any of these responsibilities, yet she did them because her staff, in which, men were the majority, usually would not. Robyn ended and explained:

I think in any workplace there are gender roles that people take on or it's the unwritten rule, this is how it is. Women do this. Men do this. Women clean dishes, men lift things. So, you know, you find that they'll [men] lift these big bags for you because you're a woman, and then here I'll [men] leave this dirty plate because you're going to wash it or you can answer the phone. Um, is that good or bad? Not sure.

The gendered nature in Robyn's workplace environment was so embedded in the culture that she almost did not recognize it existed. This was a workplace example of Kanter's (1977)

argument that organizational roles are gendered based upon physical characteristics of the types of people who should be completing certain responsibilities.

Additionally, there were several women participants who mentioned they were asked or assigned tasks, while their male counterparts often just provided thoughts and perspectives. For instance, Stephanie explained consistent behavior at her directors' meetings in which "the male directors' tend to not volunteer as much for projects so the women are the ones that are actually doing the bulk of the action; they [men] are more disengaged and just kind of there to listen." A similar experience was mentioned by Breeana. She explained how when she was in male dominated meetings, the men would simply talk and bounce ideas around, especially White men; but the opposite would happen when the room was women dominated.

So, I've been in meetings where the women are in charge and it's a majority of women in the room and that's been a little bit different. Those meetings tend to be more efficient. The men don't talk as much in those meetings, so I think it depends on who's running the meeting and who feels comfortable there and it's like it's their space. (Breeana)

As she described her experience, she made it clear how meetings led by women were productive, tasks were delegated and accomplished, while the male dominated meetings were heavy in discussion. In these examples, the women described how their fellow women administrators carried the majority of the heavy workload on their respective committees, however; Olivia discussed how she carried perceived secretarial responsibilities. "I mean the small community of us women at this level but still women, and not others, are asked to take notes at meetings when everyone is at the same peer level, right? It's almost always women of course (Olivia)." These examples demonstrated how women completed the heavy lifting of director level tasks, while also voluntold to conduct the heavy lifting of secretarial associated duties.

Faith discussed how men at her institution avoided undesired tasks. She explained how her male counterparts blended a task with a presumed compliment such as "you're very organized and

administratively strong so you should be leading this (Faith).” Along the same idea, Janet mentioned a similar experience:

So I've sat on a lot of committees where I'm the only female and I'm the one who's asked to coordinate the snacks for the next event. They have never asked Adam to coordinate snacks for anything. And so I think it also gets played out and just kind of a microaggressive way of saying you're the one who handle the details of the food because that's what you're capable of. Or taking the minutes, I've been asked to take minutes multiple times when I am not the lowest ranking person in the room but because I'm the only woman in the room.

Research has established women are more prone to be asked to conduct perceived secretarial roles compared to men despite rank. These role assumptions are what Martin (2004) argued regarding institutions preserving social positions in the workplace that are characterized via norms and engrained expectations.

Despite the workplace culture of student affairs professionals working excessive hours to support students and departmental goals, student affairs professionals still manages to carry a stigma of being disrespected as a profession. When asked to describe what it meant to be a student affairs professional, nearly half the women mentioned not feeling respected by colleagues outside the student affairs division. Gwen responded in frustration:

We are always looked at as the party planners, the fun people, the fluff of the university type thing. You just do all the fun stuff is what we get a lot. And no, it's like we actually do things that have learning outcomes and what we do is actually relevant. We don't just throw a party to throw a party.

She continued with an observation that student affairs professionals needed to start “talking faculty talk (Gwen),” as in assessment and evaluation, to prove the worth the division had to higher education. Gwen was not the only woman who expressed frustration with the culture of student affairs, which is largely associated with care work, being devalued. “I do student conduct, I do the crisis, I do the educational interventions. Those things oftentimes aren't numbers. And I'm getting heated because I, I get so frustrated with the diminishing of who I am as a person” Erika

stated. She further explained that if reports were not number or dollar based, that the academic side of the house was disinterested.

Susan had a unique position at her institution as she served in a role that worked in both the academic and student affairs divisions. Her thoughts on respect provided to student affairs professionals was consistent with other women from the study:

I think, you know, higher education institutions, I think there's still a great divide between faculty and staff. I think there's a tendency to underestimate staff. There's a tendency for faculty or senior faculty administrators to sort of tell staff what needs to be done rather than ask staff what needs to be done and generally speaking, there's about a thousand things that they [faculty] haven't thought about that are critical to the success of whatever it is that they're telling us [student affairs staff] about. And so that is something that is a frustration.

Levels of cultural privilege benefit faculty over administrators, and have since the creation of the student affairs division in the academy. Other women participants made akin statements such as, "I think it's the nature of our profession in some ways. You know, squishy-squishy student affairs" along with "we're a research university so staff in general is a challenging role to be in; we're definitely lowest on the pecking order. I don't even think staff are mentioned in our vision statement, it says faculty and students." This demonstrated several higher educational institutions that had institutional cultures that lacked respect or support for the work of student affairs professionals from the academic division.

This perception fostered frustration for the women I interviewed, directly impacting how they felt their abilities were perceived by colleagues. Janet described an incident she had with male colleagues in an academic department:

I think it's a disadvantage when I work with my academic partners, and they don't think I'm an expert in the field. I routinely work with a student who has autism spectrum disorder. She is a survivor of sexual assault, childhood abuse and a long list of things that we are required to make reasonable accommodations for her success. I went to a meeting with her faculty who were all white men probably in their seventies and eighties, and they basically told me I didn't know what I was talking about because why would I know anything; they

did not want to hear about trauma informed response or how we remove barriers to people's success.

This form of bullying in higher education meant (Simpson and Cohen 2004) women were significantly more likely to have their decisions overturned and encounter verbal abuse in the academy. Research has demonstrated that these experiences were more likely to occur with women in higher education versus men, so women were often disinterested from pursuing positions where they would be exposed to this type of workplace harassment.

### **Microaggressions**

A second major theme related to workplace culture was the various forms of microaggressions the women experienced. While women encountering microaggressions in the workplace had been found in other workplaces, there were specific types of encounters that women from my study experienced related to higher education. For instance, over fifty percent of women indicated they felt they were treated differently and/or not respected by colleagues due to not possessing a doctoral degree. Janet elaborated:

I think some colleagues we work with outside of the division, so not only being a woman, a young woman in a Dean role, and also not having a Ph.D. and not being what they view to be their intellectual equal. So that's also created some boundaries. I'm also working on my dissertation too, but they do not see it as the same level as their own. So whether that is directly or indirectly, I think it's just a vibe that you get from people. And I especially find it with older white men that are the most reluctant or do not view me as being an equal around the table or just don't even want to hear my perspective.

The academy has been known for cultivating an environment that provides those with a doctorate degree a higher level of social and intellectual capital versus those without one. According to Cox, Adams and Omer (2011) historically, the purpose of the terminal degree was to prepare leaders to improve the sciences and humanities and simultaneously develop curriculum that shaped students, faculty, and the university in a humanistic way; therefore, the doctorate degree is intellectual capital. "Regardless of field, the Ph.D. represents attainment in scholarship

and confirms students' abilities to conduct original research and their potential to become experts in their disciplines or research areas (Cox et al. 2011:4).” Because Janet did not possess the proper intellectual credentials, she was not as capable as her colleagues with three letter credentials.

Susan supported these sentiments with her experiences as an administrator working in both student affairs and collaborating with academic affairs. Specifically, Susan described a situation that further explained a previously discussed cultural theme of student affairs, workplace culture, and its overlap with intellectual credibility:

So they [faculty member] started to raise their voice and say, oh no, that's not what happened [regarding an office incident]. And I'm like, yes it is, you know, and the talking over me, the getting wowed, the mansplaining, I was just not having it! And then I was like, this is what's happening. I had to get very direct, and then I wrapped it up and said, I'm sure we can move forward in a collaborative manner...But you know, it's like, okay, I'm a female, and I don't have a doctorate. Like, I'm a staff member and, but I hold authority and knowledge that is going to support what you need to do, right? Like you do need me, at some point this was going to land on my plate and what I'm trying to do is avoid that landing on my plate as a mess and instead proactively work through it so it can be successful.

This was consistent with Karen's viewpoints as she described how administrators were treated based on intellectual credibility. She elaborated:

There's definitely a hierarchy of education level, my predecessor had a master's degree and so when she would go and interact with people who had Ph.D.s or doctorates there would be that [degree distinction]. I also think that looking at our Vice President and what her Ph.D. is in compared to what other people's Ph.Ds.' are in, I think that she has to deal with that discrimination. But to be honest with you, one of the most vocal people, and whose voice gets heard the most is a VP who doesn't have a Ph.D. but is male.

In this case, Karen provided an example of how her female Vice President dealt with discriminatory interactions due to the type of doctorate she possessed, despite her male colleague possessing one less degree than she had and still was more respected by their colleagues. This exemplified how women still encountered barriers from microaggressions, such as diminishing the type of doctorate they had, even though they had enhanced their intellectual



qualifications. There were also incidents of women in positions of intellectual power who served as barriers to women in mid-level positions. Specifically, Yvonne discussed how women in senior positions with doctorate degrees talked down to her because she only had a Master's degree and was presumably not as intelligent in their eyes. Taylor had a similar experience with women in student affairs related to intellectual authority. She described:

There was a time when our two upper administrators were both women and it was awful. I didn't count because I wasn't the right kind of Greek affiliation and I wasn't enough because I didn't have my Master's yet [was in progress]; maybe it was tough love, but I don't think it was. Sometimes I think some of the people that do the most damage to equality and empowerment in the workplace are people of our own gender.

These experiences validated how, whether intentional or unintentional, women also reinforced microaggressions in the workplace. Workplace culture perpetuates a gendered structure which is engrained from everyday interactions and behaviors; therefore, it becomes unconscious behaviors that produce negative consequences. Many women in senior leadership roles experienced forms of microaggressions themselves, and may not recognize the perpetuation of learned behavior that is typically associated with "good old boy networks." Robyn eluded to this with her thoughts on good old boy networks at her institution:

I think sometimes there was some good old boy network going on, on campus, but I mean, it's terrible to say this, but it's kind of something that as a female you just kind of go with it, it's going to happen and you got to work within the system.

Robyn adapting herself to work within the system was a prime example of how women learned to embody characteristics that sustained microaggressions. Even when women infiltrated senior management the divisional workplace culture does not always follow suit considering (1) the women typically are not the majority, and (2) the women must follow suit to often survive in

their new environment. Yvonne described her encounter with her institution's good old boys network:

Our campus, even though we have women in higher positions, it is in many ways still an old boys club. All of our upper administration, with an exception of my interim Vice President, are all male. I feel they prefer to work with all men. It's harder to get their attention and support. When I asked my VP to get a meeting with the Provost, I took my new staff member who is a man. I took him strategically because I heard from some of my allies on campus that the Provost rather works with men than women. During the meeting, even though my staff member had been there less than a month, the Provost still referred to him more than he referred to me. I still got what I wanted out of the meeting, although I don't like that it's like that I still want my goals to be met.

This was a classic form of hegemonic masculinity in the academy. Hegemonic masculinity is the preservation of behaviors and/or practices that institutionalize men's dominance over women (Connell 1987), which is typically rooted in work organization institutional culture. In the situation above, the Provost deliberately only engaged with the male staff member, which was how he used their masculine commonality to exclude the position of authority the director possessed. The behavior from the Provost was a clear disregard and lack of respect for Yvonne, despite the male colleague hierarchically positioned in a subordinate role. Again, behavior such as this was entrenched in their workplace culture of student affairs.

Other women in my study experienced various forms of hegemonic masculine encounters in the workplace. When asked what their experience had been working with men colleagues at their institution, Paige discussed how her male colleagues tended to be what she called "assertive aggressive." Paige described assertive aggressive as being interrupted when she was making a point in a meeting by her male colleagues; yet, these colleagues, typically White men, would go on to agree with her point and instantly made it a valid perspective. She was not the only woman who experienced this form of microaggression from men.

The number of times where I've sat in a meeting and I've contributed an idea or made a suggestion and it's been passed over and then come back around and another man has said

the same exact thing. In particular, my counterpart who was a director of housing operations...he is about numbers and figures and the numbers have to match to tell the story, so my experience or what I believe to be true is not valued. (Erika).

Men colleagues talking over women was a common workplace cultural practice in student affairs, and served as a dominant form of control and power within the institutional structure. Again, when asked about her experience working with men at her institution, Alexis described an extraordinary form of patriarchal behavior from men colleagues: “The male privilege, the mansplaining, like all of that happens with the men in most of the director positions I interact with. And I interact with very few men of color so most are White men.” White men, compared to men of color, were a common theme throughout the data as the primary source behind masculine microaggressions in the workplace. Unsurprisingly, Meghan described a related experience when she answered the same question.

Now as a coordinator my experience was very different. It was patronizing a lot of times and kind of belittling of my ideas and my abilities. The men [White] that I interacted with had a tendency to just talk over me and tell me what to do rather than ever asked me what I think, even if it was a place where I definitely have more subject matter expertise than them. It was kind of isolating whenever I was in a room with multiple men in powerful positions, just because they were really good at kind of just shutting down your voice.

Since White men dominated leadership and served as elitist for a long time in student affairs, it was no surprise these women’s’ stories were directly related to interacting with White men. Another common practice in which microaggressions were passed off by White men was forming a connection with a female colleague through a stereotypically male identified practice, which then was projected as a compliment. For example, Faith who identified as Asian, elaborated on how she had to navigate interactions with men colleagues in relation to sports.

One of my hobbies is sports. And unfortunately when that was disclosed they [men] were like ‘she gets it, she gets sports.’ I feel like that then established some type of communication bridge to my male colleagues. So I've noticed that when Dave would see pictures of me at college games or see me golfing, ‘male stereotypes’, then I seem to be kind of more approachable. And that was just one of those things where it's like, you know,

and I don't want to promote that. And yet I know that is 'my way in with the male leadership.' That's unfortunate because then that discloses all my female colleagues who may not get the references when somebody 'fumbles an assignment.'

Here, Faith described a situation that made her feel uncomfortable with her male colleagues, even though it made them feel most comfortable with her. Faith felt a tension between using sports as an "in" with her male leadership to better navigate a masculine workplace culture, while simultaneously; by condoning the behavior, she placed other women colleagues in an even more displaced position. While her male colleagues believed they were complimenting her on understanding the sports world, in actuality, they perpetuated a masculine environment that best benefited them.

The last form of microaggressions that emerged from the research data were elements of behavior that related to equitable treatment. In my study, women discussed and described various ways in which they experienced treatment differently from their male colleagues. One example Amanda described was an experience with her female supervisor in relation to task necessities in her department. She explained:

She was the only female on the entire central staff and leadership team for our department. She constantly had to prove herself in meetings. When she had the experience she was running the department and doing what she needed to do. But because people didn't feel that she held that [leadership] same presence, when they [upper administration] wanted something they typically went to the men in the department and bypassed her.

Amanda described how her supervisor was consistently circumvented by her male colleagues for major tasks that fell within her scope of responsibilities. This form of microaggressive behavior undermined the skillset and leadership of mid-level women professionals, particularly as they only happened to women and not men in their respective areas. Taylor had a comparable experience in relation to a lack of respect for the tasks she was responsible for:

My boss and then Director of the University Center, we would have to meet quarterly about some of the financials of what I was responsible for. The guy [Director] would look at my boss and say, so [name], what do you think about, or how did you come to this number? Even though I was sitting right next to my boss, right? So like he couldn't even look at me and they asked me the questions for a while. I thought it was because I was young or like I blamed it on a lot of other identities. But, in the end I figured out there are people that were not going to think that I could handle what I was doing based upon my gender.

She described her feelings understanding the unequal treatment based upon her various intersectional identities, yet ultimately came to the conclusion that it was simply her gender that her male colleagues were uncomfortable with. As if the work she was assigned was too high of an intellectual task for her to grasp because it directly related to numbers, which was an area traditionally monopolized by men.

Along themes of unequal treatment, I asked Julia if there had been colleagues who were treated differently than other colleagues at her institution and if so, to tell me what occurred and why. Julia began to tell a very in-depth, descriptive story about a male colleague who was the director of a cultural center on her campus:

So myself and the Director of [department name] are both women, and the Director of the cultural center is a man and we all were hired around the same time. I have the most years of experience post master's degree than either of them. The [male] director of the [department name] is very young in the field and doesn't have a lot of experience and he has really struggled. It's been a challenge because the three of us are often seen together and seen as doing good kinds of work. If the multicultural center as a whole has success, he is often included in that success even though my colleague and I are doing the majority of the work. So earlier this year, I learned he had been offered to teach a class and that was really frustrating because I'm aware of the quality of work he does compared to the quality of work that I do. I just found it to be ridiculous he would be the person to teach this class. It seems, often times, regardless of the fact that he's poor in his job, that he still gets, you know, other opportunities to help him develop professionally.

Julia's views on the women directors in her departments not receiving the same treatment and opportunities as her male director colleague stemmed from a place of long term frustration. She continued and explained how she felt because he was a man, he could get away with publicly

not performing his job well, as well as have less experience, and still being afforded advancement opportunities that neither female director would be offered. This form of unequal gender treatment was a classic occurrence in the workplace culture of student affairs. Women will continue to face barriers in the workplace that impact their long term career progression until situations such as these are handled equitably.

There was a unique aspect on unequal treatment in the workplace that surfaced from the data, specifically regarding parenthood. Numerous women without children mentioned forms of unequal treatment in the workplace due to being childless. “I think there is the idea that if you don't have a child's play to go to, or a child at home, or daycare pick up, you can cover events. And I think that's tough to do long term,” said Ciara, a single woman without children. She continued and indicated it was often an implicit message that childless women could stay and work late because they did not have to be at home like other staff regardless if a male colleague had children or not. Ciara's sentiment implied structural gendered expectations within the institution around marital status as her single male colleagues she felt weren't held to the same standard of the expectation to work late when colleagues who are parents aren't available to do so. Coincidentally she was not alone in her opinions. Grace, also single with no children also explained:

So I will say this, that our division is very much so 'family comes first.' I'm a single woman. I have no children. So what's interesting to me though is the unspoken support systems for folks who have families and the way it looks different for people who don't have families. And the way that more work might be given to the folks who don't. Or there's just more flexibility, well more flexibility and maybe less accountability for those who have families and things like that.

The cultural unspoken expectation in the workplace that women without children were expected to pick up the extra work where mothers were not able to was evident among these situations. What was likewise missing was the accountability of male colleagues without children

being held to the same inherent expectation. Janet (married, no children) held strong feelings about unequal treatment in her workplace.

I think, in particular for women, it happens or single people in general, that they're expected to do more of the afterhours engaging with students because they don't have a family to go home to. Um, so when I started here, I was single. I was not married and so I found myself being given a lot of the afterhours things to do because clearly I had nothing to go home to. So why would I ever need to have a life outside of work? So I personally experienced and have tried to impact that for others because that's not fair or reliable for us to ask people to do that and to force it upon them.

Janet spoke from the perspective of her experience when she was single, and then as a married woman who watched the same thing happen to her other women colleagues. Julia too, like Janet, spoke on her needs as a woman who was married without children. "It's important for me to go home at night to be able to have dinner with him [husband] and enjoy time with him. And so I don't think that that's any less significant than somebody who does have children" Julia stated. What was important to recognize was there was a perception of an undertone culture of expectations for women without children to work evening hours in student affairs. While the time of day was unknown, according to the data women with children in the study worked on average 47-51 hours per week, while women without children worked on average 50-54 hours per week. In this circumstance, women without children felt disadvantaged among two sets of colleagues their male colleagues as well as their women colleagues with children. All administrators should have the right to equal workplace interactions that are free of microaggressions and barriers, and establishing this equitable environment is vital to retaining quality women in the student affairs.

### **Student Affairs & Intersectionality**

Workplace cultures and environments are constructed via interactions among individuals working in the various departments. Identities and experiences that each individual brings with them to work each day serve as a component to how interactions among colleagues occur. In this

section, I focus on the women's experiences regarding race, age, and sexual orientation as these were among the most salient identities that emerged for many women in the study.

### ***Racial Barriers***

For women of color, work organizations brew environments where stereotypes and stigmas are forced upon them. For instance, almost sixty six percent of women in my study indicated they had either experienced microaggressions based on race, or witnessed women of color colleagues maneuver microaggressions based on race. As my participants were mid-level women professionals, many encountered these experiences with lower ranking individuals despite a position of authority.

I was told on my first day of my current role from one of my employees that he wanted my job, and he didn't understand why I got my job. First day. Then I knew he told my boss the same thing; he went to my immediate supervisor and said that he didn't know why a person without a background in Black Studies would be the acting Director. That totally is because, you know, that individual does not want to report to a Black woman. (Serena, Black)

Encounters such as this one was why Shorter-Gooden (2004) stated women of color are held to higher performance standards that were typically not realistic, and why women of color often felt they had to prove to their colleagues why they received the position they actually earned (Henry 2010). Several mid-level women of color mentioned numerous ways in which they felt they had to "prove themselves" in their roles. Shawna (Black) specified:

When I first got here, with women than men, I did have to prove myself. Particularly the White women I really had to prove my competence. '*Why is she here?*' And made me do things to prove that I'm credible in my role.

As mentioned, White mid-level women too perceived their women of color colleagues were treated differently in their workplace cultures. Erika, who identified as a White women, stated:



I have a staff member who is gone now, but I believe she was treated differently because, people made assumptions about what they were doing without asking questions. If she wasn't in the office, staff members would assume that she wasn't working. I don't believe they would do that for anybody else. But because she was an African American female, I think they placed some judgment on her work ethic. The housing operations director came to me and said, 'well, you know she hasn't answered the phone the last three times that I called her, so do you know if she is in the office today?'

In these two examples, women of color were challenged or questioned on doing their job in ways White women were not. Erika described how she knew her colleague had jumped to a conclusion simply from missed phone calls because the woman was Black. These experiences were not isolated as Meghan, a Black woman, had a similar encounter at her previous institution.

At another institution, I kind of had to fight for respect and recognition for my ideas and the authority I held in my position. I was looking to get my colleagues to help me with supporting graduate and professional students. And I got a lot of pushback that I really feel came from a place about me being a woman of color. There was one colleague who said something to the effect of I was being really aggressive. And I was like, oh okay. I know what that's code for. Another person said that I felt like I was their boss. (Meghan, Black)

Meghan continued to discuss how she felt had she been a White woman or a man, she would not had been perceived or treated in the same manner. Her reminiscence of the statement "being really aggressive about it" was a classic stereotype attributed to women of color. Case in point:

That stereotype threat of there being an angry woman of color, or if I'm a woman of color leader on campus, I'm hyper visible and invisible at the same time. If I don't get my shit done, everybody's going to know, right? So I find myself to be very high functioning. I'm like sometimes over performing and like I want to identify as like lazy, you know? As an Asian woman I want that sometimes but that's not necessarily the case. (Brandi, Multiracial Asian White)

Along similar sentiments, Grace described her frustrations about the way men were given room to be vocal and express certain emotions, such as anger, and not be seen as intimidating or threatening. "For our women of color, it is 'you're intimidating and you're too strong and why can't you just...so that's really what I mean when I talk about them wanting happy-go-lucky folks and

not critical thinkers” said Grace. Interestingly, these women specifically mentioned these microaggressive encounters came from White women more than men. While an exact reason for this behavior was unknown, Faith, who identified as Asian, described her experiences with White women colleagues.

So I'm probably one of seven women of color [administrators on campus]. I'm going to rag on my White women friends and colleagues, but it's, you know, it's difficult. You're constantly addressing microaggressions, you're constantly having discussions as well. It's difficult just because you are either, you're either going to eat it up because your end goal is your students or you're going to acknowledge this [incident] and this person then doesn't become an advocate or doesn't want to serve your student population. So it's a constant balance of kind of how do I address this.

Faith described a double edge bind. On one hand, she desired to address her White women colleagues when various discriminatory behaviors occurred, yet if she had she felt her students became negatively impacted from a potential lack of support moving forward from that individual. However, if she had not addressed the issue it was likely the behavior would have continued as the individual would think it was acceptable. This is emotionally exhaustive work and eventually could lead to outcomes such as women of color leaving student affairs as an entirety.

There were some White women colleagues who had good intentions, but constantly chose not to use them when opportunity presented itself according to Faith (Asian):

You know, um it's a constant ‘oh I wish you would have been at this meeting because you would have corrected this individual.’ That's what I get a lot from my White women colleagues. ‘But what I meant was, I told you so now you know’ and so that's the difficulty that I have with a lot of my White women colleagues and friends.

This was a common mistake in allyship. In this case, instead of speaking up in the moment needed, Faith described how her White women colleagues reported microaggressions back to her, instead of using their privilege to dismantle a culture of bias. Women of color had to solely shoulder the pressure to navigate and address cultural microaggressions in the workplace, whereas a powerful shift in institutional structure would occur if White women picked up some of the load.

One way Alexis (Black), chose to navigate the inherent bias in her student affairs workplace structure was by being in spaces she was not expected to be in:

Because I expect to be disadvantaged, I try to put myself in spaces where I can overcome the racial and gender bias that I know is inherently in our system. I need to try to overcome those things, so I need to be in spaces where people don't expect to see me. I need to work more intentionally, I may need to work differently or harder, so I can overcome the disadvantages that are inherently built in the system.

These were consistent forms of navigating racism within workplace culture that women of color had to figure out in higher education. For Alexis, doing things such as strategically placing herself in meetings she was not required to attend or even invited to, was a way she chose to disband embedded gender and racial bias. In her perspective, this action displayed commitment to the institution and placed her in spaces where she could advocate in ways that systematically weren't associated with Black women. Many women of color found other ways to cope with structural racism in student affairs, while others chose to tolerate the cultural discriminatory behavior from emotional exhaustion, and still others opted out of the profession altogether. However, racial encounters were not the only structural barriers women of color faced, as age too emerged as an additional intersectional barrier that women of color dealt with.

### ***Ageist Barriers***

Ageism is the systematic typecasting proceeded by interactions that are discriminatory in nature due strictly to someone's age (Fiske et al. 2002). Ageism is an intersection that is rarely identified in student affairs compared to other intersections, especially for women of color. Yet, it was one that was critical to many women. For instance, physical appearance was an easy way to stereotype age. Faith, Asian age 41, stated:

I mean just my visual is I'm of Asian heritage and you know, I'm in my forties. 'Oh, you look youthful' and it's constant. I'm trying to think just recently you know, one of my male colleagues had made reference to my ability to, work with young people because I was in

my twenties and it was just the weirdest thing, you know? I don't know this person [male colleague].

A colleague, she had never met, felt comfortable enough to verbally ascribe not only her age, but her ability to perform her duties based upon her age due to her physical appearance. In a similar situation, Stephanie, who identified as Latina, stressed her interactions with older men and the frequency of their distinct views. She felt her age, 33, served as a factor as to how they interacted with her. Stephanie also stated she did not see this behavior occur as much in her younger men colleagues. "Individuals sometimes assume that your skillset is different based on what you appear as physical appearance. So gender and age here at [named] university is something that is very interesting. Seniority [years on the job] aspect trumps everything else" said Stephanie. Susan (Multiracial age 39) too illustrated experiences she had encountered with older men:

I think that my relative youth in an academic space, has been sometimes, or in the past, seen as well, you know, she's young, she's got time. She's got time to make money or she's got time to whatever. And I have this feeling that the urgency of my desire for advancement was not felt as strongly as I would like it to. Because it's like, oh well she's so young, you know, relative to these 60 something 70 something year old men.

As senior leadership in student affairs is dominated by White men, these forms of patriarchy serve as a reinforcement of cultural norms that exclude women of color. These biases served as a checks and balances' system that maintained control over women of color in mid-level positions and how they could, or could not, progress forward. Ageist biases occurred to other women of color as well. Brandi, who identified as Multiracial and 31 years old, gave a detailed account of her experiences with gender, race and age with a female colleague.

I just turned 30. Right. So to be 30 years old and old mid-level position, I've been in the mid level positions for the past almost three years. Right? Like I look younger too, right? Because 'Asian don't raisin'. Like I will probably look like this when you and I see each other in 10 years, right?...But like the way that people perceive, I'm younger. I had a White colleague say to me recently... 'no one knows who you are here, so what you do

here doesn't matter and I don't give a shit about the way that you're directing your department.'...verbatim in my office of many. This is a White woman.

Here she described numerous microaggressions, as well as deliberate disrespect from her colleague, which she attributed to her age of 31. Verbal abuse in an office with other colleagues present was a level of privilege that women of color will never possess. Similarly, Amanda (Latina age 36) discussed her encounter with being discriminated against due to her age.

When I started to take things over I felt that I was definitely treated different based on the fact that I was a woman and that I was younger and that I look young. I think people thought they could roll over me and not treat me with the same respect that he [past Director] was provided. I actually called out one of our campus departments about it, the fact that I felt I was really being discriminated against because of being a woman and my age. I was told that 'I did not hold the same presence as this person did.'

Earlier, I discussed the way women of color perceived they were held to higher performance standards and received extrinsic pressure to prove themselves. In this scenario, these dynamics were intensified by Amanda, a young looking 36 year old woman in a mid-level leadership position in student affairs.

Women of color were not the only women who had to navigate ageism in student affairs. "Being younger and a woman here, I am not taken as seriously as I should be. People are surprised when I'm actually knowledgeable or conduct a meeting effectively. So I feel I'm treated differently for sure because I'm younger and female," said Gwen, a White woman who was 33 years old. The idea around young women and a lack of competence was also present in a situation described by Breeana. She, a White 47 year old woman, explained how a young female colleague in her department was perceived as "young and innocent" as she seemed to wear her heart on her sleeve, and their supervisor therefore showed a lack of respect for her and seemingly scrutinized her work more.

Age dynamics too played a part with interactions between women colleagues. For instance Angela, 44 years of age, talked about how she and her business manager needed mediation via their superior due to intense encounters they had in the workplace.

A lot has to do with the female emotion that some females put into collegial relationships. My business manager is an older woman, so not being ageist, I'm just giving you context. I'm a Gen-Xer of sorts, so there's an interesting dynamic with regard to her expectations of relationships. And when she feels like I'm not being supportive of her, it's a very very very big thing [issue]. And that's exhausting.

Yvonne, age 55, also had specific encounters with women much older than her but in a different perspective. She gave an overview as to not only her experience with age and gender in student affairs, but also why she thought women were so hard on other women.

Part of it was the social environment at the institution. Again because of my age, some of the women that I was working with was maybe nine years older than me. She may have come up in a time when it was even harder to be a woman in higher education; when it was even more of an old boys club than what I see. I think even though she didn't like that environment, it was what she adopted. It was a very patriarchal, I make all the decisions, I am in charge, and you will do what I want. I think it was what she knew. A lot of the people that I did knock heads with, many were women who were older than me that may have had to fight a whole lot harder to get where they were. They felt they had to demand respect from everybody because they always had to demand respect. I don't see it as much with my younger colleagues because the world has change.

What she eluded to was how generational differences attribute to (1) different expectations, (2) perspectives based on generational norms, and (3) the learned behavior that was passed down due to what happened to them. Yvonne had a sense of empathy on one hand as she felt the older women were only doing what they had always known, yet; on the other hand she was also tired of the backlash from their behavior.

### ***Sexual Orientation Barriers***

While women had gender as a commonality, intersectional identities such as age and race created lenses that provided a distinctly different outlook on normative behavior. To add more complexity, a few women described how their sexuality served as an additional intersection they

had to learn to maneuver within their workplace culture. “I’ve had some horrible experiences. I am a lesbian, so my partner is a woman and we’re married. I’ve had people, male colleagues, come up and say ridiculous things like, so that lesbian thing, how actually does that work?” said Karen, a woman who identified as a White woman and lesbian. She explained that this colleague held a position of power over her within the division of student affairs, so the complication on how to address the situation was enhanced.

I was like dumbfounded and didn't even know what to say. Quickly had to figure out that I had to put an end to it. Like in terms of like anytime he went there I would just stop the conversation and say this is inappropriate, we're not having this conversation.

This colleague deemed it appropriate to ask Karen such a question, thereby he made his behavior seemingly appropriate within their workplace culture. Too often, biases and microaggressions around sexual orientation are not taken seriously, so it is not uncommon for inappropriate interactions to occur to women in the LGBTQIA community. “If you are from, not straight sexual orientation, people don't always tend to take it so seriously or you aren't always given the same sorts of regards as other folks” said Amara who identified as an American Indian woman and lesbian.

Sexual orientation was an identity that could not be determined strictly from physical appearance, nonetheless a common mistake made in the workplace culture of student affairs is the assumption of administrators’ sexual orientation. Grace, who identified as a Black woman and pan-sexual, argued:

I have felt the marginalization, and it's from language, or...when we talk about LGBTQIA concerns for students, my colleagues will forget, or don't know... \*laughing\* ...that I'm also a part of that community. So folks who might assume that I am straight, will say things that they would not have said if they knew that I was a part of that community. I've had many of moments where I felt marginalized, but luckily I've had safe spaces where I can process it, and not be at a place where I'm triggered in the moment and can't continue forward.

Whereas I know for other folks it's hard to deal with that. So I think my cisgender identity gives me this cloak; this protection, if you will, that's still a bit of a double-edged sword.

While *Grace* learned to adapt and process her feelings when she felt marginalized, it was still a survival technique she mastered in order to not be triggered in the workplace. Not all mid-level women had the ability to manage uncomfortable situations in the workplace, and had to be strategic on how they maneuvered situations. It became even more difficult when women were unsure of support from their supervisors. For instance, Karen stated:

Historically, in terms of being disadvantage, yeah, I think that when I first started it was not okay to be in a same sex relationship, um at least not to live that out loud. And so, there were some issues at the beginning of my career with my boss about how much to share and how much not to share about my person.

Karen continued and explained how most times she chose the conservative side of keeping information to herself versus disclosing to her supervisor due to the culture of the department. Likewise, Brandi, who identified as a Multiracial Asian White woman and queer, too decided not to disclose to her direct report due to lack of trust:

I don't actually think I ever came out as queer officially to my supervisors because I was like, I don't trust these people. No, they say homophobic things. And when I did come out, that's when my supervisees slipped that anonymous note underneath my door or my supervisor's door. I just, it was bananas, right?

Subjection to homophobic remarks in the workplace was an experience no administrator should endure. Nevertheless, there were workplace cultures that cultivated this behavior and made micro aggression acceptable. Institutional leadership and supervisors are critical to ensuring all professional staff feel supported. Grace gave an account of how affirmation helped her be successful in the workplace:

I worked in [university name], where only one person was straight. So I had a unique opportunity where I was affirmed in my race and my sexual orientation; no questions asked. So as a result of that, I've been empowered and I carry myself as such. I just feel very comfortable talking about my identities, very matter-of-fact. But I wonder if that experience would look different for other people. I also understand that because I'm



cisgender, there can be assumptions about my identities that make it easy for me to navigate this working environment.

These student affairs professionals were charged as leaders, at the forefront of the fight for equality and inclusion for college students. Unfortunately, the same consideration was not always given to professional administration. Grace's experience of affirmation and support from her previous institution was an excellent example of the type of positive outcome that occurs when the workplace culture is inclusive and equitable.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, I examined themes that served as a hindrance to mid-level women in student affairs as related to workplace structure. The cultural expectation of working extensive hours without financial compensation, along with the expectation of showing up to the office the next day ready to work proved tiresome for the women. This cultural long hour work expectation is so embedded within the structure of higher education that academic work organizations are getting away with inequitable operational practices. Mid-level women in student affairs are being hired with a work hour expectation in writing that is much lower than they are being held accountable for at the institutional level. Simultaneously, women are not being financially compensated for the additional hours, yet they are penalized within their careers if they do not adhere to the structural expectation. Women also described how colleagues in academic colleges lacked respect for the type of work they administered to students. Therefore, there was a sense to constantly overcome the stereotype of "squishy squishy" student affairs. This sentiment is associated with care work as the primary work in student affairs, which is delineated as second class to the work of academic affairs. Despite working the expected excessive hours, as women administrators are penalized if one chose not to comply, and having their wage per hour diminished

for a lack of pay increase for the additional time, mid-level women administrators still reach a structural ceiling of authority and power when working with academic affairs.

Simultaneously, mid-level women were disadvantaged from the division of labor of secretarial related work, such as ordering food or taking minutes, even when male administrators were in the department or meeting who held lower positions on the hierarchical structure. Women described the disregard from male colleagues of their positionality as mid-level management, especially if men dominated the room. Women were assigned secretarial related tasks due to the structural gendered expectation of the type of work that women should conduct compared to men. In order to maintain patriarchy in higher education, men must only be seen in masculine dominant roles which is contradictory to ordering food and taking minutes. Essentially, in these situations mid-level women's position of power and authority were structurally overshadowed by gendered expectations and stereotypes. Many women felt these gender stereotyping behaviors, in addition to mansplaining, were a microaggressive way for men to maintain their dominance in the workplace by undermining their authority.

Racism, ageism, and sexual prejudice was evidenced in the data as embedded behavior within office culture in student affairs that women navigated. Women with intersectional identities discussed the necessity to maintain perfection at work in order to prove to their colleagues they deserved the positions they served in. This behavior is not only unrealistic to maintain, but also unhealthy to the mental and emotional wellbeing of the women. The root of these biases were infused into the higher education structure from the external societal norms that enact bias, prejudice, and oppression. For instance, women of color also explained how they felt White women were the primary offenders to enacting microaggressive behavior against them in the workplace. Racism is systematic oppression that has existed for hundreds of years. As White

women were afforded the opportunity into the academy before women of color, there is a structural sentiment that White women held a level of entitlement and ownership to certain spaces in the academy that women of color threaten.

Women also described comments regarding their age, such as she has time to grow since she's young, which was frequently cited in student affairs. Women also explained how their physical appearance was constantly referenced, and simultaneously their competence questioned because they looked young as professionals. These ageist barriers served as structural ways to limit the advancement opportunities of young women in the profession. By having their competence questioned in front of senior leadership, a precedence was set that these mid-level women clearly lacked experience and was not prepared for next level leadership. Women who identified in the LGBTQ community too elaborated on structural barriers and therefore the importance of hiding their sexual orientation. These women described hearing prejudice comments against members of the LGBTQ community from colleagues, and found it best to hide their sexuality from fear of retaliation on their careers. Again, systematic biases within society against the LGBTQ community is enacted in the workplace structure that forces women to navigate an additional barrier to advance their career. It is apparent that student affairs structures produce oppressive cultures that are perpetuated via workplace norms. These work organization structures were created based upon patriarchal ideals, which unfortunately serve as a double bind for mid-level women, or triple bind for mid-level women with intersectional identities.

## **Chapter 5: Elements of Advancement**

Professional development is strongly encouraged in student affairs, particularly for career advancement and leadership growth. Unfortunately, the ascribed image of what leadership looks like for women does not always align with workplace structure expectations. Videla (2006) contends women who are perceived to exhibit masculine ascribed characteristics like independence and competency are classified as difficult to work with by their coworkers. In contrast, women who embody presumed feminine characteristics like social competence or nurturing ways, are deemed less effective as they lack agentic characteristics (Eagly and Karau 2002). These gendered expectations of behavior are products of systematic societal structures that limits women's ability to lead effectively in work institutions. To attempt to circumvent stereotypes such as these, women in student affairs continually balance when, where, and how to display feminine and masculine behaviors as part of their leadership identity (Gipson et al. 2017; Knipfer et al. 2017).

For instance, leadership constructed on a masculine or feminine spectrum impacts job evaluations, which in turn impacts promotions, as women receive less favorable review assessments based on gendered stereotypes (Rivera and Tilcsik 2016). This is an example of a systematic structural consequence on mid-level women in higher education. The examination of an excellent job performance is predetermined based upon gender norms, so when women do not perform according to said desire their reviews are mark unfavorable; unfavorable reviews lead to a lack of promotion and possible pay increase, which therefore creates a financial and professional ceiling for mid-level women in student affairs. This unfortunately can occur despite women in reality performing exceptionally well in their role, but simply carry out their work performance in ways that go against structural gendered norms.

In this chapter, I discuss the major themes that emerged relative to the culture of career advancement for mid-level women in student affairs. In the first section of the chapter, I evaluate professional development factors that emerged for mid-level women from their experiences. This includes professional development obstacles such as fees associated with professional opportunities, a lack of professional growth opportunities, as well as career regrets related to the terminal degree. All of these examples are underlined barriers of associated with the class status of student affairs administrators from the academy. For instance, a major barrier women identified was a lack of travel funding from their institution for professional conferences. Women felt this limited their exposure to progress in their specified areas, while also limited their professional network. This also limits the visibility mid-level women have access to, which is a key indicator in career advancement. The lack of commitment of financial investment from institutions for the professional development of student affairs administrators contributes to their second class status in higher education. Additionally, women noted the Ph.D as a professional development barrier to advance within their career. Again, women described a lack of financial support with paying for the degree, and a lack of professional support from their supervisor as primary hardships.

The second half of the chapter analyzes factors that impacted job promotions for women in student affairs. In-depth descriptions regarding supervisor engagement and support, performance evaluations, and visibility for advancing in student affairs are examples of barriers discussed. For instance, women discussed how their supervisors were primarily hands off with their assigned responsibilities, which also attributed to a lack of performance evaluations they received. Supervisors of mid-level women administrators serve as structural agents of the institution; therefore, when performance evaluations are not conducted mid-level women are systematically being clustered to remain within mid-level roles. They also discussed visibility as

an issue in relation to the same professionals getting tapped for special projects, and the use of domestic responsibilities being used by male colleagues to benefit in the realm of visible service work for the institution. In this sense, institutions perpetuate structural biases that negatively impact women as women are at a systematic disadvantage in relation to visibility and service work.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development is a common practice among student affairs professionals, used as a means of continuing the growth of personal skillsets and staying abreast of current research that best serves universities and its constituents. The way in which student affairs professionals engage in professional development opportunities varies and is often based upon personal desires and interests. Some examples of professional development mechanisms include workshops, webinars, volunteer positions, specific trainings, publishing, and conference attendance; these options are typically offered either by higher education institutions or via professional organizations.

In my study, 87% of the women report their work institution offered some form of professional development: “We have different speakers come to campus, so obviously that's free. We do webinars as well in our division so that kind of stuff is free as a part of my position,” explained Maria. Similarly, Delilah mentioned her institution presented different webinars or brown bag series, as well as different workshops that taught on different software or skill training, such as supervising. A couple of women, Alexis and Chanel, explained how their institution created professional development committees that were charged with establishing professional development opportunities for their division. Alexis stressed, “We are pretty book-centered, so it's not uncommon for us to receive a message saying there's going to be this book that we will read as a division, if you want. Everything is always optional.” She elaborated on her institution's professional development offerings from the human resources department: saying “So human

resources has a whole litany of things that they offer related to supervision, teamwork, cooperation, budgeting; things like that. Even things as simple as how to use Excel so, there's that stuff.” Similarly, human resources at Erika’s institution went as far to offer a special leadership program focused on professional development for administrators:

So we have a number of different things. When I think about certificate training specifically, I am right now in what's called an emerging leader program. So the university has a center for executive leadership development or center for leadership development, something like that.

Breeana’s institution, too, held a leadership program via the human resources department:

Yeah, so human resources offers leadership training. So I did take like a six month-long, I don't know, it was probably maybe 10 half days and some activities outside of that, to get some leadership training. That was really helpful and I did find that to be supportive.

These various forms of professional development offerings at higher education institutions were consistent among a majority of the women. Understandably, institutions can service more administrators at once, and for a more inexpensive rate, while also benefiting from the growth of the professional staff. However, concerns with institutional professional development materialized as the women provided more in-depth explanations. While this arrangement worked for the institution, it was limited, at best, for the women administrators.

### ***Professional Development Obstacles***

While mid-level women appreciated some offering of professional development on their campuses, there were numerous issues that were associated with the system. Specifically, women discussed issues with fees that were associated with trainings, a lack of promotion and encouragement to participate in opportunities, a lack of consistency in options offered, as well as a lack of higher level development options. I have explained each in more detail below.

#### ***Financial Barriers***

Mid-level women discussed fees associated with institutional offerings. “We have a world-renowned school of management that offer all these professional development trainings. So we have staff who get certificates in emotional intelligence, and in executive coaching. They cost money but we get discounts,” Shawna stated. Janet, who stressed the need to be self-motivated, also elaborated on their center for leadership through human resources, which she explained as a for profit aspect of the university; they offered different kinds of one off programs and certificate programs. In these instances, while the institution provided the training opportunity, it was at a cost for the women to participate. Mid-level women were at an economic disadvantage via their workplace institutional professional development fees, considering the major wage gap between men and women at universities (AAUP 2010; Curtis 2011; De Welde and Stepnick 2015). Amara explained her frustration with the disadvantage financially:

For staff members we generally don't have it [professional development] now. Occasionally there may be a webinar that comes up, so say for \$250 they [institution] can bring in this webinar and then to whomever it might involve they invite. Then we go to a room and participate in the webinar that way. But for the most part, my university does not give me any professional development now through my grant program.

Amara explained how she did not have a budget at all for professional development, and was strictly limited to the any offering her institution conducted on an occasional basis. Any gaps in skills or professional content Amara possessed became stagnant as there was no financial investment in her professional growth. Ciara, too, described finances as a hindrance for her to participate in professional development opportunities. Her institution had an institutional membership with NASPA, but she did not possess a personal membership due to financial hardships so she did not have the ability to attend conferences. “In the past I think that has been a definite disadvantage because you don't set up that kind of affinity with those groups, you know?” said Ciara. A byproduct of a lack of professional funding, beyond a lack of personal development



training, is a dismal network in student affairs. Relationship building and collaboration are core components of successful student affairs professionals, however; staff members who are strictly tied to their campuses are automatically disadvantaged.

Conference costs were also a point of contention for Rebecca: “We don't have a national membership with ACPA, so that makes it very difficult because there's a different registration cost for nonmembers. I think it tripled for us. So I would say individuals tend to get their own membership,” Rebecca explained. Similarly, Breeana stated she paid for much of her own professional development, as there was little rear marked funding requested in her department budget. These women described an unfortunate reality of either (1) spending personal funds on institutional memberships, despite working in a profession that is under paid, or (2) not attending external professional development opportunities and forgoing opportunities to broaden their network and enhancing their essential skillsets. Some mid-level women claimed their institution offered external professional development funding via an application process with a limited allocation. Erika explained:

We have a set amount of money that we're allowed to use every year for professional development by the division and you have to make an application to use that money. So you have to balance whether or not you want to attend a conference or if you want to get a training or what you want to do with the money that's provided to you.

Although institutions allocating professional development funds for staff in a lottery system was more advantageous than nothing, even an application submission system did not guarantee an approval, nor did it cover the entire amount requested. Considering the importance external professional development opportunities provided to student affairs administrators, these barriers of financial access served as a detriment to mid-level women for continued professional growth, which was needed to advance.

*Lack of Encouragement & Mid-Level Advancement*

As Amara described an every now and then institutional professional development opportunity, other women described the need to be intentional and deliberate about finding growth opportunities. For instance, Janet stated “a lot of my professional development journey has been proactive on my own because it's possible to work here and never go to anything ever. So if you're not motivated, you're not going to receive it.” Similar sentiments were shared by Rebecca as she explained “I would say that professional development opportunities have to be very intentional and done on your own.” These women explored that while the institution offered several opportunities for training, they were not encouraged within their departments or divisions to participate and relied on self-motivation. The consistent theme emerged of those who self-advocated more were likewise able to participate in professional development, as several other women too felt their institutions did not prioritize professional growth. Susan explained: “So the division of student affairs is not very engaged in professional development activities. There are individuals who have advocated for themselves and sought ways to remain involved, but unfortunately it's not a priority as a whole by leadership.” Brandi echoed Susan’s thoughts as she discussed her struggles with a lack of institutional professional development as very little was offered.

What became evident from the women was the way institutions created committees to focus on administrative professional development, or used their human resources departments for opportunities; however, these mechanisms were a guise for the university claiming that they offered professional development options, as opposed to actual conducted, quality development training. For example, Amanda explained how her student affairs division had a professional development coordinator, yet the position is responsibilities had rarely been carried out despite

them being assigned to a professional staff member. Serena also described how her division masked offering professional development at her institution:

So, our student affairs division does like a one-day conference, where people come across campus to present. I'm not impressed with it because I feel like that's not necessarily professional development. If I'm hearing you just talk about your area, that doesn't develop me. So that is what they offer.

While listening to various departments report on what was happening within their units was good for collaboration, it did not provide any enhanced skill training which was what Serena was seeking. In both Amanda and Serena's cases, there appeared (on paper) to be institutional professional development training, but in reality the women received nothing of the sort.

Some women discussed how professional development at their institutions was masked in a different way. Karen and Faith both sought after institutional professional development opportunities, but felt the opportunities were geared toward new professionals. Particularly, they felt the options were too introductory for mid-level leaders who wanted to explore senior management. Karen explained, "Whether I take advantage of the ones at the university is another story, but there are some offers that's like a series of professional development. I just feel like a lot of those are geared towards new professionals." Faith concurred as she expressed the same new professional frustration to the leadership within her student affairs division:

I used to find them [professional development] helpful and the reason for that was in my young career it was beneficial. Um, but I constantly advise my university that there needs to be that next level, a more advanced level [training]. Particularly because it's very elementary and still building the foundations of our new staff and faculty. So I think oftentimes mid-level is not looked at because they consider, you know, if you've been here for 10 years or in the field for 15 years, then you must have it [leadership skills].

The assumption that years in the profession automatically equated to experience masked the importance of professional development for mid-level women administrators. As it was apparent mid-level women did not receive copious amounts of professional development on their actual campuses, unfortunately this also meant opportunities for external professional

development growth were dismal. For instance, Julia explained her external conference involvement:

Consequently I have not been to a professional conference in four years and before that I hadn't been to one in ten years. We are a member of some organizations but we have not had the funds in our budget to actually attend anything. Rare for student affairs, most of the other departments get out and get to do things.

Similar sentiments were echoed by Amara as she stated:

I went to the NASPA new administrators workshops and conference. I think I went once or maybe twice, but that's so far back I couldn't even tell you what year it was. But it was very early in my career, so no we don't have the opportunity.

Both Julia and Amara discussed a lack of conference, or other external professional development, opportunities from their institutions. Amara mentioned some new professional training options, which were similar to what Karen and Faith referenced in regards to professional training opportunities serving the new professional target population. This contributed to the concern mid-level women in student affairs had become trapped between being (1) advanced beyond new professionals but (2) not advanced enough to obtain senior level engagement. Therefore, mid-level women missed out on critical opportunities to expand their professional skills to advance in the field of student affairs simply because they were invisible. Brandi elaborated on how she had consistently missed the luck of the draw:

I don't think my institution has the culture of, of doing that [supporting professional development]. I think the people who supervise identify certain staff members and say, you know, there's this conference I want you to go, so go to this and bring back information. Right? So they kind of hand pick who they want to go versus a larger call out for everyone.

Brandi further explained how she felt her lack of opportunities were from being out of sight and out of mind as her supervisor had not selected her for any external opportunities. Unlike a complete lack of institutional engagement Brandi experienced, Julia had institutional support but

in an indirect way. Julia elaborated on her desire to get involved in external associations like NASPA, but had always been too scared to do so. "I'm intimidated by people that are involved, and not thinking myself worthy to get involved. I tend to put my own professional growth on the back burner, and be like I don't have time to commit to a NASPA committee" she asserted. In this instance, Julia had the institutional means to be involved in associations, but lacked the self-confidence in her professional ability to serve and participate. Her supervisor was not directly encouraging her to get involved, but Julia did indicate if she had asked she felt she would have been supported.

The self-doubt that Julia experienced is what professional involvement opportunities seek to dismantle, specifically for women. In fact, Sydney described a leadership opportunity she experienced through Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) that was meaningful to her professionally:

It's almost like a boot camp for women leadership. I went to the University of Denver for two weeks and it is, it's a top application process. I applied within my university and the President had to accept me, so I was accepted with a faculty member to go to this institute. I felt like my current supervisor pushed me through the entire process. He promotes me going to leadership trainings all the time, so I feel like I'm fortunate.

Sydney described how the HERS women's leadership institute along, with the support of her superior, placed her in an advantaged situation compared to her other colleagues and boosted her confidence. Advantaged (1) having an opportunity to network with other professionals in the field, and (2) the ability to obtain the current knowledge and best practices to do the daily work on her campus. Sydney's experience demonstrated the value and importance of involvement in professional associations for mid-level women in student affairs, yet numerous institutions continue to maintain obstacles for professional growth. Although the majority of institutions represented in this study offered on campus professional development opportunities, they were

either (1) few and far between, (2) were not encouraged for mid-level women to attend, (3) incurred a cost to the women on their own campus, or (4) were not geared to mid or senior level administrators to participate. To fill this void, some mid-level women fought for off campus professional development opportunities to enhance their skillsets, particularly women of color.

### *Racialization of Opportunity*

There were 18 White women in my study and 94 percent of them indicated they held a membership with at least one professional association; however, only 33 percent of these women volunteered regularly or held leadership positions within those associations. In fact, White women primarily referenced professional association memberships as a requirement for their work within student affairs versus a personal growth desire. Whereas, women of color used professional associations in a much more personal way. Of the 14 mid-level women of color in my study, 86 percent of them indicated they were members of at least one professional association, and 57 percent of them volunteered regularly and/or held leadership positions in those associations. Women of color discussed how professional associations allowed them to build a personal network beyond their institution, and obtain encouragement and motivation to advance their skills. From serving in multiple capacities, Grace (Black) found it necessary to obtain off campus connections in order to be successful in her dual role. She described:

I tend to enjoy going to conferences that are more so off campus, it allows me to network with other folks that do some of the work that I do. Because oftentimes, I know I keep bouncing back between both roles [two positions] that I have, but it's my reality. So for me, professional development really takes place off campus, not necessarily here.

Similarly, Michelle (Black) also described her membership with the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) which had been a part of her journey since she began in student affairs. “For me, NASPA has been one of the most important ones and where I've cultivated the most leadership

opportunities, AGAPS in particular has been really good to me. I was a regional rep for AGAPS,” Michelle stated. The form of cultivated leadership Michelle experienced was at the core of why professional development had been essential for women of color in student affairs. Other women of color took it a step further and not only participated in professional associations, but got involved in leadership roles as well. Shawna (Black) explained her experience:

For the longest time, I was a member of ACPA and I kind of moved up within the ranks; served on commissions, directorate bodies. For Commission of Housing and Residence Life, I was a former vice chair. And then I started doing convention steering work, convention planning team and so on.

Professional housing associations were a common development hub for student affairs professionals to get involved. Leadership positions provided an additional form of training and development of personal skillsets. Alexis (Black) explained how her general interest in professional areas allowed her to push herself beyond traditional means of professional involvement:

I participate in our Regional Housing Association quite actively. I have tried to get more involved with Association of College and University Housing Officers – International. In some ways that’s strategic. And also wanting to push myself beyond what I’ve already been doing, in terms of professional involvement. Generally, I’m just interested in stuff, though. So, if I write an article, or I’m posting something on LinkedIn, or I’m going to a Board of Trustees meeting, I’m interested in those things.

Voluntarily attending board of trustee meetings was a strategic way to creatively gain visibility and network all while gaining professional knowledge. Many of the mid-level women of color in my study spoke on the need to be strategic with their professional involvement, which was not a sentiment that most White women in the study mentioned the need to do. For instance, women of color frequently mentioned being over taxed and when to say no to an opportunity; Sarah (Black) emphasized:

So when I get involved I’m kind of strategic, if that makes sense. So, um, I was recently asked to join a board, so like it seems like that is so meaningful. But, I would say long gone

are the days where I'm like, oh yes, I can do that. Where I just say yes to say that I'm involved, but professional involvement with associations in nonprofit organizations that bring meaning are ways that I provide some development for myself.

As discussed in the workplace culture chapter, excessive work hours is a cultural norm in student affairs. Therefore, while professional involvement was immensely important for the continued enhancement of personal skills, it also required time that had to be taken into consideration. The time commitment was why Sarah was selective on what she said yes to, as she focused on areas that brought her personal meaning and value. Susan (Multiracial – Hispanic) summarized the true benefit of being a mid-level woman of color professional involved professionally external to her institution:

I myself am extremely engaged in professional associations so I know the value it can bring in, I know the value that it gives back to the institution, so that's important to me. So most of my team, they go to different things and bring back a lot of interesting knowledge. But I think that the kinds of opportunities I've gotten and the fact that I am known by people that are in wonderful places and institutions across the country is purely because of my professional association engagement and the fact that I've thrown my hat in the ring for volunteer leadership opportunities and have therefore been in contact with those people.

Here, Susan explained how professional association involvement not only benefited her, but her staff and the university itself. Due to the value she had personally experienced in professional association engagement, she was able to advocate for continued support of her involvement in her mid-level position. It was evident that for women of color the importance of professional involvement within associations was a benefit to the women in regard to community building, expanding their network, and receiving motivation and encouragement. This was additional to the need for personal growth in professional skills and training aspects that are a necessity for advancement and promotion, which was the core barrier White women discussed related to professional development.

### ***Career Aspirations for Advancement***



For many women, senior level administration was a career goal at some point, which is why the professional growth and association involvement served as an obstacle for mid-level women. For instance, Yvonne explained her concern regarding consideration down the line for senior administration:

I think when I initially came into the field my goal was to become a VP and to move up. I think partially it's not possible here. I could possibly pull it off at a community college. But I do think my lack of doing presentations at conferences, my lack of conference attendance will make me a less viable candidate. Because at those higher administrative levels they want that external engagement and that would be one of my definite weaknesses. Not because I am incapable but because I haven't been given the opportunity.

Yvonne described perceptions of qualifications for vice presidents of student affairs, and the assumption that administrators in the role are versed in professional associations as well as in leadership capacities beyond their institution. Her concern was valid as she had not experienced either of these necessities. Some women, such as Maria, desired to explore senior advancement down the line but chose to focus on getting as much experience as possible in the present. Other women on the contrary expressed imminent interest in preparing now to move into a senior capacity. Grace explained:

I mean, I can definitely see myself as a Vice President for a University. And I always say it lightly, because we could all say that, but it's really what you do in the in-between that prepares you for the opportunity. So I'm more anxious about the journey to get to that point... \*laughing\* ...and how am I going to take advantage of opportunities that bolster my resume for the future.

Julia too reflected on the current possibility of senior leadership:

So now I'm at this place where I'm a director of an office, which is as far as I wanted to go. Thinking about residence life and I'm still so young in my career to even be considering looking at senior level student affairs is like, what is this? Do I even really want to do that? And if I do, why am I even questioning whether or not I want to do it because I should want to do it. Because while there, I think, are a lot of women in student affairs there are not a lot of women in senior leadership positions.

Sarah echoed both women's sentiments on exploring and determining what was

ahead: “I’m interested in doing care work for students so I say Dean of Students long-term. As I work through this PhD, I think about policy work and what that looks like. A higher education commission or something like that.” The reflective inquires mentioned by these women can be researched more thoroughly from exposure in professional associations or training institutes. For instance, career trajectory is a type of workshop offered at training institutes where the learning outcome is to assist student affairs professionals to navigate their next move. Rebecca discussed her desired outcome for some clarity from an institute she would soon attend:

A short term goal is figuring out whether advancing my career in upper administration is the route that I want to take, or is the director and mid-level administration my niche. So that's what I would like to engage in and I would say at this institute I will hopefully get some really good information and be able to find out what that looks like for me.

It was evident that the issue for women in mid-level positions in student affairs was not that they did not desire to advance, but that the necessary preparation was not adequately offered by their workplace institutions.

### ***Professional Involvement & Career Regrets***

Unfortunately, some women voiced some regrets at the current point in their careers related to professional involvement. Taylor reflected: “I’ve kind of put my eggs in this [university’s] basket. I didn’t spend a lot of time in leadership roles in ACPA or NASPA. I think it’s one of the things that I would change now looking back.” Because Taylor did not have professional development support, she settled for association memberships versus being involved in leadership; now that she was interested in moving beyond mid-level management, she wished she had advocated for herself within this area. Ciara had similar reflections around professional association regrets:

I do wish that I had been more affiliated with student affairs groups. But when I first got into Higher Ed, I was grant-funded through Americorps, which is the federal funding and they’re very strict about how you’re spending your time. So I really wasn’t allowed to

participate in general student affairs activities. That combined with my director who wasn't really collaborative with other departments, so that felt kind of limiting in terms of understanding student affairs as a field.

Akin to Ciara's reflections but different reasoning, Shawna described her decision to prioritize her graduate assistant over herself.

I wish that I would have actually started attending conferences sooner, because I feel like my network is decent, but I feel like it would have been larger; and I mean national conferences. I would do state conferences, but I would always let my graduate assistant go to the larger conferences to job search, and I would stay at home and watch the building. So, I wish I would have at the beginning put a little higher priority on my own professional development.

While Shawna strove to be a good supervisor and supported her graduate assistant, it was consistently at the expense of her own professional development. She went on to mention that she regretted not taking her career growth more seriously sooner in her career. These women had a parallel sense of "being behind" and that they would never be able to catch up to their colleagues who had been professionally involved for a long time. Most of them indicated they would still pursue senior-level positions at some point, they acknowledged how they wish they would had advocated earlier in their careers for professional involvement for their personal growth.

### ***Advancement & the Terminal Degree***

There was a different form of regret among some of the women related to their career advancement, the terminal degree. There was a pattern amid the women whom expressed regret of not pursuing a doctoral degree: White women (75 percent), over the age of 40 (88 percent), who were married (88 percent), with children (63 percent). Very few women of color, and no women under the age of 40 mentioned the PhD as a career regret. For insight, Taylor discussed how she questioned her earlier decision to drop out of a program she had started: "I started a PhD program probably eight years ago and didn't continue and I think that was a mistake. I think I would be in a different place either here or at another institution if I would've continued my education." A

doctorate degree is often a requirement within student affairs in order to receive a senior level promotion, but unfortunately not all women have the means to obtaining such degree, stressed

Ciara:

I think I might have gone on and pursued a PhD. I thought about it, but I really didn't feel like I could afford it. We don't have a school of education at my institution. So I was thinking about doing a PhD in education. I thought about doing PhD in environmental education and they don't have those degrees here, so just financially it was so cost prohibitive at the time.

Ciara was at an institution that offered tuition assistance benefits, but in order for her to capitalize on it she would have had to obtain a terminal degree in an area not related to her career field. Faith in a related context, discussed the financial burden of a doctorate degree: "You know, my supervisor constantly encourages me to apply to a doctoral program and I just don't have a passion for that. So that's one of the obstacles, I just don't have a passion for that nor financial commitment." In Faith's case, she had supervisor support, but external obstacles, such as affording the degree itself, as well as no interest in a terminal degree held her back from pursuing that journey.

The other women simply never thought about pursuing a PhD and felt it was too late. For example, Yvonne felt she was at a point in her career where a terminal degree would not pay off due to her age: "I don't think all that work would pay off. I'm in probably the last 8-10 years of my career, I don't want to spend 6 years working on a PhD that I am only going to apply for two years." She was not the only one who had not thought about pursuing her doctorate early on in her career. Erika stated, "I wish I would've started a PhD program a lot sooner. Right now I just don't feel like I have the energy to do it." For these women, conversation regarding career progression with a supervisor could have placed them in a better position to obtain a terminal degree for career advancement. Conversations about career goals with a supervisor also provide mid-level women

with encouragement and support needed when considering whether or not to embark upon a doctoral journey. For instance, Amanda explained how she simply did not have the confidence to pursue a PhD:

For whatever reason I think it was a confidence factor and I don't know why. I always did well in school but like I think that it was a little intimidating. So I think it was making sure that I felt that I was in a place in my career where I would have the confidence to be back in a classroom.

Unfortunately for Amanda, that exact place of comfortability in her career still had not occurred. As Amanda mentioned she had always been confident in the classroom, senior level guidance and support could have pushed her to take the next professional development step. Therefore, Amanda and some other mid-level women missed, or foresee missing, promotion opportunities from not having a PhD. Chanel described an opportunity a few years ahead in her department that she doubt she qualified for from a lack of a terminal degree:

My direct supervisor is probably within five years of retirement. But that's a Dean role and she has her PhD. So I would say there are a couple of positions that currently exist that would be of interest to me. The challenging space I am in personally is I don't have a terminal degree and I don't really plan on getting one.

Similar to Erika, Chanel felt she had bypassed her window on getting a doctorate degree; therefore, she felt she would not truly be considered for her boss's role once she retired. While a number of mid-level women felt the lack of having a terminal degree negatively impacted them, many remained steadfast on not obtaining one and were content with what that meant for their career advancement. Sydney considered the implications of her career trajectory: "I don't foresee myself forcing myself to get a terminal degree, so I think a director or assistant vice president would be about as far up the ladder that I go unless I switched to the private sector." In higher education, a terminal degree extends the opportunity for career advancement. Within student affairs, terminal degrees were a form of professional development and simultaneously became barriers for professionals without one for promotions beyond a certain hierarchical level. Common

denominators among these women who expressed this regret were older White women who were wives and mothers, so family and ideological factors were present. Whereas, the terminal degree was not as relevant to younger women without children, especially women of color.

### **Promotion Factors**

Promotion factors were a second major theme that emerged regarding the culture of advancement in student affairs. Women described elements such as job evaluations, lack of supervisor support, and visibility as factors that have impacted their career advancement.

### ***Job Evaluations***

For instance, over seventy percent of mid-level women indicated they did not find their job evaluation and/or process beneficial to their career growth. According to Acker (1990), performance evaluation forms contain symbolic indicators and the interpretation of these indicators during the evaluation itself reveals the actual organization logic. The work organization establishes the blueprint for the structural evaluation, so every time the evaluation form is used the cultural interpretation is reinforced (Acker 1990). Amanda explained her frustration with her job evaluation process:

I'm not a fan of our evaluation process. Never have been. I don't feel like the different areas are necessarily relevant sometimes to work that we do within student affairs. The ways that the evaluation is set up doesn't necessarily relate directly to our roles. So I am going to be honest, I don't think that it's a great advantage. And I don't think it is set up to really provide feedback.

Amanda found aspects of the job evaluation form to be too general and not tied closely enough to evaluate her work done in student affairs. Jasmine had similar thoughts on her job evaluation not truly reflecting her work in student affairs, "I've never been able to decide if it's the best way to evaluate how I'm doing. There's no space for feedback on professional work ethic and my frustration is it doesn't speak to how you function in the office." Many mid-level women described their job evaluation process as an annual completion of a form from human resources;

the supervisor and the employee complete the form individually, followed by a conversation and signature, and hopeful agreement, in the end. The generalness of the form was at the root of the structural issue.

With these women, the actual evaluation of their specific work in student affairs was not an institutional priority as the evaluation forms did not provide direct connection to their work. Ciara explained: “There's a sheet that's kind of more nebulous and skill-based; sort of competencies. But they're very general, kind of like, ‘person shows initiative and accomplishes things in a timely manner,’ and you know, kind of just general work skills.” The work organization culture that this permeated was documentation of work versus evaluation of the professional staff. In this capacity the work organization stressed a culture of documentation, often for the purpose of marking a completion check box, but a continual lack of feedback and development ensued for administrators thereafter. Rebecca concurred:

I think it documents, I'm not sure that it really assists in progression. There's a part in which you can engage in maybe goal setting and so you can talk about goals. But instead of being a benefit that progresses my career, I think it just documents what I am currently doing and the expectations that I'm meeting. So it's more of an accountability piece versus a process to help progress my career.

These mid-level women were not alone in their feelings of a lack of support in relation to their actual careers. When I asked Olivia about her job evaluation process, she replied that even though everyone talked about how evaluations should be one of those things that is ongoing, it just did not at her institution. In fact, she felt it was simply a once a year requirement to be able to say she had done it and have it placed in her human resources file. So again, another example of culture of documentation compared to staff assessment. Similarly, Sarah felt the evaluation process did not support her in any way at her institution:

It doesn't support me. For me personally, I don't really feel like it helps at all, you know? I never get any real feedback. No one ever says, wow Sarah I know that you said you were

interested in this. Here's an opportunity for you to grow. Maybe you can think about this. And I don't get that. So it's not really helpful for me. It's a formality.

This lack of proactive usage of job evaluations for career growth that Sarah described stemmed from the issue of generic form usage. A proactive job evaluation format was discussed by Williams, Muller, and Kilanski (2012). They argued for career maps which would set out goals and expectations to “monitor a worker's productivity and evaluate his or her performance (Williams et al. 2012:556).” A simple addition such as a career map could simultaneously fulfil the human resources requirement most women mentioned, as well as filled the void of personal staff evaluation and development. In order to move into this direction, student affairs must (1) update the form used for evaluation of professional staff, and (2) ensure job evaluations are actually occur. For example, Erika explained how she had not had a performance evaluation in years:

So I haven't had an evaluation since I've been in this role, which is a point of tension for me right now. When my boss has concerns about things, he talks to me about those in the moment. But I have not had a formal evaluation since I've been in this role since 2013.

Shockingly, this was a common response when women were asked to describe how their institution evaluated their job performance. Most described it like Alexis, “It's a form, an annual form. I've been at [institution name] since 2007 and my previous supervisor was horrendous at doing formal evaluations. So I've probably only had four or five job evaluations in my time here.”

Similar sentiments emerged from responses from other women, such as Yvonne:

I believe it is annually. Most of our evaluations go along with our academic fiscal year so they have to be in by July. But that being said I began my director position last year on so I've been in it just slightly over a year and I have not had an evaluation. We have discussed at our student affairs directors meetings that there are evaluation forms and I have seen a form. But I have yet to be evaluated on my last year of work.

And again:

So within student affairs every year your supervisor is supposed to fill out an evaluation form on you. And so for the first, I'm gonna say 22 years, I got an evaluation every year by my supervisor. Now, for the last three years I have not had an evaluation. They are



supposed to be done. I have a new supervisor and she hasn't filled out a form for me since she's been here. (Amara)

Maria too stated she had not been evaluated on her job performance in at least five years; she indicated it could have been due to a lack of merit opportunity, so supervisors did not see the need to waste time. Despite the professionals association with holistic development in student affairs, according to Shawna, the culture of development does not always apply to the mid-level women who work in the field. As Maria mentioned she believed she did not receive job evaluations from a lack of potential for a pay increase. A consequence of not conducting job evaluations for mid-level women in student affairs is a lack of official documentation to serve as a starting point to advocate for higher salaries. This lack of documentation then maintains the pay discrepancy that already exists in student affairs.

#### *Pay Discrepancy*

Nearly sixty percent of women in my study mentioned a pay discrepancy between them and a male colleague in the same position classification, or across other institutions in the same classification. Gwen lamented:

I hate to be a negative Nancy but I feel like I'm disadvantaged. I am the lowest paid director in our division right now. I have been here 8 years. Some people who are paid more than me have been here for only one year with the same degree. One person who's been here a year has a bachelor's degree and is paid more than I am. About \$8,000 more than I am so it's a significant amount. One male director has been here for the same amount of time that I have and also the same degree and is paid \$11,000 more than I am per year. So try to wrap your brain around why does this happen and what have I done wrong or what am I doing that's not correct?

Gwen had clearly reflected upon why she was the lowest paid director in her division, and unfortunately did not have a clear understanding as to why. I asked her why she thought this was, and she indicated she finally got the courage to ask her supervisor and his response was "girl you ask for what you want." Gwen had not received consistent performance evaluations, which could have (1) positively impacted her financially via a performance raise and (2) provided the

opportunity for discussion with her direct report on “what she wanted.” But Gwen was not alone as Nailah too had found herself under paid compared to her male colleagues:

When the coordinator got hired, the one that reported to me he was the male staff member, I at that time had 6 years of experience in. He came in making more money than I did. I don't blame him for that he was able to negotiate salary. Working for a state based institution raises are a thing that haven't occurred since 2010. Everyone who came in at that time period, three of them including the one that reported to me, were making more than I was. That stayed the same for years.

Here were two instances where women did not ask or advocate for themselves, for different reasons, which led to them being considerably underpaid. Salary negotiation has proven to serve as a barrier for women in higher education and attributed to the continued pay gap between men and women in the profession. For instance, Michelle expressed her regret in not practicing salary negotiation early in her career:

Well I am salaried so you know, if they say there's only one letter difference between salary and slavery, just kidding. Unfortunately, that doesn't look like any overtime compensation. I think one of the biggest things that I wish that I had done differently was negotiation of salary. I think as women and especially as women of color, maybe it is, maybe it's generational. I don't know, the younger generation might be better at this, but I tended to devalue myself and not necessarily negotiate toward the beginning of my career. So I feel like I would have been a little bit further in my trajectory from a monetary standpoint if I had understood those things sooner. If I had recognized that, if they're offering me the position it's because they want me not just because they want me because they think I'll be cheap.

### ***Lack of Supervisor Support***

In Michelle's situation, there was clearly a staff support and development gap, which fell on her supervisor. Supervisors were critical components to the promotion of student affairs professionals, especially for women in this study. Like other industries, a student affairs supervisors identifies “high performers on the team, recommends raises and bonuses, and determines the quality of future placements” (Williams et al. 2012:556). Thus, having supervisor support is crucial for career advancement. ” For instance, Faith described how conversations she

had often with her female colleagues in student affairs landed with women not seeing themselves as Deans or in senior management positions. “They're always looking for lateral moves, which always equate to similar salaries, which doesn't incentivize them to do that move. So that's one of the first things I noticed is they're always looking for lateral positions, never next level,” Faith stated.

Management is charged with helping supervisees recognize valuable insights and skills that Michelle mentioned as forms of regret, and Faith stated mid-level women do not see in themselves. To further understand the role supervisors provided for the women, I asked what role had their supervisor served in their professional development. Some women experienced really positive encounters and teachable moments from their supervisors. Grace described:

Where I'm at now, I have a supervisor who is very open and shares resources with us immediately. ‘Look out for this,’ or ‘hey, I'm strongly encouraging you all to do this,’ which means go ahead and make it happen. I appreciate those moments especially being new, I'm like a sponge right now. So I am looking for those opportunities to grow. Whereas in the other place, I think because I was there for five years, we just kind of got comfortable with just doing what we needed to get done. And so there wasn't this additional investment from that supervisor.

Encouraging staff to participate in professional growth opportunities was important, yet it was also just as important to pull professional staff back when they were burning themselves out.

Gwen explained:

Before my performance review my boss was like ‘you’ve got to start saying no to stuff. Stop killing yourself trying to do all this stuff because you’re not able to do what you want effectively if you’re running yourself in every direction.’ So he’s very grounded when it comes to common sense.

In both scenarios, the supervisors were performing essential supervisory skills that helped groom and enhance professional skills of their staff. It was support such as stated that allowed for women in student affairs to continue to prosper in their career. Unfortunately, these were anomalies versus the norm. Olivia explained, “Well, I'm mostly not having those

[professional development] conversations with my supervisor. I think like, this could be improved, right? It would be nice to have somebody looking out for you and saying, well have you thought of this?" She went on to explain how she felt her supervisor did not see a need to serve in this capacity as she was pretty independent and assumed she was handling growth opportunities herself. Erika too lacked supervisory support for professional opportunities:

I'm trying to think. I can't think of a time recently where he's encouraged me to do something professionally that is outside of the institution. He wrote a recommendation letter for me for HERS, but I approached him to say that I was interested in applying for it.

Erika described a situation where had she asked for something specific, she would have received support in making it happen; Jasmine had a similar system with her supervisor. She explained some goals she had in regards to expanding different initiatives and potentially taking a training course, which she decided all on her own. Likewise, Jasmine emphasized that she had "not had good guidance in creating those types of goals while I've been here. I haven't had a lot of good supervision in doing that with my current and previous supervisors." These in-depth descriptions demonstrated mid-level women yearned for their supervisors to engage with their professional growth despite their ability to function independently.

The research showed that the majority of the women's supervisors did not directly ask nor recommend professional growth opportunities, but were supportive if the women asked. However, some women needed their supervisors to be engaged with their professional growth, such as job evaluations, to assist them with identifying important performance ranking factors they did not recognize for themselves. Faith explained:

One of the things that I would say that disadvantages women is our community outreach expectation. I think that's just one of the things that it's done after work and the expectation is never laid out to how much, how many are, what's going on. So I've noticed that a lot of my female colleagues will get penalized or they'll leave that blank, not realizing that our male colleagues are putting Boy Scout troop leaders, or that they are church leaders or you know? My male colleagues will say, I promote the university through my boy scouts or

through my church work. They are constantly given like a thumbs up, good job and that a boy.

### ***Visibility***

Many higher education institutions evaluate professional staff on visibility and community involvement. In Faith's situation, everyday life commitments were used by men in Faith's division as community outreach by the university; whereas, mid-level women performed similar engagement but did not identify it as such. In a performance evaluation meeting with a supervisor, this sort of community involvement connection could have been made via an in-depth conversation on the various ranking criteria.

The concept of visibility also appeared in other ways for women in this study. One question I asked the women was who typically gets promoted at your institution. The answer time and time again contained one essential element, visibility. Yvonne articulated:

One of the main factors appears to be visibility and connections. And partially former track record. So our admissions person, under academic affairs, left or was let go and we needed someone to be an interim in admissions for the director position. So they pulled someone out of housing, under student affairs, who had no admissions background or knowledge. I believe that happened because they performed effectively in housing and they were very well connected to people in [specified program name] at the time.

Yvonne went on to say that individuals volunteered and served on committees across campus for years, and many at the institution knew who they were. The mid-level women discussed university committees as a good place to begin displaying commitment and work ethic. Some universities maintained an application process for these university committees. For instance, Nailah explained, "There's a call for participation every year from coordinator to director level so you have the same opportunity to be on these committees. University committees sometimes has an application process because they only can take so many people." However, the overwhelming

majority of institutions used appointments where visibility became much more important. Grace described:

I have learned from this institution for real it is who you know. So when spaces do open up, people already are on board with seeing or can visualize you in that role. That's where I have gained a lot of respect and connections with staff and faculty across campus, by facilitating trainings and things like that. Then people will want to talk more about your contents and opportunities.

As Grace mentioned senior leadership being able to see a professional in a role before it opened, Julia explained how this happened for her:

We were having a larger conversation as a leadership team and the vice president said something like, 'well, what if we set up a task force?' And he looked right at me and he said, 'would you like to chair it?' I kind of was like, well I am the one that brought this up so sure, you know? I will take that responsibility. Meanwhile I had a colleague sitting right next to me who said, 'oh, I'd like to chair it.' And he kind of just ignored her and looked right at me.

The vice president already foresaw Julia as the chair of the committee from the way she previously had proved herself throughout campus. This form of university wide visibility has impacted women's promotions in student affairs. Nailah explained those who got promoted were visible throughout campus and known by name; it may have been the person who was volunteering or helping out, but if someone advanced it was usually not a surprise. It was clear, visibility to those in power was a tremendous asset for promotion; an additional issue, however, was the equal opportunity to be visible. Rebecca elaborated:

There might be individuals who are interested and have that skillset but often times falls through the cracks unless they publicly speak out, you know? Reach out to upper administration to let them know this is something that I'm interested in and these are skills that I have. And, how persistent you are with notifying those individuals. I don't think it's fair and I don't think it's efficient. A lot of times the same individuals get asked to do the same or different tasks and so they are the ones that always get those opportunities.

Rebecca described how often in student affairs the same individuals were tapped for university wide work, while other capable professionals with the necessary skills were invisible to

senior leadership. As she mentioned, part of this issue was a lack of recognition and self-promotion. Student affairs work can sometimes operate in silos, especially since administrators work with a specified demographic. Therefore professionals needed to promote themselves and their work to make themselves visible to other colleagues. Olivia explained how she wished she had began the process of self-promotion sooner in her career: “I kind of sat around at first and people will just notice this great work I’m doing. But you have to talk about yourself and tell people your interests. Had I learned that earlier, I would have been happier.” Self-promotion and advocacy was also what Sydney said was a key component to those she saw get promoted. “I see people that are more outspoken and are able to advocate very strongly for themselves on why they want that position. Or they have bigger picture ideas that they stand by and willing to do what nobody else will.”

Even though self-advocacy was an issue for some mid-level women, the culture for other women’s student affairs divisions was one where those who worked hard and kept their heads down did not reap the same rewards, especially concerning promotion. Gwen explained:

The ones that are offered the opportunities and always highly visible are always the ones to get promoted. That’s frustrating but like I said before if you want to be successful in this institution you need to make your face known. That’s unfortunate because there are people doing good work and really working their butts off. Sometimes that doesn’t even matter which is so disappointing. It’s like man you really deserved that position but you’re working too hard to even go to these functions. I don’t get much recognition here, which is unfortunate but then again I am not here for that. That’s not really why we are here as student affairs professionals but it would kind of be nice to get a pat on the back every once in a while.

Gwen explained her frustration with doing her work for the love of her students, and found herself unavailable as frequently as others to network and politic; however, she felt she should not have to engage in politics to be recognized for her hard work advancing the mission of the university, but understood not doing so impacted her negatively.

### *Racialized Visibility*

Women of color described similar but different aspects of visibility on their career advancement. Similar to White women as in the importance to be seen by senior leadership, to serve on various university committees, and to find ways to advocate for yourself. However, these aspects impacted women of color differently especially from a cultural perspective. For example, Faith (Asian) explained how culturally, visibility and recognition were not positive attributes.

Being of Asian heritage being of my Hmong culture, we're not taught and not comfortable with public accolades and awards. I'm like, I'm really uncomfortable when people give me public kudos, give me awards, that makes me uncomfortable because we're not taught to take value in that or not to enjoy that because that's seen as a bad trait. And yet in our field, if you don't get these awards you are kind of seen as not doing your job or not being an expert.

Faith described an example of how self-advocacy and visibility conflict with her cultural beliefs, a barrier White women did not encounter. This is one way in which mid-level women of color navigate visibility in a more complex manner. Mid-level women of color bring intersectional identities to their work, and in Faith's case her cultural values contradicted the structural symbols of what student affairs experts looked like. Cultural differences are often overlooked and not considered at the structural level of work organizations, and in Faith's example it is demonstrated via the organizational culture of staff recognition. Work organizations have an inherent work culture expectation that public recognition is a positive thing and should be enacted to reward good work by professional staff. Yet, this is not socially acceptable for all cultures thereby placing another barrier on women of color to navigate and could potentially permanently stunt long term career growth.

Women of color also suffer from a form of tokenism in mid-level management in student affairs. While Kanter (1977) referred to women who experienced heightened visibility due to low numbers compared to men in the workplace, theoretically this was the current state of women of



color in student affairs. Faith further explained how she was confident she had not progressed further in her career due to her steering away from visible attention and accolades at her institution. Conversely, White women described frustrations from not obtaining enough visible recognition in order to be afforded opportunities. Here demonstrates how one barrier, visibility, impacted White women and women of color in different forms. Another barrier related to visibility for women of color were performance pressures due to heightened visibility (from their race) and expectation to act within a pre-designed role, similar to what Faith described regarding recognition. White women met the normative race standard in bureaucratic organizations, so White women in my study did not experience heightened visibility pressures from gendered and racial expectations. As consequences from tokenism in the workplace were engrained in the structure of the organization (Kanter 1977), mid-level women of color in student affairs had to find ways to combat these penalties. Alexis (Black) explained how she did just that:

I have developed the cultural capital to be able to have advantages because of who I know and how I understand their work. I show up to things I don't need to be at. I go to the Board of Trustees meetings; I'm one of the few Directors from our division that regularly does that and that creates expectations and connections that other people may not have, because they're just not there. I go to the Board of Trustees meetings because I think it's good to be seen in that space, to have the opportunity to hear what people are talking about, what they care about. It's important to go to things to see and be seen. Because then when opportunities do arise, you're not an unknown person.

It was evident that Alexis was aware of how she was tokenized as a Black woman in a mid-level role at her institution, so she strategically found ways to offset the numeric disadvantage. Strategic manipulation of behavior and actions in the workplace such as these were ones that White women had the luxury of not having to do. Similarly, Brandi (Multiracial – Asian) expounded on how she used her intersectional identities to her advantage as a mid-level woman of color in student affairs.

I am like the student affairs unicorn. Everybody wants to hire someone with like all of these marginalized [race, age, sexuality] identities who knows how to play the game. Sometimes people want to interview me because they're like, ooh this is interesting on paper. This person is a wild card. I know that I'm tokenized in these processes. Have I earned every single position? Fuck yeah, I'm a bad ass. Right? Like I know the work that I do and I, I worked really hard to make sure that not only am I like a unicorn, but I'm a unicorn that knows student affairs, you know?

Women of color constantly have to be one step ahead of their colleagues in student affairs in order to properly play the game, especially the game of institutional politics which Brandi mentioned. Shawna (Black) also described experiences around playing the game. "I have learned how to play the game. Some people play the game in a way they lose who they are, and I'm not trying to dilute who I am, it's just knowing what they're going to need from me." The concept of playing the game went concurrently with the importance of understanding institutional culture for women of color. Rebecca (Latina) explained how she felt it was important to get to know organizational culture in the beginning prior to assuming everyone will welcome your ideas. "Had I known the environment, the culture were like that [unwelcoming of new ideas] I think I would have been more strategic in how I delivered my thoughts." She felt she had prematurely assumed some colleagues were allies when she entered her mid-level position, and quickly recognized those same colleagues had other political ties that left her as an outlier on important issues regarding students. But the emotional labor did not stop there, as women of color often to carry the labor of institutional politics directly connected to promotions in student affairs. Sarah (Black) elaborated:

Our area has a reputation for promoting people. So there's an open position. 'Oh, Andy [White male] you should apply, you know, we have a relationship so I think you'd be great.' Boom. He's got the job! But for others it's like, well you know. 'Let's have Ebony [Black woman] apply. We're going to do a full search.' An Ebony can kill the interview and Ebony will get the job, but this one had to do the full dog and pony show, but the other person just sorta got the gig.

Sarah described a distinct difference in how promotions occurred in student affairs at her

university. She later elaborated how she felt relationships and university politics aided in her White male colleagues being encouraged to apply, yet women of color had to apply on their own and prove their worth. Visibility is one component as to how the women were seen “playing the game” and establishing political institutional relationships was another. For example, Sarah provided the metaphor of Black women needing to put on a “dog and pony show” when seeking promotional opportunities. Alexis depicted an incident that occurred after she applied for a promotional opportunity that was representative of the same metaphor.

Alexis had interviewed for a Director of Residence Life position and was waiting to receive communication on whether or not she would get the job. “I get an email and calendar invite from the Vice President of Student Affairs to setup a meeting the following Monday to talk about this process. I say to my husband, they're about to tell me I'm not getting this job.” After some advice from her supervisor, Alexis called the VP prior to her meeting request to inquire and the VP presented her with barriers which stemmed from her identity as a Black woman in student affairs.

‘You are my choice for the Director of Residence Life position. But I need the President's executive counsel to be bought into this decision. So, we need to bring you back to campus to do another presentation, specifically for the President's executive counsel.’ I'm like ‘You know what? This is messed up. This is jacked up.’ So, I call my parents who are high school graduates. I'm like ‘they want me to come back and do this thing, and this is some racist stuff. Nobody else is coming back to do this. They had already dismissed the other candidates and I'm not feeling it. I'm about to withdraw from this process.’ And my parents said, ‘Are you going to work anyway that day?’ and I said, ‘I'm going to work anyway that day.’ And they were like ‘And how much is the raise?’ and I was like ‘It's a nice raise.’ And they were like ‘go do the presentation.’ Right? And I did it, and I knocked it out of the park, and of course, it was fine I got the job. But that was definitely different treatment, definitely felt disadvantaged.

The vice president made it clear to Alexis that she was her candidate of choice for the director position after she had completed the standard interview process; yet, that was not good enough. As Sarah coined, a dog and pony show was requested and Alexis had to overcome an

additional hurdle that other director candidates did not have to encounter. This was an example of how women of color in student affairs had to be perfect at all times in order to receive comparable advancement opportunities that their White, especially male, colleagues received. Alexis concluded her story with appreciation for her vice president for recognizing and owning exactly what happened and why it happened.

My VP was like ‘So much of this has to do with race and gender.’ Nobody would say that, right? Nobody would say ‘Oh yeah we’re totally racist, so we should have her come back.’ And it had to do, I think, with her gender. I think it had to do with people in that group, and her own strength as a VP, people in that room just not respecting the fact that she was making the decision.

In her VP’s demonstration of an ally in action, a sense of comradery was established as Alexis respected her for advocating for her. Simultaneously, Alexis also recognized had a male VP made the same hiring decision, it would have not been questioned in the first place. Instances such as this are far from rare and serve as a promotion barrier for women of color within student affairs divisions. Simultaneously, there were no instances close to the experiences Sarah and Alexis described that were remotely mentioned by White women; this demonstrates how the intersection of race and gender enhance performance stigmas for women of color.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, various obstacles related to the culture of advancement in student affairs for mid-level women were discussed. The first half of the chapter discussed factors that impacted the women’s professional development such as institutional offering types, funding for external professional engagement, and education credentials (e.g., the doctorate degree) all emerged as obstacles mid-level women navigate in order to prepare themselves to advance to senior administration. All of these obstacles were based within the structural formation of the institution which made them immensely difficult for mid-level to overcome. For example, women explained

how institutions offered local professional development opportunities but the content for the workshops were geared toward newer professionals in student affairs, or the institutions charged a fee to participate in other workshops. As the work organization dictates the workshop topics and determines the fees, these decisions sent a message that mid-level management workshops were not a priority or that they needed to pay out of pocket to receive the training. The form of structural inequality pigeonholes mid-level women to remain clustered in mid-management positions from the lack of resources invested in their professional development.

It was also explained how women of color and White women used professional development in varying capacities. White women primarily referred to professional development for skill growth for career success. So for White women, the lack of professional development opportunities from their university stalled their ability to obtain promotions as they did feel as well prepared and networked as other colleagues. Whereas women of color referred to professional development for a broader sense of network with community, as well as motivation and encouragement. Women of color described the importance of receiving encouragement and building a network with colleagues who look like them outside their institution due to the frequent structural racism within their own institution. The women leaned on their external networks for advice and uplift, a micro-level response, on ways to navigate systematic issues within their work organizations, a macro-level problem.

The other major area related to professional development were the obstacles associated with obtaining a terminal degree. For instance, many women, particularly older White married women with children, mentioned a major career regret was not obtaining a doctorate degree when they were younger in the field, and felt their time had passed. Factors including the costs associated with a terminal degree, lack of time to dedicate to a doctoral program due to extensive work hours,

and a lack of encouragement from their supervisors to pursue extending their education. In this circumstance there are structural barriers related to the public and private spheres of their world that are occurring simultaneously that resulted in these mid-level women's sense of regret. First, in the public sphere the work organization did not offer financial assistance or flexible work hours, both structural barriers, in order to pursue a terminal. Second, in the private sphere the intersectional identities of age, wife, and mother and gendered stereotypes ascribed to women associated with those roles too served as a barrier obtaining a terminal degree.

The second half of this chapter focused on women's experiences related to promotions to senior level positions. Issues regarding lack of engaged supervisors, job evaluations, and visibility had all emerged and were consistent among the women. Women explained job evaluations primarily in two facets: (1) the forms were too generic from the human resources department and did not cover the scope of student affairs work, or (2) formal evaluations had not been conducted at all, including years for some women. Women elaborated on how they were self-sufficient in their roles; therefore, their supervisors were not engaged enough, or cared enough, to conduct formal evaluations. These are clear examples of structural inequality within work organizations. A standardized performance evaluation form used at the institutional level sets a precedence on what domains are important to that institution; unfortunately much of the work of student affairs administrators does not fit exactly into these domains. Therefore, the true work performance mid-level women are carrying out is not being captured, for many women no evaluations at all, nor honored at the institutional level negatively impacting their opportunity for promotion. These institutional barriers also lead to additional consequences for mid-level women including a lack of pay increases, as well as a lack of additional opportunities across the university.

The ability to serve on external committees beyond their department were limited for women with disengaged supervisors as they weren't as visible to other senior administrators at the institution. Visibility however emerged to impact White women and women of color differently. White women expressed frustrations from either a lack of visibility and/or need for self-advocation to be visible to senior leaders. Women of color expressed cultural conflicts with self-advocation, as well as how racial pressures heightened visibility bestowed upon them. These two differences reinforce systematic societal norms that are embedded in work organizations. White women have racial invisibility due to privilege so their concerns focused on the need to be visible for promotion, while women of color have racial visibility that forced them to over perform to overcome racial stigmas. Overall, the structural pitfalls that exist with equal access to professional development opportunities and means for promotion are domains higher education institutions have the ability to control. A structural culture shift for career advancement in student affairs are necessary in order for mid-level women to receive equal access and opportunities as their male colleagues.

## **Chapter 6: Consequence of a Helping Profession**

Student affairs is a profession that many individuals enter with a passion and desire to help shape the next generation of leaders and develop civically engaged adults. While these endeavors are valued, a byproduct for administrators in student affairs include unbalanced work and home life, exhaustion from excessive work hours, and risks of codependent relationships; all of these factors are associated with helping service professions (Briskin 1996; Manning 2001). Researchers classify student affairs as a helping profession, which encompasses difficulty for professionals to enable boundaries with constituents as they see themselves as the only individual who can address the situation at hand (Chick 2004; Guthrie et al. 2005; Manning 2001). For instance, Marshall et al. (2016) found from their study on student affairs professionals 52 percent of participants felt they had enough time to complete job tasks, 51 percent felt they worked excessive hours, and 70 percent indicated continual weekend and evening work obligations. In my study on mid-level women in student affairs, 78 percent of women referenced some form of emotionally induced stress or unstable personal wellness from their roles in student affairs. The women identified responsibilities of care work as leading to these experiences. This is consistent with Volkwein and Zhou's (2003) finding that among the professional divisions in academia, student affairs professionals reported the highest levels of pressure and job related stress.

In this chapter, I discuss the findings that emerged in regards to the consequences of student affairs as a helping profession on mid-level women administrators. First I discuss the emotional labor of student affairs in relation to crisis work and work-family. For instance, women working in areas such as student deaths, student conduct, or mental health experienced an enhanced level of emotional exhaustion, as well as exhaustion from a lack of respect from colleagues for the work itself. The lack of respect primarily from academic colleagues stemmed from the perception of



care work, which is gendered, not being “real” work along with student affairs structurally ascribed lower class to academic affairs. I also discuss how women balanced work-family and their emotional wellness from bringing home the emotional labor of caring for students.

In the second half of the chapter, I discuss how the helping perspective of student affairs is racialized. The intersection of gender and race intensified care work, emotional labor and personal wellbeing for women of color. Women of color are systematically positioned in society where they have their contractual work responsibilities, as well as inherent cultural and community responsibilities they are too held accountable for. This additional weight from external cultural expectations on women of color, which White women have racial privilege that alleviate this barrier, enhances their emotional output and weighs significantly on their mental health. Therefore, the chapter concludes paying specific attention to women of color and how they navigated racial battle fatigue, advancement opportunities, and caring for marginalized populations in student affairs.

### **Emotional Labor in Student Affairs**

As a helping profession, student affairs administrators tend to push aside personal needs to care for students, which creates a codependent relationship (Manning 2001). The field of student affairs lends to excessive hours, fatigue, stressful conditions, and burnout as professionals overwork from environmental pressures and the caring sentiment that they are the only ones to solve student’s problems (Barr 1990; Manning 2001). The extensive hours of dealing with student needs led to increased emotional labor for women that contributed to an enhanced feeling of stress. Janet’s view of the student affairs culture at her institution was consistent with research findings related to stress and excessive work: “I think we do kind of have that culture here. We currently have a coworker who's out on medical leave due to the anxiety and stress of the roles we are in”

she stated. Janet went on to say she was interested to see how the situation would play out with the institution because her colleague had been there 25 plus years and had finally had enough. Janet's coworker necessity for medical leave due to workplace stress was an example of how student affairs cultural work expectations harm the health of professional staff. While Janet did not mention the exact position her colleague held, she stated it was a mid-level administrative role that over time just wears on a person.

Angela too alluded to while she loved her work, her mid-level position had become increasingly exhaustive for her. "I enjoy working directly with students, but the longer I'm in, it has become taxing. Emotionally and the energy which I can maintain, again, becomes a little more challenging, balancing that with my personal life and things like that," she stated. Similar to Janet's colleague, Angela too felt the extensive time working in her role had resulted in balancing her emotional energy with her personal wellbeing. Taylor also felt some student affairs positions carried heavier emotional responsibilities than others. She elaborated:

I have had some times where I had to do some Dean of Student work for any number of reasons. That was really emotionally very hard for me to do. I had to notify parents about their child's stuff. I, you know, had to testify in court and that kind of stuff all because I was doing some fill in work. And, you know of course just losing students in general. Yeah, I've had to lean on people that were probably my level of management or higher.

Taylor described how the work related to her temporary assignment of Dean of Students, such as managing student deaths and court appearances, were emotionally difficult for her to complete. According to job descriptions from various mid-western institutions, traditionally the Dean of Students role on college campuses involve aspects such as advocating for students, sharing information with the campus community that promote student success and retention, as well as outcomes that promote students' personal wellness in crisis situations. While Taylor's primary position was Associate Director, she experienced an enhanced level of consequences that extended

beyond campus management into personal management. She also elaborated on her sentiments of administrative professionals doing the heavy lifting on campuses:

Oftentimes I think Associate Director levels or Assistant Director levels are the people that are getting the work done day to day. They're the people that are delivering the services to students. They're the ones that have students crying in their offices. They're the ones that are doing that work. Not only for students, but also developing young staff and that work is not valued based upon what your title is. But if you can focus on the work that you've been given and entrusted to do, that's where all the reward and benefit is gonna come from. That's not money. So some people I think can get really upset not having a director title and there was a time in my career where I felt that way.

Taylor explained how she felt mid-level positions were not respected in student affairs due to (1) their title and (2) the type of work they engage on a daily basis. Breeana echoed Taylor's frustration feeling like her work in student affairs was not respected and the emotional weight she carried. She explained:

I tend to speak with emotion and passion sometimes and always thinking about the emotion and how people are affected. And when I'm in some rooms like full of lawyers, or I'm in a meeting faculty, it's like I'm speaking a different language to talk about emotion, or suicide prevention; like these are not things they talk about, so I don't have a business background at all to counteract that. So sometimes I feel like the emotional person in the room and that's a disadvantage for sure.

For both Taylor and Breeana dealing with crisis work in student affairs, such as assisting crying students in her office or suicide prevention, was demanding work that simultaneously weighed on their emotional wellbeing. These were unfortunate consequences to the helping profession of student affairs work which focused on serving the student. These women were not alone in their experiences as numerous other mid-level women possessed positions that endured responsibilities similar to those mentioned. For instance, Erika, a Director, discussed how emotionally taxing it was for her to do crisis work and have it diminished by other colleagues. She explained:

I told her [supervisor] what happened and it was just totally dismissive of what knowledge I had of been doing this job for a long time. I have this knowledge and if it's not numbers

or if it's not about money, it doesn't matter. And I do student conduct, they do the wellness checks, I do the crisis, I do the educational interventions. Those things oftentimes aren't numbers. And so I'm getting heated because I, I get so frustrated with that diminishing of who I am as a person. It's caused me to question my worth as an employee because I can't match his numbers.

Erika described how crisis work for her did not buy her respect from her colleagues, which was also Taylor's feelings. Erika owned the dismissal of her knowledge and inability to connect to numbers directly impacted her self-worth as a professional. Her experience and feelings were consistent with the lack of respect student affairs professionals encountered in their workplace cultures discussed in chapter 4. In this instance, Erika's management of dealing with the experiences impacted her emotional wellbeing as she continuously navigated balancing crisis situations, while also attempted to maintain her self-confidence in her abilities. Chanel, an Associate Dean of Students, was also able to identify with the emotional struggles of helping professions. She too described the emotional labor of working with students in crisis:

My job can be really hard sometimes and when working with students in crisis, or just crisis on campus, or students who are struggling with mental health, or students who were sexually assaulted, like that can be really mentally and emotionally draining work. And before I had kids I would have sort of a propensity to take all of that home with me. Not necessarily like sitting down at my computer and still hammering out work, but like the mental and emotional sort of occupying my brain would come with me. And I think in so many ways the fact that I have children that require a fair part of my mental and emotional capacity as well, like I, I just can't.

Student affairs requires a form of crisis work with students that has proven to be emotionally exhaustive for women, and therefore produced a consequence of unhealthy personal wellness. The unhealthy personal wellbeing stemmed from working in crisis students situations and the frustration from the constant lack of respect from colleagues on the type of care work performed. This form of care work, and the emotional output associated with it, is structurally gendered and devalued and lives at the core as to why women's experienced these unhealthy

consequences. The impact of the emotional exhaustion women experienced unfortunately carried over to the family lives of women, causing a constant issue of emotional balance.

### *Emotional Labor of Leveling the Seesaw*

The workplace culture in higher education exudes extremely high, and frequently unrealistic, expectations on their faculty and staff (Tack 1991; Howard-Hamilton et al 1998). Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) studied how burnout, stress and workload impacted the experiences of student affairs professionals via a gendered lens. Research has demonstrated marriage and children were more stressful for women in student affairs, and many women left the profession due to the difficulty of balancing the public and private spheres (Howard-Hamilton et al. 1998). As women have been found to have intensified levels of emotional labor and stress in student affairs (Berwick 1992; Volkwein & Zhou 2003), it was essential to consider the impact work induced stress had on their family commitments in the private sphere (Guthrie et al. 2005). For instance, Angela mentioned how her position in student affairs had progressively enhanced her mental frustration, which impacted her home environment.

You know, in the last four years working at this office I leave work more annoyed, stressed, and frustrated on things that are happening in the office than I ever have. And so I try to have that subside before I go home; doesn't always work and I have kind of a long drive. It's the death of me when I do open email outside of work. And of course, I'll get a message that's frustrating and I'm like 'why did I open my email?'

Angela, who was married and a mother of four, further explained how at times she found herself accidentally taking her work frustrations out on her family, which she felt bad about. Yet, she felt an inherent pressure from her role as a mid-level professional to constantly check her email while at home, even when she knew there was a strongly likelihood of it increasing her stress levels at home. Even though she had departed the office to head home for the day, Angela still found herself focused on work related necessities as a way to be prepared for going into the office the next day.

Similarly Janet, who was a wife and mother of one, discussed how her work in student affairs was negatively impacting her as well as her household. “I leave work every day and I'm mentally, physically, emotionally exhausted. So that makes it difficult to be a good partner at home when I can barely make dinner and all I can think about is climbing into bed”, she stated. Janet and Angela both displayed consequences of the ideal work norm in effect. The ideal worker norm theorizes how work organizations desire employees who can work extensive hours and can be detached from household responsibilities. Here Angela described how even while at home, she made work her priority as she perceived that as her workplace expectation. Additionally, Janet described how working 60-64 hours per week caused her to lack in her share of responsibilities at home due to mental exhaustion. She further mentioned how she felt guilty for not pulling her weight at home, and how she struggled with balancing her mid-level position as a wife and mother. Angela and Janet both felt emotional instability from guilt and exhaustion of attempting to balance both of their competing worlds.

Paige, like Janet and Angela, was also exhausted from excessive hours per week and was ready to make a change. “I am at a place where I don't want to be consumed by work. And I think in student affairs we sort of describe student affairs as this noble, you know, my life's work”, she stated. Paige was a married mother of two and worked 65-69 hours a week on average but was ready to shift her personal focus and responsibilities. “I got a life and I got work and I think it's okay to separate them and I don't have to live my work all the time” said Paige. The idea of “live my work all the time” had been demonstrated as the expectation in the leadership of student affairs at her institution, and Paige had done that for many years as she worked almost double the number of said hours in her contract per week. Paige simply lived her life as an ideal worker in order to display her commitment to student affairs, yet a consequence for her was missing out on important

family moments while also being emotionally drained. While Paige was at a place where she was ready to decrease the number of hours worked per week, Maria, a wife and mother of two, had similar issues with the lack of balance between the public and private spheres of her reality. She explained:

After hanging out with grandma and grandpa a little bit, we head home and we kind of relax and eat some dinner or daddy brings home some dinner on his way. There is always the mom guilt of not getting things done right, but I've, I've determined that my sanity is more important than how clean my house is. So my house is a hot mess and it will remain a hot mess as long as I have a three year old.

Maria, who worked 60-64 hours per week, mentioned how she was too exhausted after work every day to put attention into cleaning her home. Again, research demonstrated that women who were married and had children in student affairs experienced higher levels of stress related burnout and Maria was no exception. While she was married, she explained how her husband focused on his work as an engineer as well as his passion for farming so he deferred much of the household necessities to her. As a strategy to balance with a small child, Maria discussed how she often put more energy into spending time with her son versus chores and neatness of her home. In Maria's circumstance, she lived in a "second shift" environment where even with a partner in the home, she was expected to handle the household chores after coming home from work. Erika too mentioned her emotional struggle with mom guilt as a mother of four, yet in a slightly different manner.

I'll just work an extra 30 minutes. So I oftentimes feel guilty about needing to volunteer more to help out with my kid's school or whatever else is going on for them. Then I think that can negatively impact my work. I think if I were a doctor it could be worse, right? Like, or maybe they [external community] would expect less from me. I live in a community where a lot of moms do not work. And so that's probably also some added pressure for myself.

Erika explained her desire to attempt to volunteer with more of her children's

extracurricular activities then automatically correlated doing so to negatively impact her responsibilities at work. As she was also married, she further discussed how she just did not have the capacity to volunteer beyond working additional hours as she needed to be able to attend to her other children as well as her husband. However, she still dealt with an external pressure from other mothers in her community to live up to their idea of what a good mother displayed. Erika's guilt and fight to manage both the public and private sector was why research found women in the academy could not "have it all." As these women described their struggles with managing time at work and in the home, along with the emotional stress and anxiety it exuded on them, Shawna described a situation her colleague in student affairs vented to her regarding becoming a new mother. She explained:

The most negative experience that I have heard of comes from one of my colleagues that works in Title IX. She's pregnant right now, and will probably be going on maternity leave in a few months. But her supervisor says 'Ok, great. But you might still get called in to do cases.' No. No! Like...no! I [her colleague] am on maternity leave, which means I no longer work here for the stretch of time. No, you cannot call; no, you cannot email. She ended up reporting him and documenting it, but to hear her talk about it, it was very emotional for her to talk about.

In the situation Shawna explained, her colleague's supervisor had planted the seed that even while on maternity leave she was to be available as needed to work on cases for the department. Prior to the birth of her child, the soon to be mother had already begun to encounter consequences of mothers in a workplace. Again, this connected back to the ideal worker norm with work organizations and the culture that employees needed to be available at all times. In this case, the health and wellbeing of the administrator was placed as a secondary concern by the institution via the supervisor as the priorities of the department were still expected to be met while she was on maternity leave. This type of institutional workplace culture was a prime example of why women have higher levels of stress and emotional exhaustion in student affairs.



In this section on emotional labor in student affairs, the experiences among the women had no differences based upon any intersectional identities. White women and women of color both described experiences with crisis work, lack of respect for the profession, and work-family conflict with emotional weight that they had to carry. However, there were factors that were significant specifically just to women of color, and these are highlighted in the following section. To illustrate the racial significance for these women, the racial identity of each woman is indicated in parenthesis after their name.

### **Racialization of a Helping Profession**

While the majority of women in this study associated many components of student affairs work emotionally daunting, the intersection of race and gender emerged as a salient factor for women of color as student affairs work intensified their emotional output. Kimberlie Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality and established it as a framework to study the interconnectedness of race and gender for Black women. The research on women of color and the emotional labor as a student affairs professional has been non-existent to limited; yet, other research has confirmed that stress and chronic disease from work were exacerbated for women of color (Kersh 2018). Literature on women of color faculty has focused on how intersectionality has impacted their work in higher education, and is consistent with the experiences of women in color in student affairs. In the following sections, I discuss the themes that emerged for women of color that intensified their emotional labor. First, I discuss perceptions of women of color in student affairs, followed by racial battle fatigue and the emotional exhaustion it produced. I also evaluate the experiences from women of color in regard to career advancement, and conclude with the care work women of color perform for marginalized populations.

Women of color described emotional labor from performance or dismantling of stereotypes ascribed via student affairs. Women discussed the cultural burden they brought with them to work,

particularly with stereotypes. For instance, Brandi (Multiracial Asian White) mentioned how she navigated work stereotypes on behalf of her community, as well as worked to dismantle cultural stigmas as she went against the stereotype of Asian women, such as not speaking up. This inherently required emotional exertion, which women of color administrators were left to deal with at home or on their personal time. In a related sense, Serena during her interview passionately explained her frustration with the role of Black women in student affairs.

I think that there is this unspoken rule for Black women that we are to be the do-all, the super women of student affairs. And I even told a person that I don't like the term "Black girl magic" because it implies that there is no skill. Magic, you just put some words together and it happens. Meanwhile, you see all of us doing all of this stuff in the background, dying and that stressed out.

Black girl magic is a term that was coined in 2013 by CaShawn Thompson that was attributed to the “beauty, power and resilience of Black women” according to Wilson from HuffPost; however, Serena (Black) felt this sentiment was killing Black women from the stress it ascribed Black women from the view that Black women did not have a breaking point. Black girl magic is a widely used term by Black women in student affairs, which triggered Serena’s frustration that the concept was aiding in the detriment of Black women’s mental health in student affairs. This is consistent with the research by Smith (2008) from his higher education study and found people of color were emotionally, mentally and physically exhausted from the stress they endured working in predominantly White spaces. He defined this as Racial Battle Fatigue and claimed that most times symptoms were not immediately visible. “That's one thing that I did to protect myself for I think, for three years, every other Monday. I took a half a day on the company and I went to therapy” Serena (Black) stated. This was a strategy Serena used to manage her workplace stress from the emotional labor of feeling like a superwoman in student affairs. The constant reminder and response needed around race relations for women of color in student affairs

served as a form of microaggressions and led to racial battle fatigue. Brandi and Serena's experiences were strictly due to their racial intersectional identity, which none of the White women referenced in regard to emotional labor.

### ***Racial Battle Fatigue***

Other women of color experienced forms of racial exhaustion in student affairs as well. In this section, I provide an overview of how women experienced racial battle fatigue (Smith 2008), as well as the emotional labor from microaggressions the women discussed.

An interview question I asked the women was had there ever been moments when they seen colleagues treated differently than other colleagues, and if so to tell me why they thought the difference in treatment occurred. Grace's in-depth response provided insight of the ongoing emotional labor she felt to always be "happy" in her role despite racial tensions that were happening in Black communities around her.

For example when I say "happy," I mean like happy workers. We now work in universities during a time where race is always a part of the discussion. To be a person of color, and then let alone to be a Black person of color, I think is really difficult. And institutions where you have to be an agent of the institution, but still feel the emotional effects of seeing yourself harmed in the streets every day which is what sparked my research interest in emotional labor and how that shows up right in the workspace. So for me, I think that's what I've started to see. And so I have had to figure out even where do I want to land? And I find myself somewhere in the middle, knowing when there's an opportunity to bring about change, and go a little bit deeper and when I just need to put my head down and do the work and remind myself that this work does not make me who I am.

Grace (Black) described a constant tension at work within her identity as a Black woman in student affairs as an opportunity to change a system where needed, while simultaneously she dealt with racial battle fatigue as the emotional effect of seeing herself harmed in the streets but still had to complete her job responsibilities. This was all due to her intersectional identity and racial battle fatigue was a way in which the emotional exhaustion occurred for women of color. For instance, as she further answered the question, she mentioned how she knew she had to smile

when there were times she did not feel like smiling because as a Black woman she did not have the privilege to display other emotions at work. “I would be remiss not to name race becomes part of this and also gender becomes a part of this too. Men have been given room to be vocal to express certain emotions, whether it's anger or another emotion” Grace (Black) said. This sentiment Grace described from her workplace culture was consistent with years of research related to the process of the integration of race and gender. According to Glenn (1999):

These processes take place at multiple levels, including representation, or the deployment of symbols, language and images to express and convey race/gender norms, etiquette, and spatial rules to orchestrate interaction within and across race/gender boundaries; and social structure, or the allocation of power and material resources along race/gender lines. p. 9

The process Glenn identified began with representation, which in Grace’s (Black) example was the display of emotions, on what her gender and race display was supposed to look like, combined with the power dynamic against men in a hierarchical workplace institution, which served as the social structure. Therefore, Grace battled managing her emotions at work, as race added an additional layer that women of color had to navigate from a racial and gendered integration. She elaborated:

They [men] are able to express themselves in a particular way and not be seen as intimidating or threatening and other individuals [women] were seen as ‘you're too emotional so we don't want the tears.’ Or for our women of color, it's ‘you're intimidating and you're too strong and why can't you just bla bla bla.’ You know?...And then we have a leadership that doesn't want to understand standpoint, right? Or social location.

Women suffer an agency penalty when they express behaviors and emotions that are deemed assertive, angry, or dominant (Rudman and Glick 1999; Eagly and Karau 2002). Additional to their gender, Black women have consistently been stereotyped as threatening and angry in workplaces due to their race for a long time. Yet, despite the ample research that has proven these biases exist in workplace cultures, as Grace (Black) mentioned, senior leadership of many work organizations, such as student affairs, has yet to adjust and accordingly alter

department culture. Therefore, women of color in my study discussed experiences of the need to be conscious of how they were perceived to colleagues.

*Labor of Racial Microaggressions*

Faith, who identified as an Asian, provided insight on how she responded to colleagues when they made inappropriate racial comments to her:

I've kind of like, thought okay, do I talk to this person? I am going to wait 24 hours and see if it still bothers me and if it still bothers me then I'll go talk to this individual. The reason I stopped that [waiting 24 hours] was I realize I wait 24 hours and it's heavy on my heart. I have mental health anxiety and then when I talked to the person who has done this to me, they're 24 hours was happy because their life goes on, you know? And I just thought, why am I waiting 24 hours? Whereas with a heavy heart and practicing how I'm going to dialogue this with my coworker. And this individual was like, you know what? I'm sorry. Then okay, let's move on.

Faith (Asian) continued as she mentioned there were several nights she did not sleep from the mental stress of deciding on whether or not she would address racial microaggressions in her workplace. She not only feared being stereotyped as angry, but feared the label of a trouble maker in her department. Unfortunately, the byproduct from the constant balance of emotional labor for Faith (Asian) was increased mental anxiety which impacted her personal wellbeing. To avoid these health risks, many women retreated as an attempt to decipher which battles were worth fighting; a result of this balance was the stereotype of being perceived as weak or a pushover. For instance, Alexis (Black) described her opinion on women speaking up in student affairs:

Yeah, I'm gonna say this. I find the women that I work with to be weak. And I think the reason is maybe they've been beaten down by the men, I don't know. But I feel like I've witnessed women, certainly female Directors, have been in meetings where they have said something and been sort of confident in their statement and then a man has sort of countered that and then they're like 'Well yeah, I'm sorry I came across that way.' And I think what happens is, you get to this point where you're just like 'Whatever. Like I'm not even going to, just whatever.' But then, when the Dean is a woman and she's like 'Fuck that. We're not doing that.'

Anderson, a psychologist at the University of California at Berkley (2009) asserted “when people are confident, when they think they are good at something, regardless of how good they actually are, they display a lot of confident nonverbal and verbal behavior.” He elaborated that whether or not the individual was good or not was irrelevant, and women displayed confidence less often than men (Anderson 2009). This characteristic of confidence is what Alexis (Black) alluded to as she stated that when women in leadership speak up, such as the Dean she mentioned, confidence for other women in leadership is transferred in that space especially for women of color. So while she understood how women could get tired of constantly fighting the same battles, she felt women must speak up in order to demand respect for their leadership skills and create change in the profession. In this scenario, her colleagues could very well have associated her Dean as “angry” or other similar stereotype threats, but it was a risk Alexis (Black) felt needed to be taken by women in the field. For slightly different reasons, Brandi too had concerns around the stereotype threat of being seen as an angry woman of color. Brandi stated:

Like, the stereotype threat of there being an angry woman of color or if I am a woman of color leader on campus, I'm hyper visible and invisible at the same time. So if I don't get my shit done, everybody's going to know, right?

Brandi (Multiracial Asian White) went beyond the ascription of the angry stereotype, and expressed her concern on how visibility directly impacted her personal wellbeing. Her experiences in regard to visibility and consequences were too found in Kanter's (1977) study as she discussed the double edge sword of visibility. Many of Kanter's research participants discussed the preference to be less visible as they felt they were not allowed to make mistakes, nor did they have the autonomy to behave as freely as men; this double jeopardy was still found present in more current research. Livingston, Rosette and Washington (2012) found:

If Black women do not ‘fit’ the role of leader in general, they may be punished more harshly than White men, or even Black men, for making a mistake, because the less than perfect performance may highlight the incongruence between their social category and the established leader prototype. This might call into question whether they are fit to lead, and in such cases, Black women may indeed suffer double jeopardy. p. 357

A consequence of visibility in the workplace for women was the inability to express negative remarks and the inherited burden of representing all women, in this sentiment all women of color, which is emotionally exhaustive work (Kanter 1977; Livingston et al. 2012). The policing of expressions and ascribed notation that women of color represent all women of color are microaggressions that take an emotional tax on individuals. Unfortunately, Brandi and Faith both described a combination of stereotypes and forms of tokenism that were part of their daily experiences in student affairs. With heightened consciousness of her intersectional identity within her department, Brandi (Multiracial Asian White) also discussed her concern with institutional culture regarding various identities and student affairs. “You know, in terms of like racism, ageism, but also gender and sexuality in my workplace, it made me think critically about do I want to be in student affairs or not?” she stated. This was in response to asking her how she got into the student affairs profession and what it meant to her to be a student affairs professional. Brandi (Multiracial Asian White) elaborated:

For me, what's been really important in terms of navigating student affairs has been I really like to focus on what does it mean to be a woman of color. How can I utilize oppositional consciousness to develop, you know, political savvy and what are the ways that I can try to create change and challenge student affairs.

Brandi’s intersectional identity as a woman of color incorporated a moral sentiment to change and challenge the profession of student affairs to create better opportunities for others. To navigate politics in student affairs and go against the grain employed emotional labor additional to prescribed job responsibilities that many women of color simply consider a sacrifice as this decision has the potential for negative career implications.

### *Advancement & Emotional Labor for Women of Color*

Black women inherit the impact of double jeopardy from race and gender discrimination within their careers (Davis 2015). Despite their professional leadership skills, Black women were negatively affected due to their intersectional identity in relation to promotions in the workplace (Davis 2015). In this section, I explain the ways in which women of color played the game.

#### *“Playing” the Game*

Women from this study, consistent with research findings, indicated they knew they needed to learn the culture of the institution in order to be able to “play” the game when they sought promotions. Unfortunately, women of color expressed heavy emotional labor in relation to promotions in student affairs and the sense to prove their worth in their position. Women of color discussed frustrations with applying for positions and consistently passed over, or passed over for a role and then encouraged to apply for a less prestigious position, or even the necessity to jump through numerous hoops as an internal candidate for a position. For example, Serena, a Black woman, explained her frustration with constantly being overlooked and why she thought that was.

At first I was like, maybe it's my interview skills, the Career Services in me. But I walk away and they walk away like ‘We love you. You're the best.’ I have had schools call me back and say ‘We didn't pick you for that one, let me interview you for another one.’ But what I noticed is that it is always the hiring of a white woman. Which of course to me feels like, you know, you want to have Black women in subservient roles, but you want to have White women in nurturing roles; because White women are nurturers by nature, but then Black women are taken care of. So it's really the new era of, it's really the new era of you know, having Black women in the house. White women can burp the baby so Black women can take care of them. Yeah, that's how higher ed student affairs feels a lot of times.

The frustration Serena (Black) described tied back to Glenn (1999)’s claim that the higher respect and admiration for White women had depended on the subordination of women of color. “Moreover, White women have been able to meet more closely the hegemonic standards of womanhood because of the devaluation of the womanhood of racial ethnic women (Glenn



1999:20).” To cease this form exploitation and microaggressive behavior, White women and men would be forced to relinquish certain privileges and benefits (Glenn 1999). In this way, women of color serve as a threat to White women and men’s position of power in work organizations which attribute to the negative experiences these women of color incur. Grace (Black) for instance, also indicated similar feelings as Serena (Black) in regard to having had to compete with White women for positions. While in Serena’s circumstance White women were consistently selected for positions over her, Grace described a situation in her experience where she was selected over her White woman colleague but consistently had to prove it was justified. She explained:

She's a White woman and she had a lot of experience with Title IX, but I think the expertise that they needed for the position wasn't necessarily based in Title IX, right? Like it was more about student engagement and can you do the case management, which both of us could do; like that's what I do in [department name] already. So I know there were feelings about decisions that were made. And again, colleagues feeling like ‘well, of course they gave it to the person of color’ or ‘they lack diversity, so it was a position for a person of color.’ So I just have to sit with that. But I know that I worked so hard as well, for that entire interview process.

Grace (Black) described another aspect of what racial battle fatigue looks like that stemmed from her token positionality in her department. While she received the position over her White woman colleague, she then was minimized to a diversity hire within her workplace culture. Grace knew she had deserved the role as she had worked hard and was selected due to her skillsets, but she explained a reality of having to work in an environment that minimized her abilities due to being Black. At no point did any White women in the study describe a situation similar to Grace’s or Serena’s experience, therefore this was an emotional maintenance that none of the White women had to navigate as their racial identity allowed them the privilege to obtain a promotion and not have their capabilities questioned from being White. Other women of color found themselves subjected to constantly needing to prove their capabilities within their position. For example, Brandi (Multiracial Asian White) discussed how she found herself over performing.

So I find myself to be very high functioning. I am like sometimes over performing and like I don't want to identify as like very lazy. You know? Like a Asian woman who can just be like, you know what I'm just gonna do the path of the least resistance right now. I want that. But that's not necessarily the case.

Brandi desperately sought to work in a way she classified as “normal” like her other colleagues; she eluded she wished she had the capability to sometime do the minimum of what it takes to accomplish a task, or not have to volunteer so much for other assignments. This was another form of emotional labor that Brandi (Multiracial Asian White) carried around simply from seeking to distance herself from a cultural stereotype. Her constant over performance led to instability of emotions which have been connected to personal wellness issues.

There were other women of color who described another form of over performance. One woman indicated she expected to be disadvantaged working in student affairs from her intersectional identity, so she was deliberate and intentional beyond her work expectations to prepare to counteract the bias. More specifically, Alexis (Black) explained a strategy she used to get to her mid-level role in her career. “Because I expect to be disadvantaged, I try to put myself in spaces where I can overcome the racial and gender bias that I know is inherently in our system”, she stated. She continued on how she attended Board of Trustee meetings to display workplace commitment and made it a habit to be at after hour work events to network and level the political playing field. “I need to be in spaces where people don't expect to see me. I need to work more intentionally, I may need to work differently or harder, so I can overcome the disadvantages that are inherently built in the system”, Alexis (Black) elaborated.

Davis (2015) asserted, “African American women learned to identify how the internal politics operated and developed strategies to decipher the organizational bureaucracy. By learning how to play the game skillfully, these women learned how to become politically savvy and navigate around potential organizational landmines (p. 59).” It was evident there was no naïveté

for Alexis (Black) as she distinctly had interlinked her identity as a Black woman with a system of privilege and power she could not control, but could only navigate. Again, this contributed to the emotional labor attributed to consequences of being a woman of color working in student affairs, which demonstrated to be exhaustive work personally for the women.

### ***Racialization of Care Work, Gender Norms, & a Marginalized Population***

Exum argues that “minority faculty are especially vulnerable to conflicting expectations from the various ‘audiences’ or constituencies they must satisfy: minority students, white students, faculty peers, departments, administrators, and trustees (1983:385).” This sentiment was consistent with women of color in student affairs, which primarily was focused around a sense of indebtedness.

#### *Sense of Indebtedness*

For example, Delilah, who identified as Black, provided her perspective on how administrators of color in student affairs experience emotional labor and burn out more intensely than their White colleagues:

I think people of color in higher education institutions, because of the sheer nature of who we are, people of color and/or marginalized populations, we tend to do more emotional labor in my experience than our colleagues who do not have any type of marginalized identity. And therefore you can get burned out a lot quicker because you have more students, and possibly even staff and faculty pulling on you, who are your lived experiences and such.

Delilah (Black) mentioned “your lived experiences” as she referred to the students and professional staff whom had experienced forms of bias and oppressive encounters due to a marginalized identity. She went on to explain how she had additional responsibilities as a Black woman beyond her job description that interconnected race relations in higher education, such as serving as a liaison for diversity for various campus committees. Grace (Black) also had similar perspectives and elaborated on her feeling of obligation to the profession. “As a queer Black

woman of color, I stand on the shoulders of many who helped me get to where I'm at. So in student affairs, this is an opportunity to help students the way I was helped as an undergraduate” she stated. Grace (Black) felt a sense of responsibility to provide her students what student affairs administrators provided for her as a student. She felt indebted to those who created a space in student affairs for her because of the ways her multiple intersecting identities were recognized and validated by others. This was an example of the lived experiences Delilah (Black) mentioned that had pulled on the emotional energy to be everything for everyone who identified with a marginalized identity. The sense of responsibility Grace and Delilah asserted was too felt from Brandi, as she had a similar perspective via her identity as Multiracial Asian White:

I think that for me student affairs has really been how can someone like me, who identifies like me, role model different kinds of leadership; because student affairs, similar to any other profession, is very much built on this colonial white supremacist ideology, right? And so for me it's about resistance and about advocacy and policy change. What are the different ways that we, I'm going to say we collectively, right? As women of color, people with marginalized identities can, you know, be oppositional and eventually develop tactics and coalition building to be able to thrive.

Again, like other women of color in my study, Brandi (Multiracial Asian White) felt obligated to serve as a role model and enact change in the profession of student affairs due to her multiracial identity. Beyond this, Brandi (Multiracial Asian White) associated these characteristics as a cultural responsibility; a sense that people of color “look out” for people of color. As she specifically focused on advocacy and resiliency, Brandi connected her role with community action due to her position to better a community that looked like her. What she described were added cultural job responsibilities not outlined in her institutional role, such as resistance and advocacy, which were additional forms of stress related work.

*Emotional Exhaustion and the Extended Family*

According to Davis (2015), family and community are extremely important with Black women in higher education. In Davis's (2015) study, participants had been instilled with cultural values from early childhood, and majority of the Black women were from a tradition where family and extended family were considered invaluable and influential to their current being. Due to the extensive years of discrimination and racism in the Black community, community unification had become a way to cope, educate, and uplift Black people by Black people. For instance, Black women expressed their ability to become successful, maintain integrity, demonstrate confidence and remain resilient were developed from a strong foundation from family (Davis 2015). This sentiment carries over to "extended family" as culturally for Black people in the higher education, community often exists between faculty, administrators and students.

Due to this cultural context, it was no surprise when I asked the question of women in my study, when they thought about work and family, how did their work impact their family life. Consistent with the research on care work and race, Susan expressed her feelings in regard to caring for people's children as a woman of color. "The judgment and the empathy that comes with knowing that you are taking care of on some level, people's children when you're in your job, right? Your students are their children or siblings or partners," Susan stated. As a Multiracial Hispanic/Latin X identified woman in student affairs, she explained her sense of added responsibility to her students, especially those of color. While Susan was not Black, as a woman of color her sense of extended family responsibility was aligned with the experiences of Black women. Understandably, Susan's concerns were congruent with current research as it demonstrated that generally students of color continue to lag behind White students in terms of retention and graduation rates. For instance, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019) the most recent postsecondary graduation rates reported:

The 6-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began their pursuit of a bachelor's degree at a 4-year degree-granting institution in fall 2010 was highest for Asian students (74 percent), followed by White students (64 percent), students of Two or more races (60 percent), Hispanic students (54 percent), Pacific Islander students (51 percent), Black students (40 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native students (39 percent).

Due to the continual lower graduation numbers and retention for majority of students of color, women of color in student affairs felt an obligation to ensure students of color were supported to the best of their abilities. As mentioned, women of color saw students of color as extended family and therefore worked to provide leadership, resilience, and support they personally received to the students they worked with every day. This was also a cultural expectation to emotionally and mentally support other students of color to help them graduate as this was what had been done for them. Grace (Black) explained what her work was about for her working with her students:

You know, not everybody's story is the same so it's really about tailoring these experiences for students as individuals and meeting them where they're at and supporting them on their journey; and working to empower them so that they feel that they can take control of their navigational process.

Grace (Black) further explained the process of incorporating supporting students where they are and empowering them is ongoing and takes additional effort from professional staff. Yet, she was committed to the responsibility for the betterment of the student and getting them to graduation. While the efforts were genuine and beneficial for the students, the fatigue the women encountered from taking on the additional emotional labor was a clear consequence of a student affairs as a helping profession for women of color. In fact, Asia (Black) echoed Grace's commitment of helping students of color graduate was the driving force behind her work. As she answered the question on what were her short and long term career goals, Asia's passion was clearly beyond herself and primarily focused on her students. "It worked. Got students a degree in

their hand. That is my purpose, my mission, my passion. When I'm in the community and had students tell whoever they're with, if it wasn't for her, I wouldn't have no degree,” Asia (Black) said. Black women understood the important role of mentoring in the Black community, and for them, to pay it forward they provided guidance and insight in their higher education capacity (Davis 2015). By paying it forward, they participants in Davis’ study provided “guidance to other African American females to add value to the growth and success of future African American women leaders.”

The core meaning of sense of community support, guidance, and uplift among this marginalized population was apparent as the Black community had historically stuck together for the betterment of the next generation. West (2017) conducted a study on women in higher education in regard to perseverance and stated: “The current status of Black women enrolled and employed in higher education is a direct result of the long and arduous journey they have endured as second-class citizens in the broader societal context that multiplicatively marginalizes them.” Black women incorporated their life identity working in student affairs which included larger societal experiences. So despite their written job descriptions, women of color in student affairs also exerted excess time and energy to serve their community. Student affairs traditionally require excessive work hours, so women of color personally were pushed beyond reasonable expectation. Via this marginalization, the care work of students for women of color require an unconditional amount of emotional labor. For instance, some women described the necessity to always be available for students from marginalized backgrounds, even post traditional work hours. Delilah (Black) provided an in-depth analysis on what this looked like for her:

My students don't stop living when I leave the office. So a good number of them have my cell phone, and if they have an issue or concern, they will call me and/or text me. Or even if I'm just not in the office and they can't find me, they'll be like ‘Where are you at?!’ If they just need to talk to me about something. And I think that sometimes just the emotional

labor that we [Black women] do. Kind of take on working in identity-based environments, and working with marginalized populations, that tends to, especially at predominantly White institutions, definitely tends to need a little bit more tender love and care.

Here Delilah (Black) highlighted her perspective in which predominantly White institutions caused for enhanced levels of support for marginalized students. Her marginalized identity as a Black woman created an inherent pressure and obligation to support and engage with students all hours of the day. Delilah (Black) continued as she explained how her work revolved around her students, particularly of color, and the sacrifices being worth it:

I got into student affairs because of students, and I like students. They are one of the biggest reasons that keep me from not being in this field, because sometimes things can get a little rough. And adults can, you know, work your nerves a lot more than the students can. So definitely want to just be able to create those relationships and have a time to be with students but then also attending the different events of students who I may not advise them, but I know that's one of the best ways for you to build relationships with students is by being present at their things and so they can see that you really are someone they can go to, they can trust, and you have their best interest at heart.

In student affairs, student events are typically in the late evening. Delilah (Black) carried an emotional heavy workload of the need to care for students whom she did not even directly work with simply to prove an administrator who looked like them was in their corner. This connection with marginalized students of color often was the difference between students of color persisting or departing the institution. Simultaneously, it was additional emotional labor that was not compensated in time, nor financially, for women of color but served as a sense of purpose and communal support in their everyday work. As previously mentioned, this was another form of racial battle fatigue for women of color, as culturally they felt obligated to serve in this capacity. These women expended more emotional and mental energy, despite the subpar salary, which was an evident consequence and disadvantage to this type of service work strictly from their intersectional identity. But despite the circumstances, women of color not performing the inherited work was a non-negotiable for them. Serena (Black), for instance, described an incident that



justified why she felt students of color needed constant additional support from administrators of color:

We had a situation where a student was sent to canvas in the city right outside of our main city, and she was an African student and she was with a White student and the African student went up to the door. It was for a poli-sci class, and the man opened his garage and called the girl the n-word; told her to get off his property; pointed the gun to her face, and then pointed the gun to her back as she ran away. Now, she's afraid she scared, she's coming to the [diversity center], right? And she just so happened to come on the night of the Black faculty and staff reception. So they talking to her and of course I'm bringing up the rear, so I need to talk to her the most. I need to talk to her and just make sure that I'm going to take control. People trust us with their children, and with that, that's not an 8 to 4:30 job. Period.

Serena (Black) felt a personal obligation holistically to care for this student as she could culturally connect and understand the experience the student had encountered. In a sense, Serena (Black) served as a sponsor for this student as it became her goal to protect and cover the student from trouble to the best of her ability (Hewlett 2013). While Serena's focus was on the health and wellness of her student, her emotional output was unconsciously in over drive:

And it broke my heart that I have to sit with this student in this way because she's a senior and her mother sent her here, her parents sent her here to get an education, you know? And so you absolutely take this home with you. And if people said they don't either they're not good at what they're doing, they're not invested, or they're lying. We take this work home.

This racialized experience Serena encountered was central to what many women of color described as part of their daily experience in student affairs: a revolving door of racial battle fatigue due to their salient intersectional identity that culturally expected for extended support, assistance, and uplift to members of the extended family for the development of the next generation of leaders. Although all women in some form were impacted by the nature of student affairs as a helping profession, women of color demonstrated additional consequences of never ending days, the constant navigation of racial tension, and cultural pressure to be the super women of student affairs.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I analyzed the consequences of student affairs as a helping profession on mid-level women. First, care and crisis work associated with student affairs positions demonstrated to be emotionally difficult on mid-level women. Crisis work such as dealing with student deaths, or mental illness of students, weighed on the personal wellness of the women themselves. Mid-level women working in the Dean of Students office and/or student conduct, disability services, or housing related areas were roles that consistently dealt with care related work. The women explained the constant care of their students in these areas caused them to take their worries home at night, and unable to turn off their anxiety. In society, women from the beginning have been ascribed to be able to handle care related work simply due to their gender. Rarely are the consequences of care work on women addressed structurally, and student affairs is no different. Women described institutional expectations to care for students at all costs, at all hours of the day, while their emotional wellbeing and mental health was in constant disarray.

This emotional exertion also led to a negative impact from the student affairs care work onto the mid-level women's private lives. Women mentioned guilt, frustration and stress from work forced them to spend less hours with family and their ability to contribute less to household chores. For some women, it meant missing school related activities for their children, or some household necessities simply not getting completed, such as chores, from the carried over emotional exhaustion from work. Here demonstrates mid-level women battling the public sphere of their lives spilling over into their private sphere and women not being able to control the outcome. Women encountered additional emotional stress from guilt and conflict in the home from not being able to uphold the gendered expected responsibilities as mothers and spouses. Whereas, if work organizations provided more administrative support staff to help alleviate many of the

excessive hours care work ensues, mid-level women would be able to focus on their personal wellbeing more as well as better manage necessities in the home.

I also illustrated in this chapter how intersectionality, specifically race, enhanced the emotional labor at work for women of color. For instance, a sense of obligation via cultural expectations around the extended family caused women of color to exert constant emotional support and guidance for students and colleagues of color. Due to the ongoing systematic racism in society, Black women particularly felt the necessity to pay focused attention on students of color. Whereas, White women made no mention or discussed emotional exhaustion from cultural obligations nor the extended family. Women of color described being “on call” at all hours of the night, and weekends, for their students as they felt it was their duty to support their students of color at all costs. This was even more prominent for women at predominantly White institutions. Predominantly White institutional spaces are a smaller replica of what students of color live in everyday; therefore, women of color due to their positionality in mid-level positions felt the necessity to “look out” for student of color at their institution as they could help those students in ways other colleagues could not.

Simultaneously, women of color experienced personal exhaustion from the stereotype of being superwomen of student affairs. For instance, society has this ascription of the strong Black woman, and Black women discussed how this consistently played out within institutional expectations in student affairs. Women of color elaborated on consistently being tapped for committees due to a scarcity of other women of color within their institutions, while simultaneously having to be all things to all students at all times. One mid-level woman referred to the system as the modern day Mammy of higher education. Yet, women of color constantly found themselves fighting for promotions or the need to prove their abilities to colleagues despite

the excessive structural requirement placed upon them. They also felt inherent pressure of possessing knowledge on all things related to diversity, or as the voice for all people of their identity. Student affairs as a profession discusses the importance of personal wellbeing to prevent burnout, but rarely have institutions actually enacted workplace cultures that embraced the need to balance. An immediate structural shift in the profession to better support the personal wellbeing of student affairs administrators is in dire need in order for women to rid the unrealistic work expectations.

## Chapter 7: Discussion & Conclusions

In student affairs, men still outnumber women in senior leadership positions, despite an increase of women in these roles over the recent years. The unevenness of women to men in senior leadership in student affairs consequently produces an unequal representation of women's voices to men's voices, as well as perspectives related to critical decision-making in the academy. This research study used a critical paradigmatic approach to better understand how hegemonic practices impacted mid-level women in student affairs strictly from their standpoint. I grounded the study in the gendered work organizations framework, paying particular attention to the ideal worker norm to answer the question: *How do non-faculty mid-level women administrators experience career advancement in higher education institutions?*

To answer this question, I conducted 32 interviews with mid-level women in student affairs in the upper mid-western region of the United States. Interview questions covered four dominant themes: (1) *student affairs*, to understand organizational structure and gender overview of student affairs divisions; (2) *workplace structure*, to understand organizational logic regarding professional development and gendered expectations from workplace interactions and division of labor; (3) *elements of advancement*, to understand work organization promotion practices and visibility inside and outside the institution; (4) *work-family conflict*, to understand flexible workplace policies and the work dynamics impacted family domains. In this chapter, I summarize my results chapters on workplace culture, elements of advancement, and consequences of a helping profession. I then discuss how my findings are implications of the academy as a gendered work organization, and the role the ideal worker norm played for women. I conclude this chapter discussing future research necessities based on this study in order to further understand mid-level women's experiences.

## **Workplace Structure**

Gender work organizations imply paid work takes precedence over labor in the home, and requires staff to work extended hours as a form of commitment to the work institution (Blair-Loy 2003; Kelly et al. 2010). This expectation of a workaholic lifestyle by working late nights and weekends attribute to commitment levels of student affairs professionals long-term (Boehman 2007). Simultaneously, this pattern leads to decreased retention of women in higher paying, and higher-level positions (Taylor 2010), as the excessive work hours made women feel they had low levels of institutional support (Taylor 2010; Walker and Aritz 2015). One of the immediate structural expectations of student affairs culture that emerged in this study was the expectation to work excessive hours every day. For many women, their hourly wage averaged just over \$21 per hour after consideration of the hours worked into the late evenings and weekends, despite serving in a mid-level position. This culture of excessive hours without additional pay is a direct reflection of the structural operation higher education institutions implement to their benefit and administrator detriment. The academy systematically saves money by perpetuating a workplace culture of paying student affairs administrators minimum wages, to then hold them accountable to excessive hours well beyond their contracts.

Another theme that emerged in the workplace culture of student affairs were microaggressions related to intellectual capital and mansplaining. Women described a lack of respect, such as being talked down to, from colleagues if they did not have a doctoral degree; others encountered interactions where their degree was minimized if it was received in a field that was not deemed intellectually difficult. The terminal degree represents an elite class in academia that structurally maintains access and representation within it. The described experiences of the mid-level women are products of academic elitist seeking to remind women without terminal

degrees of their second class status to those with one, and to those women with terminal degrees the again second class status due to the supposed lack of rigor of the discipline or research it is obtained.

Simultaneously, women described leadership style frustrations in their workplace structure as they were mansplained in meetings, even when they led the meetings, or had their power circumvented by male colleagues. In this regard, women attributed low levels of workplace support to the consistent questioning of their competence in their role by supervisors and colleagues, which Britton (2017) and Tyson and Borman (2010) refer to as “chilly climate” in the workplace. Part of the chilly climate issue within higher education is the leadership style preference. The academy continues to reward and highlight transactional leadership (masculine characteristics) from men, but penalizes women in the workplace for the same behavior (Bierema 2016; Burkinshaw and White 2017). Women tend to display transformational leadership characteristics (feminine characteristics), but universities consistently demonstrate preference toward transactional leadership styles (Bierema 2016; Burkinshaw and White 2017; Knipfer et al. 2017). These examples demonstrate how systematic gendered definitions of leadership in student affairs allowed for men to behave in ways that disrespected the position of power the mid-level women possessed in those spaces as well as maintain their male dominance. This is an ongoing structural problem in higher education. These aspects of workplace culture were consistent among all women in this research study; yet, there were intersectional identities that emerged as important for some women.

Women of color are held to higher unrealistic performance standards and often feel they have to prove themselves to their colleagues (Henry 2010; Shorter-Gooden 2004). This sentiment was also true for women of color in this study, particularly the need to prove themselves to White women compared to White men. Women of color described the frequency of being deemed

aggressive and intimidating, and how this served as an additional form of microaggressive behavior they had to navigate. Aggression is also attributed to the strong Black woman stereotype, which stems from societal biases and stigmas. This is directly tied back to the preferred structural leadership styles of student affairs, and pigeonholes women of color simply based cultural incompetence and racial biases.

Age also arose as an intersectional identity that women felt served as a barrier in the student affairs workplace. Ageism is the systematic typecasting proceeded by interactions that are discriminatory in nature due strictly to someone's age (Cuddy and Fiske 2002). Women explained how older male colleagues made direct comments related to their ability to perform responsibilities because they looked young, or how they were perceived as young, innocent, and emotional. These biases allowed for men to maintain their structural positionality and power within the organization by publicly labeling the women as inexperienced. Lastly, some women eluded to their sexual orientation as a salient factor for their experiences. Some women explained how male colleagues asked them inappropriate questions about their lesbianism, and other women described overhearing colleagues make homophobic remarks in their departments as their colleagues weren't aware of their LGBTQ identification. Women indicated they often chose to keep their sexual orientation private due to fear of workplace stigmas, and the lack of inclusive environment it truly was.

### **Elements of Advancement**

Gendered expectations are socialized in work organizations and directly reflect the deep rooted structural gender practices in notions of masculinity and femininity; therefore, the expectation of leadership behavior impacts performance evaluations and career growth (Acker 1990). Mid-level managers in student affairs use professional development to enhance their skills



to be prepared for career advancement opportunities (Bacheler 2014; Sermersheim and Keim 2005). Higher education has numerous professional associations that foster best practices for professionals (Fey 1991; Janosik, Carpenter and Creamer 2007; Sermersheim and Keim 2005); however, these professional growth opportunities have fees associated with them with little to no workplace financial support (Bacheler 2014; Sermersheim and Keim 2005). Financial concerns and workplace climate toward professional development were prominent factors on the women's ability to take advantage of the growth opportunities (Bacheler 2014). First in this chapter, I evaluated elements of advancement for mid-level women in student affairs, where factors such as professional development obstacles, career regrets, and the terminal degree were prominent. Second, I evaluated promotion factors for mid-level women in student affairs, which included job evaluations, lack of supervisor support, and visibility.

### *Professional Development*

Professional development, the first theme analyzed in this chapter, is an important component in student affairs for career advancement and often occurs via workshops, webinars, volunteer positions, specific trainings, publishing, and professional conference attendance. One obstacle common among mid-level women were the fees associated with these professional opportunities. Women explained how free professional training opportunities on their campuses were either limited, such as geared toward new professionals, or required a fee; additionally, women explained that external professional opportunities cost a fee beyond their financial means, and many women did not receive institutional financial support. This was consistent with Bacheler's (2014) research that finds supervisors often lack concern in the development of their professional staff, which creates a structural indifference from the work institution toward the personal growth and career progression for their staff. Particularly, women mid-level managers in

student affairs are not prioritized in work organizations, hence the lack of financial investment in their development and lack of accountability on supervising.

Women described a lack of encouragement from leadership as a professional obstacle as women noted they had to be self-motivated to seek growth opportunities as the institution did not deliberately promote or advocate for involvement. The disconnection from institutional leadership and mid-level women administrators is a structural barrier that has a costly negative career impact on women. For this reason, majority of the women of color described strategically seeking external institutional professional opportunities as a necessity for their career success and navigation in their current workplace. The need for communal support for women of color, especially in predominantly White environments, was too a consistent factor for the external engagement.

Numerous other women found their lack of professional involvement to be a hindrance to their career advancement, and simultaneously considered it a career regret. This evolved in two facets: (1) women placed all their eggs only in their institutional baskets and did not invest the time in professional associations, and (2) women placed the development of their department staff over their own and distributed all of the department travel funds among their staff to attend conferences. Due to these factors, women described feeling behind in their careers compared to their colleagues who were professionally involved. Again, the lack of institutional investment in mid-level professional development opportunities directly impacted mid-level women sacrificing their careers for the success of their staff. Cycles such as this, which are created by systematic policies and practices at the institution, force women to remain clustered as mid-level managers or become creative to find ways to work around the inequities.

Another form of regret that emerged from women was not pursuing a terminal degree. The doctorate degree is intellectual capital that represents an esteem level of scholarship, as well as an

identification that one is an expert in their discipline (Cox et al. 2011). Some women had begun doctoral work and decided not to continue, others never thought about a terminal degree early within their career, and others did not have the financial means to afford doctoral work. In either scenario, the women noted this as an obstacle they regretted as they were treated with less respect from other colleagues. The women were constantly reminded by male colleagues, many of whom too did not possess a terminal degree, how they weren't members of the elite class in the academy, which meant they weren't experts in the profession nor could be senior level leaders. The doctorate degree, along with the limited access to acquire one, is a longtime systematic practice that continues to separate members of the academy via privilege and power.

### ***Promotion Factors***

The second theme I evaluated in this chapter was promotion factors that served as barriers for mid-level women to their career advancement in student affairs. Barriers that emerged include job evaluations, lack of supervisor support, and visibility. Research has shown performance evaluations contain symbolic indicators, and how these are interpreted during the evaluation process reveals the organization's logic (Acker 1990). Women from this study described (1) no formal job evaluations had been conducted over several years, or (2) frustration from the vagueness of the evaluation forms used, and the form's inability to evaluate the true scope of their work in student affairs. In both situations, the supervisor played a critical role in the lack of evaluations that occurred and a lack of thoroughness within the standardized form, both structural problems the work organization is accountable for. Understandably, women also noted a lack of supervisor support as a barrier for promotion. According to Williams et al. (2001), employees need the support of their supervisors in order to advance their career as they have the ability to recommend raises, determine promotions, and identify high achievers. Unfortunately, the women explained a

disconnect professionally with their supervisors as they described a lack of professional guidance, motivation, or support so inevitably this created a gap for supervisors to be able to successfully carry out these dynamics that positively impact career advancement. As supervisors serve as institutional agents, if their practices are not held accountable by the organization's leadership, the message is clear on the priorities of the institution and the structural problem for the mid-level women it impacts will remain.

Women also identified as a barrier for promotion was the invisibility of visibility. Women are the majority of professionals in student affairs, yet the excess representation does not account for the complex integration of gender discrimination in the workplace (Yoder 1991). Women explained visibility primarily in two ways: (1) how male colleagues merged visibility from everyday life activities, such as Boy Scout leaders, as a form of service work in student affairs which aided in their promotions and (2) how the same professionals got "tapped" for committee work while other professionals with the capable skills were consistently invisible to senior leadership. This example is a demonstration of the structural cycle of the good ol' boys network at play. Women followed up with the necessity for self-promotion in order to be granted opportunities, and women of color particularly stated this was critical.

For mid-level women of color, the ability to be seen as competent was even more relevant, and they had to be strategic with how they navigated visibility from their minority status. Competence was seen as more relevant for women of color as they constantly encountered societal racial biases and stereotypes that ascribed women of color as less than. Therefore, women of color had to be exceptional in their positions in order to prove they deserved their mid-management roles to their colleagues whether said or unsaid (Henry 2010). Their visibility was a way in which women of color "played the game," such as establishing political institutional relationships with

senior leadership. In order to infiltrate senior leadership spaces in the academy, women of color strategically maximized politics in their favor to gain a seat at the table. This strategic navigation stems from women of color working in environments, specifically higher education, that still systematically operates in ways that are not inclusive or meant for them to advance their careers as senior administrators.

### **Consequences of a Helping Profession**

Emotional labor, the balance of publicly acceptable feelings and emotions, is specifically associated with service work professions; researchers found correlations among burnout and stress (Hochschild 1979; Morris and Feldman 1996), and personal well-being (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993), due to the constant management of emotions. According to Gibbs (2001), higher education staff are expected to enact emotional labor among students with the intent to enhance customer satisfaction. Emotional labor is also intensified when administrators worked with students in advising and counseling situations (Bellas 1999). For example, Abery and Gunson (2016) find from their study numerous connections from student counseling between personal family tragedy that required increased administrative emotional labor to display empathy and trust. Hochschild classifies this as deep acting as administrators adjusted their empathetic display to focus on the student's personal wellbeing; this was also an example of why higher education was now classified as an extremely stressful profession (Barkhuizen and Rothmann 2006; Dhanpat 2016). Factors such as these have led to the interest in the attrition of student affairs professionals, and found that more than 50 percent of higher education professionals leave the field within five years due to high stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction (Berwick 1992; Boreen, Niday and Johnson 2003; Tull 2006).

In this section, I first summarize the emotional labor of student affairs in relation to crisis work and work-family. Particularly, the way in which women balanced work-family and their emotional wellness from bringing home the emotional labor of caring for students. I then summarize how the helping perspective of student affairs is racialized. Intersectionality, particularly race, intensified care work, emotional labor and personal wellbeing for women of color; therefore, the section concludes paying specific attention to women of color and the ways race intensified their experiences.

### ***Emotional Labor in Student Affairs***

Student affairs professionals are known for working long hours, enduring stressful conditions, and burnout from an overworked environment (Barr 1990; Manning 2001). The excessive hours dealing with student needs caused increased emotional labor for women and enhanced their stress levels. Specifically, crisis work in student affairs was a major factor in the emotional instability of women. In crisis and care work, there is an institutional expectation to be provide any and all services to all students at all hours despite the lack of structural reward, pay increase, or formal recognition in performance evaluations. The mid-level women indicated the stress from student affairs not only negatively impacted their personal health, but their domestic life as well. According to Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) marriage and children were more stressful for women in student affairs, and many women left the profession due to the difficulty of balancing the work and home life. Women in my study echoed this research as many explained leaving work every day mentally, physically, and emotionally exhausted; this level of exhaustion made it difficult for the women to be good partners and/or mothers once they were home. Interestingly, both White women and women of color highlighted experiences where crisis work and work-family conflict served as a form of emotional labor; however, there were specific factors

related to emotional labor that emerged that were significant just to women of color in student affairs.

### ***Racialization of a Helping Profession***

The pressure to balance teaching, research and service work in the academy due to the scarcity of faculty women of color was higher for women of color, despite the reward of their efforts not equating that of their White colleagues (Turner and Viernes 2002). Regardless of the lack of tangible reward from the work organization, the work itself served as a sense of pride and validation for women of color faculty as it provided a natural connection to their community of color inside and outside the academy. This additional sense of responsibility contributed to women of color faculty exerting more energy related to their emotional balance and wellbeing due to their racial identification. External to the work organization women of color faculty endure systematic racism in society; therefore, they feel obligated to be additional support to students of color as they are all members of an oppressed community.

My findings builds on this research on the experiences of faculty women of color, and extends to administrators of color in the academy regarding the intensified emotional labor in student affairs. For instance, women of color explained a need to always to be “happy” at work, and to not be seen as threatening or angry despite racial tensions around them. This sentiment was based on women of color strategically seeking to dismantle societal stereotypes, such as the angry Black woman. Women also noted the labor of constantly navigating racial microaggressions in student affairs, so much so some women experienced high levels of anxiety while at home. This level of emotional policing of expressions by women of color led to mental and emotional instability and exhaustion, which was attributed to racial battle fatigue.

### ***Advancement & Emotional Labor for Women of Color***

According to Davis (2015) Black women experience double jeopardy from their race and gender in regards to their careers, particularly promotions, regardless of their leadership abilities. Due to this, women of color elaborated on the necessity of learning to “play the game” in student affairs in order to be successful. This included learning the culture of the institution, as well as key constituents, when seeking to be promoted. Women of color emphasized the necessity to be intentional and strategic when playing the game, such as being two steps ahead; it was also indicated how emotionally exhausting it was to have to operate in this manner. Women of color compromised their emotional and mental health from consistently over performing and purposefully winning over senior leadership as they would take on additional responsibilities simply for an opportunity to advance to the next level in their career.

This system of networking and proving skills and abilities was immensely embedded into the student affairs structure, and administrators without power and access in the system struggled to find ways to be afforded opportunities. Yet, playing the game had consequences for women of color such as the emotional exhaustion from a constant feeling of needing to over perform in order to be recognized for their hard work. However, too often their efforts went without structural recognition as women of color expressed a higher level of emotional labor from frustrations of consistently being passed over for a position, and encouraged to apply for a less prestigious role. This cycle preserved the spaces of power at the institutional level from elitist in the academy as a way to keep minority groups out of senior level spaces, or in low numbers, but still in mid-management roles where they could still be used as tokens as needed, such as on university committees. These were ongoing experiences that demonstrated how racial battle fatigue showed up for women of color in student affairs.

*Care Work of a Marginalized Population*



Family, including extended family, is very important to Black women in higher education (Davis 2015). Cultural values regarding support in the Black community are instilled from early childhood in Black women (Davis 2015); therefore, many Black women in student affairs deemed it their responsibility to educate and uplift students and other colleagues of color. Women of color owned the responsibility of investing more time to support students and staff of color from a feeling of indebtedness to the culture. In society, people of color rely on the culture of community to navigate racial oppressions, so within higher education institutions the racial connection and indebtedness to other people of color stemmed from systematic societal spillover into institutional work structures. Women of color noted they were only able to be as successful as they were due to other people of color who sacrificed before them, and they needed to pay it forward. For this reason, women of color explained how they felt they exerted more emotional labor than their White colleagues, as they did not have the weight of an entire racial community on their shoulders.

This level of care work from women of color for marginalized groups at the institution were additional factors that played into the racial battle fatigue. For instance, women of color were expected to perform the job responsibilities they were hired to perform serving all students, faculty and staff as needed; yet, also serve their cultural obligations from their racial identity and “take care” of the community at the same time. Particularly, it was found that women of color at predominantly White institutions caused for enhanced levels of support for marginalized students, which often meant women of color being on call all hours of the day and night. If the women chose not to be on call, then they (1) are penalized at the institutional level for not providing levels of care and support that are not even in their formal job descriptions, and (2) judged and criticized by members of their respective community for not going beyond job expectations and supporting that student of color. Circumstances such as these demonstrated why women of color exhibited higher

levels of emotional labor and mental wellness concerns as consequences from cultural pressures working in student affairs, even though they rarely received structural rewards, such as promotions, for their efforts by the institutions.

### **Application of Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided by the theoretical foundation of gendered work organizations which assert work organizations perpetuate inequalities among women and men through gender identities for employees, workplace culture, policies and practices, as well as interactions between men and women (Acker 1990; Britton and Logan 2008). Consistent with these findings, my findings illustrated how mid-level women experienced barriers to career advancement via factors within the student affairs workplace culture, and access to elements associated with growing professionally in the field. Women described interactions with colleagues that pigeonholed them into secretarial related duties, even as mid-level professionals, microaggressions in the workplace such as mansplaining, and financial hardships with affordability of professional development opportunities. Similar to Britton (2000), hegemonic leadership styles and characteristics proved to be the preference among the institutions in my study, but women who embodied these traits were penalized and classified in ways such as difficult to work with. These realities were integrated within the organizational logic in student affairs and therefore sustained biases against mid-level women seeking to advance from their respective roles.

According to Acker (1990), Mennino et al. (2005), and Williams (2000) women are in part hollowed out in mid-level positions because they are not “ideal” workers for bureaucratic institutions. The ideal worker norm declares women fall short of an abstract worker as they are not able to fully commit to working excessive hours, travel at will, or arrange their personal lives around their work life due to their domestic obligations in the home (Acker 1990; Bierema 2016;

Brumley 2014; Kelly et al. 2010; Williams 2000). Women in my study describe how gender inequality was reproduced in their work institutions as they had found themselves overcompensating by working from home late at night to demonstrate their commitment; women also described extreme exhaustion and emotional labor from exerting so much energy into their work. Some women explained how the emotional labor from work negatively impacted their personal life at home, and others explained how they missed out on networking opportunities, such as post work events, from commitments in their personal lives.

This study contributes to the literature as it extends the research from faculty women in higher education to mid-level women student affairs professionals from a sociological perspective. These theoretical frameworks coupled with the study results identify how the academy is still operated by gendered dynamics, and calls for senior leadership to enact institutional structural shifts of acceptable behavior in the workplace. This change is also immensely important for the emotional wellbeing of women working in student affairs, which also emerged as a contribution from this study. Numerous women identified aspects of student affairs as emotionally taxing, especially those mid-level women working in care and crisis work on college campuses. However, the emotional labor was intensified for women of color and a major contribution from this study exposed this in the form of racialization of a helping profession. Research on women of color and emotional labor in student affairs has rarely been conducted; this study provides data that women of color in fact experience excessive stress and chronic illness from consistently navigating the various aspects of double consciousness and racial battle fatigue in student affairs (Kersh 2018; Thompson 2013).

### **Implications & Future Research**

This study was not without limitations. The various institution types in the sampling frame added various institutional demographics that could influence women's experiences such as union status, institution size, residential versus commuter schools, public or private universities, and so on. However, the objective of this study was to better understand women's experiences related to career advancement from a mid-level perspective. The focus sample population of this study was to explore the experiences of mid-level women at universities in student affairs in the upper mid-western region of the United States. Therefore, future research is needed to continue to further understand and explore the experiences of women in other regions of the country. The data from an expanded sampling frame will allow senior leaders in higher education institutions nationwide to implement the necessary cultural changes in the workplace departments per the results from women in their respective areas and/or institution type. This research is not meant to be generalizable as a whole, so additional research is needed on mid-level women in order to be able to compare and adjust accordingly. This future research necessity was beyond the scope of this project, but will be immensely valuable to the organizational and structural change needed in the academy to enhance women's experiences, obtain more women in senior leadership capacities, as well as lessen their emotional stress levels.

Considering the central barriers associated with mid-level women's experiences in this study are rooted in structural policies and practices, a national call to action is needed in order to address the systematic disparities. Associations such as NASPA, the leading international association for student affairs, have the capacity to prioritize and facilitate additional research to build data on experiences of mid-level women nationwide, and thereby adopt new strategies of best practices for academic institutions. In student affairs the primary focal point is best practices for student development and retention to graduation strategies, yet the condition of administrative

staff carrying out this work is not a priority. The student affairs profession has competencies for various departments under the traditional student affairs umbrella, as well as competencies for administrative levels like new professional or mid-level; however, a standardized competency format in this same facet does not exist for institutions to use to be able to evaluate and provide guidance on structural practices that have inequitable consequences to administrative professionals. The creation and adoption of such system will allow higher education work organizations to demonstrate student affairs administrators are a priority, along with the ability to demonstrate a commitment to structural change for more inclusive and equitable practices on their campuses.

Additional future research endeavors from this study is to further explore: (1) mid-level women sacrificing families in order to progress within their careers; particularly, exploring if this is a new trend women are embarking on by choice or has it become a reality of working within student affairs leadership considering more than half the women in this study were single and/or childless; (2) the mental and emotional wellbeing of mid-level women in student affairs, especially women of color; over 80 percent of the women identified excess stress, exhaustion, and emotional and mental anxieties from working in student affairs that they take home with them every day. Research is needed to explore this more in-depth, along with what institutions are doing to support women within these dynamics.

## Appendix A: Institutional Structure Categorization

\* MI total n=6, OH total n=11 (sample states breakdown)

### Residential Four-Year Institutions

- |  |   |                                     |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| - Ashland University<br>(OH)                 | - Miami University<br>(OH)                | - The University of<br>Findlay (OH) |
| - Bowling Green State<br>University (OH)     | - Northern Michigan<br>University (MI)    | - University of Dayton<br>(OH)      |
| - Case Western<br>Reserve University<br>(OH) | (OH)                                      | - Xavier University<br>(OH)         |
| - Ferris State<br>University (MI)            | - Ohio Dominican<br>University (OH)       |                                     |
|  | - Saginaw Valley State<br>University (MI) |                                     |

### Commuter Four-Year Institution

- |                                      |  |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| - Cleveland State<br>University (OH) | - University of<br>Michigan-Dearborn<br>(MI) | - Wright State<br>University (OH)     |
| - Franklin University<br>(OH)        | - University of<br>Michigan-Flint<br>(MI)    | - Youngstown State<br>University (OH) |
| - Oakland University<br>(MI)         |  |                                       |

### Public Four-Year Institutions

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| - Bowling Green<br>State University<br>(OH) | - Northern Michigan<br>University (MI)       | - University of<br>Michigan -Flint<br>(MI) |
| - Cleveland State<br>University (OH)        | - Oakland University<br>(MI)                 | - Wright State<br>University (OH)          |
| - Ferris State<br>University (MI)           | - Saginaw Valley<br>State University<br>(MI) | - Youngstown State<br>University (OH)      |
| - Miami University<br>(OH)                  | - University of<br>Michigan-Dearborn<br>(MI) |  |

### Private – Not for Profit Four-Year Institutions

- |  |                                     |                                |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| - Ashland University<br>(OH)                 | - Franklin University<br>(OH)       | - University of<br>Dayton (OH) |
| - Case Western<br>Reserve University<br>(OH) | - The University of<br>Findlay (OH) | - Xavier University<br>(OH)    |

**Mid-Size Four-Year Institutions (5,000 – 19,999 enrollment)**

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| - Ashland University (OH)              | - Miami University (OH)                | - University of Michigan-Dearborn (MI) |
| - Bowling Green State University (OH)  | - Northern Michigan University (MI)    | - University of Michigan -Flint (MI)   |
| - Case Western Reserve University (OH) | - Oakland University (MI)              | - Wright State University (OH)         |
| - Cleveland State University (OH)      | - Saginaw Valley State University (MI) | - Xavier University (OH)               |
| - Ferris State University (MI)         | - The University of Findlay (OH)       | - Youngstown State University (OH)     |
| - Franklin University (OH)             | - University of Dayton (OH)            |  |

**Unionized (AAUP)**

- |  |                                     |                                |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| - Bowling Green State University (OH)  | - Cleveland State University (OH)   | - University of Dayton (OH)    |
| - Case Western Reserve University (OH) | - Northern Michigan University (MI) | - Wright State University (OH) |
|  | - Oakland University (MI)           | - Xavier University (OH)       |

**Non-Unionized**

- |                                |  |                                     |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| - Ashland University (OH)      | - Saginaw Valley State University (MI) | - University of Michigan-Flint (MI) |
| - Ferris State University (MI) | - The University of Findlay (OH)       | - Youngstown State University (OH)  |
| - Franklin University (OH)     | - University of Michigan-Dearborn (MI) |                                     |
| - Miami University (OH)        |  |                                     |

*\*\* Information gathered from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions, College Simply, and the American Association of University Professors as of May 2018.*

## Appendix B: Interview Guide

### Student Affairs Structure

1. How would you describe what it means to be a student affairs professional? How did you get here?
2. Tell me about how student affairs is organized at your institution? Probes: what are the different departments/divisions included in student affairs at your institution? What does the hierarchical structure look like?
3. Describe your current position, title and your main responsibilities? Have you held other positions within student affairs?
  - a. Probe: How many people work in your department? How many are women and men? How many supervisors do you report to? Do you supervise anyone? If so, in what capacity?

### Work Place & Structure

In relation to *workplace structure*, I seek to understand (1) what they perceive the organizational logic to be at their institution, (2) interactions with colleagues and superiors that may be discriminatory, and (3) division of labor along gendered expectations.

1. Can you walk me through what a typical day may look like for you? How are your projects and deadlines determined?
  - a. Potential Probe: what role do you get to play in deciding what is done daily basis?
2. What are your core hours? On average, how many hours do you actually work a week?
  - a. Potential Probe: Why do you work the additional hours? How are they compensated?
    - i. Can you adjust your start or stop times? If yes, then: is this something you can do regularly?
    - ii. Does your workplace expect you to be in the office every day? Do you or others ever work remotely?
3. How are new initiatives or responsibilities assigned in your office? Do you think this system is efficient/fair?
4. If you knew someone who was going to start tomorrow, what would you say are the most important things to do, and not to do to be successful in this department? Institution?
5. Have there ever been moments when you have seen coworkers treated differently than others? Can you tell me about that this and why you think it occurred?
  - a. Potential Probe: race? other identities?



6. What has been your experience working with men colleagues at your current institution? Women colleagues? Superiors?
7. Have you felt that you have received an advantage or been disadvantaged over other colleagues? Throughout your career?

### **Networks & Professional Development**

In regards to *networking and professional development*, I seek to explore (1) promotion practices at their institution(s), (2) their visibility in the workplace, (3) how participants obtain professional growth, and (4) practices and interactions of professional networks.

1. Describe how your current institution evaluate your job performance – is it annually or biannually? How are the evaluations used?
  - a. Potential Probe: In what way does this process help support you?
2. What kinds of professional development training are offered at/by your current institution? How have you found these useful?
3. What other kinds of mechanisms do you use to develop your professional skills? Have these been strategic or have they happened by accident?
  - a. Potential Probe: What role does your supervisor or others play within these?
4. Describe ways in which you have been promoted within your career, if at all. How many opportunities are there for advancement at your current institution?
  - a. Potential Probe: Who gets promoted typically at your current institution?
    - i. What characteristics do you think management/supervisors/institution are looking for when they consider promotions?
5. How important is it to network in your job – within the university itself, and then outside it? Are there opportunities for colleagues outside of your department and institution to observe your work skills?
6. Can you describe what your network consists of in regards to your career? In what ways have you used these networks, if at all?
7. Can you describe your affiliation with professional associations, if any? How are the financial obligations covered with your participation, if applicable?
8. Looking back, is there anything you wish you had done differently regarding your career?

### **Work-Family Conflict**

For *work-family conflict*, I seek to explore (1) flexible work-place policies, utilization and/or benefits, (2) how the “second shift” concept is applicable, if at all, and (3) how the work and family dynamics are balanced.

1. Can you describe the company policies that support working families at your current institution? Previous institutions?
  - a. Potential Probe if not mentioned: Parental leave; Flexible work schedule policies offered at your current/prior institutions?
    - i. Did/do you utilize them? What is/was the perception of employees who use these policies?
    - ii. How does your institution handle sick days?
2. Do you have any major responsibilities and/or obligations outside of work that takes up your time?
  - a. Potential Probe: Children? Elder care? By choice? Why or why not?
3. How have you seen your supervisor accommodate these outside obligations with other employees? Institution?
  - a. Potential Probe: What about your situation?
4. When you think about work and family, how does your work impact your non-work life?
5. When you think about family and other non-work activities, how does it impact your day at work?
  - a. Potential Probe: **IF SPOUSE**, Moving for career advancement opportunities is common in student affairs. What does this look like for you, specifically with your partner? (Or other obligations potentially)
6. Why do you think this is your experience? Other women colleagues you've witnessed?

**IF CHILDREN:**

7. Can you walk me through a typical morning routine in your household? And, then tell me what the evenings look like? How does this change on the weekend?
8. Who typically deals with childcare: homework, pick-up/drop-off, children's school appointments, extracurricular activities, making/going to doctors' appointments, waking up/putting to bed, and playing? (if applicable)
9. What typically happens when your child(ren) are sick?

**Closing**

1. What are your short and long term career and family goals?
2. Do you have any questions for me?
3. Is there anything you would like to discuss that we have not covered?
4. Can you think of anyone who would be willing to be interviewed for this project?

**Appendix C: Sociodemographic Information Form**

Interview ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

The information you provide will be used for research purposes only. Your responses will remain confidential. You have the right to not answer any or all of the questions.

Year of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex/Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_ Sexual Orientation: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

**Marital Status:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Single	<input type="checkbox"/> Cohabiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Married	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/> Widowed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other specify: _____
---------------------------------	-------------------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------------------	----------------------------------	--

If married/cohabiting, please indicate year married/began cohabiting: \_\_\_\_\_

If divorced, please indicate the following: Year married: \_\_\_\_\_ Year divorced: \_\_\_\_\_

If widowed, please indicate the following: Year married: \_\_\_\_\_ Year widowed: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have children, what are their ages?

	Age
Child #1	
Child #2	
Child #3	
Child #4	
Child #5	

Name of Institution: \_\_\_\_\_ Public or Private: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution size: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Years at this institution? \_\_\_\_\_ Years in current position? \_\_\_\_\_

**How many hours a week do you work (on average)?**

<input type="checkbox"/> less than 35	<input type="checkbox"/> 35- 39	<input type="checkbox"/> 40- 44	<input type="checkbox"/> 45- 49	<input type="checkbox"/> 50- 54	<input type="checkbox"/> 55- 59	<input type="checkbox"/> 60- 64	<input type="checkbox"/> 65-69	<input type="checkbox"/> 70+
--	------------------------------------	------------------------------------	------------------------------------	------------------------------------	------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------	------------------------------

Number of years in profession: \_\_\_\_\_

**Professional organization involvement:**

<input type="checkbox"/> No involvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Member only	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently involved as member volunteer	<input type="checkbox"/> Hold/held leadership position
---	--------------------------------------	--	---

**What organization(s), if applicable:**

---



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**What is your highest education completed?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Associate's Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate Degree
---	--	--	--	---

**Other (such as certifications):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your gross income:**

<input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000-49,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000-59,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$60,000-69,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$70,000-79,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$80,000-89,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$90,000-99,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000-109,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$110,000-119,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$120,000-129,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$130,000-139,999

*The following questions are about your partner/spouse (if applicable):*

**How many hours of paid work does your partner/spouse work weekly (on average)?**

<input type="checkbox"/> less than 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 10-14	<input type="checkbox"/> 15-19	<input type="checkbox"/> 20-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 25-29	<input type="checkbox"/> 30-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 35-39
<input type="checkbox"/> 40-44	<input type="checkbox"/> 45-49	<input type="checkbox"/> 50-54	<input type="checkbox"/> 55-59	<input type="checkbox"/> 60-64	<input type="checkbox"/> 65-69	<input type="checkbox"/> 70+

**What is your partner's/spouse's highest education completed?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Some High School	<input type="checkbox"/> High School	<input type="checkbox"/> GED or Equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/> Some College	<input type="checkbox"/> Associate's Degree
<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)

**Other (such as certifications):** \_\_\_\_\_

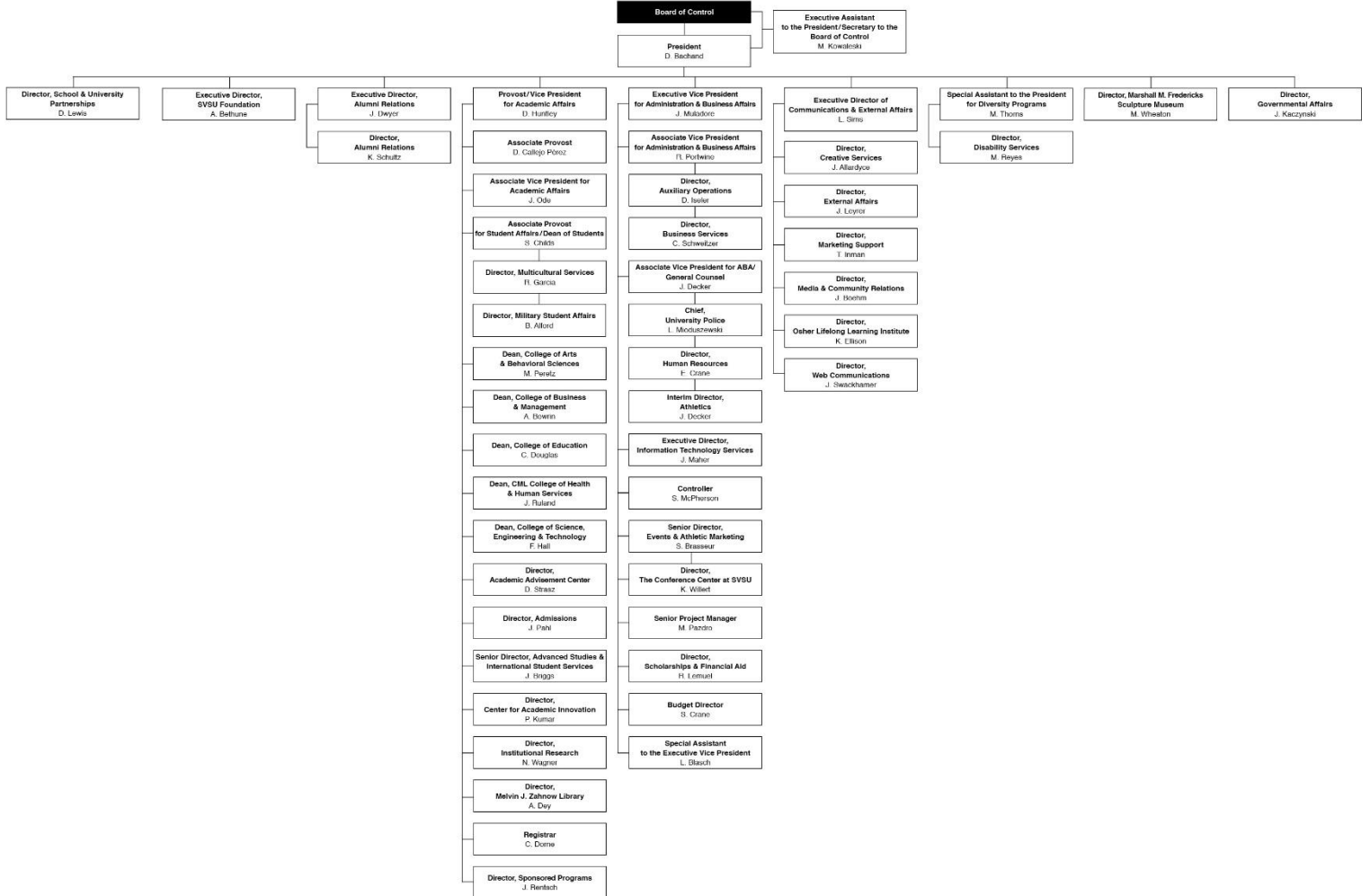
**Your partner's/spouse's gross income:**

<input type="checkbox"/> No earned income outside of home			<input type="checkbox"/> Under \$9,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000-19,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000-29,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000-39,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000-49,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000-59,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$60,000-69,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$70,000-79,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$80,000-89,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90,000-99,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000-109,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$110,000-119,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$120,000-129,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$130,000-139,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$140,000-149,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150,000-159,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$160,000-169,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$170,000-179,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$180,000-189,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$190,000-199,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$200,000-224,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$225,000-249,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$250,000-299,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$300,000-349,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$350,000-399,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$400,000-449,999	<input type="checkbox"/> Over \$450,000

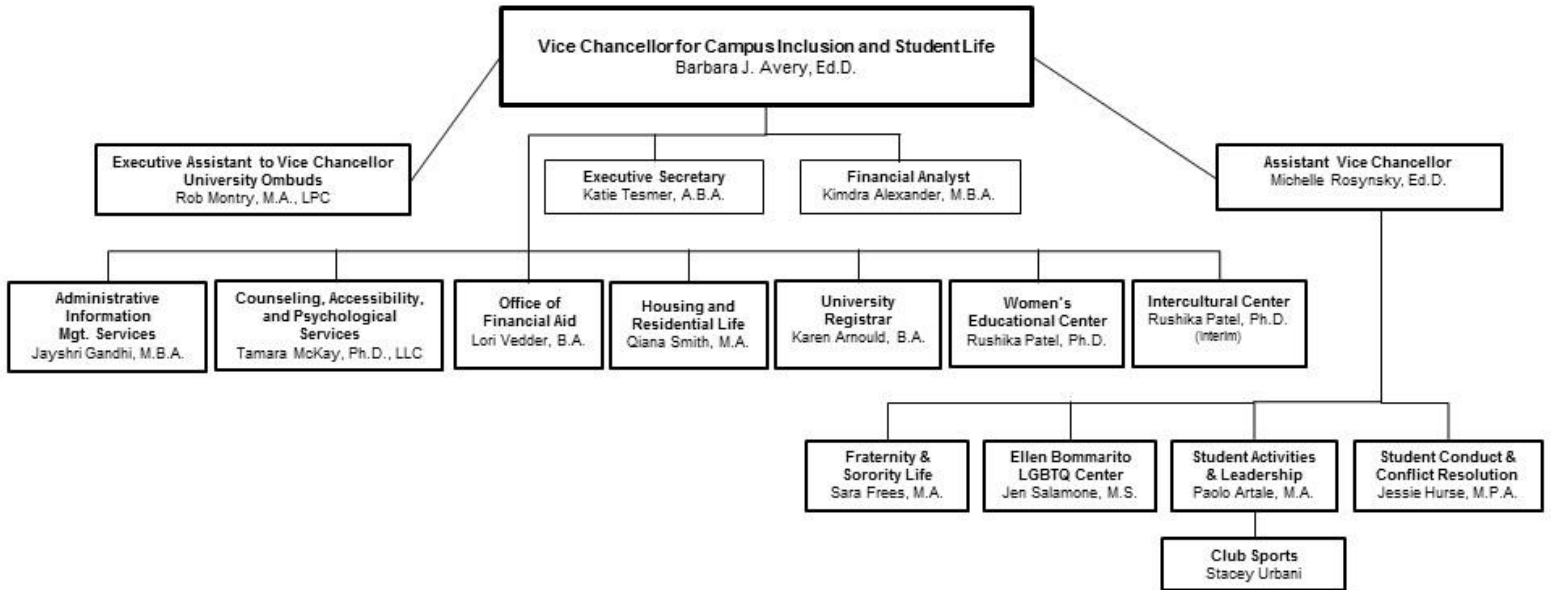
Appendix D: Examples of Student Affairs Organizational Structures

**SAGINAW VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**

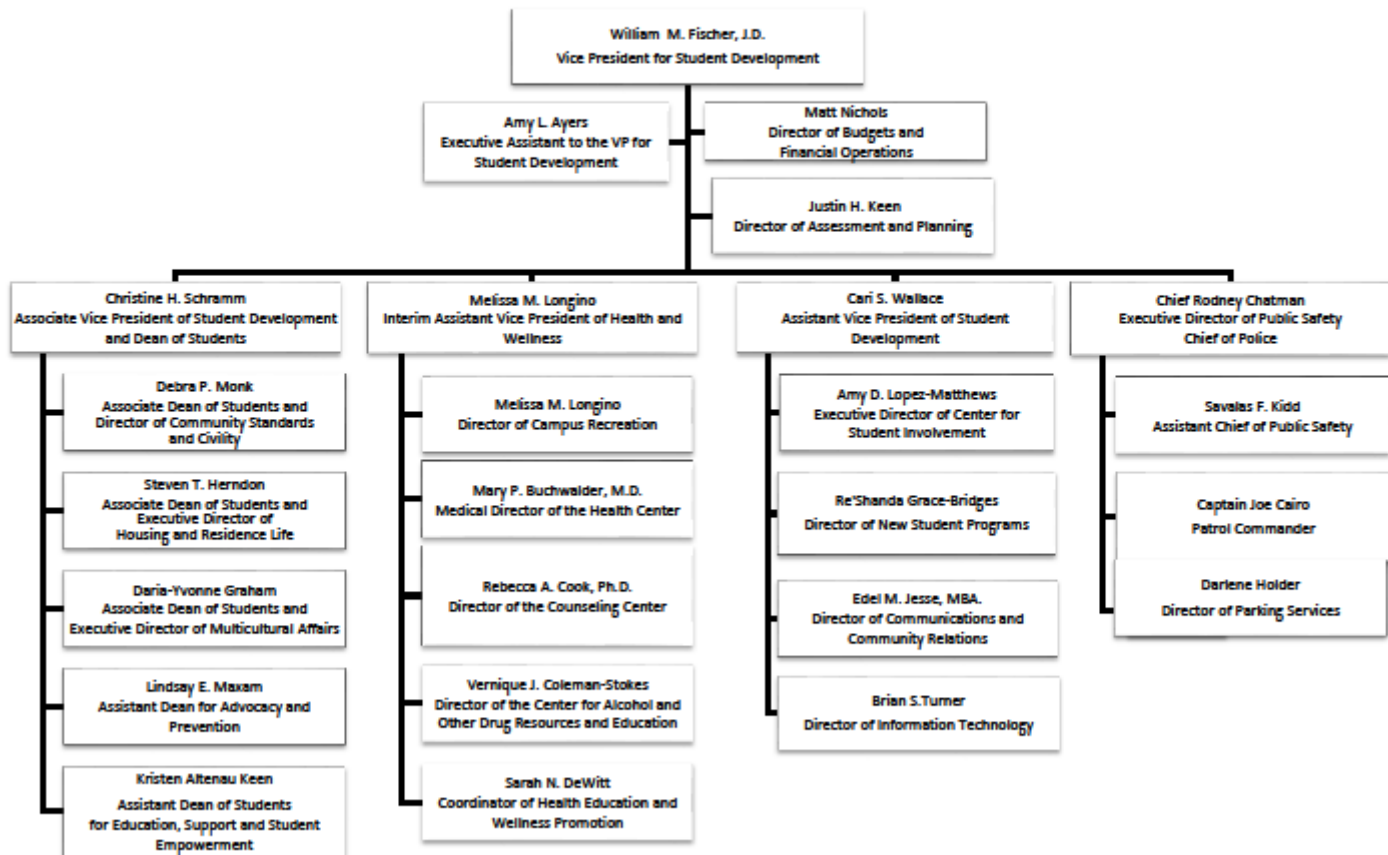
(As of January 26, 2018)



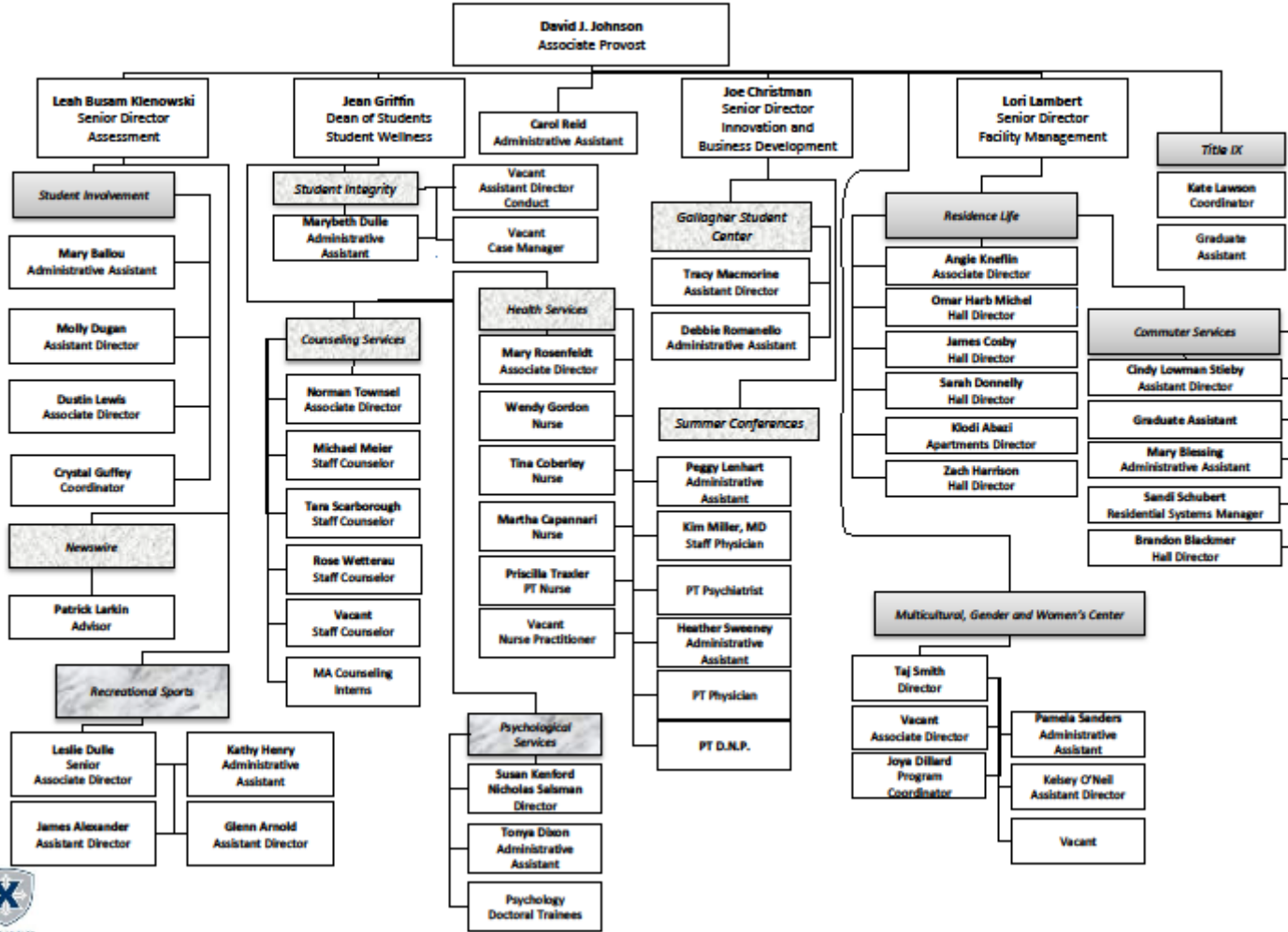
## University of Michigan-Flint Division of Student Affairs



# Division of Student Development



### 2014 -2015 Student Affairs Organizational Chart





**Appendix E: Recruitment Email**

Good Afternoon \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Eboni Turnbow and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at Wayne State University, and I am conducting a study on work and gender in the academy, specifically within student affairs. I also serve as the Assistant Director for the Office of Student Engagement at University of Michigan-Dearborn.

I am emailing to inquire if you'd be willing to assist and possibly be interviewed for my research study. I am studying Work and Gender in the Academy, and I am seeking woman working in mid-level administrative positions in student affairs related divisions, in the Midwest, at mid-size institutions.

As I am in the recruitment phase of my study, I found that you may qualify with this criteria. This is a one-time interview that should take no more than 90 minutes to complete, and will cover topics related to workplace culture, leadership, and family in academia for non-faculty administrators. I am seeking to interview 50 women.

The interview will be audio-recorded (if consented) and occur via a phone call or Zoom/Google Hangout. Participation in this interview is voluntary. If you are interested in participating, I have attached a screening document to ensure you meet the criteria for the research sample.

My goal is to help share the experiences of women working in the middle as this particular population is rarely studied. I hope for the opportunity to hear your story. If not, I absolutely understand and appreciate your time reading this email.

If you know of any other women whom meet the criteria and may be interested in the study, I'd appreciate the referral greatly.

Kind Regards,

Eboni N. Turnbow Department of Sociology, Wayne State University [eturnbow@wayne.edu](mailto:eturnbow@wayne.edu)

## Appendix F: Participant Screening Document

Dear Potential Interviewee:

October, 2018

Thank you for your interest in serving as an interview participant for my research study. As you know, I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at Wayne State University and I am conducting a study on work and gender in the academy, specifically within student affairs.

To ensure you meet the sample criteria for this study, please answer the following questions:

### First and Last Name:

		YES	NO
1.	Are you a non-faculty administrator (work in student support service departments that typically fall within the classification of the division of student affairs sector) in higher education?		
2.	Do you have minimum of five years of professional working experience in student affairs?		
3.	Are you working in a four-year university in one of the following states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin?		
4.	Does your current position incorporate titles such as "Associate Director", "Director," "Assistant Dean" (without faculty retreat rights), OR other titles deemed mid-level by the institution within the middle third of the institution's organizational chart?		
5.	Do you work at an institution with an enrollment size of 5,000-19,999 in the mid-west?		
6.	Do you supervise at least two professional staff members?		
7.	Do you have three or more hierarchical reports above you?		
8.	Do you oversee the management of your department's budget?		

If you answered YES to **all questions one through five**, and YES to **at least one of the questions six through eight** you are eligible to participate in this study.

If you are still interested in participating in the interview, we can now proceed forward. I hope through your participation, researchers will learn more about workplace culture, leadership, and family in the academy, specifically in the student affairs division.



Eboni N. Turnbow  
 Department of Sociology, Wayne State University  
 586-764-1948  
[eturnbow@wayne.edu](mailto:eturnbow@wayne.edu)

### Adviser:

Krista M. Brumley, Department of Sociology  
[kbrumley@wayne.edu](mailto:kbrumley@wayne.edu); 313-577-1418

*For questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at Wayne State University can be contacted at (313) 577-1628.*

### Appendix G: Expanded Participant Demographic Overview

Pseudonym	Public/ Private	Size	Residential /Commuter	Union/ Non- Union	Title	Work Hrs/Week	Years in SA	Association Involvement	Education	Income
Amanda	Public	18K	No answer	No answer	Assist. Director Residential Life	50-54	11	Regular Member	Master's	50K- 59,999
Josie	Private	23K	No answer	No answer	Assist. Director Special Events	40-44/50- 54 (2 jobs)	12	Leadership Position(s)	Doctorate	40K- 49,999
Nailah	Public	19K	No answer	No answer	Assoc. Director of Programs	45-49	9	Leadership Position(s)	Master's	50K- 59,999
Gwen	Public	8.5K	Commuter	Non- Union	Director Student	55-59	8	Regular Members	Master's	40K- 49,999
Yvonne	Public	7.5K	Residential	Non- Union	Director Career Services	45-49	24	Member Only	Master's	60K- 69,999
Karen	Public	19K	Residential	Non- Union	Director - Learning	40-44	18	Member Only	Doctorate	70K- 79,999
Amara	Public	8.5K	Both	Union	Assoc. Director, Multicultural	40-44	25	No Involvement	Master's	50K- 59,999
Olivia	Private	16K	Residential	Non- Union	Director of Student Center	55-59	16	Member Only	Bachelor's	80K- 89,999
Susan	Private	8K	Both	Non- Union	Assistant Dean	40-44	16	Leadership Position(s)	Master's	100K- 109,999
Maria	Public	10K	Commuter	Non- Union	Assoc. Director Student Life	50-54	20	Member Only	Doctorate	40K- 49,999
Angela	Private	10K	Residential	Non- Union	Assoc. Director Student Engagement	50-54	18	No Involvement	Master's	50K- 59,999
Delilah	Public	16K	Residential	Non- Union	Director Diversity Affairs	60-64	16	Member Only	Doctorate	70K- 79,999

Pseudonym	Public/ Private	Size	Residential /Commuter	Union/ Non- Union	Title	Work Hrs/Week	Years in SA	Association Involvement	Education	Income
Serena	Public	17K	Residential	Both	Director Cultural	40-44	8	Regular Member	Master's	60K- 69,999
Alexis	Public	19K	Residential	Non- Union	Director Of Residence Life	50-54	16	Leadership Position(s)	Doctorate	90K- 99,999
Shawna	Private	12K	Residential	Non- Union	Assoc. Director Student Activities	40-44	12	Regular Member	Master's	50K- 59,999
Ciara	Private	10K	Residential	Non- Union	Director Civic Engagement	50-54	20	Member Only	Master's	70K- 79,999
Grace	Private	17K	Residential	Non- Union	Assistant Dean	45-49	7	Member Only	Master's	70K- 79,999
Stephanie	Public	8K	Residential	Non- Union	Director of Cultural Center	60-64	10	No Involvement	Master's	40K- 49,999
Chanel	Private	12K	Residential	Non- Union	Assoc. Dean of Students	40-44	16	Member Only	Master's	60K- 69,999
Julia	Public	8.5K	Residential	Union	Director Women's Center	50-54	14	Member Only	Master's	50K- 59,999
Paige	Private	12K	Residential- Commuter	Non- Union	Director Of Student Life &	45-49	12	Regular Member	Master's	80K- 89,999
Brandi	Public	12K	Commuter	Union	Director Student Life	40-44	10	Regular Member	Master's	70K- 79,999
Janet	Private	14K	Residential	Both	Assist. Dean of Students	60-64	11	Regular Member	Master's	50K- 59,999
Taylor	Public	12K	Residential	Non- Union	Assoc. Director	50-54	29	Member Only	Master's	50K- 59,999
Faith	Public	9K	Residential	Union	Director Cultural Office	50-54	14	Member Only	Master's	60K- 69,999

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Public/ Private</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Residential /Commuter</b>	<b>Union/ Non- Union</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Work Hrs/Week</b>	<b>Years in SA</b>	<b>Association Involvement</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Income</b>
Asia	Public	18K	Commuter	Both	Director Student Conduct & Advocacy	60-64	31	Member Only	Master's	90K- 89,999
Sydney	Public	12K	Commuter	Non- Union	Assoc. Director Veteran Military Center	55-59	10	Member Only	Master's	40K- 49,999
Breeana	Public	17K	Commuter	Both	Director - Counseling	50-54	10	Leadership Position(s)	Doctorate	80K- 89,999
Karleen	Public	11K	Commuter	Non- Union	Assoc. Director Housing & Residence Life	50-54	12	Involved as Regular Member	Master's	50K- 59,999
Meghan	Private	6K	Residential	Both	Director of Diversity & Inclusion	40-44	13	Leadership Position(s)	Master's	80K- 89,999
Erika	Private	10K	Residential	Non- Union	Director of Residence Life	50-54	15	Member Only	Master's	60K- 69,999
Robyn	Public	12K	Residential	Non- Union	Assoc. Director	50-54	27	Leadership Position(s)	Master's	50K- 59,999

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**ABSTRACT****GENDER AND WORK: AN ANALYSIS OF MID-LEVEL WOMEN  
ADMINISTRATORS IN STUDENT AFFAIRS**

by

**EBONI N. TURNBOW****December 2019****Advisor:** Dr. Krista Brumley**Major:** Sociology**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

Research has examined the experiences of women faculty in higher education. However, the experiences of non-faculty mid-level women administrators within higher education continues to be understudied. Women are often the majority in non-faculty positions, yet men dominate senior level positions. Instead, women are frequently clustered in entry and mid-level administrative roles within student affairs divisions or departments, often with limited access to career ladders. Drawing on the theoretical framework of gendered work organizations, this study explores the experiences of women working in non-academic departments, and analyzes how these experiences impact their career advancement at four-year public universities. More specifically, I examine workplace culture, elements of advancement, and student affairs as a helping profession as plausible factors that explain the disparate outcomes of non-faculty women working in higher education.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

**Dr. Eboni N. Turnbow** is the Dean of Students at Humboldt State University. Eboni completed her doctoral work fall 2019 at Wayne State University (WSU) in the Department of Sociology where she studied the impact of gender, work and intersectionality in higher education. She received her M.Ed. in College Student Affairs Leadership at Grand Valley State University, and her B.S. in Secondary Education and Health Studies at WSU.

Eboni serves as the Research and Scholarship Co-Chair on the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Women in Student Affairs (WISA) Knowledge Community board, as well as a participant in the NASPA SERVE Academy fourth cohort. Dr. Turnbow previously served on the NASPA Region IV-E regional board as the Regional Engagement Coordinator, and simultaneously served on the Education Advisory Group national board for the National Association for Campus Activities. She is a Past President of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Michigan, a state division of ACPA.

Recently, Eboni served as the NASPA Region IV-E WISA 9<sup>th</sup> Biennial Drive-in Conference Co-Chair at IUPUI in May 2019, and the WISA Knowledge Community Representative for Region IV-E from 2017-2019. She also served as the Student Leadership Programs Knowledge Community (SLPKC) Representative for NASPA Region IV-E from 2014-2017, where she chaired a Drive-In Conference in May 2015 at Loyola University Chicago. Eboni has served on NASPA Region IV-E's regional conference planning committee from 2015 through 2019.

Eboni is a published author, with her most recent co-authored book chapter, *When Intersections Collide: Young Black Women Combat Sexism, Racism, and Ageism in Higher Education (2019)*. Eboni has also published numerous articles including a co-authored publication, *Challenge, Support, Accountability: Opportunities for Women of Color (2017)*. Other publications include *New Professionals Battle Ageism and Sexism for Career Success (2015)* and *Campus Activities: Enhancing Student Retention while Developing Leaders of Tomorrow (2013)*.

In July 2018, Eboni was recognized by Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Incorporated as the National Greek Advisor of the Year, by NACA with the C. Shaw Smith New Professional Award in February 2016, by NASPA IV-E for the Outstanding New Professional Award in November 2014, and by the Academic Staff Professional Development committee at WSU with the Outstanding Contributor Award in April 2014.

Dr. Turnbow has presented at several local, regional and national conferences for Association of Fraternal Leadership Values (AFLV), Sociologist for Women in Society (SWS), Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), NASPA, NACA, and ACPA. Eboni also served as faculty for the national Programming Basics Institute hosted by NACA from 2015-2019. She is a proud and active member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated.