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**LESS OF A BALANCING ACT AND MORE OF A JUGGLING ACT: HOW
WOMEN WHO WORK IN STUDENT AFFAIRS AND HAVE CHILDREN WITH
DISABILITIES NAVIGATE THEIR DUAL ROLES**

by
Kellie Marie McKinney

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
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Dedications

This dissertation is dedicated with love to my sons, Ayden H. Hahn and Graycen O. McKinney. THIS is for YOU. You both have been and always will be the *why* behind all the things I do in this lifetime. I hope that you both know that being your mother will forever be my greatest accomplishments. No job, award, degree, or publication could ever fulfill me the way being your mother does. Everything I have ever done in my life was to demonstrate to you both that *anything* is possible. Even when something seems so far out of reach, I hope you remember that you can accomplish anything with a little patience, hard work, determination, support from those who love you, and grace. I love you. I love you more. I love you most. I WIN!

Next, I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Frank and Rebecca Perkowsky. Your unwavering support and love made this moment possible. Mom, I could not have asked for a more nurturing, loving, selfless, compassionate, and empathetic mother than you. If I become half the mother you are, I will consider myself lucky and blessed. You taught me the value of family, to prioritize what is important, to slow down, and enjoy the little moments in life, and for that I am eternally grateful. Dad, you instilled in me from a young age that if you want something, you have to work for it. I have *you* to thank for my work ethic, drive, and the ability to persevere through trying times. Thank you for always believing in me, always being the one person in my life to tell me what I *need* to hear rather than what I *want* to hear, and for encouraging me to stand on my own two feet. I hope you both know that I am eternally grateful for your love and encouragement.

Lastly, this is dedicated to you Gram, the one who never stopped believing that I would wear “that funny little hat” one day.

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This seven-year journey has truly been one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my life and I would not be here today as Dr. Kellie Marie McKinney without the support and encouragement of my committee members, family, and friends.

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The completion of this dissertation would not be possible without my husband, Ryan D. McKinney. I would not be celebrating this moment if it was not for you. You are the one who watched day in and day out as I made every attempt over seven years to navigate being a mother, wife, professional, and being a student. You saw me in my greatest and darkest of moments and yet loved and supported me as you have unconditionally for over 10 years now. I hope you know I'm grateful for you every single day, love you always, and will be tangled up in you forever.

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Abstract

Kellie Marie McKinney

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Cecile Sam, Ph.D.

Doctor of Education

Student affairs professionals often grapple with how to attain proper work/family balance (WFB), as being a part of a helping profession can make it extremely difficult for these professionals to set limits and boundaries. In addition, successfully balancing one's work and family domains appears to be more challenging for parents that have children with disabilities than those with typically developing children. Unfortunately, there is a lack of literature examining how women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities achieve WFB. As such, the purpose of this general qualitative study is to describe how women who work in student affairs and have at least one child with at least one disability, describe WFB and navigate their dual roles. The sample included 21 women who were selected utilizing a criterion sampling method and every individual participated in an in-depth semi-structured interview. The collected data was analyzed using process coding and pattern coding. The findings of this study suggest that these women do not try to achieve WFB but rather attempt to *juggle* their multiple roles. They strive to “let go” of the idea that *balance* is achievable, they need workplace flexibility, and they rely on the role of their spouse/partner, family support, the creation of networks, as well as hiring outside agencies, to successfully navigate their dual roles. The findings of this study can assist higher education leaders in understand the important role they play in helping their employees navigate their dual roles.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

Working mothers are the norm in today's society. There are approximately 74.6 million women in the civilian labor force, and within the United States specifically, almost 47% of workers are women (DeWolf, 2017). About 70% of the women who participate in the labor force have children under the age of 18, and over 75% are full-time employees (DeWolf, 2017). In 1960, 11% of mothers with children under the age of 18 were the primary or sole income earners for households, and today, that number has grown to 40% (DeWolf, 2017).

Women make up approximately 67-68% of the entry-level population within the student affairs profession (Turrentine and Conley, 2001). In addition, more than 16.8 million Americans are providing care to children with disabilities and approximately 70% of these caregivers are employed for some duration while simultaneously providing care for their child with disabilities (National Alliance for Caregiving, 2009). Given the increase of women in the labor force, how many of them work in the student affairs profession and the number of caregivers that work while providing care to children with disabilities, it is important to examine how women who work in student affairs and have at least one child with at least one disability, describe work/family balance and navigate their work and family domains.

This chapter begins with the problem statement and context for the study. Within the context section of this chapter, the student affairs profession is explored, as well as work/family balance for women in student affairs and work/family balance for women with children with disabilities. This is followed by the purpose of the study and the

research questions as well as definition of terms. The chapter concludes with the significance of the study as well as an outline of how the study will be organized.

Problem Statement

As long as women continue to have children and work outside the home, most of them will try to navigate their work and family domains. This can be particularly difficult for women who work in student affairs as they have extremely high and sometimes unrealistic demands placed on them regarding time and energy (Tack, 1991). The general problem is that the demands of the student affairs profession can result in an environment that does not encourage or support professionals in balancing their personal and professional lives, as the profession tends to support and promote long workdays, evening hours, as well as working on the weekends (Houdyshell, 2007; Nobbe & Manning, 1997). This type of extensive work schedule results in burnout, high attrition rates, and an unwillingness to pursue career advancement within student affairs (Dale, 2007). This can be especially true for women who are not only making career decisions but also those making choices about children and family (Dale, 2007).

More specifically, navigating work and family domains can also be a challenge for women who work and have children with one or more disabilities. Research indicates that work/family balance is a more complex task for working women with children with disabilities than those with typically developing children (Freedman, Litchfield, & Warfield, 1995; Stewart, 2013). For example, employed parents with children with more severe disabilities and behavior issues experience more difficulties achieving work/family balance than other parents (Brown & Clark, 2017). The type of caregiving these women provide their children is more time consuming and intense than caregiving

provided by working parents of typically developing children, as they frequently need to monitor their child's condition, schedule and/or provide therapies, attend medical treatments, and/or advocate on behalf of their child with various agencies such as social services, schools, therapists, or medical personnel (DeRigne & Porterfield, 2010).

Not only do parents with children with disabilities spend more time providing care for their children than working parents with typically developing children, but they also experience higher levels of stress, are less likely to advance in their careers, and are more likely to need and use accommodations at work than other caregivers (National Alliance for Caregiving, 2009). Finding reliable childcare is also a more difficult task for employed parents of children with disabilities than those caring for typically developing children (Brown & Clark, 2017). The lack of reliable childcare has been linked to women leaving the workforce as well as work/family conflict (Gates & Akabas, 2012; Scott, 2010). As well as reliable childcare, the employee, workplace, and child's characteristics are predictive of work/family conflict (Brown, 2014). Higher levels of work/family conflict occurred when the working mother or their partner worked more hours, there were lower levels of supervisory support, less family supportive organizational policies, or there were greater levels of child difficulties (Brown, 2014). If we want women to succeed within higher education, pursue advanced degrees, and accept professional opportunities, it is important to understand and address the challenges that women face within both their work and family roles.

Context for the Study

The context for this study is broken down into four sections: The history of women in higher education, the student affairs profession, work/family balance for

women in student affairs, and work/family balance for women with children with disabilities. Exploring each of these topics helps one to further understand the problem and need for this study. Each area is described in detail below.

History of Women in Higher Education

Women were not always permitted in the higher education setting. In fact, it was not until 1837 that women were finally able to attend higher education as Oberlin College became the first college to admit women. As the attendance of women increased between 1890 and 1910, male presidents and faculty found themselves uneasy with the presence of women on college campuses (Duffy, 2010). To eliminate the tension related to women on campus, the position "Dean of Women" was created (Duffy, 2010). The first Dean of Women position was established at the University of Chicago in 1892, and by the early 1900s, the dean of women was the highest-ranking woman on campus at most coeducational institutions (Duffy, 2010). From the 1890s through the 1940s, the dean of women created the foundations of professional practice for student affairs administration (Nuss, 2003). Since there were not many other women that the dean of women could consult or collaborate with on their individual campus, they came together in 1910 to create the American Association of University Women (AAUW) (Nuss, 2003). Soon after in 1916, the National Association of Dean of Women (NADW) was established, which focused on the needs of women in education (Nuss, 2003). In 1957, the NADW was renamed the National Association of Women Deans and Counselors (NAWDC), and by the early 1970s, it was renamed the National Association of Women Deans Administrators, and Counselors (NAWAC) due to women assuming new roles outside of

the dean of women title within student affairs (Nuss, 2003). In 2000, the organization was dissolved due to a decline in membership and conference attendance (Nuss, 2003).

The Student Affairs Profession

The field of student affairs is composed of professionals who are dedicated to supporting the academic and personal development of students (Best College Reviews, 2020). This line of work is typically referred to as student affairs, student services, or student personnel (Best College Reviews, 2020). Student affairs professionals specialize in assisting students with a variety of aspects related to the pursuit of their post-secondary education (Best College Reviews, 2020). Due to college and universities' varying sizes, resources, geographic regions, academic specializations, missions, histories, traditions, and cultures, student affairs divisions are structured very differently across institutions (Dungy, 2003). The unique needs of the students at a given institution typically influence how student affairs and educational programs are provided (Dungy, 2003). Academic advising, admissions, athletics, assessment and research, campus safety, career development, college or student unions, community service and service-learning programs, commuter services, counseling and psychological services, dean of students office, dining and food services, disability support services, enrollment management, financial aid, fundraising and fund development, graduate and professional student services, Greek affairs, health services, international student services, judicial affairs, leadership programs, multicultural student services, orientation and student programs, recreation and fitness programs, religious programs and services, registration services, residence life and housing, student activities, women's centers, as well as lesbian, gay,

bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) student services are functional areas that are typically considered functions of student affairs (Dungy, 2003).

A primary purpose of the student affairs profession is to connect people who are in need with people who care. Being attentive to the whole student has been embedded within the core values, philosophy, and literature of the student affairs profession from the onset (Reynolds, 2011). Although the field of student affairs has become highly specialized with many functional areas, student affairs practitioners are first and foremost caretakers, educators, and helpers, expected to actively assist students with the emotional and academic demands of college life and to encourage their personal development (Creamer, Winston, & Miller, 2001). Competencies such as teaching, assessment and evaluation, as well as counseling and helping skills, are hallmarks of the student affairs profession (Komives & Woodard, 2003). Unfortunately, assuming a caring role can at times be challenging for practitioners. Dealing with student's strong emotions, hearing their painful stories, and setting appropriate boundaries can make professionals who take on this helper role feel drained and emotionally overwhelmed (Reynolds, 2011). In addition, individuals can experience self-doubt, perfectionism, emotional exhaustion, and take on too much responsibility for those they are helping (Corey & Corey, 1998). Student affairs practitioners also face challenges associated with having too many demands and not enough time or resources to deal with them, which frequently leads to frustration with institutional bureaucracy and complexities to help those in need (Reynolds, 2011).

The visibility of student affairs professionals on university campuses makes them accessible and approachable to students with a wide range of problems and concerns

(Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004; Winston, 2003). Due to the close personal relationship that practitioners tend to develop with students, as well as the fundamental expectations of some of their jobs, practitioners are prone to work beyond the typical 40 hours per week (Hirt, 2006). In fact, working long hours is a common characteristic within the student affairs profession (Renn & Hughes, 2004; Turrentine, 2005). Practitioners are frequently found working in the evenings as well as on weekends (Hirt, 2006). Not only are student affairs employees regularly required to work long hours, but they are typically not thanked for their work, receive public criticism, are subject to conflicting demands, and are often physically and emotionally exhausted by the end of a term or academic year (Sandeem & Barr, 2009). As a result of the high and at times unrealistic demands placed on student affairs professionals, it can be difficult for practitioners that work within student affairs to find balance between their personal and professional lives (Guthrie, Woods, Cusker, & Gregory, 2005).

Work/Family Balance for Women in Student Affairs

Student affairs professionals often wrestled with how to attain proper work/family balance (Bolton, 2005; Grube, Cedarholm, Jones & Dunn, 2005; Healy, Lancaster, Liddell, & Stewart, 2012; Lancaster, 2005; Turrentine, 2005). Although many aspects of work/family balance exist for both men and women, research suggests that women who work in student affairs are less satisfied with their positions, less satisfied with student affairs in general, and tend to leave higher education at a higher rate than men (Beeny, Guthrie, Rhodes, & Terrell, 2005; Bender, 1980; Blackhurst, 2000). Waltrip (2012) conducted a study in which it was found that women left the field of student affairs due to personal or family related reasons. Every participant in this study denoted that they had to

work long hours, and the long hours resulted in work/family conflict as well as conflict with their additional responsibilities outside of work (Waltrip, 2012). Lastly, the literature indicates that some women feel as though they have less balance between their personal and professional domains in comparison to their male counterparts and women perceive that higher expectations are placed on them at home and work, which adds to their perception of imbalance (Beeny et al., 2005).

In addition, women who are mothers and work in student affairs make considerable efforts to take personal responsibility in balancing work and family roles (Nobbe & Manning, 1997). They carefully plan their decision to have a family and attempt to minimize any inconveniences their family life would have on their colleagues (Nobbe & Manning, 1997). Some women in student affairs change their career goals and plans after having children, while others put their family's needs above jobs or promotions, delay or chose not to pursue an advanced degree, and as alluded to earlier, consider leaving higher education altogether (Marshall, 2009; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Ting & Watt, 1999, Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

Work/Family Balance for Women with Children with Disabilities

The number of children with developmental disabilities in the United States has increased (Heasley, 2017). Developmental disabilities are conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Approximately 15% of children in the United States between the ages of three and 17 have one or more developmental disabilities (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). More than 16.8 million Americans are providing care to children with disabilities (National Alliance for Caregiving, 2009).

Approximately 70% of these caregivers are employed for some duration while simultaneously providing care for their child with disabilities (National Alliance for Caregiving, 2009).

Work environments with supportive supervisors and understanding coworkers are important factors for parents of children with disabilities as they work to achieve work/family balance (Brown & Clark, 2017). A key factor that helps parents cope with their work/family demands of raising a child with disabilities is having a supervisor that provides both influential and emotional support (Matthews, Booth, Taylor, & Martin, 2011). Higher levels of supervisory support have been connected to higher levels of employee retention, lower levels of family interfering with work, and higher levels of work/family balance (Beutell, 2010; Chenot, Benton & Kim, 2009; Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brockwood, & Colton, 2005). In addition, supportive workplace policies such as paid or unpaid parental leave and flexible work hours, have positive outcomes for parents with children with disabilities (Earle & Heymann, 2012; Jang, 2008; Matthews et al., 2011; Rosenzweig et al., 2011; Wakefield, McLoone, Evans, Ellis, & Cohn, 2014). These women have identified that having flexible work hours is the most important supportive workplace policy that impacts their ability to find work/family balance (Jang, 2008; Stewart, 2013). For women with children with disabilities, this is incredibly important as many of their children's doctor appointments, meetings with school personnel, or appointments with other service providers, can only be scheduled during regular business hours (Brown & Clark, 2017). An organization's culture (system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, which govern how people within the organization behave) also impacts a woman's perception of work/family balance.

Organizational cultures that are not supportive of families were predictive of higher levels of work/family conflict and family/work conflict among parents (Stewart, 2013).

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The primary purpose of this general qualitative study is to describe how women who work in student affairs at an accredited higher education institution and have at least one child with at least one disability navigate their work and family domains. Each research question is noted below and followed by sub-questions associated with the primary question.

1. How do women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities describe work/family balance?
 - a. How do these women negotiate their work and family responsibilities?
 - b. What, if any, strategies do these women employ to navigate their dual roles?
 - c. What, if any, factors contribute to work/family balance for these women.
2. How do women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities describe emotional work within their family and work domains?
 - a. In what way does emotional work play a role in the work/family balance for these women?

Definition of Terms

Below are the key working definitions that are utilized throughout this study.

Work/family balance is defined as an individual's perception of the fit between work and family roles (Greenhaus & Allen, 2001). It is often operationalized as the lack of work/family conflict, which is a type of conflict that occurs as a result of one's work and family roles not being compatible with each other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Work/family conflict is viewed as an inter-role conflict that occurs when one's energy, time, or behavioral demands of their work domain conflicts with those of the family role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). It is bidirectional and therefore includes work-to-family conflict as well as family-to-work conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Work/family enrichment is defined as the extent to which the experiences in one life domain improves the quality of life within the other domain (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Indicators of work/family enrichment include developmental, affective, capital, and efficiency benefits from the blending family and work roles, as well as greater individual functioning within both domains (Marshall & Barnett, 1993). Similar to work/family conflict, work/family enrichment is bidirectional.

Student affairs is defined as all functional areas that consist of any advising, counseling, management, or administrative function at a college or university that exists outside of the classroom (Love, 2003).

Children for this study is defined as children 6-17 years of age, who are preschool age, primary school-aged, or secondary-school-age.

Child with disabilities is defined as a child with one or more of the following conditions: Intellectual and developmental disability, hearing impairment (including deafness), speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, or a specific learning disability who needs special education and related services (IDEA Partnership, 2004).

Mother is defined as a woman who gave birth to a child; an individual who conceived a child using a donor egg; a woman who has adopted a child; a co-mother who

has automatically become a child's parent, has acknowledged a child or has been declared a child's parent by a court.

Negotiate is defined as finding a way over or through (an obstacle or difficult path). In this context, we are examining how a woman negotiates their family and work domains.

Strategy is defined as a plan of action designed to achieve a major or overall aim. For this study, the aim is to navigate one's family and work domains.

Significance of the Study

There are four primary reasons that this study is significant. First, with numerous demands professionally and personally, women who work in student affairs that have children, make compromises to navigate their dual roles. These compromises come in a variety of forms. For some women, because of the hectic lives they live, they forgo advanced education, are not significantly involved in professional organizations, pass up professional opportunities, and earn less money (Marshall, 2009). Personal tradeoffs consist of limited time for personal interests, little time for one's self, marital strain, and frequent worry about missing out on their children's lives (Marshall, 2009). Attempting to find a balance between work and family is a challenge in general, but it can be especially difficult for women who work in student affairs who have children (Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Marshall, 2009; Ting & Watt, 1999).

In addition, caring for a child with disabilities is more time-consuming and intense than caregiving provided by working parents of typically developing children (DeRigne & Porterfield, 2010). Three out of four caregivers of children with disabilities make changes to their work status by cutting hours, taking a less demanding job, quitting

altogether, or taking a leave of absence (National Alliance for Caregiving, 2009). The successful balance of work and family responsibilities is a more complex task for working parents of children with disabilities than those with typically developing children (Freedman, Litchfield, & Warfield, 1995; Stewart, 2013). If balancing work and family is difficult for women who work in student affairs, and more complex for women with children with disabilities than for women with typically developing children, then it is imperative we better understand how women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities navigate their dual roles.

Second, there appears to be limited research regarding how women who work in student affairs and women who have children with disabilities navigate their work and family domains. As alluded to earlier, although many studies have examined various aspects of navigating work and family roles, very little research focuses specifically on female professionals in higher education and the complexity of navigating their dual roles within the postsecondary educational setting (Levtov, 2001; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011). In addition, little research has examined *how* parents with children with disabilities navigate their work and family roles and *how* they achieve work/family balance (Brown, 2014; Jang & Appelbaum, 2010). Addressing these gaps in the literature can assist administrators on college campuses to not only become more aware of what factors contribute to work/family balance for women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities, but also how to better support and hopefully retain them.

Third, the potential impact that the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 may have on work/family balance for women also supports the need for continued research within this

area. Trends are starting to indicate that the pandemic has reverted the world to traditional gender roles within households, further deepening the expectation that moms are to “do it all” as they continue to work, perform the majority of duties within their home, and home school their children (Pearson, 2020; Wingard, 2020). Initial studies indicate that the responsibilities mothers now take on as a result of the closing of schools and daycares leave less time for women to be undistracted and focused on their work, which can lead to increased stress and potential burnout (Pearson, 2020; Wingard, 2020).

Lastly, support for work/family balance across all levels of leadership cannot be understated (Morganson, Litano, & O'Neill, 2014). Organizational leaders are perceived to be an imperative source of support for work/family balance due to how frequently they communicate organizational policies and procedures regarding available work/family practices (subsidized childcare, parental leave, working from home) (Budd & Mumford, 2006; Todd & Binns, 2013). In addition, they are also viewed as a significant source of support for work/family balance due to their relationship with their employees (framing and/or role modeling work/family balance) (Budd & Mumford, 2006; Todd & Binns, 2013).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. This chapter (chapter one) provides an introduction to the topic at hand, problematizes the issue, outlined the study's research questions as well as important definitions, and explains the significance of the study. Chapter two offers a review of the literature and a conceptual framework that includes two theories that are the basis for this study. Chapter three focuses on the methodology

for the study, positionality, sample and sample size, data collection, methods, and analysis. Chapter four specifies the finding of this study and chapter five provides a summary of the findings, limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Within recent years, the challenges associated with navigating paid work and home responsibilities have received increased attention. Much of this focus is a result of an increase in the number of dual-earner couples, more mothers being employed outside of the home, and the disappearance of work/life boundaries as the use of technology further blurred the boundaries between work and home domains (Valcour & Hunter, 2005). Although work/life conflict impacts individuals across class, gender, occupation, and ethnicity, they are most prominent among single parents, women, low-income families, racial minorities, individuals with chronic health problems, and employees who are responsible for caring for children or elderly individuals (Brennan, Rosenzweig, Ogilvie, Wuest, & Shindo, 2007; Heymann, Boynton-Jarrett, Carter, Bond, & Galinsky, 2002; Kossek & Lambert, 2005; Byron, 2005; Scott, Edin, London, & Mazelis, 2001).

Literature relevant to the balance of work and family obligations for working mothers, particularly those who work in student affairs as well as working mothers that have children with at least one disability has set the background for this research. This review of the literature covers five main topics: 1) examining the work/family interface which includes work/family balance, work/family conflict, and work/family enrichment 2) the impact of gender expectations and assumptions on working mothers 3) the field of student affairs, and challenges faced by women in the student affairs profession 4) factors that impact work/family balance for women who work in student affairs, and 5) factors that impact work/family balance for women with children with disabilities. This literature review concludes with an examination of Clark's Family Border Theory (2000) and

Hochschild's (1983) Emotional Labor, the two primary theories that will be used as aspects of the conceptual framework for this study. In addition to these two primary theories, a disability interpretive lens will be used to further understand how having a child with a disability is viewed simply as a dimension of human differences.

Work/Family Interface

Achieving work/family balance continues to be a challenge for individuals who work in the workforce as well as the organizations that employ them (McMillan, Morris, & Atchley, 2011). Issues and challenges associated with work/family balance impact everyone, regardless of their educational background, gender, income level, family structure, occupation, race, age, job status, or religion (McMillan, Morris, & Atchley, 2011). This section of the literature review examines the origin of work/family balance, compares the terms work/life balance and work/family balance, and defines work/family balance, work/family conflict, and work/family enrichment.

History of Work/Family Balance

Jain and Nair (2013) provide a historical synopsis of the evolution of the term work/family balance. The importance of understanding this origin is to understand how relatively new this term is as well as how complex understanding the work-family interface can be. As cited in Jain and Nair (2013), the concept of work/family balance originated in the United Kingdom in the 1970s. From the onset, work/family balance was frequently examined from a conflict perspective. In 1985, Greenhaus and Beutell explored work-family conflict as a conflict that occurs when work interferes with family (Jain & Nair, 2013). Three years later, Chow and Berheide developed the separate-spheres model in which they identified that there was a segregated approach to work and

family (Jain & Nair, 2013). Frone (1992) went on to establish that work-family conflict is a bidirectional process (Jain & Nair, 2013). Barnett's (1998) work led to the finding that work and family are two spheres that have considerable overlap. In 2002, Werbel and Walter observed that work and family domains are interdependent and complementary (Jain & Nair, 2013). In the past two decades, the study of work/family balance transitioned from only focusing on work-family conflict to examining positive relationships between the work and family domains (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne & Grzywacz, 2006; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). For example, Greenhaus and Powell (2006), developed the term work/family enrichment and examined the extent to which experiences in one role increase performance and positive affect in the other role (Jain & Nair, 2013). A few years later, McMillan, Morris, and Atchley (2011) went on to coin the term work-family harmony and found that work and life domains are interwoven into a single narrative of life (Jain & Nair, 2013).

Examining Work/Life Balance and Work/Family Balance

How one examines the relationship between their work and the remaining aspects of their life depends on the language that is used. The two terms that are used frequently to describe this relationship are *work/family balance* and *work/life balance*. Routinely, the term *work/family balance* is used to denote *work/life balance* however, the two constructs have important distinctions (Guest, 2002). For example, *work/life balance* is defined as the absence of undesirable levels of conflict between work and non-work responsibilities, with *work* defined as paid employment, and *life* defined as all activities outside of work or “nonwork” activities (Guest, 2002).

Work/family balance is often defined as an individual's perception of the fit between work and family roles (Greenhaus & Allen, 2001). It is frequently operationalized as the lack of work/family conflict, which is a type of conflict that occurs as a result of one's work and family roles not being compatible with each other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The term *work/family balance* will be used throughout this study due to the longevity of the term, its wide usage, and its ease of understandability. While *work/life balance* is an important notion to study and it should be recognized that individuals may assume more roles than just those within the work and family domains, the term *work/family balance* is a better fit for this study since the purpose of this study is to examine how women navigate the work and family domains.

Constructs of Work/Family Balance, Work/Family Conflict, and Work/Family

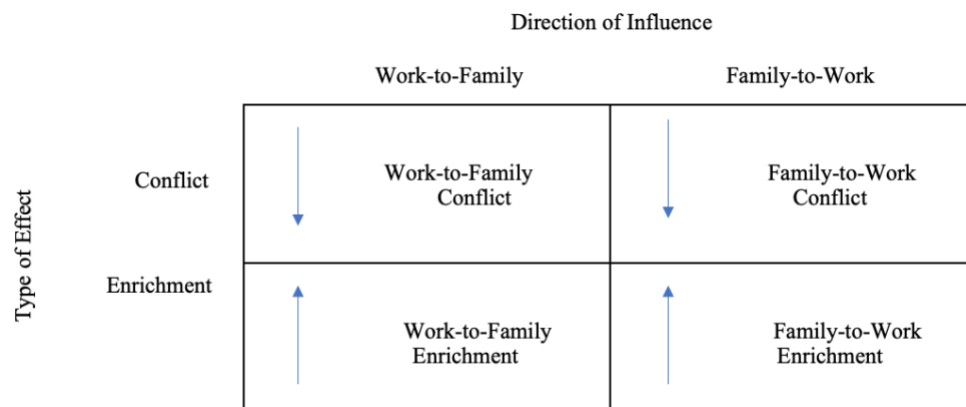
Enrichment

Before the terms *work/family balance*, *work/family conflict*, and *work/family enrichment* are explored and defined, it is important to note that these constructs share similarities that increase and influence our understanding of the work-family interface (McMillan, Morris, & Atchley, 2011). *Work/family balance* reflects an overarching characterization of an individual's engagement in and enjoyment of their many roles across the work and family domains (Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Valcour & Zedeck, 2007). *Work/family conflict* and *work/family enrichment* reflect the extent to which one role negatively or positively impacts the other. In other words, *balance* can be viewed as a more global perspective than one's individual experiences of conflict and enrichment (Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Valcour & Zedeck, 2007). Figure 1 below depicts the dimensions of work/family balance. The two components that are represented are the

direction of influence between work and family roles (work-to-family and family-to-work) and the type of effect (conflict or enrichment) (Frone, 2003). The direction of influence refers to both work/family conflict and work/family enrichment being bidirectional constructs (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Zhang et al., 2012). For example, work/family conflict may occur when work interferes with family (work/family conflict) and also may occur when family interferes with work (family/work conflict) (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Work-to-family enrichment occurs when experiences associated with the work domain improve the family domain, and family-to-work enrichment occurs when family experiences improve the quality of the work domain (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The arrows within the figure indicate that low levels of inter-role conflict and high levels of inter-role enrichment represent work/family balance (Frone, 2003).

Figure 1

Dimensions of Work/Family Balance



Note. Figure adapted from Frone, M. R. (2003). Work-family balance. In J. C. Quick & L. E. Tetrick (Eds.), *Handbook of occupational health psychology* (pp. 143–162). American Psychological Association.

It has not been until recently that scholars have begun to integrate the constructs of conflict and enrichment to demonstrate a fuller picture of the work-family intersection (Gareis, Barnett, Ertel, & Berkman, 2009). To examine work/family balance in its totality, I utilize the constructs of *work/family conflict* and *work/family enrichment* in addition to *work/family balance*.

Work/Family Balance. Although the term *work/family balance* is widely accepted, a formal definition of this term remains difficult to articulate (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). It is used as a noun when one is encouraged to achieve balance, as a verb when describing balancing work and family demands, and as an adjective as in a balanced life (Kofodimos, 1993). *Work/family balance* often implies cutting back on work to spend more time with the family, and there is thought that it is in an individual's best interest to live a balanced life (Kofodimos, 1993). Definitions of work/family balance can typically be categorized based on the two key dimensions of role engagement in multiple roles within work and nonwork life and minimal conflict between work and nonwork roles (Sirgy & Lee, 2017).

For this study, work/family balance is viewed from two lenses. Work/family balance is defined as an individual's perception of the fit between work and family roles (Greenhaus & Allen, 2001). In addition, it is defined as the accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and their role-related partners in the work and family domains' (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). This additional definition is important because it views the construct from a social domain which makes it subject to observation (Carlson, Grzywacz, & Zivnuska, 2009). Also, it does not impose how accomplishing role-related responsibilities is achieved, which is

beneficial because it suggests that work/family balance is possible regardless of incidents of work-family conflict (Carlson, Grzywacz, & Zivnuska, 2009). Lastly, this definition focuses on the outcomes connected with balance rather than individual perceptions, and it is consistent with interpretations of role theory (Marks & MacDermid, 1996).

Work/Family Conflict. *Work/family conflict* is typically viewed as an inter-role conflict that occurs when one's energy, time, or behavioral demands of their work domain conflicts with those of the family role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). As noted earlier, it is bidirectional and therefore includes work-to-family conflict as well as family-to-work conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Each direction is assumed to have different antecedents, and in some instances, different consequences (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991). As alluded to earlier, the concepts of *work/family balance* and *work/family conflict* are closely intertwined concepts as conflict and balance are frequently defined or implied based on the absence of the other (Kossek & Lee, 2017). For example, work/family balance is operationalized as the lack of work/family conflict, which is a type of conflict that occurs as a result of one's work and family roles not being compatible with each other (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Work/Family Enrichment. *Work/family enrichment* has been defined as the extent to which the experiences in one life domain *improves* the quality of life within the other domain (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Indicators of work/family enrichment include developmental, affective, capital, and efficiency benefits from the blending family and work roles, as well as greater individual functioning within both domains (Marshall & Barnett, 1993). This work/family enrichment definition provided by Greenhaus and

Powell (2006) is used throughout this study. As alluded to earlier, similar to work/family conflict, work/family enrichment is bidirectional. Work-to-family enrichment occurs when an individual's work experiences improve the quality of their family life and family-to-work enrichment occurs when their family experiences improve the quality of their work life (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). For example, an individual's partner might offer an idea or recommendation on how to better perform a work task, or a productive day at work may result in more intentional interactions with one's family at home (Gareis, Barnett, Ertel, & Berkman, 2009).

Expectations and Assumptions of Working Mothers

Stereotypes of women specify that certain behaviors are appropriate for them to perform while others are not (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004). For example, a common stereotype about women is that they are interpersonally warmer and more communal than men when interacting with others (Christopher & Wojda, 2008). This belief leads to the expectation that women are supposed to be attentive to the roles of mother and/or wife over being a professional (Christopher & Wojda, 2008). In addition, this cultural stereotype that depicts women as communal can also lead to the belief that women are ineffective within their professional role (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012). It is believed that one must be assertive, strong, and dominant to be successful within the workforce. Communal characteristics such as being warm, emotional, or caring are inconsistent with the attributes that society believes are necessary for job success which may result in a perceived lack of fit (Heilman, 1983; Heilman, 2001). Research indicates that this perceived lack of fit is particularly salient for working mothers because the concept of motherhood embodies the cultural perception of what it means to be a woman

and as a result, it amplifies the perception that mothers embody the stereotypical feminine characteristics of being communal (Cuddy et al., 2004; Heilman & Okimoto 2008).

Stereotypes of Working Mothers

Studies indicate that stereotypes can have a detrimental effect. For example, when an individual tends to their family obligations, it is assumed that there is a reduction in that individual's commitment to their job (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004). Similarly, when a working parent tends to their work obligations, it is assumed that there is a reduction in their commitment to their family (Bridges & Etaugh, 1995; Etaugh & Nokolny, 1990).

Although these assumptions can be made about any working parent, it is more of a concern for mothers because it is not only assumed that they lack commitment, but it is also assumed that they are less capable within their work role as compared to nonworking mothers and working fathers (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008). In addition, it has been found that assumptions that are made about a mother's effectiveness within their motherhood role can be an additional source of psychological distress which could distract an individual from being effective within both the family and work domains (Bridges, 1987; Bridges & Orza, 1992; Etaugh & Study, 1989; Okimoto & Heilman, 2012). Unfortunately, working mothers face a difficult scenario as motherhood provokes assumptions about their work ineffectiveness and if they prove to be competent within their work domain, they are assumed to be ineffective as a parent (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012).

The Field of Student Affairs

Literature indicates that the high and impractical demands within the student affairs profession may be causing female leaders to leave the field (Tack, 1991). If higher education wants to retain student affairs professionals, they must find a way to keep them from being stretched beyond their professional and physical limits (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998). Without understanding and developing appropriate interventions to address these challenges, it is likely that the trend of women leaving student affairs at a higher rate than their male counterparts will continue (Bailey, 2011).

The Foundation and Values of Student Affairs

The Student Personnel Point of View (1937) is a keystone document that was instrumental in establishing the foundation of the student affairs profession. Two main concepts from this document have remained consistent throughout the history of student affairs. The first idea is the consistent emphasis on and commitment to the development of the whole student (Nuss, 2003). The second is that the student affairs profession was originally founded to support the academic mission of the institution, as a hallmark of the profession is the commitment to supporting the diversity of institutional and academic missions (Nuss, 2003). After World War II, *The Student Personnel Point of View* (1949) statement was released. This statement focused on the structure and fundamental components of a student personnel program (Nuss, 2003). In addition, the importance of assessment and evaluation of services was explicit, and it is this part of the statement that signifies student affairs as an empirically based profession (Evans & Reason, 2001).

The values of the student affairs profession focus on individuals, their context, and caring. The values of individuals include wholeness, uniqueness, experience, and

responsibility while the values of context include community, equality, and justice (Nuss, 2003). Caring is a goal of a professional's practices and is an important value as it links individuals to their context. The field of student affairs has denoted caring as the concern for human betterment over benign attention to one's context (Nuss, 2003). Some researchers have used the term altruism to denote the type of caring that student affairs professionals carry out and have stated that it is an essential value of the profession (Sandeen, 1985; Young & Elfrink, 1991). Altruism is described as primarily selfless service to others and as such, the term service is another name for the value of caring (Nuss, 2003). To serve is the fundamental mission of student affairs and higher education institutions and the concept of caring supports this fundamental mission (Nuss, 2003).

Student Affairs as a Helping Profession

Being a part of a helping profession can make it extremely difficult for student affairs professionals to set limits and boundaries (Guthrie, Woods, Cusker, & Gregory, 2005). For example, practitioners may find it particularly challenging to attain balance due to the 24/7 nature of their work, their participation in the informal life of the college, and the demands associated with being a part of a helping profession (Guthrie, Woods, Cusker, & Gregory, 2005). More recently, there has been an increase in the presence and severity of mental health issues on college campuses (Reynolds, 2013). As a result, student affairs professionals are spending an exorbitant amount of time addressing the needs of distressed students (Levine & Cureton, 1998). Literature suggests that student-facing high levels of depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, self-injurious behavior, posttraumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and other serious mental health issues as well as frequently engaging with highly involved parents, place increased demands on

student affairs professionals (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007; Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004; Soet & Sevig, 2006).

In addition, the student affairs professionals typically adopt a mindset and work ethic that involves not delegating tasks, being a mentor for *all* colleagues and students, infrequently using the word "no", and believing that the concept of accomplishment is synonymous with exhaustion and fatigue (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998). Furthermore, higher education administration is among the 12 most stressful occupations which impact the level of job satisfaction of student affairs professionals (Charlesworth & Nathan, 1985). Managers within student affairs have reported higher levels of job stress and pressure compared to professionals within other divisions (Volkwein & Zhou, 2003).

In addition, research suggests that women do not feel as though they had balance between their personal and professional lives and did not have enough time to spend with family and friends due to the high demands of the student affairs profession. In addition, 12% of the individuals sampled left the profession to stay at home to take care of their children (Marshall et al., 2016). This specific finding from the study is especially important to note, especially given the long hours that some student affairs professionals work and the expectation that student affairs professionals must sacrifice personal time and put students' needs first (Marshall et al., 2016). This workplace environment can result in burnout, work-life conflicts, and as denoted throughout the literature, result in professionals leaving the field (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Marshall et al., 2016).

Women in Student Affairs

Even though women have made advancements within the workforce, gender equality in higher education and student affairs specifically has not yet been achieved.

Academia is still considered a man's profession (Bracken, Allen, & Dean, 2005; Jaschik, 2007, Pratt, 2002). Although it is challenging to find an exact number of how many women work in student affairs today, Turrentine and Conley (2001) found that women made up 67-68% of the entry-level population. With that said, in senior administrative positions, research indicates that women assume less than half of the positions (Dale, 2007). Roles such as deans, vice presidents, and administrators are still occupied by majority men, while women remain in mid-level administrative positions such as deans and directors or assume lower-level positions (Schwartz, 2000).

Challenges Faced by Women in Student Affairs

Student affairs is a male-constructed profession, as higher education institutions, like organizations within the corporate sector, were designed and created from a male perspective (Dale, 2007). In this environment, women often have to adapt to styles of leadership and management based on male constructs. Studies have echoed that women's experiences are different from men's experiences, and the notion of trying to conform to a single (male) standard adds to the women's negative experiences (Spurlock, 2009). Researchers have found that women who want to pursue families and have children are disadvantaged in this male-constructed environment as women administrators in higher education believe that having children has a negative impact on their careers (Marshall & Jones, 1990).

Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, Johnson, and Kicklighter (1998) examined the relationship between workload, burnout, and stress among full-time student affairs administrators and its association with gender. Their work suggests that being married and having children is more stressful for women than for men and that although there are

more women in the student affairs profession than there are men, very few of them obtain a top administrative position (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998). Their work also proposes that women leave the student affairs profession because of the challenges associated with trying to navigate raising a family and working nearly 50 hours a week (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998). Obtaining mid-level positions frequently coincides with the same timeframe in which a woman is making decisions about having a family and as a result, women in the mid-level positions have a tendency to leave student affairs (Dale, 2007). Nobbe and Manning's (1997) study suggests that women are more likely to alter their career goals and slow their advancement into higher positions once they have children. Houdyshell's (2007) findings also suggest that women within mid-management consider the impact having a family would have on their advancement within the field. In addition, Bender (1980) found that women may be more apt to leave the student affairs profession than men due to the lack of advancement opportunities.

Work/Family Balance for Mothers that Work in Student Affairs

As noted in Chapter 1, student affairs professionals often wrestled with how to attain proper work/family balance (Bolton, 2005; Grube, Cedarholm, Jones & Dunn, 2005; Healy, Lancaster, Liddell, & Stewart, 2012; Lancaster, 2005; Turrentine, 2005). Although many aspects of work/family balance exist for both men and women, research suggests that women who work in student affairs are less satisfied with their positions, less satisfied with student affairs in general, and tend to leave higher education at a higher rate than men (Beeny, Guthrie, Rhodes, & Terrell, 2005; Bender, 1980; Blackhurst, 2000). In addition, women feel as though they have less balance between their personal and professional domains in comparison to their male counterparts and that they have

higher expectations placed on them at home and work, which adds to their perception of imbalance (Beeny et al., 2005). This section examines the workplace and family factors that impact work/family balance for women who work in student affairs.

Workplace Factors

Padulo (2001) analyzed the factors that detract from and enhance the success of women with children who work in student affairs. Padulo (2001) found that having a flexible work schedule, an educated, understanding, trusting, and supportive supervisor, as well as manageable job responsibilities which give flexibility regarding when and where to accomplish work tasks are workplace factors that enhance a woman's ability to manage both a family and her work in student affairs. In addition, Padulo (2001) denoted that long hours and the amount of evening and weekend work, the student affairs organizational culture which rewards long hours and does not value balance, and poor compensation are workplace factors that detract from a woman's ability to manage a family and her work in student affairs. Women in this study believed that the most important factors in managing work and family for a woman in student affairs were flexibility of their work schedule, supportive supervision, manageable job description, few weekend and evening work obligations, a supportive organizational culture, and adequate compensation and benefits (Padulo, 2001).

In addition, the literature suggests that women who work in student affairs and have children face additional challenges within the work environment due to their child-care commitments (Mason, 2009). For example, networking events such as conferences or workshops typically occur outside of work hours yet are often encouraged, required, or looked upon favorably especially when it comes to advancement opportunities (Wilson et

al., 2015). Nobbe & Manning (1997) found in their study that student affairs women were more likely to change their career goals and were also slower in obtaining higher positions once they had children. Women within this study also reported that they felt as though they had to prove their commitment, productivity, and performance would not suffer as a result of having children. In addition, the research indicates that some key factors helped women transition back to work after having children. These factors include the ability to use technology, feasible work options, finding quality childcare at an affordable price, and having a supportive partner (Nobbe & Manning, 1997).

Family Factors

Bailey (2011) interviewed 15 women about their experiences navigating motherhood and being a student affairs professional. Through this study, it was found that women frequently are torn between their competing priorities within their work and family domains (Bailey, 2011). Bailey (2011) found that this was particularly true when their children were sick, had work meetings outside of typical business hours, or had to deal with after-hour work crises. Bailey (2011) also explored the strategies mothers utilized to manage their dual roles. It was found that five of the most common ways that women negotiated work/life balance were self-constructed (Bailey, 2011). These strategies were building support systems, defining boundaries, managing time efficiently, focusing on family, taking care of self (Bailey, 2011). Similarly, Gelwick (1984) found that the women who were student affairs professionals with children identified that having flexible spouses who were willing to assume non-traditional roles was an important factor in maintaining work/family balance (Gelwick, 1984). In addition,

mothers noted that the personal ability to set boundaries within both domains was another important factor (Gelwick, 1984).

Work/Family Balance for Women with Children with Disabilities

Feedman, Litchfield, and Warfield (1995) found that successfully balancing one's work and family domains appears to be more complex for families that have children with disabilities than those with typically developing children. This section will examine the workplace and family factors that impact work/family balance for women who work and have children with disabilities.

Workplace Factors

Organizational factors have been found to impact the work/family balance of employed parents with children with disabilities. Researchers have examined variables related to supervisory support, workplace policies, and organizational culture, and each is discussed below. It is important to keep in mind that although each organizational factor is examined separately in this literature review, they do interact with one another, and the same can be true for the family factors that are discussed after organizational factors.

Supportive Supervisor. A supportive supervisor is defined as an individual who appreciates the difficulties that employees may experience as they try to achieve work/family balance (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). They usually provide instrumental (e.g., allowing one to bring one's child to work) or emotional (e.g., expressions of concern) support (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Brown (2014) found that higher levels of supervisory support are linked with lower levels of work/family conflict. Similarly, Gates and Akabas (2012) found that higher levels of supervisory support are associated with lower levels of work caregiving conflict. Overall, higher levels of supervisory support are related to

higher levels of employee retention (Chenot et al., 2009), lower levels of family interfering with work (Beutell, 2010), and higher levels of work/family balance (Hammer et al., 2005).

Workplace Policies. Many studies have indicated that supportive workplace policies, such as paid or unpaid parental leave and flexible working hours, are important contributors to many positive outcomes for employed parents with children with disabilities (Earle & Heymann, 2012; Jang, 2008; Matthews et al., 2011; Rosenzweig et al., 2011; Wakefield et al., 2014). Researchers have found that the availability of parental leave impacts the ability to find work/family balance, the number of hours an employee worked, leaving employment altogether, and switching to less demanding careers (Baker & Drapela, 2010; Bourke-Taylor et al., 2011; DeRigne & Porterfield, 2010; Freedman et al., 1995; Jang, 2008; Matthews et al., 2011; Rosenzweig et al., 2002; Scott, 2010; Stewart, 2013). Flexible work hours have been found to impact the ability of parents with children with disabilities to find work/family balance, and also might be the most important of all of the supportive workplace policies (Stewart, 2013). Rosenzweig et al. (2002) noted that workplace flexibility is critical because community-based support systems for employed parents of children with disabilities are either non-existent or significantly limited. For example, some doctors and service providers will only schedule appointments during regular business hours, and schools are sometimes also inflexible as meetings are typically held during just a few hours within the school day (Rosenzweig et al., 2002). Stewart (2013) found that flexible work arrangements were predictive of lower levels of family/work conflict. Through both quantitative and qualitative measures, Jang

(2008) found that for employed parents of children with disabilities flexible work schedules were predictive of higher levels of work/family balance and well-being.

Organizational Culture. Researchers have found that supervisor flexibility and support impact the ability of parents of children with disabilities to find work/family balance (Brown & Clark, 2017). Organizational culture, particularly family-supportive organizational cultures, has been found to impact one's ability to find work/family balance (Brown, 2014; Ricketts, 2008; Stewart, 2013). Organizations that have high levels of family-supportive organizational culture are associated with lower levels of work/family conflict and work-in-family conflict (Brown, 2014). In addition, Stewart (2013) found that workplace cultures that did not support employee's family domain were predictive of higher levels of work/family conflict and family/work conflict.

Family Factors

There are also factors within the family domain that impact work/family balance for employed parents of children with disabilities. Some of these factors include the child's age, the number of children in the household, childcare availability, presence of a relationship partner such as a spouse, and the perception of the ones' work role (Brown & Clark, 2017). Each factor is discussed in detail below.

Number of Children and Their Age. Researchers have found that the number of children within a home can lead to parenting role stress (Warfield, 2005; Rosenzweig, Brennan, Huffstutter, & Bradley, 2008), a reduction in the number of hours the parent works (Brandon, 2000; Hauge et al., 2013), changes within employment status (Porterfield, 2002; Cuskelly, Pulman, & Hayes, 1998) and a reduction in work/family fit (Rosenzweig et al., 2008). The stress that parents experience could be due to the

increased financial pressure that is associated with a larger family as well as having more responsibilities and not enough time to do it (Brown & Clark, 2017). Cuskelly et al. (1998) found that in instances in which there is more than one child in the family and more than one child with disabilities, parental caregiving responsibilities and their impact on factors related to employment may grow exponentially. In addition, research indicates that the age of a child with a disability impacts parenting stress (Rosenzweig et al., 2008; Morris, 2012), changes the number of hours the parent will work (Leiter et al., 2004; Loprest & Davidoff, 2004), and also impacts a parents unemployment or underemployment status (Porterfield, 2002; Loprest & Davidoff, 2004; Bourke-Taylor et al., 2011). In addition, researchers also suggest that having a child with a disability who is not school-aged yet, deepens the negative effects on employment and work/family balance, and many of these negative effects are linked to the lack of available childcare (Brown & Clark, 2017).

Childcare Availability. Galinsky (1992) found that childcare difficulties negatively affect employee performance and well-being. Parents have increased absenteeism, interference with concentration on job tasks, lower marital and parental satisfaction, and increased stress-related health problems (Galinsky, 1992). Childcare is especially problematic for parents with children with disabilities, and in some instances finding appropriate childcare and paying for the care may be impossible (Freedman et al., 1995; Rosenzweig et al., 2008). This is particularly worsened for employed parents with children with disabilities because their employment and financial stability are necessitated by having access to consistent childcare (Brown & Clark, 2017). The availability or adequacy of childcare for children with disabilities is a substantial factor in

the parent's employment status (Brennan & Brannan, 2005). More specifically, the lack of reliable childcare has been linked to mothers leaving the workforce and work-family conflict (Gates and Akabas 2012; Scott 2010).

Relationship Status. Many researchers have examined the impact of one's relationship status on their ability to find work/family balance (Brennan & Poertner, 1997; DeRigne & Porterfield, 2010; Hauge et al., 2013; Scott, 2010; Stoner & Stoner, 2016). The status of one's relationship is suggested to be important as partners provide important support such as taking a child with disabilities to a doctor or therapy appointment or listening to a partner's concerns about the child (Scott, 2010). Scott (2010) found that single mothers were more likely to be employed than married mothers and that they were more likely to experience changes in their career trajectories. These career trajectories changes tended to be negative as compared to married mothers. Similarly, DeRigne and Porterfield (2010) noted that married mothers and fathers with children with disabilities were less likely to make employment changes as compared to single mothers with children with disabilities.

Perception of the Work Role. Researchers have studied the quality of the work role and how it impacts work/family balance for parents with children with disabilities (Al-Yagon & Cinamon, 2008; Freedman et al., 1995; Morris, 2012, 2014; Shearn & Todd, 2000; Warfield, 2001; Watt & Wagner, 2013). An overarching finding is that when the work domain provides emotional support and improves role identity, parents with children with disabilities may recover from stressors in the family domain (Matthews et al., 2011; Olsson & Hwang, 2006). For example, Freedman et al. (1995) found that the work domain provided psychological benefits for parents with children with disabilities

as work provided a break from caregiving responsibilities. They also found that supportive workplaces with supportive coworkers and supervisors were also an important factor in helping parents find work/family balance (Freedman et al., 1995). In addition, Warfield (2001) found that when mothers perceived work as interesting they reported less parenting stress when parenting demands were classified as a low or moderate level. Warfield (2005) went on to find that mothers with high work interest experienced less parenting stress when compared to mothers with low work interest, however, this did not hold true for mothers that had children with behavior problems. When children had behavior problems, high work interest was related to higher levels of parent's stress, which might be the result of those mothers needing to reduce their work hours to provide care to their children (Warfield, 2005).

Women in Student Affairs with Children with Disabilities

As one can see from this literature review, women with children with disabilities and women who work in student affairs have their own sets of challenges when it comes to work/family balance. Although there are some unique challenges each group faces, there are some clear overlaps, especially when it comes to the need for flexibility within their work schedules and the need for supportive supervision. Unfortunately, there is a lack of literature when it comes to understanding how women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities navigate work/family balance. Addressing these gaps in literature can assist administrators on college campuses to not only become more aware of what factors contribute to work/family balance for women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities, but also how to better support and hopefully retain them.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study includes two primary theoretical frameworks. They are Clark's Work/Family Border Theory (2000) and Hochschild's (1983) Emotional Labor, each of which is described below. After each theory is explained individually, how Clark's Work/Family Border Theory (2000) and emotional labor shape work/family balance will be discussed. In addition to these two theoretical frameworks, this study uses a disability interpretive lens to further understand how having a child with a disability is a dimension of human differences (Mertens, 2003). A child with a disability is not viewed from a deficit framework but rather seen as an additional aspect of the participant's life that makes their experiences different from others. The disability interpretive lens and its relevance to this study is discussed further at the end of this section.

Work/Family Border Theory

Clark's (2000) Work/Family Border Theory will be used as the primary theory for this study. Clark's (2000) research was designed to address the gaps in the literature regarding previous theories focused on the work and family domains. This theory is relevant to this study as it provides a way to examine the navigation between one's work and family domains and provides a framework for understanding why work/family conflict occurs. It can also be used to identify ways to facilitate work/family balance (Clark, 2000).

Description of the Theory. Clark's (2000) Work/Family Border Theory helps one to understand how individuals manage and negotiate their work and family roles and the borders between them in an effort to attain balance. This theory has several key

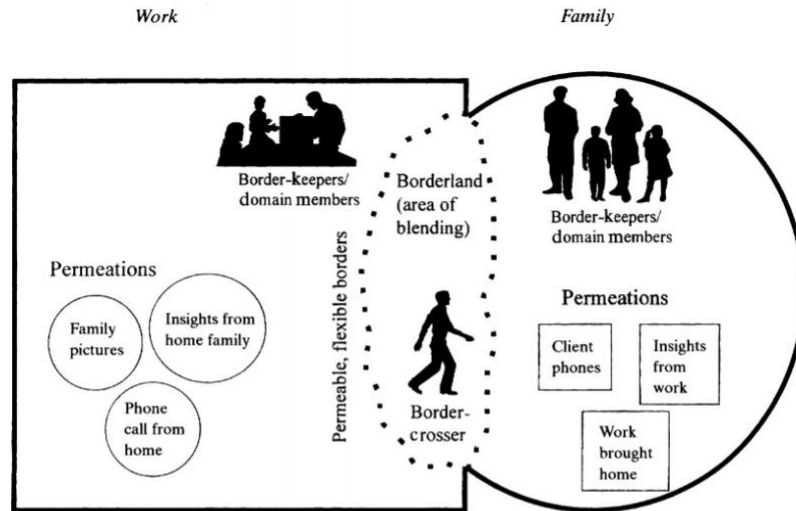
components. First, individuals (called *border-crossers*) cross from one domain (*work*) to the other (*family*) daily (Clark, 2000). People will tailor their attention, goals, and interpersonal style to fit the various demands of the two domains (Clark, 2000). Border-crossers can attempt to negotiate the demands that each domain places upon them and can make key decisions along the way. For this study, the border crossers are women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities. The second key component is *border-keepers*. These are individuals who determine what constitutes the domain of work or family and where the borders lie between them (Clark, 2000). Within the setting of student affairs, border-keepers are supervisors, colleagues, as well as the dean of students or vice president for student affairs. Examples of border-keepers within the family realm would be one's spouse or partner, parents, and children. These border-keepers typically can shape and mold their respective domain, determine the relationship between the two domains and their members, and mold the borders between them (Clark, 2000). The third component is referred to as *borders* or *borderland space*. The roles of *work* and *family* are two distinct domains that are interconnected and influence each other (Clark, 2000). When there is a tremendous amount of permeability and flexibility around the border of one's work and family domains, *blending* occurs (Clark, 2000). The blending leads to what Clark (2000) refers to as a *borderland*. This *borderland* space is not exclusive to one domain or the other and it can be quite challenging for an individual when the two domains are very different. In these instances, individuals struggle to juggle their conflicting demands, dissonance often arises, and these strains may lead to individuals struggling with their identities and purpose (Anzaldúa, 1987). On the other

hand, when the domains are similar, some blending can result in integration and a sense of wholeness (Clark, 2000).

The relationship between work and family domains is viewed as a continuum that ranges from segmentation to integration. Segmentation refers to work and family life being independent of one another and having little to no influence on one another (Clark, 2000). Integration on the other hand is the blending between work and family domains (Clark, 2000). The segmentation or integration of work and family is associated with the degree of permeability and flexibility that describes the boundaries between the two domains (Clark, 2000; Voydanoff, 2005). Both domains are believed to be in balance when one is satisfied within each of the domains, and they have minimal resentment regarding the demands that are imposed from each of the domains (Clark, 2000). Imbalances, on the other hand, result from difficult transitions across domains and low boundary permeability. Difficult transitions across domains are when obligations in one domain undermine the performance within the other. Low boundary permeability refers to the non-negotiable competing demands from both domains.

Figure 2

Work/Family Border Theory



Domains

extent of segmentation and integration
 overlap of valued means and ends
 overlap of cultures

Border-crossers

peripheral vs. central domain membership
 identification
 influence

Borders

border strength
 permeability
 flexibility
 blending

Border-keepers & other domain members

other-domain awareness
 commitment to border-crossers

Emotional Labor

Theories associated with emotional labor have been applied to the study of the work-family interface to help understand how emotional experiences within both the family and work domains relate to the experiences of work/family conflict, work/family enrichment, as well as attitudinal and health outcomes (Yanchus et al., 2010). This theory is relevant to this study as there is an increased awareness that emotional expression is a significant component of both work and family domains (Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; Salovey et al., 2000).

Description of the Theory. Surface acting and deep acting are the two distinct dimensions associated with emotional labor. Surface acting occurs when individuals manage their observable expressions (Hochschild, 1983; Yanchus et al., 2010). This typically involves a change in response in which an individual may feel a particular emotion to a situation but rather than reveal it, they alter their reaction to reflect a different one, one that is typically more acceptable or even required by their organization (Yanchus et al., 2010). Grandey (2000) identifies the changing of one's emotional expression as faking. On the other hand, deep acting occurs when individuals regulate their true feelings or change their evaluation of the situation at hand (Yanchus et al., 2010). Deep acting is defined as an attentional deployment in which the events that caused a particular emotion are recalled when that emotion is required in a new situation (Yanchus et al., 2010). An individual consciously modifies their feelings to express the desired emotion. In addition, it involves a cognitive change that results in the situation being reassessed to decrease its emotional impact on the individual (Yanchus et al., 2010). An example of this would be a flight attendant imagining that a difficult passenger is a child, which in turn may make it easier to develop the necessary emotional response to deal with the problematic passenger (Grandey, 2000).

As alluded to earlier in this literature review, the concept of *caring* seems to be an important aspect of education (Gilligan, 1988; Noddings, 1984 & 1992). While caring relationships may provide teachers and professional staff with a source of professional satisfaction (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989), it can also be a source of emotional strain, anxiety, anger, and disappointment (Acker, 1995; Leavitt, 1994; Nias, 1993). These emotions are often categorized as *emotional labor* as professionals engage in efforts to

modify and control their negative emotions to communicate only those emotions that are socially acceptable (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). In addition, it is argued that the term “emotional labor” is often used to refer to “emotional work” (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Emotional work typically refers to the intention and actions to improve how others feel and is often described as an effort that one makes to understand others, empathize with their situation, and feel someone else’s feelings as part of one’s own (England & Farkas, 1986). Examples of emotional work within the educational setting would be taking time to listen to student’s concerns, giving them advice or providing guidance, as well as showing student’s love and warmth (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Emotional work is one of the ways caring is established in professional and student relationships, and is often invisible, unacknowledged, or devalued (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006).

Managing particular emotions often becomes stressful and alienating (Fineman, 1993 & 1996; Hochschild, 1983; Pogrebin & Poole, 1991). Burnout, feelings associated with being worn out due to the demands of work, is closely related to emotional labor (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Emotional labor as burnout occurs when an individual is no longer able to manage their own or someone else's emotions according to organizational expectations (Copp, 1998). Although many researchers have studied the negative impacts of emotional labor, it is important to note that some employees might find emotional labor as rewarding and an exciting aspect of their position (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). For example, some teachers might find the emotional labor demand rewarding when they have an opportunity to help improve a student’s life (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Although emotional work and emotional labor are distinct terms, both

relate to the concepts of care and caring and because of this reason, both terms will be used in this study.

Even though research on emotional labor has focused on the workplace, it can be easily extended to the family domain. It has been argued that “work” occurs within the family domain (Zedeck, 1992). While the specific duties of "work" within the family domain are different from the work one does within their organization, in both domains an individual works on tasks that are designed to reach a specific goal (Zedeck, 1992). For example, within the family domain, tasks may include cooking, cleaning, helping children with their homework, as well as engaging in family activities (Yanchus et al., 2010). In addition, the role demands that are associated with one’s family domain also come with emotional display requirements (Yanchus et al., 2010). Beehr et al. (1995) denote that although family life can be found to be psychologically rewarding, it can also be stressful, physically exhausting, and emotionally draining. Regardless, parents are expected to act in a caring manner, be supportive to their spouses, demonstrate concern for their children, even when they feel physically or emotionally exhausted (Yanchus et al., 2010). This implies that the construct of emotional labor can be applied to not only the work domain but also the family domain as they are likely to experience emotional labor within the family domain as they do in the work domain (Yanchus et al., 2010).

How Work/Family Border Theory and Emotional Labor Shape Work/Family Balance

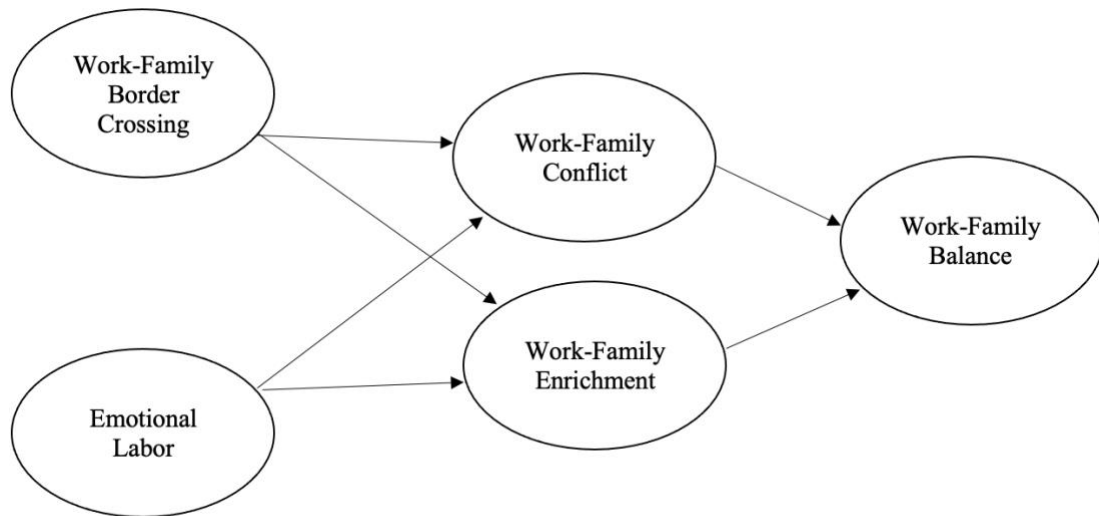
By utilizing both theories, I am able better understand how women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities navigate work and family. For example, women might utilize *segmentation* (actively create an emotional, mental, and/or physical boundary between their work and family) in order to navigate their two domains

(Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Park, Fritz, & Jex, 2011). Clark's (2000) Work/Family Border Theory indicates that enacting stronger borders between one's work and family domains aids in work/family balance when the two domains differ in regards to the emotions and behaviors that are appropriate for each (Krannitz et al., 2015). If an individual is surface acting at work and able to separate their family and work domains by suppressing negative work-related thoughts/feelings or avoiding technology for work-related purposes while at home, they may be less vulnerable to the cross-domain consequences of emotional labor (Krannitz et al., 2015). On the other hand, women may utilize work/family *facilitation* (a construct that reflects the positive influence of involvement in one domain on another) (Wayne et al., 2007). For example, resources or skills from surface acting within the work domain such as self-regulatory efficacy might help an individual within their family domain (Krannitz et al., 2015).

These examples above indicate that to discuss work/family balance from a more holistic perspective one must not only consider border crossing of one domain into another but also the impact of emotional labor within each domain. Figure 3 below indicates the conceptual framework that will be used in this study. This figure suggests that both emotional labor and the permeability between one's work and family domains can lead to work/family conflict and/or work/family enrichment. Ultimately, work/family conflict and work/family enrichment impact one's work/family balance.

Figure 3

Conceptual Framework



Disability Interpretive Lens

Although this study does not examine the children’s disability, it is still important to examine this study through a disability framework since one of the criteria for a woman to participate in this study is that they must have at least one child with at least one disability. Historically, disabilities are viewed through a medical model or social model framework. In the medical model, a disability is viewed primarily as a medical concern, a feature of the individual which requires medical care by professionals (Sportanddev.org, n.d.). Through this lens, individuals with disabilities are viewed as victims of a tragic circumstance (Sportanddev.org, n.d.). The social model of disabilities views a disability as a social construct, not just an attribute of an individual (Sportanddev.org, n.d).

Today, disability studies primarily focus on the meaning of inclusion in schools and include teachers, administrators, as well as parents of children with disabilities

(Mertens, 2015). Researchers frequently use a disability interpretive lens when examining individuals with disabilities. Through this theoretical lens, a disability is viewed as a human difference and acknowledges that a disability is simply derived from social constructs (Mertens, 2003). In addition, it is not viewed as a defect, flaw, or shortcoming (Mertens, 2003). This theoretical framework is appropriate to use for this study because having a child with a disability is viewed as just another dimension of a woman's life.

Chapter Summary

This review of the literature suggests and demonstrates the need for further research regarding work/family balance for women who are student affairs professionals and have children with disabilities. Although many studies have examined various aspects of navigating work and family roles, very little research focuses specifically on female professionals in higher education and the complexity of navigating their dual roles within the postsecondary educational setting (Levtov, 2001; Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011). In addition, even though the work/family experiences of parents with children with disabilities has been studied, little research has examined how parents with children with disabilities navigate their work and family roles and how they achieve work/family balance (Brown, 2014; Jang & Appelbaum, 2010). To better understand how women with children with disabilities who work in student affairs navigate their dual roles, this study incorporates Clark's Family Border Theory (2000) and Hochschild's (1983) Emotional Labor theoretical frameworks as well as a disability interpretive lens. The next chapter, Chapter 3, discusses the methodology of the study, positionality, research questions, sample and sample size, data collection, methods, and data analysis.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Methodology includes analyzing assumptions, principles, and procedures within a specific form of inquiry which informs the methods that are utilized within a particular study (Schwandt, 2001). Within this chapter of the manuscript, the following areas will be discussed: Restatement of the purpose and research questions, research design and constructivist worldview, strategy of inquiry, setting and research participants, sampling strategies, data collection techniques, data analysis, validity, and the positionality of the researcher.

Restatement of the Purpose and Research Questions

The primary purpose of this general qualitative study is to describe how women who work in student affairs at an accredited higher education institution and have at least one child with at least one disability navigate their work and family domains. As noted in Chapter 1, this study is significant for four primary reasons. The first is associated with the compromises women who work in student affairs make as it relates to work/family balance. The next is the lack of literature regarding work/family balance for women who work in student affairs as well as for women with children with disabilities. In addition, this study is significant due to the potential impact the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic may have on work/family balance for women with children with disabilities. This study is a timely effort to fill knowledge gaps regarding work/family balance for these women. Lastly, support for work/family balance across all levels of leadership cannot be understated (Morganson, Litano, & O'Neill, 2014). The hope is that this study will provide direct supervisors and higher administration a glimpse into work/family balance

for women with children with disabilities as well as strategies they utilize to navigate these two domains.

This study was designed to address these issues by exploring the following research questions. Each research question below is followed by sub-questions associated with the primary question.

1. How do women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities describe work/family balance?
 - a. How do these women negotiate their work and family responsibilities?
 - b. What, if any, strategies do these women employ to navigate their dual roles?
 - c. What, if any, factors contribute to work/family balance for these women.
2. How do women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities describe emotional work within their family and work domains?
 - a. In what way does emotional work play a role in the work/family balance for these women?

Research Design

Qualitative research is the research design that will be utilized for this study. Qualitative research focuses on understanding and making meaning about a phenomenon specifically how individuals interpret their experiences, construct their worlds, and what meaning individuals attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It is a general research method used to study social phenomena and utilizes interactive and humanistic methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is best suited for this type of investigation because it provides a rich painting of the complexities of an individual's

life (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This research design is described as emergent, interpretive, holistic, reflexive, cyclical, and iterative (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

A basic qualitative study is an appropriate design for this research, because the main goal of basic research is to learn more about a particular phenomenon to expand on what is already known (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Although basic research can eventually inform practice, its primary objective is to uncover and interpret how meaning is constructed and how individuals make sense of their lives and worlds (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For this particular study, the problem requires a deep understanding of women's experiences to better understand how they navigate their work and family roles.

Constructivist Worldview

Worldview is defined by Guba (1990) as a basic set of beliefs that guide one's actions. Creswell and Creswell (2018) see worldviews as a general philosophical orientation about the world and the philosophical perspectives that a researcher brings to the study regarding the nature of research. The specific worldview that informs this study is a *constructivist* worldview. Constructivism or social constructivism (which can be combined with interpretivism) is a perspective that is typically seen in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Social constructivists believe that individuals strive to understand the world in which they work and live, and that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The constructivist worldview is appropriate for this study because I am examining the complexities associated with the various perspectives women have regarding the work/family balance and I am focusing on the specific contexts in which individuals work and live in an effort to understand the phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, I acknowledge

that my background shapes the interpretation of data, and I intend to make sense of the meanings that others have of the world (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Naturalistic Inquiry Approach

The research methods outlined in this study are informed by a naturalistic inquiry (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This paradigm defines the methods and techniques that will be most suitable for data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Within a naturalistic study, a researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon being studied. It can be defined as the study of people in everyday circumstances by ordinary means (Beuving & de Vries, 2014). This encompasses observing how individuals navigate their daily lives, listening to what individuals have to say, as well as understanding the meaning of their stories, interactions, and accomplishments, and reporting back on those findings (Beuving & de Vries, 2014). A naturalistic paradigm expands the knowledge of the work/family balance phenomenon for women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities, and it requires flexibility within its design while still necessitating that I identify the problem, how the sample will be selected, how data will be collected, analyzed, and reported on (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This type of inquiry is unique because I am the primary research instrument and as a result, I play a vital role in the information or data collection processes (Erlandson et al., 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002).

It is argued that a naturalistic inquiry can result in important insights into society and suggests that there are many truths that cannot typically be understood through quantitative measures (Beuving & de Vries, 2014; Erlandson et al., 1993). Naturalistic inquiry is appropriate for this study because rather than trying to identify a single truth, I

am attempting to describe an event, phenomenon, or experience and provide rich descriptions of the phenomenon through interviews and observations (Patton, 2002). It is an emergent process that continues throughout the duration of the study (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Setting and Research Participants

The sample for this study included 21 women who worked in student affairs at an accredited higher education institution and have at least one child with at least one disability. Each participant participated in an in-depth semi-structured interview. Rossman and Rallis (2017) remind us that it is important to conduct interviews within the participant's natural setting as this allows a researcher to seek depth rather than breadth on their research topic. As such, all participants participated in the interview process from either their office or home. Either setting was appropriate because I was able to observe each participant in one of their natural settings that directly connected to their work or family role. This setting also allowed for an opportunity for me to discover recurring patterns and create richer descriptions of the setting and collected data.

Selection of Research Participants

Qualitative research typically involves purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015). The power of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases especially with limited resources, which in turn, allows a researcher to learn a great deal of information about the factors that contribute to work/family balance for women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities (Patton, 2015). Purposeful sampling involves selecting and identifying individuals that are knowledgeable about or have experience with the particular phenomenon that is being studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). As alluded

to earlier, the primary objective of qualitative research is to achieve a depth of understanding and as a result, it also seeks to emphasize saturation (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Saturation occurs when a researcher has developed a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon by continuing to sample until no new substantive information is learned (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The specific purposeful sampling strategy that was used for this study is criterion sampling (Patton, 2015). Criterion sampling is a purposeful sampling strategy that involves reviewing and studying all cases that meet a predetermined criterion of importance (Palinkas et al., 2015). Explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria are established which includes specifications for methodological rigor (Suri, 2011). The objective is to understand cases that are likely to be information-rich because they uncover major system weaknesses that become the focus of opportunities for program or system improvements (Palinkas et al., 2015). Individuals are selected based on the assumption that they have knowledge or experiences that are directly associated with the studied phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2015).

For this study, the criteria all women of the study met are noted below.

- Participant is a full-time employee in student affairs at an accredited higher education institution.
 - For purposes of this study, student affairs include all functional areas that consist of any advising, counseling, management, or administrative function at a college or university that exists outside of the classroom.
- Participant identifies as a mother.

- *Mother* is defined as a woman who gave birth to a child; an individual who conceived a child using a donor egg; a woman who has adopted a child; a co-mother who has automatically become a child's parent, has acknowledged a child or has been declared a child's parent by a court.
- This excludes individuals who identify as a father (mother's husband or registered partner at the time of the child's birth; a man who acknowledges or adopts a child; a man who has been declared a child's father by a court).
- Participant is the mother of at least one child who is school-aged (6-17 years of age) and is diagnosed with at least one disability.
 - *Child with disabilities* will be defined as a child with one or more of the following conditions: Intellectual and developmental disability, hearing impairment (including deafness), speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, or a specific learning disability who needs special education and related services.
 - The disability must be diagnosed through either a doctor or an educational setting.

Utilizing criterion sampling was appropriate for this study since the goal is to investigate the phenomenon of work/family balance for women who work in student affairs and have children with a disability. Individuals were selected on the assumption they possess knowledge and have experience with this phenomenon and therefore would be able to provide information that is detailed (depth) and generalizable (breadth)

(Palinkas et al., 2015). In addition, selecting participants who meet the criterion listed above who possess intimate (or at least greater knowledge than those who do not) of the phenomenon by virtue of their experiences, made them information-rich cases for the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). The recruitment letter that was utilized for this study can be found in Appendix A.

Strategies of Inquiry/Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques in qualitative research are methods researchers use to learn about the phenomenon they are studying and it provides a formal way of gathering information (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). By using techniques such as interviews, observations, and documentation analysis, a researcher can capture the richness and depth of what they are studying (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). For this study, I began the data collection process with an electronic demographic survey. The purpose of the demographic survey was to gather the necessary data to identify participants that met the specific criteria outlined in the criterion sampling plan. The electronic demographic survey can be found in Appendix B of this manuscript.

Once a sample was determined by utilizing the demographic survey, I emailed all participants directly to schedule a time for their individual interview. In-depth interviewing served as the primary data collection tool for this study because it is the hallmark of qualitative research (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Important characteristics of an in-depth qualitative interview are rich and detailed information, open-ended questions that allow the interviewee to respond how they choose, and unfixed interview questions which allows the researcher the flexibility to determine the questions or order in which the questions are asked (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Each interview was conducted via a video conferencing tool, and lasted approximately 60 minutes, and was recorded. Interviews were conducted via a video conferencing platform rather than face-to-face due to the pandemic of COVID-19. Video conferencing allows for real-time, online synchronous conversation to transpire, and provides the researcher and participants the ability to send and receive audiovisual information (Salmons, 2012). As one compares video conferencing to other online methods for qualitative data collection such as email interviews, online forums, or instant messaging, it is important to acknowledge that video conferencing most closely resembles in-person qualitative interviews (Tuttas, 2015). Video conferencing is a viable and practical alternative to in-person interviews (Irani, 2019). In addition, there are practical and logistical advantages of utilizing video conferencing. For this study, it reduced geographical constraints associated with in-person interviews and provided me with the opportunity to reach more geographically dispersed participants (Irani, 2019). It also offered scheduling flexibility as it allowed participants to fit in the interview in between their hectic work schedules and busy personal lives (Irani, 2019). Utilizing a video conferencing tool allowed me to have access to the participant's visual cues via the screen, as well as the ability to collect verbal and nonverbal data (Irani, 2019). Video conferencing preserved many of the features of an in-person interview, with added flexibility and convenience for both researchers and participants (Irani, 2019).

An interview and documentation protocol can be found in Appendix C of this manuscript. The interview protocol denotes a limited number of questions I asked as well as follow-up questions that were asked as necessary throughout the interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This approach encouraged participants to answer at length and in rich

detail and provided the researcher with an opportunity to focus more intently on specific areas that addressed the research questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interview and documentation protocol was adapted throughout the data collection phase. Even though it was modified over time, it provided an overall structure for the interviews, which ensured appropriate data was collected.

Documents and records are useful sources of information for triangulation (which will be discussed later in this chapter). For this study, participants were asked to show one to five photos or a short video that depicts work/family balance to them at the conclusion of their interview. The advantages of utilizing audiovisual digital materials is that it is an unobtrusive method of collecting data and provides an opportunity for participants to directly share their reality (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 1998). Table 1 provides a list of artifacts that were shown by each participant.

Table 1
Participant Artifacts

Participant	Artifact(s) Provided (Yes/No)	Type of Artifact
Charlotte	No	
Marie	Yes	4 photos
Rebecca	Yes	3 photos
Lora	Yes	6 photos
Jean	Yes	5 photos
Mary	Yes	1 photo
Ashley	No	
Sharon	Yes	1 video
Brianna	Yes	6 photos
Jesse	No	
Julia	No	
Vicky	No	

Participant	Artifact(s) Provided (Yes/No)	Type of Artifact
Judy	Yes	2 photos
Elizabeth	No	
Nettie	No	
Fran	Yes	1 video
Lauren	No	
Kenzie	Yes	2 photos
Juliana	Yes	5 photos
Ellie	Yes	5 photos
Brittany	No	

Observation is a fundamental component of all qualitative inquiry (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). They help a researcher to capture the whole social setting in which their participants function (Mulhall, 2003). Observations are valuable in this study because it not only provided data associated with a participant's behaviors but also data about the physical environment (Mulhall, 2003). During the interviews for this study, I observed the participant's office and/or home as well as the participant's body language throughout the interview. Due to the unique time period the world is in with the pandemic, some mothers were working from home and also had their children attending school from home. Being able to observe this environment provided me with insight into how some participants handle work/family conflict as one domain intersected with the other during the interview. Using this data collection technique helped me to develop richer descriptions of the setting and collected data. All observations were noted in my reflective journal.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis brings order, structure, and meaning to the collected data (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Rossman and Rallis (2017) noted that data analysis

typically falls into the following eight phases: Organizing the data, familiarizing yourself with the data, identifying categories, coding the data, generating themes, interpreting, searching for alternative understandings, and writing the report.

Coding is a cyclical act and is typically broken down into two cycle methods (Saldana, 2016). It is important to keep in mind that coding is not just the process of labeling but rather *linking* (Saldana, 2016). It leads a researcher from the data to the idea and from the idea to all the data related to the idea (Richards & Morse, 2013). For the first coding cycle, the methods are organized into seven broad subcategories, which are grammatical methods, elemental methods, affective methods, literacy and language methods, exploratory methods, procedural methods, and theming the data (Saldana, 2016). For this study, an elemental method called *process coding* was utilized.

Process coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies but is particularly fitting for grounded theory studies or studies like this in which routines are examined (Saldana, 2016). Process coding is used to denote action in the data by utilizing words ending with “-ing” (Saldana, 2016). These can be observable activities such as reading or playing, as well as more general conceptual actions such as surviving or struggling (Saldana, 2016). It implies that actions interconnect with the dynamics of time and that things emerge or occur in a particular sequence, or become strategically implemented (Saldana, 2016). This type of coding was useful to this research because it allowed the researcher to analyze *how* each woman navigates their dual roles and responsibilities.

Second cycle coding methods are advanced ways of reorganizing and analyzing the data that was coded in the first cycle (Saldana, 2016). The primary goal during this cycle of coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or

theoretical organization from the array of first cycle codes (Saldana, 2016). *Pattern coding* was utilized in the second cycle. It was used to group the summaries into a smaller number of categories or concepts (Saldana, 2016). Pattern codes are explanatory codes, that allow a researcher to develop major themes from the collected data (Saldana, 2016). Data is organized into sets, themes, or constructs and attributes (Saldana, 2016). This method was useful to this research because it provided a way for similarities and differences to be identified across all interviews. Although hand coding was used to assign coding to the data, a qualitative computer data analysis program called Dedoose was used to analyze the data and keep the data organized. An excerpt of the two coding cycles can be found in Appendix D.

Although the above data analysis techniques are rigorous, controversy regarding the quality of the qualitative findings based on the data analysis can still exist (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). As a result, steps were taken throughout the data analysis phase to minimize the potential concerns about the validity, credibility, and reliability of the data analysis within this study. The next section will further address in detail how concerns regarding the validity of this study were minimized.

Validity

Validity is one of the primary strengths of qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2000). It is based on determining whether the findings of the study are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, participant, and readers (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Checking for qualitative validity means the researcher must assess whether the data collected is accurate and examine the extent to which the information is credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each will be

discussed below as well as the specific strategies that will be used to guarantee each construct, which ultimately ensures the validity of this study.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative inquiry addresses the issue of “fit” between participants' views and the researcher's representation of those views (Schwandt, 2001). It is associated with the internal validity of the study and depends on rigorous techniques and methods, the credibility of the researcher, and the philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 1999; Schwandt, 2001). The two primary strategies that were utilized to demonstrate credibility were peer debriefing and triangulation. With peer debriefing, I relied on another individual to review and ask questions about the study to ensure that the accounts resonated with someone other than just me (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By having another person invested in the research, the credibility and ultimately the validity of the study was improved (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I utilized triangulation to examine evidence from different data sources (interviews and observations) to build a coherent justification for themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As themes were developed based on the convergence of several sources of data, it can be asserted that this process adds to the credibility and validity of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Although there is not a prescribed list of items that can help to establish researcher credibility, researchers should report any personal and professional information that may positively or negatively affect data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Patton, 1999). This has been reported on in detail in the section titled *Positionality of the Researcher*. In addition, researcher credibility is associated with a

researcher's intellectual rigor and professional integrity (Patton, 1999). I did my best to make sense out of the data and return to it time and time again to see if constructs, categories, explanations, or interpretations made sense (Patton, 1999). In addition, I worked to ensure that the data truly reflected the nature of the phenomenon (Patton, 1999). Creativity, intellectual rigor, perseverance, and insight go beyond the typical application of scientific procedure but are important in establishing researcher credibility (Patton, 1999).

Transferability

Transferability is associated with external validity and refers to the generalizability of the study (Tobin & Begley, 2004). It is important to recall that there is no single correct interpretation in the naturalistic paradigm (Tobin & Begley, 2004). As such, it is argued that the traditional perspectives of generalizability should be rejected since naturalistic inquiry has individual subjective meaning (Donmoyer, 1990). As such, ultimately it is the responsibility of the reader to determine how and if the findings of this study can be applied to other settings and it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide detailed information about the phenomenon to assist the reader in their decision (Merriam, 1998). In this study, I utilized thick and rich descriptions with sufficient detail so that the reader can obtain a clear picture of the procedures and findings of the research. This included providing details about the setting, environment, participants, the participant's attitudes, observations, interactions between the participants and their environments, and the feelings and perceptions of the researcher (Amankwaa, 2016).

Dependability

Dependability is associated with reliability and is achieved through an audit trail where individuals can examine the documentation of data, methods, decisions, and findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tobin & Begley, 2004). To establish dependability, it is suggested that researchers utilize a technique called inquiry audit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Tobin and Begley (2004) remind researchers that reflexivity is essential to an audit trail. As alluded to earlier, reflexive journaling was utilized throughout this study.

In addition, dependability (or reliability) in qualitative research indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and projects (Gibbs, 2007). Researchers are responsible for ensuring that processes and procedures are logical, traceable, and clearly documented (Schwandt, 2001). For this study, this was done through an interview and documentation protocol found in Appendix C. Gibbs (2007) also recommends that researchers check transcripts to ensure they do not contain mistakes, ensure there is no drift in the definition or meaning of codes, and cross-check codes. These procedures helped me to determine if my approaches were reliable or not.

Confirmability

Confirmability is associated with the objectivity or neutrality of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tobin & Begley, 2004). It is concerned with establishing data and ensuring that the interpretation of the findings is not fabricated by the researcher but rather that they clearly stem from the data (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that researchers use audit trails, triangulation, and reflexivity to authenticate the confirmability of a study. An audit trail is defined as a transparent description of the research steps throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As noted above, an audit trail, triangulation, and reflexive journaling are strategies that were utilized to ensure the validity of this study.

Positionality of the Researcher

No study is perfect and as a result, a researcher must acknowledge limitations to their research (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Limitations of a study affirm the weaknesses of the study, and readers are encouraged to judge this study with the limitations of researcher bias in mind (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). In qualitative research, researchers self-consciously use their own experiences as a resource as they are the primary instrument in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). It is imperative that a researcher's feelings and perceptions on the research topic, participants, and method, are not eliminated but rather identified and limited (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

I am a white woman and currently work as a student affairs manager in housing at a four-year public institution. I have worked in the field since 2004. I am married, have two children, and I am currently pursuing my doctoral degree. My oldest son who is now 13 was diagnosed at the age of nine with a specific learning disability (dysgraphia) and has an individual education plan (IEP) through his school. In addition, in 2017 he was diagnosed with severe osteoporosis. This means that his bones are incredibly weak, and his strength is poor. His first fracture occurred at six months old and since then has fractured a bone on average every year through "typical" children tasks. Since he was five, he participated in physical therapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT) outside of school hours. The year he was diagnosed with severe osteoporosis, he began Zometa infusion treatments at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) which takes place every six months.

For 13 years now, I have worked to define, understand, and navigate balancing my work and family roles. Since this subject matter is important to me and I am so deeply connected to the phenomenon, it is possible that my own experiences, beliefs, and assumptions on this topic may influence the findings in this study. Creswell (1998) noted that bracketing is a way of setting aside one's assumptions so that one can see the subject matter through the lens of the participants. To recognize my own biases, perspectives, and assumptions I was interviewed by my chair and wrote self-reflections in my reflective journal after reviewing the recorded interview. This interview along with using a reflective journal throughout the research process helped the researcher to critically examine their beliefs, assumptions, and biases that are brought into this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined a reflexive journal as a type of diary that is used by a researcher which can be used daily or as needed. The purpose is to record a variety of information about oneself and methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After each interview, the researcher journaled their observations, feelings, attitudes, speculations, and general thoughts about the interview process and shared these journal writings with their peer debriefer. This reflection also helped the researcher to determine if a follow up was needed with the participants.

In addition, some of the strategies that were used to ensure the validity of the study also helped to minimize researcher bias. For example, observation, prolonged engagement, utilizing unobtrusive measures where possible, and making the researcher's intentions clear, helped in reducing the effects of me on the participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Triangulating data, examining potential participant bias, showing field notes to a colleague, utilizing participants to provide background and historical

information, keeping research questions in mind, and maintaining a conceptual framework are some of the steps I took to minimize the effects of the participants on the me (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Chapter 4

Findings

The primary purpose of this general qualitative study is to describe how women who work in student affairs at an accredited higher education institution and have at least one child with at least one disability navigate their work and family domains. A basic or general qualitative methodology within a naturalistic inquiry framework was utilized for this study. This study was designed to address the following primary research questions and their associated sub-questions.

1. How do women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities describe work/family balance?
 - a. How do these women negotiate their work and family responsibilities?
 - b. What, if any, strategies do these women employ to navigate their dual roles?
 - c. What, if any, factors contribute to work/family balance for these women.
2. How do women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities describe emotional work within their family and work domains?
 - a. In what way does emotional work play a role in the work/family balance for these women?

To answer these questions, the researcher interviewed 21 women who were selected through a purposeful sampling strategy called criterion sampling. Below are the criteria that all 21 women met.

- Participant is a full-time employee in student affairs at an accredited higher education institution.
- Participant identifies as a mother.

- Participant is the mother of at least one child who is school-aged (6-17 years of age) and is diagnosed with at least one disability.

The interviews generated over 25 hours of data which was initially transcribed utilizing a transcription program called Otter.ai. The researcher then reviewed each transcript and edited any transcription errors made by the computer program to ensure that each interview was accurately transcribed before coding the data.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the seven major findings of this study. This chapter begins with two tables that provide a profile about each participant. Following these tables, each of the seven major findings are discussed in detail. These findings are *the helper identity, the advocate role, less of a balancing act and more like a juggling act, juggling work and family is not a solo act, letting go of the ideal, flexibility in the workplace, and masking*.

Participant Profiles

The two tables below provide information about the professional and personal characteristics of each participant. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was provided a pseudonym. Pseudonyms were also generated for the participant's child(ren) when needed. Table 1 provides professional characteristics of each participant. This includes the number of years the participant has worked in student affairs, the type of institution they work at, as well as the title of the current position they hold. Table 2 provides personal characteristics of each participant. This table includes information about the participant's race, marital status, age of their child/children with disabilities, as well as a description of the child's specific disability/ies.

Table 2
Professional Characteristics of Participants

Participant	Years Worked in Student Affairs	Institutional Type	Title
Charlotte	10-14	Public	Military Services-Academic Success Center
Marie	15-19	Public	Associate Director Housing and Residence Life
Rebecca	15-19	Public	Manager of Campus Life
Lora	20-24	Public	Director of LEAD Scholars Academy
Jean	15-19	Public	Director of Student Conduct
Mary	15-19	Public	Assistant Director for Residential Education
Ashley	20-24	Private	Dean of Student Success
Sharon	20-24	Public	Coordinator of Student Advising
Brianna	15-19	Public	Assistant Dean of Advising, Licensure and Student Success
Jesse	5-9	Public	Title IX/EEO Investigator
Julia	25-29	Public	Assistant Dean
Vicky	1-4	Private	Assistant Dean for Academic and Student Affairs
Judy	25-29	Private	Dean of Academic Success
Elizabeth	25-29	Public	Director of Housing
Nettie	20-24	Public	Assistant Director of Residence Life for Student Conduct and Resident Support
Fran	1-4	Public	Admissions Clerk
Lauren	15-19	Private	Sophomore Success Coach/Early Alert Coordinator
Kenzie	15-19	Public	Director of Student Affairs
Juliana	15-19	Public	Assistant Dean of Students
Ellie	20-24	Public	Associate Director for Business Operations
Brittany	15-19	Public	Director of Recreation and Wellness

Table 3
Personal Characteristics of Participants

Participant	Race	Marital Status	Age of Child with Disability	Child's Disability
Charlotte	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	7	Nurofibromitosis, Failure to Thrive, Heart Condition, Trachyamolasia, G-tube, Asthma, Speech delays
Marie	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	11	Anxiety, Depression, ADHD
Rebecca	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	13	Autism, ADHD
Lora	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	12	Autism, Congenital Heart Defect
Jean	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	11	ADHD, Auditory Processing Disorder, Dyslexia, Dyscalcula, Anxiety and Panic Disorder
Mary	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	8, 10	8 year old: Rare Genetic Form of Adrenal Insufficiency 10 year old: Autism and Tourette's Syndrome
Ashley	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	9	Autism Spectrum Disorder
Sharon	White	Divorced	14, 16	14 year old: Alports Syndrome, Hearing Loss (Uses Hearing Aids), Life Threatening Allergy 16 year old: Alports Syndrome
Brianna	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	12, 15	12 year old: ADHD, Dysgraphia 15 year old: ADHD, Vocal Tic Disorder
Jesse	Black or African American	Married/Domestic Partnership	9	Anxiety, OCD, Precocious Puberty, Seizures Related to Sleep
Julia	White	Widowed	15, 17	15 year old: Autism Spectrum Disorder 17 year old: ADHD
Vicky	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	9, 9	Child 1: Autism Child 2: Speech delay, Gross motor delays, Fine motor delays, Hypotonia
Judy	Other	Married/Domestic Partnership	8	Down Syndrome, Chronic Heart Disease, Celiac

Participant	Race	Marital Status	Age of Child with Disability	Child's Disability
Elizabeth	Other	Divorced	10	Dyslexia and Unspecified learning disabilities
Nettie	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	9, 11	9 year old: ADHD, Sensory Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder 11 year old: Anxiety Disorder
Fran	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	7, 9, 12	7 year old: Failure to Thrive, Auditory Processing Disorder, Motor Tics, Feeding Tube Dependent, EOE, Idiopathic Short Stature, ADHD 9 year old: Tourette's, ADHD, OCD, Anxiety 12 year old: POTS, EOE, Anxiety
Lauren	White	Separated	7	Tourettes, ADHD, Social Pragmatic Communication Disorder, Sensory Processing Disorder
Kenzie	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	15	Autism Spectrum Disorder
Juliana	White	Separated	12	Anxiety
Ellie	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	14	Tourette Syndrome, ADHD, OCD
Brittany	White	Married/Domestic Partnership	7	Retinoblastoma (cancer in both eyes), Blind in one eye and low vision in other

Now that the participant profiles have been provided, the first finding *the helper identity* will be discussed.

The Helper Identity

The women in this study assume the role of “helper” within their professional role. Many participants reported that being a helper comes naturally and it just is “who they are”. In fact, participants frequently described their work in student affairs as part of their identity and described how their professional work was much more than just a job.

Well, I love it. I mean, I think that I chose this profession because I am a helper by nature. I'm an empath, and I mean I got my master's degree in counseling. And so, you know, I feel like my natural inclination is to be a helper. And to kind of be in tune to what's going on with people. I gravitate towards people who are struggling, people who, you know, need an additional layer of support. (Jean)

Similarly, many women made comments about how they could not see themselves in another professional role. For example, Julia could not picture herself working in any other profession. She stated, "You know, like, I can't imagine myself not in a helping profession."

Although Ashley agreed that the student affairs profession is a helping profession that attracts those who are helpers by nature, she denoted how being a helper can be "all consuming" if one is not careful. She believes that tasks at work are frequently added to her plate because "she'll just do it because she's a helper" and "gets things done".

And, and it's dangerous. It's a slippery slope, because then it becomes more than sort of what I'm being compensated to do. And it's funny to me, and I don't hear this as much anymore, as earlier in my career. But you know, there's so much like, expectation, even amongst peers to give, give, give, because that's who we are as people. And then without a recognition or as much energy put into, I should be paid for that as we paid for my give give giving, like I gotta pay my bills.

(Ashley)

While most participants described being a helper as part of their identity, not all participants were salient with the helper identity. For example, Elizabeth was explicitly

clear that being in a helping profession did not hold significance for her the way in which it does for other student affairs professionals.

I think, it is what I do. Right? I do. I mean, I would not, I would not say that I have continued in this profession, because there's some sort of huge meaning for me in helping people. That is not why I'm where. Okay? And I'm sure that's not a very popular sentiment, because I'm supposed to be altruistic about this all right? It's like, I'm supposed to tell you how much I love helping people. What I love is having incredibly talented, competent, functional staff who I can mentor to their own professional capacity around those issues. (Elizabeth)

Being a helper does not stop when these women leave the office or put the student affairs work down. They continue with their helper identity as they assume primary caretaking responsibilities for their children. The notion of the helper identity within the motherhood role is discussed next.

Helper Identity Within the Motherhood Role

Helping in the family domain typically presented in the form of *doing* tasks for their children and family. For example, women described how they help within the family domain by cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, helping children with their homework, or taking children to after school activities. Assuming these responsibilities were found to be characteristic for most women in this study. However, beyond these responsibilities, mothers of children with disabilities were required to spend additional time beyond these obligations to help and care for their children. They were regularly needing to monitor their child's condition(s), schedule and/or provide therapies, as well as attend their child's multiple doctor appointments or treatments. For example, Marie

described that one of the ways she helps her daughter is by reminding her to take her medicine. In addition, she must “do a lot of coaching on executive functioning” with her. This is something that Marie does not have to do with her younger child. She continued by stating that having to help her child with disabilities is “just a lot more mental workload to say, get your medicine, do this thing. Do this thing. Let me teach you how to use a planner...”

As for Ellie, she spends a great deal of time helping to create structure for her son who has Tourette Syndrome, ADHD, and OCD. Now that her son is 14, he is trying to be more independent, and believes that he can handle all that he faces with no structure at all, but Ellie understands that without structure he will not be successful. So, she spends a significant amount of time helping him to reflect on the importance of structure and how to maintain it within his daily schedule. Similarly, one of the most significant ways in which Julianna helps her daughter, is by assisting her with managing her anxiety. She spends much of her time helping her daughter remember her coping mechanisms. These coping mechanisms are imperative to her daughter’s success to be able to deescalate and cope with her anxiety.

Judy spoke about how because of her son’s disabilities (Down Syndrome, Chronic Heart Disease, and Celiac Disease), it feels as though they “are in this very prolonged early childhood phase for him, even though he's in second grade and eight years old.” Her son is not fully potty trained and therefore she must help her son with his frequent accidents. She also spoke about how much effort and time it takes to ensure that he is not exposed to anything that will make him sick both at home and at school.

Rewards of the Helper Identity

There are many rewards or benefits that resulted from women assuming the helper identity within both their professional and personal lives. Students, staff, colleagues, spouses, children, family, friends, and community members all benefit in some way from the helping nature of these women. However, these women also benefit too. For example, Lora described how when her children first went to elementary school, no children with special needs had been permitted in the school's before-care, aftercare, or summer programs. By the time her children left elementary school, there were numerous children with special needs in these programs. This accomplishment of her successfully advocating for the inclusion of students with special needs into these three programs resulted in Lora feeling a sense of pride. She stated she felt "a sense of pride that I helped get that started."

As an Assistant Dean of Students, Julianna also felt "a lot of pride and accomplishment" whether it was through helping students, their family members, or other constituents on campus. She stated, "I mean, we get a lot of different people touching base with our office who are seeking something, and it feels good to be able to, you know, help people navigate something that they didn't know how to do." While many women discussed the rewards associated with their helper identity, some also described negative emotions associated with being a helper. These are described in more detail in the next section.

Emotional Effects of Being a Helper

Although women found that the helper identity was fulfilling and rewarding, it was not uncommon for participants to also mentioned words like "emotional exhaustion"

and “draining” when describing their experiences as a helper. Participants discussed feeling emotionally taxed and drained within both their professional and motherhood roles.

I also think that, you know, as a person who is a natural helper, you find yourself doing that in your personal life too. And, you know, there are times where you can feel completely drained of all of you know, your like, as a mom, you say sometimes, like I've been touched out, you know, like, I cared for everybody all day long. Nobody touched me, I have to care for myself now, you know. And I feel like it can be the same way with work. You know, today I cared for a lot of people, and then after work, I cared for my little people and I cared for my friends and I cared for my spouse. And, you know, sometimes that can feel like a lot.

(Jean)

Elizabeth shared a similar sentiment stating, “I think there's an emotional exhaustion with having to be the advocator, the educator, the person who has to stay on top of it, all right?” While Elizabeth spoke about emotional exhaustion, Judy used the word “draining” to describe the emotional labor associated with being a helper. She reflected on how working in student affairs and specifically as a helper can be draining because of her empathic nature.

And so, with that comes the burden that you end up caring for these really complex situations that students are trying to navigate. And, you know, wanting to help them, maybe sometimes more than you should, because I think that mother for me for sure, that mother hat goes on with some of these students.

(Judy)

Sharon described the challenges and struggles she faces as she works to give all she can at work and still ensure she has enough to “give” at home at the end of the day.

The challenge, though, is giving of yourself in a way that feeds your soul and doesn't empty you and leave you hollow. And that has taken a couple of decades of figuring out how to do right? So that when I am finished with my workday, I have a little something left to offer my family. (Sharon)

It was clear that Mary, like many other women in this study, enjoys being a helper. She stated, “I love being a helper”, but “when the definition of helper keeps changing, it's getting harder and harder.” She believes that as each year passes it becomes more challenging to feel like she is “helping enough” particularly because she senses that student problems and concerns have shifted and changed so drastically. She thinks that this then leads to burnout and a feeling of being a failure.

I think it creates burnout, because it feels like failure...And I think it gets harder every year to feel like you're helping is enough, and that your presence is enough, and your attention and your efforts are enough because it's not solving the problems like it used to but the problems have changed. And you know, it's weird. I know I feel this way sometimes where I'm like, instead of rationally saying the student needs help beyond my scope, it becomes like this imposter syndrome ask like, why can't I help them enough, when really, they need again, they need help that is outside of what I can get them. So, it feels like failure. (Mary)

This data provided in this section of the manuscript indicates that while the women in this study found the helper identity fulfilling and rewarding, they also found the identity consuming and draining. In any given day, a woman may help a lot of people

(students or colleagues at work, their children with disabilities, spouse, or friends) which can be emotionally exhausting.

The Advocate Role

Every woman in this study spoke about another role that they assume in addition to being a professional and mother of a child with disabilities. This role is the role of the advocate. Some described being an advocate as “another job”, their “primary role”, and as “their title”. For example, Sharon shared, “This is my job. This is another job. And it's a job I've had to be really good at. Because they're worth it.” Charlotte stated, “You have the oh, you're a parent of special needs child, your work, and then oh, wait, you have to be an advocate as far as for school or the other part that goes with the disability.”

Although each women in this study advocated differently, advocacy seemed to occur most often for educational services, state services, diagnoses, inclusion for their child, extra-curricular activities, as well as with teachers, family, and friends. For example, Ashley had to advocate for speech therapy for her son who has autism. The school district initially informed her that they would not provide her son with speech therapy, and she would need to employ those services from a private organization.

Can you believe they said he didn't need the speech therapy? And I was like, he doesn't talk, he's three and a half, like he needs speech therapy. Oh, no, you're gonna have to go private and pay for that. And like, no, I'm not. I am permitted under the law to demand that you assess him and get him some services. (Ashley)

Lauren's son has been diagnosed with Tourettes, ADHD, Social Pragmatic Communication Disorder, and Sensory Processing Disorder and she finds herself frequently advocating for him. She described that advocating for her son is a daily

responsibility. She shared that one of the most recent ways in which she has advocated for her son is by helping those at her church understand her son's needs. She has help church members find ways to be more inclusive by being conscious of how "sensory friendly" the church environment is with their lighting and the volume of the music.

Another aspect of the advocacy role that women in this study described was managing when to step in and advocate for their child and when to step back and let their child advocate for themselves. More specifically, women that have children that are approaching teenage years or are teenagers, frequently spoke about letting their children self-advocate, whereas those who had younger children spoke about needing to advocate more frequently for their child. Self-advocacy is associated with a child being aware of their needs and accommodations and being able to "take the lead" with matters associated with their disabilities. Brianna stated that she encourages self-advocacy for both her daughter who is 12 and her son who is 15. Her daughter self-advocates a lot when it comes to her appointments and more specifically her appointments with her counselor. Her son began attending his 504 meetings in seventh grade and she believes it is incredibly important that "they both understand what their disability is, [and] what their accommodations are."

While encouraging their children to self-advocate is something many of the women in this study foster, their children are not always capable of advocating for their needs because of the child's age or the severity of their disability. When this occurs, the participant is then required to step back in and take more of an active role in advocating for their child. For example, Julia described how trying to keep up with her son's academic progress was affecting her mental health and her relationship with her son, so

she paused on advocating for him in the ways she did for her son prior to her husband's diagnosis and passing. Unfortunately, now that she has seen the consequences of her taking a step back in advocating and relying more on her son to self-advocate and others to step in to assist her son, she realizes although she wishes advocating for her son was minimal at this point, she needs to step back in.

And, you know, worse that happens is that he has to take another year of high school. And that's not the end of world. And...I looked at his PowerSchool, and he's failing every single course. It's like alright, so now I got to get back into it. They're not following his IEP...People have been out sick; he doesn't get a substitute. You know, they, one of them actually had the nerve to say to me yesterday, well, you know, Graycen's been really great about reaching out when he needs me. I'm like, well, I'm gonna have to disagree with you, because he's failing every course. And he didn't know that there was a capstone project in order to graduate... And you know, so yes, the advocacy has changed over the years, and I wanted it to be next to nothing at this point in his career, but it just hasn't been able to happen that way. (Julia)

Although the level to which the women in this study need to advocate for their child may change over time, it is still an important role that they all assume in addition to their motherhood and professional roles. At times the advocacy role must become priority and at other times it cannot be the priority as Julia articulated above. The next section of this manuscript is devoted to understanding how the women in this study manage and prioritize their roles and responsibilities associated with their work as a student affairs professional and being a mother of a child with disabilities.

Less of a Balancing Act and More like a Juggling Act

The majority of the women in this study do not use the word “balance” to describe how they manage their dual roles. Rather, they frequently used words or phrases such as integration, a juggling act, harmony, learning process, blending, meshing, making trade-offs, anything but “balance”. For example, Marie and Ashley utilized the word *integration* when describing work/family balance. Marie stated, “I would say...that it's not so much balance for me, it's how do I integrate those things and maybe make tradeoffs”.

The reason that the women in this study do not use the word “balance” is because it is not reflective of their life experiences. For example, for some participants the term “balance” implied that both roles were equal or that one’s work and family roles were in balance like a double-pan balance scale.

...I think of balance, it's kind of like that scales of justice, right? You have to have a relatively equal load on both sides, or else it tips very far in one direction. I think of it more and it might just be mincing words, but I, it helps me feel better if I think about it as integrating the two as best I can. (Ashley)

Not only did participants not use the term “balance” to describe navigating their dual roles, but some of them were explicitly clear that the concept of work/family balance did not exist for them. Vicky commented, “So first, I will say work family balance is a load of crap. And I tell this to my students all the time because balance means 50/50. And it's never 50/50.” Kenzie agreed stating “Yeah, I don't think there is any. Nothing is in balance at all, at all times.”

More so, using the term “balance” can create levels of frustration for the women in this study and make them feel as though they are failing when they cannot achieve this ideal of “all things being equal”.

I guess when I think about, like that word balance because it's so loaded...It frustrates me and like, I'm not even gonna try to go there. Because I just can't do it. And I don't want to always think I'm a failure. So, I think of it rather as like some days work will lead, some days family will lead. Some days, I, Ashley, who's been lost in work and family want to take the lead. And some days I'm good at that and some days I'm not. (Ashley)

For a few women, striving to achieve “balance” led to health issues. For example, Nettie described how she frequently felt she had to be like “super woman”, being both a mother and professional and doing both roles well. This along with having a job that she described as “extremely stressful” resulted in her developing health issues and being out of work for eight months.

I always say getting sick was probably the best thing ever happened to me, because it showed me how, how messed up my priorities were, you know, that I was never first, I was always last and that, and I don't, I was not successfully balancing work and being a mom. (Nettie)

The data indicates that these women do not use the term “balance” to describe their life experiences of navigating motherhood and their professional roles. So, if these women are not trying to “balance” their roles and responsibilities, then how are these women navigating their dual roles? Rather than trying to perform a balancing act, they are performing a juggling act.

The Juggling Act

The women in this study are jugglers who are striving to master the art of the juggling act. There are times in which their work and family roles collided, which required the participants to decide what role or responsibility should be prioritized and which should wait and be tended to later. When facing work/family conflict, the majority of the women in this study prioritized their family before their work. For example, Brianna, like many women this study articulated, “If I'm in a position where I'm forced to choose between work and family, I'm going to choose family, ultimately.” However, some women acknowledged that depending on the time of year for work and the context of the conflict, they may prioritize responsibilities differently. Nettie shared, “There’s times in my field where I have to spend more time at work or doing work than I can with my family. So, I can't be balanced all the time.”

One participant spoke in detail about a situation in which she prioritized work before her son’s medical needs. Lora’s supervisor was terminated, and as a result, she was appointed interim director. This new appointment came at the same time in which her son was scheduled for his second heart surgery.

So, my boss was fired, and I basically became interim, and he's like, Lora, I need you at 100%. I'm like okay. So that next week, my son's cardiologist called, and they're like, oh, well, we're ready to schedule his heart surgery. He'll be out for two weeks...Because he'll be like, he was in the hospital for a week...I'm like, how am I supposed to do all this? Right? Because, and so I said, does he have to have it now? Can this be held off? Their like, yeah, he'll just have to stay on heart medicine until he does it. (Lora)

Lora made the decision to postpone her son's heart surgery for five months and have her son remain on the necessary medication recommended by the cardiologists. This decision allowed Lora to assume the director role and give the amount of effort and focus to work that she was being asked to give. She was worried that if she did not prioritize her work over her son's surgery that her opportunity for promotion may be eliminated.

I was kind of afraid, like, well, if I tell my boss after he just told me, I need you at 100% that I'm gonna have to take off like three weeks. You know, I really wanted to become director. And I was like, is that gonna hurt my chances? You know, is he gonna say, well, you know, we have to hire someone as a you know, emergency now because you're not going to be there. (Lora)

In the end it all worked out for Lora as the following year she officially became the director for her department and her son received his surgery five months later. Lora was promoted to director without a search process being completed, which made her feel good.

The data collected in this study indicates that the women in this study attempt to successfully juggle rather than balance their multiple responsibilities as both a mother of a child with disabilities and a student affairs professional. More specifically, the word balance does not depict the realities of their lives. In addition, data indicated that these women did not juggle their dual roles alone. The next theme describes the support systems that these women developed to assist them in navigate their dual roles.

Juggling Work and Family is Rarely a Solo Act

The women in this study rarely navigate their roles and responsibilities as a student affairs professional and mother of a child with disabilities alone. Creating support

systems within and outside of their work and family domains is important as they negotiate their dual roles, and were unique to them and their needs. Support systems that were frequently created and discussed in this study were the role of a spouse/partner, having family support, creation of networks, as well as hiring outside agencies. Each support system is described in detail below.

The Role of a Spouse/Partner

The majority of the women who have a spouse/partner, articulated that having a significant other was an important factor in navigating their dual roles. Specifically, women spoke about how their spouse/partner tended to be more involved with the child's activities, routines, doctor appointments, and was available to assist when work/family conflict arose if their spouse/partner worked from home or had an occupation that was considered more flexible than the participant's profession. An occupation was described as "more flexible" if the spouse/partner could be home when the child was home after school, they had more of an ability to leave work at a moment's notice or did not need to travel for work. For example, Julia described how she would work until 6:00 p.m. every night while her husband's schedule allowed him to be home by 3:00 p.m. This schedule afforded him the opportunity to be available to assist their children with their homework and their evening routine. She stated, "You know, he had them honestly for more hours of the awake time than I did."

However, for some women, their spouse/partner was unable to take on a larger role in their child's day to day activities and needs. Some participants denoted that they had a more flexible work schedule/occupation than their spouse/partner and this led to the participant taking on a greater role with the child. For example, Marie described how she

is responsible to do “the brunt of the day-to-day” with her child with disabilities because her spouse is a house supervisor (nurse manager role) at a hospital. When work/family conflict occurred for the participants who had less flexible schedules than their partner and they could not rely on their partner, participants realized it was important to construct other support systems. Judy denoted that having respite care (temporary care for a sick, elderly, or individual with a disability, which provides relief for the individual’s everyday caregiver) was imperative because she could not rely on her husband to assist with her child’s needs. She went on to explain how her husband, who serves as a police officer, commutes 4 hours, which results in Judy being the sole caretaker for her child approximately four to five days a week. She continued, “So now, I think that gives you maybe a little bit more context for why some of the respite care is even more important and why I have to put boundaries around work.”

While most women spoke about their spouse/partner being an important support system, it should be noted that not all women viewed their spouses as helpful even when they were accessible and available to help. One participant in particular spoke about how her therapist and friends are a greater source of support for her and she views her husband as her “fourth child”.

Having Family Support

For most of the women, having a family support system (outside of a spouse/partner) was very important to their success. For example, Jesse lives with her mom and her sisters also lives in close proximity to her. She relies on them frequently to assist her when work/family conflict arises. She continued stating, “I can’t imagine what

that would be like to be in this field that is heavily involved, and requires a lot of physical and time energy, then to have a child with a disability, and you have no nobody around.”

Sometimes, participants spoke about the importance of family support systems by describing what life is like when it is not present. For example, Fran has three children with disabilities and in her interview spoke about a 10-year period in which she was not able to work because her husband was working full time, earning his master’s degree and they had no family in the area that they could call upon in a time of need. She stated, “It is all on me because he was you know, when we were in Texas, he was working full-time and then getting his master's in the evening. And so, there was no help.” However, they then moved to Kansas, closer to family. Moving closer to family and being able to rely on them when work/family conflict arises gave Fran the support she needed to be able to return to the workforce.

Creation of a Network as a Support System

Some women described their support systems as “networks” or “tribes”. These networks typically consisted of individuals or groups of individuals who the participant could rely on when they needed someone to “cover them at work” or assist with their children when they found themselves with a conflict between work and family. Networks were developed in both the work and family domains for most women. For example, Ashley stated that her network consisted of individuals at work who she is emotionally closer to, who assist her when she is not going to be able to “rise up to the occasion because of a family need”. Jean shared a similar sentiment.

I have an amazing team of people at work, who totally understand and if I got to go, I got a sick kid, I have a, you know, crisis happening at school, you know,

something like that, I have people who would step in and take...the wheel for me.
(Jean)

Some participants described how the networks they develop provide them with emotional support. In other words, some networks are not necessarily called upon to “act” or step in to help resolve an issue or conflict as Ashley and Jean described above, but rather to serve as a listening ear. As much as the participants in this study are helpers who listen and empathize with those in need, they also need someone trustworthy they can vent too as well. For instance, Kenzie spoke about having two individuals at work that she could trust and be vulnerable with. She stated, “And I just remember crying in my office, like I just gotten the diagnosis for Frank. And I was really upset, and they were there to support me.” Similarly, Fran discussed how she is close friends with one of the women she works with and that she values being able to vent and talk with this individual. She stated, “Having somebody there that does get it really helps. And they kind of know the chaos that I have going on at home. And they're very supportive.”

A few women mentioned that the network they created consisted of other mothers that have children with disabilities. They described that this specific support system “just gets it”. What they mean by that phrase is that these other mothers understand what they are going through and when they use jargon associated with disabilities or navigating systems, they are less apt to need clarification, something that participants see as one more thing that drains them emotionally. For example, Mary has a friend on campus who is also a mother with a child with disabilities and she described how this friend not only provides normalcy for her life experiences but also how a reduced amount of emotional energy is required to maintain this friendship.

So, we have our own little like, parties of like, oh, you know, he did this. Oh, he learned this. Oh, we're here. You know, what do you think about this?...It's, helpful for those moments where you just need like, am I crazy? Is this what's going on? And like they can be your crazy check. They can be your... they get it. And it really makes it less heavy. It is emotionally easier to go to her and say, ugh IEP meeting tomorrow, they didn't even send me the IEP yet...And she's like, I know. Well, do this. Let me know how it goes after versus maybe some of my other mom friends where I'm saying, oh IEP meeting. Oh, that's interesting. What's that? How do you like...It's just, it's less emotional energy. (Mary)

For some women, the network of support that they relied on was the friends they associated with outside of work. For example, Ashley was very clear that even if her parents lived next door, it would not provide her with any type of advantage or assistance as they would not help watch her children and as a result, she often relies on her friends when work/family conflict arises. She went on to talk about how she is better off having “made routes” where she lives with her friends, and even goes as far to call her friends “family”.

I'd trust them with my kids. I'd trust them to, you know, help me out if I'm ever in a pickle and people do...I'm better off having my made routes, because they'll actually like pick up my kids from school and take them home and feed them dinner and, you know, do stuff like that to help us get over a bumpy patch if it arises. And even with my older kids, who's you know, it's just he's different the way his way of seeing the world is different. He interacts differently than a typical

kid. People, people in our, in our family here don't. It's like not even a speed bump. They just roll with it. It's really great. We're really fortunate. (Ashley)

In addition, a few women spoke about how important online networks were for their success. Online groups associated with their child's disability or online groups associated with being a mother and student affairs professional have been helpful resources for them. Lauren spoke about how a Facebook group called S.A.M.S (Student Affairs MomS) is her "safe space". If nothing else, sometimes these support networks provide participants with the affirmation that they are not alone on their journey and there are other families similar to theirs.

I know, in the last, especially the last few months that's helped is being part of the different (even though they're virtual) groups, but the S.A.M.S. group, or I'm in a couple of the Neurofibromatosis groups for Ronan, and then just saying, okay, we're not the only family that's going through this struggle right now. (Charlotte)

While the role of one's spouse/partner, having family support, and creating supportive networks was important to the participants of this study, sometimes, they needed to create support systems beyond those that existed in their family or work domains. These support systems are discussed in the next sub-theme.

Hiring Outside Agencies

A few participants mentioned the importance of support systems specifically associated with their child's disability that are not part of their work or family environments. For example, as denoted earlier, Judy relies on respite care to help her meet her son's needs. Additional agencies that were mentioned by participants were childcare providers, caseworkers, therapists, and tutors.

Ashely described how her son's caseworker is imperative to her ability to find work/family balance. Especially during the pandemic as she is working from home, she realized that she could not do it all and needed help to be able to successfully work from home and ensure her son's needs were met. Ashley described that her state's disability department pays for a childcare assistant for her son. She described how pre-pandemic the childcare assistant would come to her house to help her son with his routine after school, but during the pandemic these services are imperative throughout the day so Ashley can successfully work from home.

I tried to do it by myself when they first when we first went on work and school at home, and I just was gonna lose my mind. I couldn't do it. And I mean, I don't know what your day to day is like, but I basically sit in meetings all day long. And I couldn't like, Oh sorry President, can I just step out and help my child with his technology issue? I'll be right back...So anyhow, Rae, our childcare provider is here largely to help Harrison, my older son. But then the added bonus is she helps a little guy too. (Ashley)

A few participants mentioned the importance of childcare by describing its importance particularly when it is lacking. Childcare for these women can be particularly challenging because not all childcare entities are reliable, affordable, or capable of appropriately addressing the needs of their children.

Those are the pieces that are challenging, I think, for folks to understand. For school aged care. So, it almost got harder once my kiddos were in first grade and older, because then I no longer have the childcare. So, all the half days and teacher in services and the school breaks and the...Who who's taking care of my

kiddos then? Right? So, talk about I was either paying for camps, right? Or I was paying a babysitter I was paying a....(Sharon)

The data provided in this section indicates that in order for women to successfully navigate their family and work roles and responsibilities they need the support of others. Support systems such as the role of a spouse/partner, having family support, the creation of networks, as well as hiring outside agencies are important as these women strive to navigate their dual roles.

Letting Go of the Ideal

Many of the women in this study described the need to “let go” of the ideal they thought they had to achieve and learning to accept the reality of their life circumstances. For example, Jean described that she has recently learned to come to terms with and accept the challenges in her life. Now that Jean has started to accept that her daughter’s disabilities are not going away and there is not a “magic pill that will make her better” she believes she can “face the day” being her “authentic self.” She is now much more transparent with those around her when she is having a difficult day and as a result needs time to take care of herself. She believes that being authentic is not only good for her but also for her children. “Sometimes I feel sad. Sometimes I feel anxious. Sometimes I feel angry. Like, I want my kids to recognize and understand that those emotions are real and human, and they can have them too.”

Julia on the other hand, talked about letting go of the idea of being *all* things to *all* people and the idea that *everything* must be a priority. For her, sometimes the advocacy ball is the ball that she as a juggler must drop because other balls must take priority. In October 2020 when Julia’s husband passed away, she found herself trying to deal with

keeping her job, being a single mother, helping her students, and trying to help her children. With all she was trying to juggle, she was clear with her son (who is now 17) that it was time for him to self-advocate more for his needs as she “did not have the time or energy to help him through the minutiae.”

For some women there were emotional responses to the concept of letting go. Prior to letting go, some women felt as though they were always in survival mode, felt guilty, and were under extreme pressure to always be *all* things to *all* people. For example, Elizabeth describes how trying to be the person who does everything is emotionally exhausting.

So, I think there's an emotional exhaustion with having to be the advocator, the educator, the person who has to stay on top of it, all right? And I don't have a partner, right? Her dad loves her very much, but he's not involved in the day to day. (Elizabeth)

Once women began the shift to letting go of unrealistic ideals they held, they were more apt to view their roles from a more joyful, hopeful, excited, and gratitude lens.

And I feel like I'm really truly at that season right now, where we're at the crest and now like, I'm just gonna throw my hands up, and I'm just gonna enjoy the ride with my son because he's having the time of his life. He is laughing, he is enjoying this, why am I not? So, for me, I really come back to am I finding joy in this journey? You know, this is beautiful. Ryan's perfect. (Lauren)

In addition, as women in this study learned to let go of the unrealistic ideals they held and began to embrace that they could not be *all* things to *all* people *all* the time, they developed strategies to help reframe their own expectations and the expectations

(perceived and/or real) of others. The most common personal strategies that they employed were setting realistic expectations and establishing boundaries, clearly communicating their needs to the various members of each domain, asking for help, managing time efficiently and multitasking, as well as taking care of oneself. Each strategy is described in detail below.

Setting Realistic Expectations and Establishing Boundaries

Being okay with achieving what they view as “the minimum,” recognizing one’s limitations, or lowering one’s expectations was necessary. For example, both Ellie and Julia mentioned the need to “be okay” with accomplishing the bare minimum. As Julia found herself trying to navigate work and family as well as her husband’s pancreatic cancer diagnosis in 2018 and his passing in 2020, she found that in order to find balance she needed to acknowledge and be okay with the fact that she is not the “uber of anything”.

Vicky believed that “the best is the enemy of good enough and good enough is sometimes okay.” If she does not have time to wash the dishes, she uses paper plates. If she does not have time to cook, she orders takeout. If she is working from home and her children need to be entertained, she lets them be on their iPad and have more screen time than she would ideally prefer.

One way in which the women in this study set realistic expectations was by setting good boundaries and adhering to them accordingly. They discussed setting boundaries within their work and home environments as well as setting boundaries for oneself.

You know, today I cared for a lot of people, and then after work, I cared for my little people and I cared for my friends and I cared for my spouse. And, you know, sometimes that can feel like a lot. And so, I have always tried to set really good boundaries for myself on like, when I've reached my threshold of helping, and I need to kind of turn that helping focus back on myself. (Jean)

Nettie also agreed with the importance of setting boundaries. She has “started to learn the word *no*”. She realizes that she cannot please everyone or say “yes” to all requests because she does not have the time to “do it all”.

Ashley described how her youngest son recently had surgery and she needed to take the day off to tend to him. She clearly communicated her boundaries with her supervisor and did not waiver from her plan.

If you need me, you can wait until the next day. You know, and I said to my boss, like, I don't work in the emergency room, no one's gonna die if I don't answer your email or attend to that project today. So, I'm just need to step away. I didn't even take my work phone or my computer to the hospital. I was like, I'm just gonna focus on my kids, draw a boundary, and people respect that, where I worked. (Ashley)

Establishing boundaries occurred not only in the work environment but also at within the family domain. Elizabeth spoke about setting boundaries she set at home now that she is working from home due to the pandemic. She stated that she had to clearly draw boundaries with her daughter regarding when/if she can interrupt Elizabeth when she is on a work call or zoom meeting. She said that she even set the boundary with her

daughter prior to our interview together by telling her daughter “There is nothing other than you being on fire that can interrupt this next meeting.”

Data in this study indicates that the women in this study realize that they cannot “do it all” and as such, they had to adjust their expectations to be more realistic of their lived experiences. In addition, establishing clear boundaries within both the family and work domain was important as they tried to navigate their dual roles.

Clearly Communicating Needs to Members of the Domains

Clearly communicating one’s needs with key constituents from both the family and work domain was important to some women in this study. For example, Sharon believes that when you are a parent of a child with disabilities you cannot have any secrets. She needs to be able to take time away from work and the only way she will be able to do that is if she communicates her needs with her supervisor.

So, part of it is, is you can't have any secrets when you're parenting children that need stuff, right? So, I need to be able to take the time, like, you know, we've got three surgeries or something coming up this summer. You know, that requires taking time off. My boss needs to know why. (Sharon)

Brittany does not want to tell her supervisor about her son’s medical appointments and the details of his disability, but she acknowledged that sometimes she must share those details with her supervisor. She described a situation in which her supervisor was “hounding” her for something for work but during that same time period she was trying to navigate her son losing his vision in his left eye. Although she did not *want* to, she *needed* to meet with her supervisor to explain what was going on with her son Ayden’s

medical concerns and how this impacted her ability to accomplish her work tasks on time.

Although communication with supervisors was important, communication within the family domain was also important for participants. For example, while Charlotte described the importance of communicating with her supervisor, she also discussed the necessity of communicating with her husband, particularly when she needs to take a phone call during family time. Sharon also discussed how important communication is within her household. Clear communication within their family keeps everyone on track and everyone where they need to be.

Asking For Help

A few women denoted that in order to successfully navigate work and family they must ask others for help. For example, Vicky stated, “And I will say work/family coexistence is what I call it, relies on asking for help.” Ashley agreed that asking for help is important, especially for those who identify as helpers and work in student affairs. It has been her experience that individuals who work in student affairs tend to not ask for help if it is beyond the scope of their job. She acknowledged, “But we're all people, and we all have lives outside of our jobs. And asking others for help, or at least to be you know, just even to be an ear is so important to feeling fulfilled.”

Like Vicky and Ashley, Nettie agreed that asking for help was important to her success. Although there was once a time in her life that she did not ask for help and held the perception that she could do everything on her own, she now sees asking for help differently. She now believes that there is no shame in asking for assistance. She stated, “I think I wouldn't be able to do it without half the help that I have. And I'm not afraid to

ask for help.” The data collected in this study indicates that while some women once thought they could navigate their dual roles successfully on their own, they now understand that the reality of their circumstances requires them to lean on others and ask for assistance.

Managing Time Efficiently and Multitasking

While women utilized a variety of different strategies to manage their time efficiently, almost most of the women in this study denoted how critical efficient time management was to achieving work/family balance. Some of the strategies that were discussed were using calendars, multitasking, keeping a routine, using to-do lists, and in general working efficiently. For example, some women will check email or fold laundry while watching a movie or engage in activities with their family members such as hiking or food prepping as this allows them to spend time with family but also accomplish the tasks that *needs* to be done. Both Elizabeth and Nettie talked about multitasking when their children are at sports practices. Elizabeth will drop her daughter off to soccer practice and then grocery shop during that time. For Nettie, there were times when she could not get work done during traditional work hours, so she would do it when the children were in bed or while they were at practice. She intentionally comes in early to work so she can get herself organized for the day and prioritize the things that need to be done, but she is realistic that sometimes, even with the best planning, some of her work responsibilities may spill into family hours.

Many women talked about how they manage appointments or their schedules. For example, Brittany tries to do all of her son’s appointments over her lunch break. She said this can be challenging to figure out when doctors take their lunch breaks or shut down

their offices so the entire office can leave for lunch. Overall, this strategy works well for her. Charlotte described how she will frequently attend meetings via phone while she is driving to her children's doctor appointments. More recently, she has attended zoom meetings from her car while they are waiting to get into an appointment or doctor's office, or even attends zoom meetings the exam room once they are called back to see the doctor.

Taking Care of Self

Most of the women in this study described the importance of taking care of themselves as a strategy utilized to successfully navigate work and family. Although there are a variety of ways in which the participants describe how they take care of themselves, they share the common goal of trying to take care of themselves so they can continue to give to others. The most frequently mentioned self-care strategies that were discussed were working out or going to the gym, taking time for oneself, baking/cooking, and reading. Other strategies that were mentioned were running, reading, meditating, playing a musical instrument, prioritizing sleep, and attending therapy sessions.

I think that a strategy is to fill my own cup backup to make sure that I don't run dry...I am most likely to not be my best self in both places is whenever I'm not taking the best care of myself...I like to bake, I love to read, and I read a lot, and I try to set aside, you know, time at night, which sometimes takes away from my sleep...Those are like two things I'm really passionate about doing and that I spend a lot of time doing for my own self-care (Jean)

Nettie articulated that in some ways her self-care is more important than the other responsibilities she has in her life. She stated, "If I can't be good for myself, I can't be

good for them. So, like to me, a balance is being able to have, like my own, like, self-care routine in a day.” Nettie begins everyday by meditating. Sometimes she will also meditate again at lunch. She works out every morning before work too. By focusing all of her self-care tasks in the morning, she is then able to tend to work and dedicate the evenings to her children and their needs.

Although self-care seemed to be a strategy that most women utilized, three women made it a point to openly discuss how self-care is nonexistent for them and just one more thing added to their already very long list of responsibilities. For these women, the self-care “ball” is the one that cannot be priority, or even juggled along with the rest of their responsibilities.

You know, what's interesting is, you know, having a having a full-time job and kids with disabilities and just any kids and ill husband, you know, well-meaning people would be like, you know, what are you doing for you? I'm like, I know what you're asking, but I a little bit want to flip you off because like, what, what, what, what thing am I going to stop doing so I can get a massage? Like what thing? (Julia)

Julia went on to describe how she does not focus on her physical fitness any longer and is not focusing on her hobbies because “it’s just not worth it.” She concluded by saying, “And my brain just needs to rest it needs to rest in a different way.” Similarly, Sharon reported that when someone tells her to take time for herself, she finds it “funny” because “it feels like one more thing.” She stated, “Like, oh, I have to add this to the list too? Oh, okay. You know, like, it's, it's to me, it is just really funny, silly advice, because it's just more, right?”

One participant, Fran, views her time at work as time in which she is taking care of herself. As noted earlier in this chapter, Fran has three children with disabilities and recently started her work in student affairs as an admissions clerk, because for 10 years she was unable to work due to needing to tend to her child's special needs. She described these 10 years as "very hard" and stated she reached her breaking point, which was one of the reasons she decided to go back to work. For her, work is viewed as "me time".

But honestly, work has been even though it's stressful and you know, all the things we talked about this whole time, it's still a me time thing, because I'm getting to go do something for myself, which is a career versus something for somebody else. (Fran)

Data from this study indicates that women are "letting go" of the idealistic view of being *all* things to *all* people at *all* times. As a result, they developed strategies to help reframe their own expectations and the expectations (perceived and/or real) of others, which inevitably helped them to navigate their dual roles. The most common personal strategies that they utilized were setting realistic expectations and establishing boundaries, clearly communicating their needs to the various members of each domain, asking for help, managing time efficiently and multitasking, as well as taking care of oneself.

Flexibility in the Workplace

Having flexibility within the work environment was significant to most of the women in this study as they strived to achieve work/family balance. They described the importance of having a flexible supervisor, flexible work schedule, and having flexibility to integrate their work and family roles. While describing flexibility within the work

environment some women made a correlation between their level of flexibility within the workplace and their title/position. Each of these sub-findings are described below.

Having a Flexible Supervisor

While women in this study described the importance of a supervisor being empathetic, caring, supportive, trustworthy, and understanding, having a *flexible* supervisor was one of the most imperative factors in being able to successfully balance working in student affairs and being a mother of a child with disabilities. Juliana denoted that “flexibility is really the key term” and it is important for supervisor to be aware that “kid stuff doesn't only happen from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. the next day, and work stuff doesn't always happen between the hours of eight and five.”

Mary has been in her position for almost 10 years and within that time period has had two supervisors. She denoted the importance of having a flexible supervisor by comparing the two of them. Her current supervisor she described as flexible. Her supervisor would tell her “I know you're good for the work, do what you have to do. Like, I know if you're home, you're going to be working. I know you answer email later than you should.” In fact, she went on to denote that she had an upcoming neurology appointment for her son that was over an hour away and scheduled for the middle of the day during a workday. She told her supervisor that she would come into the office in the morning for a few hours and then leave to take her son to the appointment. Her supervisor followed up stating, “It's Friday take off. Like, don't worry about it.”

Mary went on to describe her previous supervisor as hypocritical when it came to providing her with flexibility. Mary's supervisor gave her flexibility to tend to her child's

needs but in reality, she would call Mary when Mary was at a doctor appointment for her child.

Like they just on paper, they said...like you have kids do your thing, do whatever you got to do. But then I'd be getting phone calls during doctor's appointments and like, why didn't you answer this email while I'm like off with the sick kid.

Like it wasn't in practice. (Mary)

Brittany's supervisor also pretended to provided staff with workplace flexibility. Brittany described how her supervisor would only be flexible if being flexible benefited him or "made him look good". In other words, although her supervisor articulated that he would provide her flexibility, in practice he would not. This was challenging for Brittany because it would lead to her feeling as though she was not meeting her supervisor's expectations and failing at her job.

So, I had to go home on Friday. Somebody was sick. So, I called and texted and said, listen, I got to go home. Somebody...It was Orion, Orion was sick. I have to pick them up from daycare. I literally have a half hour to pick him up. Um, and he's like, Yeah, sure. Go get going. Yeah, definitely. I go pick Orion up. By the time I got home, I had an email. Hey, I know your son's sick however, I still need duh duh duh duh duh. And so now I'm failing in my job you know what I mean? So now you're failing in your job. But he was like, super supportive of me going home. (Brittany)

In addition to having a flexible supervisor, having flexibility to adjust one's work schedule was key in for almost half of the participants. This finding is discussed in more detail in the next section of this manuscript.

Flexible Work Schedule

Data indicates that having a flexible work schedule was essential for many women in this study as they navigate their dual roles. For example, Marie described how as an Associate Director for Housing and Residence life, she has flexibility within her work schedule because she frequently works in the evenings and serves in an on-call capacity. She also mentioned that she has flexibility because of her campus culture. She stated that ultimately, she has control over her schedule to come and go as she needs to.

I would say in terms of hours worked, because I think that's important to note, I have a good deal of flexibility because of those nighttime things and because of our campus culture...If I am working that Thursday night, from seven to nine to help out with something, I don't really need to ask to take care of driving our kids to school, or whatever it is I need to do. (Marie)

Juliana drives her daughter to school every day so that her daughter's anxiety is not exacerbated by riding on the bus. As a result, she arrives to work about 30 minutes late and adjusts her lunch time by 30 minutes to make up the time. For her it is well worth making this schedule adjustment so that her daughter's needs are met.

Flexibility to Integrate Work and Family Roles

There are many ways in which women integrate their work and family roles, however, working from home and having children come to work were the two methods most discussed by the women in this study. Having the flexibility to integrate work and family roles or allowing the two worlds to blend allow for most women in this study to achieve work/family balance.

Brittany frequently takes work home. She may not actually send emails until the next workday, but she utilizes the evenings after her children go to bed to draft emails. She uses this time to get done as much as she can. Rebecca also uses the evening hours to respond to emails in order to find balance between work and family.

While women found work/family balance by allowing their work domain to permeate into their family domain, they also found balance by allowing their family domain to infuse into their work domain. Nine of the participants specifically mentioned bringing their children to work as a way of integrating their work and family roles and as a strategy in achieving work/family balance. Children are permitted to attend university openings and closings, university programs, or visit their mother's office while sick or when their schools were closed.

Lauren spoke about how it has never been problematic if she needed to bring her son to her office. In fact, seeing children on campus is "the norm".

If I need to bring Ryan in, especially through the pandemic, it's been a beautiful thing that it was this way prior to the pandemic, but then then the pandemic happened, and it was not uncommon for my son to come to work with me. No one thought twice about, oh, is she spending time at her job, or is she babysitting her kid? You know, it was very normal to see children on campus. We are encouraged to bring our kids to student activities events, to go to the soccer games with our families, to go to cookouts with our families, um it's just normal. It's been very normalized that we are we are celebrating the family. (Lauren)

A few women made a correlation between their title or position within their department and their level of flexibility to come and go from work as they need to for

child or family related needs. For example, Marie serves as an Associate Director for Housing and Residence Life and has worked in the student affairs profession for 15-19 years. She described how in her current role she does not have many student appointments per say and is no longer overseeing one on one supervision of student staff. With her focus more on the programmatic parts of the department, her meetings are more with faculty and staff which she stated happens more during the “10 to three timeframe”. She continued by reflecting on the fact that earlier in her career when she was an academic advisor, her degree of flexibility was less than what it is now. “When I was doing academic advising, it would have been much more difficult to have the degree of flexibility that I have now.”

Lora also described a correlation between her title and her ability to have a flexible work schedule. She is currently a director and has worked in student affairs for 20-24 years. She described how her title as director allows her to take her lunch hour early in the morning, which lets her to get her workout in and get her children to school. She continued by describing that her supervisor was not aware of the schedule change, nor would he care if he was aware.

Masking

Some women in this study described times in which they modified or altered their feelings and their expressions associated with their feelings. These modifications were made both within their work and home environments. Women described feeling one way but had compelling reasons to express a different emotion, or to “mask” their true emotions. In many instances the reason they altered their emotions was to express an emotion that was more acceptable by organizational culture or altered their emotion to

one that was what they believed was more appropriate for their home environment and children's needs. Women in this study spoke about toxic positivity in the work domain leading to masking as well as masking in the family domain. In addition, a few women described that masking was not needed when they were permitted to be their authentic self. All three of these areas are discussed in detail below.

Toxic Positivity Leads to Masking in the Work Domain

Women discussed the need to alter or change their emotions more at work than at home. For some women, masking at work was imperative. Masking at work sometimes was required because participants did not want their colleagues to adjust their expectations of what they believe the participant could accomplish. Masking also occurred when participants felt the need to cover up an insecurity or needed to create boundaries between work and family. Lastly, masking usually occurred because participants were not permitted to be authentic within their place of employment due to toxic positivity in the work culture.

Rebecca articulated that she wore a mask at work because she was worried her colleagues would adjust their expectations and perceptions of what she could accomplish if they were aware of all she was juggling within her personal life. She also described using a mask at work to create a boundary between work and family. She explained how she believed it was appropriate for colleagues to provide their opinions about workplace matters such as developing a collaborative series or advising relationship but when it came to her child, she did not see it fitting for her colleagues to provide her with suggestions or recommendations.

Brittany was also unable to share her authentic emotions at work. Brittany described how when her son was first diagnosed, she would cry on her way to work every morning. Once she arrived at work, she would sit in the parking lot to apply her makeup and once that physical mask went on, so did her emotional mask.

When Ayden was diagnosed, I cried every morning on the way to work. Every morning I cried. A song would come on, a thought would be in my head, I would cry. Pull into the parking lot. And like I never put makeup on until I got to the parking lot, because I had to fix myself. And then I would fix myself to go into work, and I put that mask on. I'd be positive, I'd be a go getter and get shit done...So that's how I coped with everything and all that emotional baggage. So as soon as I put the makeup on, I stopped crying. (Brittany)

Brittany was clear in her interview that toxic positivity is part of their campus culture. In other words, it is expected that staff, particularly female staff are positive, nurturing, and never provide negative feedback or complain about anything professionally or personally. They are expected to suppress their negative emotions and be positive at all times while at work. She described how if she is not positive and does not fall in line with the cultural expectations “you can really suffer professionally here.” As a result, she masks frequently always trying her hardest to smile and be positive. She said, “Like I fake it to make it.”

Brittany was not the only participant who described needing to “fake it” and pretend everything was okay. Other women in this study used the words “I’m fine” to describe the toxic positivity within her work environment. For example, Juliana said culturally in the area of the country she lives in, saying “I’m fine” is part of the mindset.

“Like to say, I'm fine, even when you're incredibly not fine.” She said that regardless of what is going on in her life, she has to “stuff it deep” and put on her “fine mask”.

When toxic positivity was part of one’s work culture, it led to the women in this study feeling as though they could not be their authentic self while at work. Women had to mask their true emotions and feelings to meet the expectations of the work environment. As women discussed the idea of not being able to be their authentic self, some articulated that they believed there was an emotional impact that resulted from masking. These women used words like “super tiring”, “overwhelming”, and “angry”. Vicky stated, “I feel so sometimes I feel angry that I'm not, I'm not allowed to have feelings.” Although Fran did not use the words angry or overwhelming to express the emotional impact of masking, she still experienced negative emotions associated with masking. She described how the process of masking can “eat away at you.”

And, you know, that goes back to that, you know, that mental hard time I was having was when you're doing for everybody else, and you're putting this mask on for everybody else, you're really not being yourself, it can really eat at you. (Fran)

While masking occurred more frequently in the work environment for the women in this study, some women did talk about the need to mask while at home. The next section focuses on women masking within the family domain.

Masking in the Family Domain

For some, masking at home was deemed necessary when the participants needed to prioritize their children over their authentic emotions, they attempted to not exacerbate the child’s disability, and utilized masking as a mechanism to detach from work and draw a boundary between their two roles.

Lora was one of the participants who described the need to mask at home. When she has had a difficult day at work, she tries to ensure her children are not aware of her feelings and she works to “overcome whatever it is.” She stated that by the time she gets home from work and picks up her children, they want her to focus on their lives, so that is what she prioritizes over her authentic emotions. She masks the feelings from her difficult day to tend to their needs, listen to their concerns, and respond accordingly.

Similarly, Elizabeth acknowledges that she masks at home as well. She emotionally masks her stress and anxiety because her daughter lives with enough to worry about when it comes to her disabilities. She believes that if she was more authentic and did not mask in front of her daughter, she could inadvertently be making things more difficult for her daughter.

Nettie talked about a time in which there was a student death on campus. The student who passed away was someone who worked for her for a period of time and as a result she knew the student personally. The experience was incredibly taxing on her. She explained, “You know, in the sense of like, could you have done something more? You know, how can you help.” She described how working in student conduct, she tries really hard to detach from her work, but that sometimes to do so is incredibly difficult when she knows the student personally. She concluded by talking about how she would put on a mask, pretending to be “fine”, when she went home. “And so, when you go have to go home and be like, oh, everything's fine, you know?”

Like how some women spoke about the emotional impact that resulted from masking in the work environment, some also spoke about the emotional impact they believe occurred as a result of masking in the family domain. For example, Juliana talked

about how it can be overwhelming to have something at work that is frustrating her and have to “pull the I’m fine mask on at home.” She stated, “It’s a heavy load for people to stuff feelings in and not be authentic about where they’re truly at.” She acknowledged that she may not “need” to mask at home as much as she does, but she chooses to mask there so that there are no negative impacts on her children or on her plans for the evening.

While some women discussed the need to mask in their work and/or family domain, it should be noted that not all women felt the need to mask. This idea of being able to be one’s authentic self is further in the next section.

Being Able to be Authentic

Some women described their ability to be their authentic self, and as a result, masking was not required. Women seemed to be able to be more authentic at work when being vulnerable was encouraged and cultivated throughout the institutional culture. In addition, not only was being authentic ingrained in the institutional culture, but the participant’s direct supervisor also encouraged their employees to be authentic in the workplace.

Lauren described that in her current work environment she is permitted and encouraged to be authentic. She described moments in which she has cried in her supervisor’s office and during this time she was supported and not judged. She explained how there is a “genuine invitation to come to the table, come as you are” and that there is nothing that her supervisor has not seen or heard from her or one of her colleagues.

And that’s really special, because he doesn’t expect me to take work home with me. But he expects me to bring my whole self to the job. And it’s unique and beautiful...He just he invites us to be who we are. He wants us to be authentic.

And I feel like that has created a culture where we can be real with each other.

And we can allow our students to be real with us. It's this authenticity in the workplace I've never experienced elsewhere. (Lauren)

Juliana described how her current leadership encourages and applauds employee's ability to be authentic and vulnerable with their colleagues, being transparent with "where you're at and what you're feeling." Juliana went on to acknowledge that under different leadership she was not permitted to be her authentic self and "what a difference" being authentic makes for her and her experience. Her current leadership is "very grace based" and "applauds one's ability to be vulnerable with their colleagues."

While some women described being their authentic self at work, others described being authentic within their family domain. For example, Brianna stated that she can be her authentic self at home and does not mask while at home. "I'm pretty authentic at home. Like I'm, they get they get what they get...I think my kiddos, my husband would, would agree with that." She continued by articulating that when the pandemic hit and she was transition to work from home, she struggled significantly with anxiety. This was a difficult time for her but throughout this challenging time, she was transparent with her family about what she was feeling and what she was experiencing.

Data indicates that some women had to modify or alter their feelings and their expressions associated with their feelings within both their work and home environments. However, there were a few women who denoted that they did not need to mask and could be their authentic self particularly when their work environment cultivated and encouraged their employees to be authentic and toxic positivity was not present within the work culture.

Summary of Findings

The data collected in this study strived to address the following primary research questions:

1. How do women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities describe work/family balance?
2. How do women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities describe emotional work within their family and work domains?

In this study, 21 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted via a videoconferencing tool, resulting in over 25 hours of data. An interview and documentation protocol, found in Appendix C, provided an overall structure for the interviews, which ensured appropriate data was collected.

Through the analysis of the data collected in this study, seven major findings emerged. These findings are *the helper identity*, *the advocate role*, *less of a balancing act and more like a juggling act*, *juggling work and family is not a solo act*, *letting go of the ideal*, *flexibility in the workplace*, and *masking*. These findings provide an in-depth and rich understanding of how women with children with disabilities who also work in student affairs view the concept of work/family balance and how they successfully navigate their dual roles.

The next chapter will provide an overall summary of this study as well as a discussion of the research findings. In addition, limitations of the research will be provided, as well as recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

Chapter 5

Summary and Discussion

This chapter is devoted to providing a summary of the study as well as a discussion on each overarching conclusion that is directly associated with the established research questions. Then, limitations of the research will be provided, as well as recommendations for policy, practice, and future research. This chapter ends with a conclusion to the study.

Study Summary

The primary purpose of this general qualitative study was to describe how women who work in student affairs at an accredited higher education institution and have at least one child with at least one disability navigate their work and family domains. A basic or general qualitative methodology within a naturalistic inquiry framework was utilized for this study. This study was designed to address the following primary research questions and their associated sub-questions.

1. How do women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities describe work/family balance?
 - a. How do these women negotiate their work and family responsibilities?
 - b. What, if any, strategies do these women employ to navigate their dual roles?
 - c. What, if any, factors contribute to work/family balance for these women.
2. How do women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities describe emotional work within their family and work domains?
 - a. In what way does emotional work play a role in the work/family balance for these women?

To answer these questions, 21 women were interviewed utilizing a purposeful sampling strategy called criterion sampling. Below are the criteria that all 21 women met.

- Participant is a full-time employee in student affairs at an accredited higher education institution.
- Participant identifies as a mother.
- Participant is the mother of at least one child who is school-aged (6-17 years of age) and is diagnosed with at least one disability.

As individuals were selected, it was assumed that they possessed knowledge and have experience with this phenomenon and therefore would be able to provide information that was detailed (depth) and generalizable (breadth) (Palinkas et al., 2015). The objective of utilizing this strategy was to understand cases that were likely to be information rich because they uncover major system weaknesses that become the focus of opportunities for program or system improvements (Palinkas et al., 2013).

The data collection process began with an electronic demographic survey that was designed to gather the data necessary to identify participants that met the specific criteria outlined in the criterion sampling plan. As noted in chapter 3 and chapter 4, 21 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted via a videoconferencing tool and recorded. In addition to participating in an interview, participants were asked to show me one to five photos or a short video that depicted work/family balance to them. I chose to use audiovisual digital materials because it was an unobtrusive method of collecting data and it provided an opportunity for participants to directly share their reality (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 1998). Lastly, during the interviews, I had the opportunity to observe the participant's office and/or home, strategies participants

utilized to achieve work/family balance, work and family domains intersecting, as well as the participant's body language.

The nature of the research questions of the study influenced the specific coding choices I selected. Since the research questions for this study focused on *exploring* and *understanding* the phenomenon of work/family balance for women who work in student affairs and have children with a disability, *process coding* was used in the first round of coding. This allowed me to analyze *how* each individual woman navigated their dual roles and responsibilities. *Pattern coding* was utilized in the second cycle. It was used to group the summaries into a smaller number of categories or concepts (Saldana, 2016). This method was useful to this research because it provided a way for similarities and differences to be identified across all interviews.

Discussion

In this section, each research question and sub-question is directly restated and then answered utilizing the data that was collected and analyzed in this study. A connection is then made to the literature review and the theoretical frameworks to establish if the conclusions found in this study support, contradict, or add to the body of literature regarding women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities.

RQ 1: How Do Women Who Work in Student Affairs and Have Children With Disabilities Describe Work/Family Balance?

This study answers this question by acknowledging that women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities describe work/family balance as a juggling act, not a balancing act. While the terms *balance* and *work/family balance* were used

throughout this study due to the longevity of the term, its wide usage, and its ease of understandability, the findings in this study suggest that these two terms do not accurately depict the lived experiences of women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities. The majority of the women in this study do not use the word “balance” to describe how they manage their dual roles, but rather utilize words or phrases such as integration, a juggling act, harmony, learning process, blending, meshing, or making trade-offs. More so, they view the concept of *balance* as static, implying that both their professional and motherhood roles had to *always* be equal and in balance, like a double-pan balance scale. This static concept of balance was also apt to create levels of frustration for the women in this study when they were unable to achieve this “ideal”.

The way in which the women in this study approach their responsibilities is much more dynamic than the idea of static balancing. They frequently must decide which role or responsibility should be prioritized over another, and which ones should be tended to later. The majority of the women in this study prioritize their family before their work, however, some did acknowledge that depending on the time of year, work had to be prioritized over family matters. This art of juggling particularly occurred when there was conflict between work and family. Work/family conflict was frequently noted when women had competing priorities within both domains, or the demands in one domain were not compatible with that of the other domain.

In addition, although the women in this study did not directly use the term *work/family enrichment*, some of them did describe how their experiences in one domain help them to become successful in the other domain. For example, women in this study noted that some of the skills that they developed from working in student affairs such as

being an advocate helped them to become a better advocate for their child with disabilities. In addition, some women noted that being a mother of a child with disabilities helped them to be a better student affairs professional by being more compassionate. Their motherhood role also helped these women to be better communicators at work and improved their ability to meet their student's needs.

Work/family balance is often defined as an individual's perception of the fit between work and family roles (Greenhaus & Allen, 2001). *Work/family conflict* and *work/family enrichment* reflect the extent to which one role negatively or positively impacts the other. In other words, *balance* can be viewed as a more global perspective than one's individual experiences of conflict and enrichment (Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Valcour & Zedeck, 2007). Although the term *work/family balance* is widely accepted, a formal definition of this term remains difficult to articulate (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). It is used as a noun when one is encouraged to achieve balance, as a verb when describing balancing work and family demands, and as an adjective as in a balanced life (Kofodimos, 1993). In addition, research indicates that the idea of trying to achieve work/family balance is a more complex task for working women with children with disabilities than those with typically developing children (Freedman, Litchfield, & Warfield, 1995; Stewart, 2013). For example, employed parents with children with more severe disabilities and behavior issues experience more difficulties achieving work/family balance than other parents (Brown & Clark, 2017). The type of caregiving these women provide their children is more time consuming and intense than caregiving provided by working parents of typically developing children, as they frequently need to monitor their child's condition, schedule and/or provide therapies, attend medical

treatments, and/or advocate on behalf of their child with various agencies such as social services, schools, therapists, or medical personnel (DeRigne & Porterfield, 2010). In addition, research suggests that women who work in student affairs do not feel as though they had balance between their personal and professional lives and did not have enough time to spend with family and friends due to the high demands of the student affairs profession. In a study conducted by Marshall et al. (2016), 12% of the individuals sampled had to prioritize their family and left the profession to stay at home to take care of their children.

Within previous research, work/family balance is frequently viewed from a conflict lens. It is frequently defined as the absence of work/family conflict. Although some research has been conducted regarding work/family enrichment, the data collected in this study adds to this body of literature because it suggests that in order to discuss work/family balance from a holistic perspective, one must consider *both* work/family conflict and work/family enrichment, not one lens or the other.

In addition, taking into consideration the information provided from the literature review as well as the data collected from this study, new terminology should be utilized to describe what women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities are trying to achieve as they navigate their dual roles. While they did describe moments of work/family conflict as well as work/family enrichment, the term “balance” may not be suitable to describe the lived experiences of the women in this study. Living a *balanced* life may not be achievable or at least not consistently achievable for these women. More so, the data collected in this study indicates that continuing to use this

terminology could result in creating levels of frustration and make women feel as though they are failing when the ideal of “all things being equal” cannot be achieved.

Sub-Question 1a: How Do These Women Negotiate Their Work and Family Responsibilities?

This study answers this question through the understanding that the women in this study rarely navigate their roles and responsibilities as a student affairs professional and mother of a child with disabilities alone. Creating support systems within and outside of their work and family domains is important as they negotiate their dual roles. Some of the support systems that these women created and relied on are the role of one’s spouse/partner, having family support, the creation of networks, as well as hiring outside agencies.

In general, women relied on their spouse/partner to assist with their child’s activities, routines, doctor appointments, and be available to assist when work/family conflict arose. Their spouse/partner was more apt to assist the participant if they worked from home or had an occupation that was considered more flexible than the participant’s profession. However, for some women, their spouse/partner was unable to take on a larger role in their child’s day to day activities and needs. This was typically because the participant had a more flexible work schedule/occupation than their spouse/partner. When this occurred, the participant was required to take on a greater role with the child. The finding in this study that the role of a spouse/partner is important as women try to navigate their dual roles is congruent with findings from prior research. For example, Scott (2010) found that the status of one’s relationship is suggested to be important as

partners provide important support such as taking a child with disabilities to a doctor or therapy appointment or listening to a partner's concerns about the child.

For most of the women, having a family support system (outside of a spouse/partner) was also important to their success. Some women described their support systems as “networks” or “tribes”. These networks typically consisted of individuals or groups of individuals who the participant could rely on when they needed someone to “cover them at work”, assist with their children when they found themselves with a conflict between work and family, or provide them with emotional support. Some of the most frequently used networks were ones that consisted of other mothers that have children with disabilities, friends outside of the work domain, as well as online networks associated with their child’s disability or online groups associated with being a mother and student affairs professional. Lastly, support systems specifically associated with their child’s disability that were not part of their work or family domains were noted as important to a woman’s ability to successfully navigate their dual roles. The agencies that were most frequently utilized were respite care, childcare providers, caseworkers, therapists, and tutors.

While the idea that women utilize support systems to assist them in successfully navigating their dual roles is not necessarily new, this finding suggest that Clark’s Work/Family Border Theory (2000) could be expanded. Clark’s Work/Family Border Theory (2000) acknowledges that the border keepers (supervisors, colleagues, higher administration, spouse/partner, parents, or children) impact the permeability of the border between the family and work domains. However, it does not acknowledge how the assistance from support groups may help a woman to achieve work/family balance,

specifically in moments when there is low boundary permeability. These support groups could be added to this theoretical framework as “border helpers”. Particularly when individuals struggle to juggle their conflicting demands, the ability of these support systems to step in and help could help reduce work/family conflict and increase the likelihood that both domains can be successfully juggled.

Sub-Question 1b: What, If Any, Strategies Do These Women Employ to Navigate Their Dual Roles?

This study answers this sub-question through the understanding that one of the primary strategies that women utilized in this study to navigate their dual roles was to “let go” of the ideal they thought they had to achieve and learn to accept the reality of their life circumstances. Being okay with achieving what they viewed as “the minimum”, recognizing one’s limitations, or lowering one’s expectations was necessary to successfully navigate one’s dual roles. Women in this study recognize they could not be *all things to all people all the time*, they employed strategies such as setting realistic expectations and establishing boundaries, clearly communicating their needs to the various members of each domain, asking for help, managing time efficiently and multitasking, as well as taking care of oneself to help reframe their own expectations and the expectations (perceived and/or real) of others.

Literature primarily focused on self-constructed strategies that women develop to navigate their dual roles. For example, Bailey (2011) explored the strategies mothers utilized to manage their dual roles. It was found that building support systems, defining boundaries, managing time efficiently, focusing on family, and taking care of self were the most common ways that women negotiated work-life balance, and all strategies were

self-constructed (Bailey, 2011). While the findings in this study are congruent with the findings from previous studies such as Bailey's (2011) study, there is a unique finding from this study that has not been discussed in previous studies. The idea of "letting go" in this study adds to the literature base by acknowledging that for some women to successfully navigate their dual roles, they must let go of the unrealistic idea that they can be *all* things to *all* people *all* the time. In addition, this addition should serve as a reminder that self-constructed strategies are just that, self-constructed. What works for one woman may not work for another, however, it is clear that using strategies is important to successfully navigate one's dual roles.

Sub-Question 1c: What, If Any, Factors Contribute to Work/Family Balance for These Women?

This study answers this question through the acknowledgement that workplace flexibility is a factor that contributes to a woman's ability to successfully navigate their dual roles. The most important factors that impacted and contributed to their success or failure of achieving work/family balance was having a flexible supervisor, having a flexible work schedule, and having flexibility to integrate their work and family roles.

While women in this study described the importance of having a supervisor that was empathetic, caring, supportive, trustworthy, and understanding, having a *flexible* supervisor was the most imperative factor in being able to successfully balance working in student affairs and being a mother of a child with disabilities. Literature typically used the term *supportive* rather than *flexible* to describe the important role a supervisor play as a border keeper. A supportive supervisor is defined as an individual who appreciates the difficulties that employees may experience as they try to achieve work/family balance

(Thomas & Ganster, 1995). They usually provide instrumental (e.g., allowing one to bring one's child to work) or emotional (e.g., expressions of concern) support (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Brown (2014) found that higher levels of supervisory support are linked with lower levels of work/family conflict. Similarly, Gates and Akabas (2012) found that higher levels of supervisory support are associated with lower levels of work caregiving conflict. Overall, higher levels of supervisory support are related to higher levels of employee retention (Chenot et al., 2009), lower levels of family interfering with work (Beutell, 2010), and higher levels of work/family balance (Hammer et al., 2005).

In addition, the data collected in this study indicates that having a flexible work schedule and the ability to adjust one's work hours is essential for many women as they navigate their dual roles. The ability to come and go as needed and tend to their child's needs when they arise was important for work/family balance. This finding is in congruence with other studies as well. Jang (2008) and Stewart (2013) found that having flexible work hours was the most important supportive workplace policy that impacted a woman's ability to find work/family balance. For women with children with disabilities, this is incredibly important as many of their children's doctor appointments, meetings with school personnel, or appointments with other service providers, can only be scheduled during regular business hours (Brown & Clark, 2017). This finding by Brown & Clark (2017) was congruent with the findings in this study.

Lastly, while a flexible supervisor and work schedule were important factors, so was the ability to integrate one's work and family roles. In this study, integration was frequently accomplished by having the ability to work from home as well as having the ability for one's children to come to their work. Having the flexibility to integrate work

and family roles allowed the participant's two worlds to blend and ultimately for them to be able to successfully navigate their dual roles.

Padulo's (2001) study found that having a flexible work schedule, an educated, understanding, trusting and supportive supervisor, as well as flexibility regarding when and where to accomplish work tasks are workplace factors that enhance a woman's ability to manage both a family and her work in student affairs. A similar conclusion can also be established from the findings of this study. Supervisor who are supportive of their employee's needs and allow their employees to have more flexibility over their work schedule or blend family into the work domain are important factors as women try to navigate being a student affairs professional and mother of a child with disabilities.

Furthermore, the important role a supervisor plays in work/family balance can also be viewed through the lens of Clark's (2000) Work/Family Border Theory. In this theory, supervisors are border keepers and have the ability to impact the permeability of the borderland space (area of blending) (Clark, 2000). When there is a tremendous amount of permeability and flexibility around the border of one's work and family domains, *blending* occurs (Clark, 2000). The relationship between work and family domains is viewed as a continuum that ranges from segmentation to integration. The segmentation or integration of work and family is associated with the degree of permeability and flexibility that describes the boundaries between the two domains (Clark, 2000; Voydanoff, 2005). When women in this study felt as though obligations from one domain negatively impacted their performance in the other, their supervisor was not flexible, they did not have the ability to integrate their work and family domains to

the degree in which they wanted, there was low boundary permeability and work/family conflict. This finding is supported by Clark's (2000) Work/Family Border Theory.

RQ 2: How Do Women Who Work in Student Affairs and Have Children with Disabilities Describe Emotional Work Within Their Family and Work Domains?

This study answers this research question through the understanding of the “helper identity” the emotional labor or masking that is associated with this identity. The women in this study assume the role of “helper” within their professional and motherhood roles. Many participants reported that being a helper came naturally and it just is “who they are”. Women assumed the role of helper in their professional domain by helping students, their parents, and colleagues with problem solving, navigating institutional policies, and providing resources. Helping in the family domain typically presented in the form of *doing* tasks for their children and family. For example, women described how they help within the family domain by cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, helping children with their homework, or taking children to after school activities. In addition, beyond these responsibilities, mothers of children with disabilities were required to spend additional time beyond these obligations to help and care for their children.

Although women found that the helper identity was fulfilling and rewarding, it was not uncommon for participants to also mentioned words like “emotional exhaustion” and “draining” when describing their experiences as a helper. In addition, there were times that being a helper led to participants feeling burnt out or feeling like a failure. This finding is congruent with current literature on emotional labor. Caring professions such as teachers and professional staff may be a source of satisfaction as well as emotional

strain, anxiety, anger, and disappointment (Acker, 1995; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Leavitt, 1994; Nias, 1993). Literature also indicates that emotional labor as burnout occurs when an individual is no longer able to manage their own or someone else's emotions according to organizational expectations (Copp, 1998).

For some women there were emotional responses to the concept of letting go of trying to be *all* things to *all* people *all* the time. Prior to “letting go” of what they viewed as unrealistic ideals, some women felt as though they were always in survival mode, felt guilty when they couldn’t achieve said ideal, and felt under extreme pressure to always be *all* things to *all* people. However, once women began the shift to letting go of unrealistic ideals they held, they were more apt to view their roles from a more joyful, hopeful, excited, and gratitude lens.

Some women in this study described times in which they had to modified or altered their feelings and their expressions associated with their feelings. These modifications were made both within their work and home environments. Women described feeling one way but had compelling reasons to express a different emotion, or to “mask” their true emotions. In many instances, the reason they altered their emotions was to express an emotion that was more acceptable by organizational culture or altered their emotion to one that was what they believed was more appropriate for their home environment and children’s needs. Women in this study spoke about toxic positivity in the work domain leading to masking as well as needing to mask in the family domain. Women in this study also noted that they felt there was an emotional impact that resulted from masking. They stated that making was *super tiring*, *overwhelming*, and made them *angry* when they had to do it. This finding is congruent with the research conducted by

Stewart (2013). Stewart (2013) found that an organization's culture (system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, which govern how people within the organization behave) has an impact on a woman's perception of work/family balance.

Some women however, described being able to be their authentic self, and as a result, masking was not required. Women seemed to be able to be more authentic at work when being vulnerable was encouraged and cultivated throughout the institutional culture. Not only was being authentic ingrained in the institutional culture, but the participant's direct supervisor also actively encouraged their employees to be authentic in the workplace. The concept of masking ties directly into Hochschild's (1983) Emotional Labor Theory. Women in this study described both surface acting and deep acting when masking. However, Hochschild's (1983) Emotional Labor Theory does not take into consideration how the ability to be authentic in the work environment may impact emotional labor.

Sub-Question 2a: In What Way Does Emotional Work Play a Role in the Work/Family Balance for These Women?

This study answers this sub-question by examining if masking plays a role in work/family balance for the participants of the study. Whether or not emotional labor impacted work/family balance for a woman seemed to be personalized for that particular woman and their individual circumstances. Some women noted that masking helped them achieve work/family balance, while others said it hinder their ability to navigate their dual roles, and others noted that it did not play a role at all. This finding is in alignment with the work conducted by Krannitz et al. (2015). If an individual is surface acting at work and able to separate their family and work domains by masking, they may be less

vulnerable to the cross-domain consequences of emotional labor (Krannitz et al., 2015). On the other hand, it is possible that women utilize work-family *facilitation* (a construct that reflects the positive influence of involvement in one domain on another) (Wayne et al., 2007). For example, resources or skills from surface acting within one domain may help them in the other domain (Krannitz et al., 2015).

Study Limitations

Rossmann and Rallis (2017) reminds us that no study is perfect, and it is important that readers keep in mind that the findings of any study are tentative, conditional, and that the knowledge produced is elusive and approximate. Limitations can arise from several factors such as a small sample size, reliance on one technique for gathering data, or a researcher's selection procedures (Rossmann & Rallis, 2017). The limitations that have been identified in this study are it is nongeneralizable, study was conducted during a pandemic, and the lack of consideration of *all* roles a woman assumes. Each are discussed below.

The first limitation of this study is that it is not fully generalizable. Although this study provides useful findings regarding how women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities view work/family balance and navigate their dual roles, it cannot be generalized because of the small sample size and that the sample size is not representative of all women. This study was limited in areas of diversity such as the participant's race and the child's disability. For example, 18 of the 21 women self-identified as white. In addition, the type of disability the child has, or the severity of the disability was not accounted for in this study. The type of institution the participant worked at was not a specified criteria and as a result only 4 women worked at a private

institution. Participants also assumed different roles within student affairs. They had different titles, differing levels of work responsibility, and came from different functional areas within student affairs. While the findings of this study cannot be generalized to *all* women who work in student affairs and have a child with disabilities, they can still be *useful* as researchers compare and contrast their studies with the findings of this one.

The second limitation of this study is that the data was collected and analyzed during a pandemic. While the data collection and analyzation occurred during the pandemic, the study was designed prior to the pandemic, preceding when women were required to work remotely, and their children were required to remote learn at home. When discussing work/family balance with the participants, it was not always clear if the participant was speaking about how they navigated their dual roles *during* the pandemic or *prior* to the pandemic. Some participants alluded to the idea that there were different challenges associated with work/family balance during the pandemic because of being required to work from home. Ideally, participants would have described work/family balance and navigating their dual roles either pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, or post pandemic.

The third limitation of this study is the consideration of the roles in which women assume. For purposes of this study, women were confined to the dualistic roles of mother and professional. I did not take into consideration other potentially challenging roles, such as the role of advocate, or any activities outside of work, that the participant assumes responsibilities for. Taking into consideration the advocate role and additional nonwork roles and responsibilities may have provide a more holistic understanding of how women juggle “it all”.

Recommendations for Higher Education Policies

As noted earlier in this chapter, the term *balance* and *work/family balance* does not accurately reflect the lived experiences of women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities. It is recommended that institutional policies are reviewed, and terms such as *balance* and *work/family balance* are changed to new terminology that is more inclusive of this group of women.

In addition, the data collected in this study indicates that women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities require work-schedule flexibility. Higher education institutions should consider adding (or adjusting existing work-schedule flexibility policies) to ensure they provide employees with the greatest amount of flexibility possible. As Rosenzweig et al. (2002) noted, workplace flexibility is critical because community-based support systems for employed parents of children with disabilities are either non-existent or significantly limited. For example, some doctors and service providers will only schedule appointments during regular business hours (Rosenzweig et al., 2002). In addition, elementary schools are sometimes even more inflexible as meetings are typically held during just a few hours within the school day (Rosenzweig et al., 2002). Establishing policies that allow women to adjust their schedules to tend to appointments associated with their child's needs is important as they try to navigate their dual roles successfully. In addition to creating and reviewing work-schedule flexibility policies, institutions should review any work/family friendly policies associated with employees being permitted to bring their children to work as well as their remote work policies. Ultimately, creating formal work-schedule flexibility policy in

which employees can blend work and family, may result in a reduction of work/family conflict for women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities.

Recommendations for Higher Education Leaders

Support for work/family balance across all levels of leadership cannot be understated (Morganson, Litano, & O'Neill, 2014). Organizational leaders are perceived to be an imperative source of support for work/family balance due to how frequently they communicate organizational policies and procedures regarding available work-family practices (subsidized childcare, parental leave, working from home) (Budd & Mumford, 2006; Todd & Binns, 2013). In addition, they are also viewed as a significant source of support for work/family balance due to their relationship with their employees (framing and/or role modeling work/family balance) (Budd & Mumford, 2006; Todd & Binns, 2013).

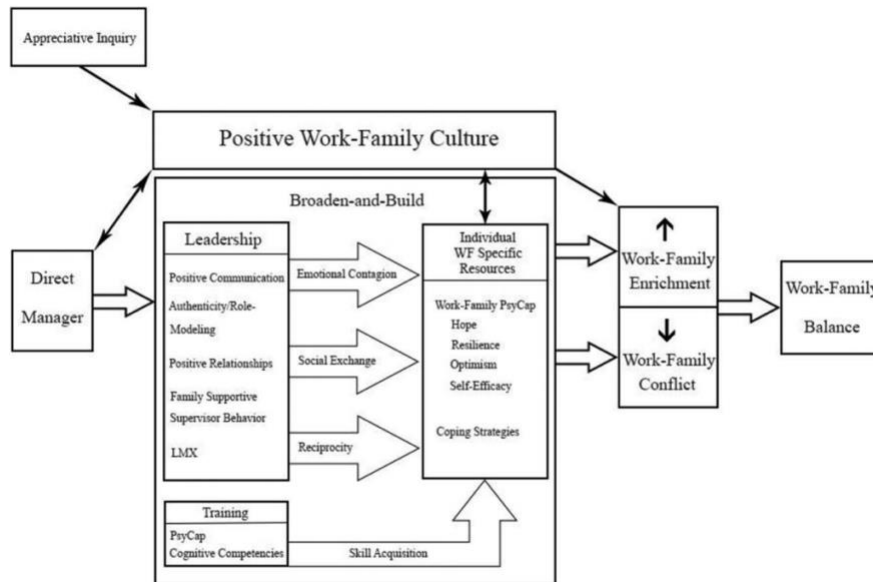
It is important that those in leadership roles understand the role they play as border keepers and how that impacts an employee's ability to achieve work/family balance. Therefore, it is important that supervisors and higher administration engage in bias training or diversity/equity/inclusion training associated with overseeing employees who are parents. The trainings should provide tools on how to navigate work/life balance issues that might arise with their employees. Equipping supervisors with this type of training and knowledge can assist them to become better advocates and supporters for their staff member. In a similar way in which being attentive to the whole student has been embedded within the core values, philosophy, and literature of the student affairs profession from the onset (Reynolds, 2011), higher education administrators and supervisors need to be attentive to the "whole employee".

Administrators and supervisors also need to critically examine their work culture and the impact of that culture on their employees. The data gathered in this study suggests that toxic positivity in work cultures is not congruent with what employees want or need. They want to be able to bring their authentic self to work and as a result, supervisors need to find ways in which to support and encourage this.

Figure 4 below, is a summative model indicating how leaders can promote work/family balance in the workplace. This figure indicates that addressing work/family issues through a positive psychology framework is conducive to positive work/family outcomes (Morganson et al., 2014). Managers should employ positive work/family practices within their organizations because research indicates that family supportive supervisor behaviors have been linked to increased organizational commitment, reduced intention to leave, and higher job performance over time (Ode-Dusseau et al., 2012). This figure also indicates that by utilizing Fredrickson's (1998) broaden-and-build theory, managers can develop personal resources through positive thinking and reframing, which may help to reduce negativity bias by focusing on well-being and work/family enrichment rather than conflict (Morganson et al., 2014). Lastly, this figure also depicts work/family conflict and enrichment as separate entities, which predict work/family balance. This is discussed in further detail in chapter two.

Figure 4

Supporting Work/Family Balance



Note. Morganson, V. J., Litano, M. L., & O'Neill, S. K. (2014). Promoting work/family balance through positive psychology: A practical review of the literature. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, 17(4), 221-244.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.rowan.edu/10.1037/mgr0000023>

Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study focused on the experiences of women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities, it was not intended to infer that men who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities do not face challenges associated with work/family balance. As such, it is recommended that a study be conducted to analyze how men who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities describe work/family balance and navigate their dual roles. An additional recommendation would be to conduct a study that would include both women and men who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities, as this would allow for the ability to compare

their experiences in an effort to provide a more holistic perspective on the idea of work/family balance in student affairs.

As denoted earlier in this study, for most women who had a spouse/partner they utilized their spouse/partner as one of their support systems to achieve work/family balance. In this study, two women were divorced, two separated from their significant other, and one was widowed. It could be beneficial to further examine the experiences of single mothers who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities in comparison with women who have a spouse or partner. Research comparing these two groups allows a researcher to develop a better understanding of how these groups navigate their dual roles and specifically identify any similarities and differences.

As indicated by this research, some women have left student affairs or are planning to leave student affairs because of their inability to achieve work/family balance. In an effort to retain women who have children with disabilities within student affairs, research should be conducted to interview those who have left the field, in order to better understand what factors led to their decision to leave the profession. This information can then be utilized to inform policies and practices within higher education.

Lastly, it is possible that women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities are or will become border keepers as they serve as supervisors of women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities. It could be beneficial to examine how these women approach being a border keeper and how it is different or similar to the way in which other supervisors who do not identify as a woman or a mother of a child with disabilities assume their role of border keeper. Examining how these

women impact the borderland space for their employees could potentially add to the literature base of supervision and leadership within student affairs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to describe how women who work in student affairs at an accredited higher education institution and have at least one child with at least one disability navigate their work and family domains. A basic or general qualitative methodology within a naturalistic inquiry framework was utilized for this study, and 21 women were selected using criterion sampling. Women who work in student affairs and have children with disabilities have rarely been studied and as a result the data collected in this study hopefully provides a deeper understanding of how these women describe work/family balance and navigate their dual roles.

While research typically uses the term *work/family balance* to describe how women navigate being a professional and mother, this is not reflective of the lived experiences of the women in this study. At any given moment, a woman must make a choice about how to juggle their multiple responsibilities, divide up their time and energy, and work through any feelings of guilty that might be associated with the choice they made. Women in this study began to “let go” of the idea that balance was achievable, became okay with achieving what they viewed as “the minimum”, recognized their own limitations, and lowered their expectations in order to successfully navigate their dual roles. In addition, their ability to successfully navigate their dual roles was possible because of the personalized strategies they employed. One of the most common strategies that was utilized was that of support systems. These support systems, whether

inside or outside of the work environment, allowed each woman to juggle the various demands and responsibilities associated with their dual roles.

The findings in this study also have implications for those in leadership positions within higher education and those that assume supervisory roles. Leaders should not minimize the important role they play as border keepers when it comes to work/family balance. Ultimately, being a supervisor who is invested in being attentive to the “whole employee”, encouraging authenticity in the workplace, and being committed to reviewing, challenging, and changing policies as the demographics of their students *and* employees change could lead to women feeling more satisfied within both of their domains and ultimately lead to the retention of these women in student affairs.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Letter

Hello S.A.M.S (Student Affairs MomS)!

This letter serves as an invitation to participate in a study about women who work in student affairs and have at least one child with a disability. The research study is for my doctoral dissertation through the Department of Educational Services and Leadership at Rowan University.

For this study, I am seeking women who meet all of the following criteria:

- Is a full-time employee in student affairs at an accredited higher education institution.
 - *Student affairs* includes all functional areas that consist of any advising, counseling, management, or administrative function at a college or university that exists outside of the classroom.
- Identifies as a woman.
 - This includes not only cis women, but also trans women and femme/feminine-identifying genderqueer and non-binary individuals.
- Identifies as a mother.
 - *Mother* is defined as a woman who gave birth to a child; an individual who conceived a child using a donor egg; a woman who has adopted a child; a co-mother who has automatically become a child's parent, has acknowledged a child, or has been declared a child's parent by a court.
- Is the mother of at least one child who is school aged (6-17 years of age) that is diagnosed with at least one disability.
 - *Child with disabilities* is defined as a child with one or more of the following conditions: Intellectual and developmental disability, hearing impairment (including deafness), speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, or a specific learning disability who needs special education and related services.
 - The disability must be diagnosed through either a doctor or educational setting.

The hope is that this study will provide direct supervisors and higher administration a glimpse into work/family balance for women with children with disabilities as well as strategies they utilize to navigate these two domains.

As a student affairs professional and mother of a child with disabilities, I recognize that balancing the roles and responsibilities of motherhood and professional life can be demanding and possibly even more complex as we navigate these dual roles during a pandemic. As a result, I understand that your time is very valuable and as such have

ensured that the time required for involvement in this study is minimal. If you decide to participate in this study, please fill out this demographic survey https://rowan.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9n5iUOU4Taz9ee2 by Monday, March 8th. The purpose of the survey is to ensure that participants meet the sampling criteria of the study. If selected to participate in the study, you will be asked to engage in a 60-minute interview via zoom, with a possible follow-up only if there is a need for clarification. After the interview concludes, participants will be asked to show the researcher 1-5 photos or a short video depicting what work/family balance means to them. Participants should also be aware that in order to ensure accuracy of the data collected, only the interview will be recorded and written/typed notes will be taken about your photo/video.

Participation in the study will be asked to provide consent to participate in the study. There will be no repercussions if you choose to withdraw from the study for any reason at any time. In addition, the risks associated with this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life. The data collected will be kept secure and will only be accessible to the primary researcher. Pseudonyms will be used and your identity and institution will not be published.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at mckinney@rowan.edu. I sincerely thank you for your consideration and look forward to hearing from you soon!

Kellie M. McKinney
Ed.D. Candidate, Rowan University

Appendix B

Participant Demographic Questionnaire

General Question:

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled Work/Family Balance: Women Who Work In Student Affairs and Have Children With Disabilities. You are included in this survey because you have shown interest in participating in this study and believe that you meet the sampling criteria requirements. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be 20.

The survey may take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey.

The primary purpose of this general qualitative study is to describe how women who work in student affairs at an accredited higher education institution and have at least one child with at least one disability navigate their work and family domains. This study is being conducted to meet dissertation requirements.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, but it will help us determine if you meet the sampling criteria for this study. If you do, we will reach out to you via the email address you provide in the survey to schedule your 60-minute interview.

Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can reach out to the Principle Investigator at the address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.
Dr. Cecile Sam Educational Services and Leadership 856-256-4500 x53827

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at (856) 256-4078– Glassboro/CMSRU. This study has been approved by the Rowan IRB, PRO-2021-309.

Please complete the checkboxes below.

- To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older. By checking this box, I affirm I am 18 years or older.
- Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey.

Personal Information:

First name: _____

Last name: _____

Email: _____

Current Age:

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 or older

How do you describe your gender identity at this time? _____

Please select the category that you most identify with:

- Mother
- Father
- Neither

What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married/Domestic Partnership
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Other

Please specify which best describes you. (Check all that apply).

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other

Work:

Institution of employment:_____

Your institution of employment is:

- Public
- Private

What is the name of the department you work in?_____

What is your current title/position?_____

Please select the one that best describes you.

- Full-time employee
- Part-time employee

Number of years you have worked in student affairs:

- Less than 1 year/I just started working in student affairs
- 1-4
- 5-9
- 10-14
- 15-19
- 20-24
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35+
- I do not work in student affairs

Family:

How many children do you have?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- More than 5

Please list the ages of each of your children. You do not need to include your children's names:

How many children do you have that are school-aged (6-17 years of age) that are diagnosed (through either a doctor or educational setting) with at least one disability?

<>0

<>1

<>2

<>3

<>4

<>5

<>More than 5

Please list their disability/disabilities. _____

Thank you for completing this demographic survey! If you meet the sampling criteria for this study, I will send you an email to the email address you provided in this survey to schedule your online interview. I sincerely thank you for your time and for agreeing to participate in this study!

Kellie McKinney

Appendix C

Interview and Documentation Protocol

The following interview questions will be used to guide, not limit, each participant's interview:

Work-Domain:

1. You noted in the demographic questionnaire that you are an <insert position> at <insert location>. Please tell me about your current job responsibilities and what a typical workday looks like for you.
 1. *Hours? Overtime or weekend responsibilities?*
2. What is it like to work in a "helping profession"?
 1. *How does this make you feel?*

Family-Domain:

1. You noted in the demographic questionnaire that you have <insert number> children and <insert number> children with a disability. Please tell me what it is like to be a mother of a child with a disability?
 1. *What is your role in caring for them?*
 2. *What type of appointment/supports (ex. doctor, IEP, aids etc.) are needed associated with your child/children's needs?*
 3. *What role do you play (if any) as your child's advocate?*
 4. *What emotions are associated with being a mother of a child with disabilities?*

Navigation/Negotiation of Both Domains:

1. As you think about navigating both family and work, how would you **define** the term "work/family balance"?
 1. *What does it look like for you to **successfully** balance work and family?*
 2. *What does **failure** to balance work and family look like to you?*
2. Please look at your calendar from this month. Can you please tell me about a day that most closely resembles what a typical day looks like for you personally and professionally?
 1. *Are there additional roles/responsibilities that you take care of frequently that are not noted on your calendar?*
 2. *Do you find that you are able to achieve "work/family balance"? What made that possible?*
 3. *How do you **negotiate** your work and family responsibilities?*
3. How do you **prioritize** your work and family obligations?
4. What **factors** help you to successfully navigate your work and family responsibilities?
 1. *Work environment?*
 2. *Personal life?*
5. What do you do when your family and work obligations **collide**?
 1. *What **strategies** do you use to navigate these two roles?*

1. *Supervisor?*
2. *Significant Other?*
2. *Do you allow for family and work to intersect or do you keep them separate? Why?*

Emotional Labor:

The next set of questions I would like to ask are regarding emotional labor or emotional work in both your professional and personal roles. Emotional labor refers to the effort professionals associated with modifying and controlling their emotions to communicate only those emotions that are socially acceptable or meet organizational goals or norms.

1. In what ways has modifying or changing your emotions to meet emotions that are socially acceptable/meet organizational norms assist you in achieving work/family balance?
 1. *Why did you resist expressing your true feelings?*
 2. *How did hiding your true feelings make you feel?*
 3. *How frequently would you say this happens at home vs at work?*
2. Has expressing a different emotion on the outside (compared to how you truly feel) ever created work-family conflict for you?
 1. How (if at all) does hiding or altering your feelings hinder your ability to achieve work/family balance?

Concluding Questions:

1. What recommendations do you have for other women who are also navigating both of these roles?
2. Are there any question you anticipated I would ask, but did not? If so, what is it and how would you answer?

Following the Interview:

- (Once video is off) Do you have 1-5 photos or a short video depicting what work/family balance means to you that you would like to show me? Why did you select these photos to share?
- Sincere thank you and briefly summarize the major discussion points.
- Would you like an opportunity to review or edit your remarks? Are there any additional questions you have for me before we leave?
- Following the transcription of our interview I will send you a copy to review and edit as needed.

****If the interviewee wishes to discontinue the interview at any time, ask if they would be willing to share why they chose to withdraw from the study.*

Appendix D

Cycle Coding Excerpt

Code	Cycle Coding	Coding Method	Example From Text
USING A TERM DIFFERENT THAN "BALANCE"	Second cycle	Pattern coding	
Having work and family intertwine	First cycle	Process coding	<p>"I would say, for my family, there is not a whole lot of work, family balance, a kind of merges all into one. As far as it's funny, because my kids refer to the students as their other friends. So there's like, cause what they will see them and they'll be like, oh, they're your army friends, or they're your date. And it's funny, because that's just how they see it. Because they're used to me, oh, coming home and taking a phone call or vice versa, especially now with the pandemic. They're used to seeing me work at home at home more" (Charlotte, personal communication, March 7, 2021).</p>
Describing it as blending	First cycle	Process coding	<p>"I have I do have it pretty blended. Like, you know I'll come in, I'll come in late to work, but I'll stay late. That's fine. You know, I'll work this weekend, but I, you know, I'll do you know. And I don't have the same given take at my current institution that I have had when I worked in, in housing. In housing, it was like, I mean, the kids, they literally lived there, right? So like, if you get me you got them too, because this is this is the scenario, you know. So you know, when I started in housing, my first thought was that, you know, I was a younger professional at the beginning. And it was like, oh, I'll never have work life balance, because I'm always at work, right? And then as I had my kids, it became like, I'm always also at home, right? Like, something happens, I am always at home. So I can do both of those things. Now, am I sometimes going to have a kid with me</p>

			in an elevator with a kid that I just had a conduct meeting with? Yep. Yeah" (Rebecca, personal communication, March 9, 2021).
Describing it as harmony	First cycle	Process coding	"Like, there's some days I'm 100% a good mother. And there's other days, I'm 100%, good student affairs professional. Um, and then most days, I'm I think it's more of a harmony or a juggling act than a balance. just kind of good at both. Right" (Lora, personal communication, March 10, 2021).
Describing it as integration	First cycle	Process coding	"But for me, it's integration is really how the only way that I can balance it. I can't just have a separate work and family life and make that balance. It just it's not going to work. So for me, work life balance equals work life integration" (Ellie, personal communication, March 26, 2021).
Describing it as a juggling act	First cycle	Process coding	"So there's a lot of juggling. I feel like a professional juggler in this role. Because part of me could be dealing with a sophomore and then early alert, and then a crisis situation and counseling services. So it's a lot of shifting, very fast paced, but it doesn't get stale" (Lauren, personal communication, March 23, 2021).
Learning process	First cycle	Process coding	"Um, it's still a learning process. I feel like it's definitely not balanced. You know what I mean" (Fran, personal communication March 23, 2021).
Making tradeoffs	First cycle	Process coding	"I would say, so like, I think a lot of people have talked about this, that it's not so much balance for me, it's how do I integrate those things and maybe make tradeoffs" (Marie, personal communication, March 8, 2021).
Referring to WFB as work/family coexistence	First cycle	Process coding	"And I will say work/family coexistence is what I call it relies on asking for help" (Vicky, personal communication, March 18, 2021).

WFB DOES NOT EXIST	Second cycle	Pattern coding	
Being balanced does not indicate equal	First cycle	Process coding	"You know, it's just a big balancing act that doesn't feel like it's always equal" (Fran, personal communication, March 16, 2021).
Believing WFB doesn't exist	First cycle	Process coding	"Yeah, I don't think there is any. Nothing is in balance at all, at all times" (Kenzie, personal communication, March 24, 2021).
Describing it as a load of crap	First cycle	Process coding	"So first, I will say work family balance is a load of crap. And I tell this to my students all the time, because balance means 50/50. And it's never 50/50" (Vicky, personal communication, March 18, 2021).