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The Graduate School

I DON'T HAVE TO STAY HERE! THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK
WOMEN, HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS
WHO EXPERIENCED A PROFESSIONAL
TRANSITION AND/OR PROMOTION
TO A HISTORICALLY WHITE
INSTITUTION DURING THE
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Margaret Littona Sebastian

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Department of Leadership, Policy, and Development:
Higher Education and P-12 Education
Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership

August 2021

This Dissertation by: Margaret Littona Sebastian

Entitled: *I Don't Have to Stay Here! The Experiences of Black Women, Higher Education Administrators Who Experienced a Professional Transition and/or Promotion to a Historically White Institution During the Coronavirus Pandemic*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, Department of Leadership, Policy, and Development: Higher Education and P-12 Education, Program of Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Sebastian, Margaret L. *I Don't Have to Stay Here! The Experiences of Black Women, Higher Education Administrators Who Experienced a Professional Transition and/or Promotion to a Historically White Institution During the Coronavirus Pandemic*. Published Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 2021

Through the transformative research paradigm, the critical race feminism theoretical framework and based on Bridges' (1980) transition theory, the author explored the experiences of 20 Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions with a professional transition and/ or promotion to a predominately and historically White institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study highlighted the experiences of 20 Black women higher education administrators who shared their experiences through two virtual interviews and created visual maps to explore their journey working in higher education in the United States. The study used portraiture to focus on four aspects of their transition: (a) experiences with transitioning into new management roles, (b) developing personal and professional support systems, (c) developing a sense of safety, and (d) understanding their feelings of empowerment in their roles.

The findings suggested four themes for interviews and three themes for visual maps. The interview themes were (a) professions may stumble into the higher education field or intentionally plan their careers as higher education administrators; (b) there is a lack of connection to their campuses communities during the pandemic because of the lack of in-person community development, (c) entry- and mid-level professionals were concerned about job security, whereas senior-level professionals were concerned about their physical sense of safety;

and (d) senior-level administrators felt more empowered in their roles than entry-level and mid-level professionals. The visual mapping themes were (a) career decisions were rationalized over emotions, (b) reflection on past career showed negativity and depression, and (c) reflection on future career showed hopefulness and potential.

Keywords: *Black women, Bridges transition theory, Coronavirus pandemic, higher education, promotion, transition*

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all of my pastors along my journey. Some of them drove me to college, others expanded my vision of the world, and all of them showed me what real love looks like. Thank you for seeing in me what I did not see in myself. Without all of you, I would have never made it to college.

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“Why do you want to be a Doctor?” Dr. Marvette Lacy asked me when I was writing my proposal. I answered with a quote: “To be **free** is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others” (Nelson Mandela)

During the summer after I completed my first year as a doctoral student, I visited South Africa for two weeks. I spent the time learning and seeing the history and culture of the country and the continent. During a sunset in Cape Town, I reflected on my successes being the result of my friendships and relationships over the years and took inspiration from Nelson Mandela’s museum. My freedom is intertwined with the freedom of my connections and vice versa. My hope is that my immediate family, my future children, the people I have and will work with in the future will be influenced by this work, if not directly, then indirectly.

The completion of my doctoral work is not just for me to be free to live a life of happiness, love, and prosperity; but also, for those in my circle of influence. This section gives me the opportunity to recognize the people who have made my pathway manageable, joyful, and focused when I was too exhausted to edit another section.

Often people write their acknowledgements at the end of the dissertation process, after they have defended their final dissertation. I have been writing random renditions of this section since I started my comprehensive process because I had writers block throughout the entire process. I use these couple of pages to remind myself of why I was completing this degree and of the support I had to complete this process. I first want to thank God for the personal relationship I have with You. During my time in Colorado, I breathed differently, saw the world differently, and learned to thrive in silence. I believe in the silence God birthed dreams and visions for my

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- Thank You for giving me new dreams and visions while the pandemic ravaged the country...
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- Thank You for giving me a positive perspective with the numerous changes and delays...
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IN MEMORIAM

Jewell Littona Bradley
(Maternal Grandmother)

Clemmietene Sebastian
(Paternal Grandmother)

Clarence Sebastian
(Uncle)

Linda Sebastian Doyle
(Aunt)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

It cost me \$6,800 to move from Colorado to Maryland. And even more to get settled in the new physical space and community. Before I moved to Colorado for my Ph.D., I was working full-time in Missouri and had enough savings to hire a moving company and buy new furniture. My larger items went with the moving company and everything else was moved by a couple of my former students and colleagues. I filled my apartment in Colorado with cheap furniture and lived there for 3.5 years as a full-time doctoral student. But when I took the full-time professional position towards the end of my doctorate, in Maryland, I gave away all the cheap items and half of my other belongings to international students. There were some Ghanaian and Nigerian students who came to the university with only two suitcases, so gifting them with my extra television, bookshelves, and other useful items was a mutual blessing.

Although, I would be moving for an administrative Director position in Student Affairs, I did not have the savings or a budget to move, so accepting the position was tricky. The position offer included a moving reimbursement of \$2,000, but I did not know if that would be enough to move across the country. And reimbursement meant I had to spend the money first and be reimbursed after six to eight weeks. I put together a budget and called moving companies. The highest budget estimate was \$7,200; for one single woman to move. Not a four-person traditional family, just single me. That budget included the first month's rent to the new place, rent for my old apartment since I was breaking my lease, food, traveling from Colorado to Maryland, my

moving company, new furniture, new cleaning supplies, cleaning fees, rental cars, and so much more. But I kept saying to myself, this is just for me. I could not imagine how much it would cost for a family to move. So, I asked my friend who had a family of four who was doing an interstate move. She worked in higher education her entire career. She estimated her budget to move across the country was \$17,000 - \$20,000.

The financial burden of an interstate move was not the most daunting. I was not connected to a personal or professional support system in Maryland, let alone, that region of the country. I needed a new church, new hobbies, knowing the best grocery store, hair stylist, eye doctor, gynecologist, and the location of the mall. I needed to know where I would be safe. I was moving alone. Another thing that stuck out to me was that I needed all of this and I kept encouraging my friends to move to new places. I encouraged them to be free to take a career wherever they felt called to move. How would they do this without a support system or a financial nest egg that they saved? Where would they live? How would they save money since they were living paycheck-to-paycheck? Most average Americans do not have three to six months of savings to cover expenses saved. Nor would they have access to it if they wanted to move immediately. Physically moving your possessions is not the only thing a person has to worry about as they transition to another professional position though.

I moved in January 2020, the COVID pandemic shut down my physical campus and town on March 15, 2020. I did not have a new church, hobbies, or a professional support system. I barely knew anyone. I did not account for a global pandemic to affect my life when I started as a new administrative Director. I spent my first couple of months trying to understand the department and our technology systems. But also learn a new city and find new friends. The

majority of our campus had in-person paper processes. The state wanted original signatures on each document. Everything changed in about a month.

When I initially wrote this journal entry, it was written with no focus on the implications of the current pandemic, race relations, and economics issues of 2020. The last notes were added after the pandemic began. I also did not think to include what it meant to be an African American woman, who is one of the few Black women administrators at either of the institutions I left or began my new position at. With African Americans making up less than 10% of higher education professionals (Whitford, 2020), there is a lot of interest in the experiences of these professionals. Additionally, White employees account for more than three-quarters of all higher education professionals. If I expanded some of the details in the story, would the story change? Would the reader comprehend the complexity of the experiences with details of the race, gender, or economic status?

In the last decade, between 2010 and 2020, African Americans have experienced increased levels of violence, murderous acts, and economic uncertainty (Patton, 2020; Simien, 2020). In comparison to White Americans, African Americans have experienced significant increases in experiences with violence and death (Patton, 2020; Simien, 2020). Further, African Americans, compared to White Americans, are more economically disadvantaged. African-American families in the United States have, on average, considerably less wealth than White households. In 2016, the average wealth of households with a head identifying as African-American was \$140,000, while the corresponding salary for White head of households was \$901,000, nearly 6.5 times greater (Aliprantis & Carroll, 2019). The fact that African Americans, on average, have considerably less wealth than Whites is troubling; not only because of the implications of the systematic inequalities in US society, but also because it strongly suggests

inequality of professional opportunities. Professional opportunities that provide wealth range from ensuring protection against disruptions to a household's disposable income to enabling access to housing, good public schools, and postsecondary education (Aliprantis & Carroll, 2019). These characteristics change the experience of an interstate move for African-American women. Throughout this study, I focus on Black women who are higher education professionals working in predominately White universities (PWI) in higher education and their experiences with transition and promotion during a global pandemic. This study focused on four aspects of their transition: (a) experiences with transitioning into new management roles, (b) developing personal and professional support systems, (c) developing a sense of safety, and (d) their feelings of being empowered and encouraged in their roles.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Black women working in higher education who experienced a transition and promotion to a predominately and historically Black university during the coronavirus pandemic. Their experience, in contrast to others who have experienced unemployment during the pandemic, showed the journey of courage as they navigated new environments. It is often said to move into a mid- or senior-level position, a person may have to leave their institution altogether. Indeed, often, it is out of the institution (Alfred, 2001; Blackstone, 2011; Gamble & Turner, 2015; Hirschy et al., 2015; Yancy-Tooks, 2012). There is a Biblical statement that describes the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the God incarnate through the statement "a prophet has no honor in their own home town" that can be used to describe internal candidates being promoted at their current job. The phrase specifically speaks to the idea that as an internal candidate, the people who have worked with each other in their institution cannot see each other's talents and the progression of each other's gifts because

they can only see the faults from each other's past or cannot see their peers in a different position (Watkins, 2013). But is that really true? Can we see the evolution of people we work closely with? In addition, are we training those professionals to be promoted in their position, or are we hoping they would not take advantage of those experiences? These questions might connect to reasons why those in higher level positions move into new positions at other universities. The purpose of the study was to understand the experiences of Black women who have transitioned and/or been promoted to a new professional position during the pandemic.

I sought to explore the experiences of these Black women who have moved into a new institution and how they developed respect, rapport, and professional strategies that led to being a leader during their transition, all nested in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also sought to explore the struggles they experienced as they settled into a new position with new staff and built new support systems. When considering all of the experiences of Black women in these roles, they are complex and unique.

Black women working in higher education as administrators have barriers that keep them from reaching their full potential. The literature detailed barriers as including a lack of mentoring (Bright, 2010; Glenn, 2010; Hylton, 2012; Johnson-Jones, 2009), navigating gender politics (Price, 2000; Sandeen, 1991; West, 2015), and isolation of support systems (Moss, 2014; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Wiggins, 2017; Williams, 2019). The experiences of Black women in higher education have been explored within the literature (Bagilhole, 1994; Carroll, 1982; Guillory, 2001; Moses & Association of American Colleges, 1989; Owen, 2004; Pollard, 1990), especially dissertations in the past 20 years. The literature highlighted qualitative research studies that focused on small populations of Black women in certain U.S. regions, often under 20 people (McChesney, 2018) but the experiences, findings, and conclusions could not be qualitatively

generalized to the larger population. In short, the population of Black women was not largely represented working in higher education as their counterparts (McChesney, 2018). Over the years, the number of Black women working in higher education has decreased and recent literature has focused on the pushing out of Black women in higher education positions (Williams, 2019).

In Chapter II, I cover the available literature of the history of Black women working in higher education as well as a synthesis of most of the literature published in the last 40 years. The current research has been designed to cover the gap in the literature—Black women higher education administrators who experienced various stages of transition theory in new positions.

Problem Statement

For this study, the problem statement was focused on the difficulty and complexity of the experiences of Black women administrators working in higher education transitioning to new professional positions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there was a strong literature base for Black women's experiences as administrators in entry- and mid-level roles in higher education institutions (Abdulahad et al., 2018; Balram, 2012; Bates, 2007; Dill, 1983), there was a dearth of literature on senior-level administrators who work in higher education. In addition, there is a lack of Black women who work in senior-level roles who have recently transitioned into a new position at a predominately and historically White institutions. By studying the narratives of these women, this study exposed their experiences as they were promoted in the field to be more influential in the changing landscapes of higher education at their individual institutions.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study. The overall research question was:

- Q1 How do Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions, experience a professional transition and/or promotion to a predominately and historically White institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic?

This question led to the following sub-questions:

- Q1a How do Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions, who have experienced a professional transition and/or promotion, determine a sense of safety in their new role at a predominately and historically White institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Q1b At which point do Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions, who experienced a professional transition and/or promotion, feel empowered in their new role at a predominately and historically White institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Q1c How do Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions, express their career decisions and connected emotions through visual mapping?

Significance of the Study

There were three reasons why this study is significant. First, there was a lack of studies that focused on Black women in positions that ranged from entry-level to senior-level management positions working in higher education institutions. In addition, there was a lack of literature discussing Black women and their transition into new leadership roles. The larger issues surrounding this lack of research included the lack of Black women in mid-level management positions working in mid- and senior-level positions in predominately White institutions in higher education (McChesney, 2018). There has been a steady decline of Black women in senior-level positions but the amount of Black women in these roles as compared to other groups is less than 5% of the entire population of senior-level administrators (McChesney,

2018). Research that focused on Black women in mid-level management positions in higher education could also help to strengthen the number of Black women in the pipeline to become mid- and senior-level administrators; in this way, the number of undergraduate and graduate students working toward this career could increase the number of professionals in the field of higher education administration.

Second, comprehending the process of transitioning to new positions connects to increasing retention of Black professional staff. The retention of Black professionals in higher education is thought to have an impact on retention of Black students, thus allowing for the uplift of the entire Black community. Having a stronger awareness of the transition of Black women could provide clearer reasoning as to why the large population of educated Black women are not currently working in higher education. Third, the hope was this study would highlight the reasons why Black women leave their positions and how they adjust to new positions during the pandemic.

In the last 10 years, the number of Black women who have graduated with various degrees has increased tremendously but somehow that has not connected to the number of people working in higher education (Williams, 2019). According to recent research studies in the last 10 years, there has been a surge of Black women graduating with terminal degrees and leaving the academy (Williams, 2019). In addition, there is literature that addresses the effect the limited number of Black women administrators in higher education has on Black students as a whole when there is no representation in the leadership of individual higher education institutions (Cruse, 1994; Hinton, 2001; McChesney, 2018; Mosley, 1980; Watson, 2001; Williams, 2019). Increasing the number of Black women in mid-level positions would help Black students in general and Black women students increase their sense of belonging at predominately White

institutions, thereby increasing retention, persistence, and graduation of that population (Blackstone, 2011; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Hylton, 2012; Jackson & Flowers, 2003; Mitchell, 2010; Sagaria & Johnsrud, 1991; Washington, 2006).

Research focused on mentoring discusses mentees connecting more with people who have similar backgrounds and this branch of literature also connected with the sense of belonging research (Allen et al., 1995; Gamble & Turner, 2015; Hatzopoulos, 2003; Majette-Daniels, 1993; Moss, 2014; Patton & Harper, 2003; Smith & Crawford, 2007). Research mentioned that when someone has a place to belong or a group of people who accepts them, they are more likely to be successful and stay in that environment (Green, 2015; Robinson & Franklin, 2011; San Antonio, 2015; Strayhorn, 2018; West, 2015, 2017).

Researcher Positionality

When I left Chicago as an 18-year-old, I thought I would come back and make a home there. But I did not. After working for five years in the Cabrini Green housing projects, I felt a calling to explore the world and take myself up on the promises of my college graduation journal: “I’m willing to go anywhere and work.” And I could! I did not have children or a significant other to keep me in Chicago so I took a job in Missouri. After seven years working in residence life and TRIO (McElroy & Armesto, 1998), I felt the same nudging again for career ascension, wanderlust, and educational exploration. For multiple reasons, I left Missouri for Colorado and began my Ph.D. journey. After being there for four years, I left for a new adventure being a TRIO program director in Maryland. But this transition was different. As I have gotten older and more experienced in the field, I have felt more of a need to settle into a neighborhood and institution—not only to learn it but also to focus on maintaining a financial, physical, emotional, and social support system.

Every time I have transitioned, I met people who were raised in the areas who have never left. Research mentions a majority of students attend college in an area within a 100-mile radius of their hometown (Hillman & Taylor, 2016). These students become adults who find jobs near their original home and re-establish a life distant from their parents. I did not do that so each time I moved I was still thinking about the next place that I could establish as a temporary home. I would develop support systems, find a safe place to live, and figure out where to shop. After I figured out a routine, I would develop alliances, understand the institutional policies and systems, begin the process of learning my position, and add additional responsibilities. But I wanted more this time. I wanted not only educational opportunities to grow as a human but a place to develop a family, a safe neighborhood, and build wealth by purchasing real estate. The transition processes every couple of years do not allow for people to do this seamlessly.

Transitioning from and to a new job, school, and home is really dis-jarring for a human being. Although the sky is still the same wherever transition occurs, our physical positioning to it is different; people have similar qualities, they are not the same people who have history and background stories. It is difficult. Over the years, a couple of lessons stand out for me when transitioning.

- Finding comfort in an office, seeing things that feel like they belong to an individual, but may belong to the company.
- Having people who understand another's history. That understand personal background stories and experiences that make a person who they are and build respect.
- Having a disciplined system of how to get things accomplished.

- Having a home where a person feels a sense of security with either family members or neighbors.
- Possibly having a sense of financial security, depending on the type of institution. But as a director, having a higher income.
- Being the leader for your office. Approving processes and create vision for the organization. Establishing a sense of power and respect.

All of these topics have described my transition and my hope is I hear how others have experienced their transitions through the pandemic.

Use of Theoretical Framework in the Study

Bridges' (1980; Bridges & Bridges, 2019) transition model served as a useful theoretical framework for analyzing a mid-level administrator's movement through the transition for a supervisory role because it applies to an individual's transition in most any context such as intrapersonal transitions, relationship transitions, or organizational transitions. Although the model recognizes transitions in adult lives occur in different ways, even if the individuals have the same or similar experiences, research can potentially uncover patterns that represent a commonality of the new supervisors' lived experience. Given the comprehensive nature of Bridges' framework, this study could help uncover new understanding of the context and factors influencing the experiences of Black women in mid- and senior-level roles during their transition in a global pandemic.

Limitations

There were multiple limitations in this study. The first was there was not an equal number of participants for each group. Because there was double the number of senior-level administrators, their experiences might have been more prevalent in understanding transition and

promotion experiences when analyzing data and creating themes. Second, there was no intermingling of the participants in terms of a focus group or getting to hear the experiences of each other. It would have been beneficial if small groups of participants could have met each other and discuss if there was an overlapping of experiences as it related to transition and promotion.

Third was a heavy population of participants on the east coast of the United States but not a heavy population from any one institution. Although their experiences of leaving the institutions were similar, there was no shared experience of their institution so the data might represent a general experience but policies might not be able to be established based on the generalized experiences of the people in the study. Fourth, the coronavirus pandemic affected the data collection processes. Although it gave me the opportunity to conduct interviews during the holiday season, it also limited the data collection to a virtual environment. If the study was conducted in-person, there might have been a difference in the length of the interviews as well as the information shared with me. Lastly, because of the number of participants, there was a massive amount of data and more themes that erupted from the study.

Summary

Although an abundance of academic scholarship and printed works focused on Black women entry-level or mid-level professionals in higher education (Abdulahad et al., 2018; Balram, 2012; Bates, 2007; Dill, 1983), there was a dearth of literature on mid-level managers and senior-level professionals in higher education as they professionally advance within the field during the pandemic. Current scholarship was focused on the pipeline to becoming a tenured faculty member (Gregory, 2001; Holmes, 1999; Kayes, 2006; Parker, 2017; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Pratt-Clarke, 2018), the experiences of Black women in higher education generally

(Leveque, 2012; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Stanley, 2009), and barriers to their professional successes (Beale, 1970; Becks-Moody, 2004; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Mitchell, 2010; Ramey, 1995; Wilson, 1989). This study focused on the experiences of Black women who were entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrators experiencing a professional transition and/or promotion to predominately and historically White institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, this study focused on portraits of their experiences of moving up in the field and breaking the invisible barriers of promotion in the changing landscape of higher education at predominately and historically White institutions. The roles of mid- and senior-level administrators are influential in creating major change for staff who work at the institution, the students and campus culture, and the legacy of policy development. This study showed the transition of their positions and how they impacted change on their campuses throughout a global pandemic.

As I close out this chapter, I provide an excerpt from a senior-level Black woman administrator who left a job during the pandemic:

My decision to leave Spitzer after less than a year is fairly straightforward: I was not able to build enough support to be able to deliver on either my promise of change, or my vision of it. The reasons why are more complex. Part of it has to do with COVID-19 and the rapid lockdown, which occurred after only three months in post. It's hard enough to build social capital in a new place without having to do it over Zoom....

In an incredibly bureaucratic and highly-regulated context, change is as much administrative as it is conceptual. The lack of meaningful support—not lip service, of which there's always a surfeit—meant my workload was absolutely crippling. No job is worth one's life and at times I genuinely feared for my own. Race is never far from the

surface of any situation in the U.S. Having come directly from South Africa, I wasn't prepared for the way it manifests in the U.S. and quite simply, I lacked the tools to both process and deflect it. The lack of respect and empathy for Black people, especially Black women, caught me off guard, although it's by no means unique to Spitzer. I suppose I'd say in the end that my resignation was a profound act of self-preservation (Flaherty, 2020; Lokko, 2020).

Glossary of Key Terms

The following key terms were used throughout this study:

African American or Black. Used interchangeably throughout the study to identify both African American and Black students.

Higher Education. Refers to any four-year institution, public or private, college or university.

Low-income. Used interchangeably with low socioeconomic status (SES) in this study. I recognized that SES is a composite index of parental educational background, occupational prestige, and family income. Studies reviewed included reference to SES, low-income, family income quartile and quintile, parental educational level, and more. For purposes of this study, low-income is defined as those who are eligible to receive a Pell Grant—the Federal Financial Aid Program for the neediest college-bound students.

National Association of Student Affairs Professionals. Student affairs administrators in higher education, national organization for Student Affairs profession.

Traditional Higher Education Institutions. Institutions described as in person and not online institutions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

When I began my doctoral research about African Americans who are administrators working in higher education, the first piece of literature I discovered was the *Chronology of Major Landmarks in the Progress of African Americans Higher Education* (Titcomb, 2006). This timeline described the first Black graduates and faculty members in colleges, specifically in the United States and some other countries around the world. The list included faculty members, chairs of departments, undergraduate students, and the first doctoral graduates in science, technology, electronics, and mathematics (STEM) fields. What I noticed missing was the story of administrators. Who were they, where did they work? Were there any Black women or men in positions that helped to lead the university? That is where my interest began.

The goal of this literature review is to tell the story of professional Black women in entry, mid-, and senior-level higher education administration positions, and then connect that literature to the research concerning transition. Additionally, this chapter surveys the relevant research in relation to the research question. Lastly, this literature review provides an overview of sources I explored while researching and demonstrates how my research fit within the larger field of study.

Black women working in higher education over the years have been the minority, representing less than 5% of the administrators and faculty working at universities in the United States (McChesney, 2018). In the chapter, I discuss the literature surrounding the following topics: the history of the student affairs profession, women in higher education, Black women working in higher education, entry-, mid-, and senior-level management positions, and transition

literature. I close the chapter with the gaps in the literature that led me to focus on my research topic.

History of the Profession of Student Affairs

Although the oldest U.S. higher education institutions were created in 1636 (Harvard University) and 1701 (Yale University), the profession of student affairs did not begin until about 235 years later as result of the American Civil War (Thelin, 2003). The need for faculty to focus more on research created the work of student affairs administrators (Thelin, 2003). These professional positions began with a focus on student discipline and the administrative needs of the institution. Some of the departments we recognize today were created during those beginning years such as admissions, student activities, financial aid, and many other functional areas (Dinise-Halter, 2014). In 1870, the first dean of students position for men was appointed at Harvard University. A professor at Harvard was asked to teach part-time and take on the responsibilities of managing student records and relieving the university president of discipline responsibilities. Deans of men “were charged with the development of students, which included attending to students’ indiscretions” (Dungy & Gordon, 2010, p. 63). While there might have been appointments to dean of students positions prior to 1900, Thomas Arkle Clark has been established as the first dean of men in the United States but he formally was given the title in 1909 even though he had been acting in the position since 1901 (Thelin, 2003). As the position grew in higher education institutions throughout the country, the responsibilities of the position evolved from only focusing on student discipline to student development based on the changing needs of the surrounding society (Dungy & Gordon, 2010).

As women students entered higher education, the first dean of women position developed at the University of Chicago was held by Alice Freeman Palmer in 1892 after women were

admitted to the institution (Dungy & Gordon, 2010; Herdlein et al., 2008). However, in contrast to deans of men, deans of women were seen more as house mothers who provided leadership and discipline in residence halls rather than for the personal development of women students. This was because of the influence of society and the different socialization paths colleges had for women in comparison to men (Thelin, 2003). Almost 60 years later, in 1928, Anna Eloise Pierce, Dean of Women for New York State College for Teachers, published a list of over 100 responsibilities for the dean of women position (Dungy & Gordon, 2010). This list, the changing priorities of higher education, and the influence of society refocused the dean of women positions to be more in line with their men counterparts.

As the position of dean of students expanded, so did the changes in higher education. Professional organizations began to emerge to facilitate networking and professional development nationwide but for White higher educational professionals. And just as the field was divided based on gender and race, so were the professional associations (Nuss, 2003). The American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the National Association of Deans of Women (NADW) were developed in 1910 and 1916, respectively (Nuss, 2003). These associations focused on serving the needs of White women in education. Unfortunately, African Americans and other minority student affairs professionals were prevented from participating in these professional associations based on race (Nuss, 2003). As a result, two professional organizations were developed to meet the needs of African American student affairs professionals: the National Association of Deans of Women in Negro Education in 1929 and the National Association of Deans of Men in Negro Education in 1935 (Nuss, 2003). These two organizations ultimately formed the National Association of Personnel Workers (Nuss, 2003). They were founded when separate but equal was law (see *Plessey v. Ferguson*; cited in

Anderson, 2002) and before the end of legal K-12 segregation (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954). This association's main focus was on the "hopes, aspirations, and goals of Negro education" (Nuss, 2003, p. 2). Finally, the National Association of Personnel Workers changed its name to the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (n.d.).

Women in Higher Education

Throughout the first 200 years of American history, formal post-secondary education of women was not universal (Zamani, 2003). By 1860, 45 institutions of higher education offered bachelor's degrees to women (Thelin, 2003). Over time, schools for special populations, specifically women, began to emerge (Perkins, 1998; Zamani, 2003). One of the important goals for many women's colleges was to inspire a sense of social responsibility (Zamani, 2003). As a result, several private colleges in the Northeastern region of the United States began to emerge as a catalyst for women who craved educational stimulation (Benjamin, 1997). These women's colleges, also known as the Seven Sister Colleges, "were founded in the nineteenth century in response to the leading private, elite male institutions' refusal to admit women" (Perkins, 1998, p. 718). These colleges consisted of Mount Holyoke College, Vassar College, Wellesley College, Smith College, Radcliffe College, Bryn Mawr College, and Barnard College. Although Black women were allowed to attend these colleges, their race was unknown until they arrived on campus because they were allowed to pass for White women (Perkins, 1998). Passing occurred when a person classified as a member of one racial group was accepted or "passed" as a member of another. Historically, the term has been primarily used in the United States to describe a Black person or person with multiracial ancestry who assimilated into the White majority to escape the legal and social conventions of racial segregation and discrimination (Perkins, 1998). In this circumstance, because the Black students did not immediately look like Black women, they were

allowed to receive the privileges of being enrolled in an undergraduate institution as a White women.

American History of Black Women and Education

In 1955, one of the first dissertations about African American women in administrative student affairs roles began by discussing the history of African American women in slavery (Brooks, 1955). African American women's involvement in education began during slavery when women who were enslaved discreetly learned to read and then secretly facilitated classes and schools to impart their literary knowledge to others who were enslaved (Bright, 2010; Brooks, 1955; Noble, 1993). Black women were seen as the educators of their family because they were the first to become literate and the first to teach their communities how to read (Brooks, 1955). African American women educated both themselves and their children. Despite the negative backlash of obtaining an education, there were African American women whose determination and resilience led to opportunities in college administration and teaching (Benjamin, 1997; Moses & Association of American Colleges, 1989; Mosley, 1980; Rusher, 1996).

Historically, African American women have been involved in formal educational processes in meaningful ways despite challenges to their efforts (Becks-Moody, 2004). African American women's entry into higher education provided more of a means of "race uplift" and financial freedom in an effort to acquire freedom from discrimination and legal segregation (Noble, 1993, p. 87). The field of education was the most desired subject of study for many Black women (Bright, 2010). Numerous Black women entered institutions of higher education to become teachers to educate the Black community. During this time, most Black women sought higher education for both personal and community empowerment (Noble, 1993).

Only a small number of White higher education institutions admitted African Americans as students and those that did were primarily located in the North in the late 1800s after the Civil War (Zamani, 2003). From the 1900s to the present, more African American women were being admitted to college as students, graduating, becoming faculty, and eventually being hired as Presidents of historically black colleges and universities within a decade of their graduation (Johnson-Jones, 2009; Price, 2000).

Contemporary Experience of Black Women in Higher Education

African American administrators have reported shared experiences of PWIs including isolation, invisibility, hostility, indifference, and lack of understanding of their and other minority individuals' experiences (Bagilhole, 1994; Carroll, 1982; Guillory, 2001; Moses & Association of American Colleges, 1989; Owen, 2004; Pollard, 1990). In addition to these emotions, researchers discussed the campus climate issues they experienced as well as the relationships with their supervisors (Flowers, 2003; Jackson & Flowers, 2003; Steele, 2018). Campus climate was defined as "exploring the perceived thoughts of students, faculty, and staff towards racial/ethnic diversity measured by structural diversity" (Steele, 2018, p. 110). Retention issues and concerns with African-American women increased throughout the years because of low expectations at work and not receiving promotions when these same women had been working in institutions for long periods of time (Freeman et al., 1993; Henderson, 1994).

Black women in professional staff positions have been researched and studied for the past 30 years. From 1970 until now, Black women have been centered in research literature specifically highlighting their experiences in leadership (Bright, 2010; Glenn, 2010; Hylton, 2012; Johnson-Jones, 2009; Price, 2000; Sandeen, 1991; West, 2015), their barriers to promotion (Bailey & Dziko, 2008; Belk, 2006; Greer, 1981; Mercurius, 2018; Miles, 2012; Mitchell, 2010;

Owen, 2009; Stewart, 2016), support systems to help them navigate higher education institutions (Moss, 2014; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Wiggins, 2017; Williams, 2019), and their resilience despite systems of power (Holmes, 1999; Sobers, 2014; Wesley, 2018). What was even more interesting was that over the years, we have continued to survey Black women in positions of leadership (Balram, 2012; Bichsel & McChesney, 2017; Blackstone, 2011; Gray, 2018; Herdlein et al., 2008; McChesney, 2018) and over the last 30 years, studies have shown the percentage of Black women in mid- and senior-level leadership roles have ebbed and flowed, having minimal gains (Bichsel & McChesney, 2017; Gray, 2018; McChesney, 2018). As disappointing as that sounds, I want to discuss some of the original literature that highlighted the history of higher education and specifically the intersectionality of race and gender.

While the first part of the literature review gives context to Black women working in higher education, the second part covers topics that supported the study connecting to transition theories and the theoretical framework connected with the study. These included the research and background of Black women who transitioned to administrative higher education roles and the various transition theories that connected with life and career progression.

Transition Literature

The literature in this domain generally made a distinction between the concepts of change and transition (Kralik et al., 2006; McLean, 2011). Change was viewed as an event or a process that happened external to an individual, such as a new job, while transition was an internal psychological process in response to the change and during which individuals attempted to make sense of and adjust to the change (Bridges, 2004; McLean, 2011). Up until the middle of the 20th century, adult lives were typically seen as unfolding along a predictable timetable such as completing school, securing a job, getting married, having children, and so on (Butler, 2005).

More recently, researchers have begun to recognize different views of adult life that acknowledged periods of stability and instability (Butler, 2005). In the context of career transition, a change for an individual could include when there was task change—a shift from one set of tasks to another set of tasks while in the same job; position change—a shift in jobs with the same or different employer but with no significant difference in job duties; or occupational change—a shift from one set of job duties to another dissimilar set of job duties, often in a new setting (Heppner, 1998, p. 137). A review of the studies in the existing literature directly exploring transitions revealed new supervisors and new managers often had misconceptions about their new role and unrealistic expectations about their job performance (Dragoni et al., 2014; Plakhotnik et al., 2011; Rapisarda et al., 2011).

One study discussed how supervisors facilitated leadership amongst transitioning leaders. It focused on a supervisor's attainment of knowledge regarding their new role and the time they allocated toward leading others (Dragoni et al., 2014). The study included three findings. First, transitioning leaders acquired self-understood knowledge about their jobs more quickly when their supervisor modeled effective leadership behaviors and provided relatively high levels of job information. Second, this accelerated rate of acquiring self-perceived role knowledge was even more pronounced for those leaders who had not worked for an exceptional leader before. Finally, transitioning leaders were more likely to devote more time toward leadership when they reported higher levels of self-perceived knowledge (Dragoni et al., 2014).

Another study focused on increasing retention and success of first-time managers (Plakhotnik et al., 2011). Plakhotnik et al. (2011) found managers underestimated the amount of challenges they would encounter in their first year. In addition, the study focused on the idea that managers learned from experience as their professional identity transformed through that first

year of transition. Lastly, the study highlighted the idea that managers had unrealistic expectations of their first-year responsibilities. Supervisors either made the assumption they had more or less responsibilities and therefore added more pressure to themselves (Plakhotnik et al., 2011).

The last article by Rapisarda et al. (2011) focused on nine doctoral students transitioning from full-time doctoral coursework to full-time work. In this study, the authors highlighted the experiences of being new supervisors. Their unrealistic expectation circled around the difficulty and complexity of developing supervisory relationships. Additionally, it focused on understanding supervisors needed to develop more skills to be better administrators and leaders (Rapisarda et al., 2011). All of these studies had in common the idea that as supervisors transition into new positions, their expectations of the positions are skewed in one way or the other.

In this vein, two subsets of relevant transition models were prevalent in the literature (Bridges, 1980; Ciampa & Watkins, 1999; Gabarro, 1987; Gilmore, 1988; Hill, 1992; Hopson & Adams, 1976; Moos & Schaefer, 1986; Nicholson, 1984; Schlossberg, 1981; van Gennep, 1960; Watkins, 2013). One set of transition models was designed to explain transitions in any facet of an individual's life and consequently were applicable to transitions in career and work-related contexts (Bridges, 1980; Hopson & Adams, 1976; Moos & Schaefer, 1986; Schlossberg, 1981; van Gennep, 1960). The other set of transition models was designed specifically to explain career transition including transitions to leadership and managerial roles (Ciampa & Watkins, 1999; Gabarro, 1987; Gilmore, 1988; Hill, 1992; Nicholson, 1984; Watkins, 2013). The overall transition experience as shown in these dozen models has been conceptualized in different ways, yet all the identified models were grounded in empirical research and theoretical analysis. Table

1 presents a chronological summary of these two subsets of models on individual transition by showing each model under the associated level of system (i.e., transitions in all facets of life versus transitions in career and work-related contexts). The remainder of the discussion of this strand of literature examines these transition models in further detail to uncover information that was applicable to this research.

Table 1

Timeline Models of Transition for Individuals

Transitions in Any Facet of Life	Career and Leadership Transitions
van Gennep's (1960) rites of passage	Nicholson's (1984) career transition cycle
Hopson and Adams's (1976) transition curve	Gabarro's (1987) leadership transition model
Bridges' (1980) transition model	Gilmore's (1988) framework of leadership transition
Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory	Hill's (1992) process of becoming a manager
Moos and Schaefer's (1986) model of life crises and transitions	Ciampa and Watkins' (1999) leader transition framework
Hudson's (1991) cycle of renewal	Watkins' (2013) leadership transition strategies

Models for Individual Transitions in Life

The first set of transition models are those frameworks predominant in the literature that were developed to describe the transition of individuals in any facet of life. Although Bridges' (1980) transition theory was the selected theoretical framework for this dissertation, these transition models could be applied in work-related settings such as the transition from employee to supervisor. The inclusion of these transition models in this literature review provides a multidimensional view of the perspectives on transition that is instructive in exploring the

phenomenon of supervisory transition. The six models included in this set are van Gennep's (1960) rites of passage, Hopson and Adams's (1976) transition curve, Bridges' (1980) transition model, Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, Moos and Schaefer's (1986) model of life crises and transitions, and Hudson's (1991) cycle of renewal.

These six models of life transition generally depict transition as both stages of a process (going from one experience to the next) and factors that influence the transition (graduation from college to moving home to find employment). Although the stages of transition in these models are depicted in different and sometimes complex ways, all the models in simple terms follow a process-oriented pattern of three key elements: (a) a change to the status quo, (b) efforts to adjust to the change, and (c) assimilation to the new reality. Some of the models describe the transition process as linear (e.g., Hopson & Adams, 1976; Moos & Schaefer, 1986) while another portrays the process as circular (e.g., Hudson, 1991). The various factors in the models shown as influencing the transition include the individuals' emotions (e.g., Hopson & Adams, 1976), personal characteristics (e.g., Schlossberg, 1981), personal skills (e.g., Moos & Schaefer, 1986), new perceptions and awareness (e.g., Bridges, 1980; van Gennep, 1960), available resources (e.g., Hudson, 1991), environmental factors (e.g., Schlossberg, 1981), strategies and actions (e.g., Schlossberg, 1981), and outcomes (e.g., Moos & Schaefer, 1986).

From a broad perspective, in addition to examining the process and factors that influence transition for individuals, it is beneficial to consider the phenomenon of supervisory transition. Each of these six transition models published in the literature are summarized as follows.

- Van Gennep (1960) viewed transition as a matter of passage.
- Hopson and Adams (1976) contemplated transition as a matter of self-esteem.
- Bridges (1980) saw transition as a matter of letting go.

- Schlossberg (1981) viewed transition as a matter of coping.
- Moos and Schaefer (1986) conceived transition as a matter of surviving a crisis.
- Hudson (1991) considered transition as a matter of assumptions.

Models of Transition for Individuals in Career or Work-Related Contexts

In addition to analyzing transition models that apply to any facet of life, the next set of transition models are those frameworks predominant in the literature explicitly developed to describe the transition of individuals in career or work-related contexts. These more specific models focus on how individuals in transition think and behave in the context of work, career, or organization. Because the focus of the current study involved transition during the pandemic, the inclusion of these career and work-related transition models in this literature review offers relevant contextual information for further analysis and possible applicability in answering the central research question for this study.

In this study, because there was such a difference between pre-pandemic life and life in the actual pandemic, I wanted to focus on Bridges and Bridges' (2009) transition theory as the participants in my study were letting go of the past ways of knowing and conducting their jobs as it related to the past before the pandemic. Bridges and Bridges provided a brief description of each phase:

1. Letting go of the old ways and the old identity people had. This first phase of transition is an ending, and the time when you need to help people to deal with their losses (Bridges & Bridges, 2009, pp. 4-5). During the pandemic, the old ways of knowing and the identity of working in person drastically changed for some administrators.

2. Going through an in-between time when the old is gone but the new is not fully operational. We call this time the "neutral zone;" it is when the critical psychological realignments and re-patterning take place (Bridges & Bridges, 2009, pp. 4-5). This phase of time was during the month of March. During the first interview, there was a focus on that particular month and their description of changes in their workplace.
3. Coming out of the transition and making a new beginning. This is when people develop the new identity, experience the new energy, and discover the new sense of purpose that makes the change begin to work (Bridges & Bridges, 2009, pp. 4-5). This phase happened about six to nine months after the participants began their new positions. In this study, the focus of this phase was in the second interview when participants were asked about empowerment of their leadership.

In this study, I used the methodologies to have a focus on the three steps of Bridges' (1980) transition theory. The idea of allowing the participants to give voice to their past journey in higher education, the neutral zone of their transition, and their new beginning and how they felt empowered helped guide the thematic analysis (as discussed in Chapter III).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is the underlying foundation of the research questions and the methodology. I used critical race feminism theory, which is founded in critical race theory and feminist theory. In this section, I discuss the development of critical race feminism as it has evolved over time.

Foundations of Critical Race Feminism

Critical race feminism was one of the many theories that evolved from critical race theory (CRT; Wing, 2003). In this section, I discuss the origins and tenets of CRT and its connection to critical race feminism. Critical race theory was created out of the legal field and is founded in understanding a crucial examination of society and culture, and the intersection of race, power, and privilege (Bell, 1995). By looking at the intersection of race, power, and privilege, researchers are able to understand the structure of institutions and culture. Specifically, CRT focuses on institutional policies and legal practices that discriminate against people of color, but mostly it is focused on the intersection of racialized issues. The four specific tenets of critical race theory focus on intersectionality, counter narratives, highlighting the history of underrepresented populations, and ending oppression (Bell, 1995). The origins of CRT began during the civil rights movement as lawyers and scholars began to dismantle federal and state laws that were barriers to the civil rights of African Americans. Some of the founders of CRT were Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman from the early 1990s. As a result, more critical theories emerged from their research such as Black feminist theory by Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Latina/o/x critical theory by Oscar Acosta (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000), and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1995).

However, another theory that emerged out of CRT was critical race feminism (CRF); which centers how women of minoritized races experience culture (Wing, 2003). Because CRF is from the legal field, it is described as

an embryonic effort in legal academia that emerged at the end of the twentieth century to emphasize the legal concerns of a significant group of people—those who are both

women and members of today's racial and ethnic minorities, as well as disproportionately poor. (Wing, 2003, p. 1)

As Wing (2003) discussed, CRF “constitutes a race intervention in feminist discourse, in that it necessarily embraces feminism’s emphasis on gender oppression within a system of patriarchy” (p. 7). Critical race feminism seeks to understand how society organizes itself along intersections of race, gender, class, and other forms of social hierarchies. For the purpose of this study, I focused on critical race feminism as my theoretical framework.

Connections to Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term defined as the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group and regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1995). In social theory, Crenshaw (1995) developed the theory of intersectionality in the 1980s. Although the idea of intersectionality was not new to academia, it was not formally recognized until Crenshaw published her theory. Her inspiration for the theory started while she was still in college and realized the gender aspect of race was extremely underdeveloped. The realization came after she noticed there were no classes at her college offered that addressed both race and gender issues. The courses available discussed women in only literature and poetry classes, while men discussed serious politics and economics in some of their courses.

As coined by Crenshaw (1995), intersectionality discusses how the law responds to issues that include gender and race discrimination. The particular challenge in the legal field is that anti-discrimination laws look at gender and race separately; consequently, African American women and other women of color experience overlapping forms of discrimination. The legal field was unaware of how to combine the two, leaving these women with no justice for cases

when they felt like the discrimination they experienced was because they were not only African Americans but also women (Crenshaw, 1995).

Critical race feminism embraces intersectionality by incorporating the understanding that women of color experience different discriminatory policies in society at a higher rate (Crenshaw, 1995; Hill Collins, 2000; McCann & Kim, 2017; Wing, 2003). The purpose of using this theory was to highlight those experiences but also form solutions based on the research. In addition, the use of intersectionality is inclusive because it uses the term *women of color*, which includes all women in underrepresented populations. When recognizing all women in underrepresented populations have common issues that converge on issues of class, ethnicity, race, and gender, discriminatory institutional policies have the same effect on that group of people. Critical race feminism serves as a challenge answer to the invisibility of women of color in laws deemed as neutral and challenges the idea that the law is balanced, when it instead perpetuates race, gender, and class hierarchies (Wing, 2003). In an attempt to spotlight the experiences of women of color who were normally silenced by supposedly neutral laws and the experiences of women of color who were legal scholars who were silenced in the academy, critical race feminist scholars provided critiques of several prior other legal theories, while also citing its development as part of or an extension of Black feminist thought, intersectionality, and critical race theory (Wing, 2003).

Critical race feminism focused on intersectionality and the multiple voices of women of color as found in the work of Crenshaw (1995) and Hill Collins (2000). In fact, Crenshaw has been deemed the foremother of critical race feminism (Wing, 2003). Wing (2003), who continues to develop critical race feminism, introduced what is known as “multiplicative identity,” which suggested that when multiplied together, the multiple identities of women of

color transformed into “a holistic One” when understanding the discrimination against them (p. 7). Wing (2003) stressed having a multiplicative existence was not simply negative but also meant the lives of women of color were positively diverse. The “holistic One” concept may imply that there is commonality of thought processes about discrimination against women of color; but the idea is that there is a commonality of experiences of discrimination, not how the experiences are understood and interpreted. The next section focuses on the tenets of critical race feminism that helped to focus this study and the data collection.

Tenets of Critical Race Feminism

The tenets of critical race feminism speak to the uniqueness of women of color. Critical race feminism first emphasizes the experiences that shape the perspectives of women of color are different from those that impact the lives of men of color, White women, and White men (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 2003). Second, critical race feminist theorists are concerned with the various forms of oppression, and the ways oppression manifests in the lives of women of color due to the intersectionality of race, class, and gender (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 2003). Third, critical race feminism focuses on anti-essentialism in that it suggests women of color have multiple political identities that should be considered. Essentialism is debated in feminist circles as the idea that women's essence is assumed to be universal and is generally identified with those characteristics viewed as being specifically feminine. Critical Race Feminism focuses on the concept that the various political identities such as race, ethnicity, and class should be considered and essentially change the dynamic of what issues should be centralized in feminism.

Further, the experiences of White women do not necessarily mimic those of women of color, and the experiences of men of color do not automatically speak to the experiences of

women of color (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 2003). Fourth, critical race feminism is multidisciplinary in that it draws from various fields of study and from various theories such as Black feminist thought and intersectionality. Finally, critical race feminism calls for the promotion of theories and practices that critique and combat both gender and racial oppression (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 2003). The use of such theoretical tenets affords one the ability to recognize the faces of my participants as not only Black, but also women. In this study, critical race feminism was intertwined in the research questions as the study was focused on the experiences of Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior level administrative management positions.

Gaps in the Literature and Recommendations

To increase the number of African American women administrators working within higher education, institutions should make the environment conducive for a diverse population. Becks-Moody (2004) wrote, “Higher education has the responsibility to foster an academic climate that is conducive to African-American women administrators” (p. 4). Research shows more White men, White women, and African American men hold more administrative positions than do African-American women (Jackson, 2003; Moore, 1982, 1983) and currently are paid more than African American women (McChesney, 2018). Although there have been numerous dissertations about African-American women administrators working in higher education (Bright, 2010; Glenn, 2010; Hylton, 2012; Johnson-Jones, 2009; Price, 2000; Sandeen, 1991; West, 2015), the global pandemic we are currently experiencing has a tremendous effect on our administrators and higher education institutions. Because of these effects, this dissertation covers a significant gap in the literature, which is how Black women administrators are transitioning and coping through this global pandemic.

Summary

This chapter focused on the history of the profession of student affairs, the evolution of women in higher education, and transition theories generally. The focus on transition literature generally helped to frame this study by understanding there are various models for life transitions as well as career related transitions. Lastly, the focus on the theoretical framework of critical race feminism and its foundation in intersectionality and critical race theory helped to undergird this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe the overall design for the study in four sections: philosophical assumptions, research approach, the data collection processes, and the interpretation and evaluation of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The philosophical assumptions include the research paradigm, ontology, axiology, and epistemology. Second, the research approach focuses on defining the methodology. Third, the data collection processes include the methods of data collection (interviews and visual mapping), the setting of the study, the participant information, and the data analysis procedures. Lastly, the interpretation and evaluation of the study includes the criteria for rigor, ethical challenges, and areas for consideration.

An ample amount of literature focused on Black women working in higher education who are entry-, mid-, and senior-level professionals (Bright, 2010; Glenn, 2010; Hylton, 2012; Johnson-Jones, 2009; Price, 2000; Sandeen, 1991; West, 2015) and their experiences working specifically in the student affairs profession (; Moss, 2014; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Williams, 2019). However, there was a dearth of literature about the range of entry-level to senior-level Black women professionals working in higher education as they professionally advance within the field. Current scholarship is focused on the pipeline to becoming a tenured faculty member (Gregory, 2001; Parker, 2017; Pratt-Clarke, 2018), the experiences of Black women in higher education generally (Bagilhole, 1994; Carroll, 1982; Guillory, 2001; Moses & Association of American Colleges, 1989; Owen, 2004; Pollard, 1990), and barriers to their professional successes (Bailey & Dziko, 2008; Belk, 2006; Greer, 1981; Mercurius, 2018; Miles, 2012;

Mitchell, 2010; Owen, 2009; Stewart, 2016). Therefore, in this study, I focused on the experiences of Black women who are entry-, mid-, and senior-level, higher education administrators, experiencing a professional transition and/ or promotion to a predominately and historically White institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study focused on exploring the experiences of Black women transitioning in academia and breaking the invisible barriers for promotion in the changing landscape of higher education at predominately and historically White institutions during the pandemic in order to create rich portraits. The roles of entry-, mid-, and senior-level administrators are influential in creating major change for staff who work in academia, the students, campus cultures, and the legacy of policy development. Throughout the pandemic, these administrators made influential decisions that changed the experiences and campus culture on their campuses. Additionally, they had to manage the communication of these decisions and at the same time, experience the pandemic through their personal perspectives. This study showed the transition of their positions and how they impacted change on their campuses despite working virtually for months at a time.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided my study. The overall research question was

- Q1 How do Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions, experience a professional transition and/or promotion to a predominately and historically White institution during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - Q1a How do Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions, who have experienced a professional transition and/or promotion, determine a sense of safety in their new role at a predominately and historically White institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - Q1b At which point do Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions, who experienced a professional transition and/or promotion, feel empowered in their new role at a

predominately and historically White institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Q1c How do Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions, express their career decisions and connected emotions through visual mapping?

Section One: Philosophical Assumptions

The philosophical assumptions highlighted in the first section are the research paradigm, ontology, axiology, and epistemology. Philosophy, in this context is understood as the “use of abstract ideas and beliefs that inform our research” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 16) and assumptions are ideas that are accepted as true, or at least plausible, by the researcher. These beliefs and truths led to the philosophical assumptions that helped to develop the study. The transformative paradigm was the guiding force for how I understood the research process and how I analyzed the data from the study. Ontology is defined the nature of reality, axiology is defined as the role of values in research, and lastly, epistemology is defined as what counts as knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Paradigm

The terms *research paradigm* and *theoretical framework* are often used interchangeably depending on the field being studied but for the purpose of this dissertation, I used the term research paradigm to guide the way I understood the world of research and I used the theoretical framework as the underlying foundation for the research questions and the methodology. Research paradigms are defined as the worldview or a set of assumptions about how cultures are understood (Bhattacharya, 2017; Broido & Manning, 2002; Creswell, 1998, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Guido et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2014).

In this study, the transformative paradigm defined the shared understanding of the reality of the participants, how I understood the research questions to be answered, and how I collected

certain types of data connecting to the research (Mertens, 2010). The transformative paradigm invites traditionally marginalized populations and researchers to engage in the co-construction of knowledge and to focus on social change (Mertens, 2010). By directly engaging members of culturally diverse groups with a focus on social justice; transformative research can bring to light unexamined power relations (Mertens, 2010). Recognizing dominant ideologies is critical as well as understanding the perspectives of the participants as dominant and valuable. Since I was conducting qualitative research, this study focused on highlighting the experiences of the participants. As I have progressively understood the value of research and have been socialized in the educational field, this paradigm most connected with my understanding of research.

Ontology

Ontology answers the question of “what is the nature of reality?” The transformative paradigm “rejects cultural relativism and acknowledges the existence of multiple versions of reality based on social positioning” (Mertens, 2010, p. 10). Ontologically, this paradigm recognizes the influence of multiple factors such as sociopolitical, economic, cultural, ethnicity, and gender in the definition and construction of reality (Romero de la Torre, 2013). Therefore, a multitude of varied and distinct perceptions of reality might be generated. However, “what is taken to be real needs to be critically examined through an ideological critique of its role in perpetuating oppressive social structures and policies” (Mertens, 2010, p. 32). From this viewpoint, exploring social and power structures and their influence in the construction of multiple realities is a critical ontological aspect of this paradigm (Romero de la Torre, 2013).

Transformative researchers acknowledge the social construction of reality and the existence of multiple truths (Bradbury & Reason, 2008; Mertens, 2010). Thus, researchers

using this paradigm explore the influence of dominant ideologies on socially constructed realities since reality is socially constructed and the power of dominant groups determines which version of reality is accepted as real (Mertens, 2010). In this research, my hope was the participants, although they might be women of marginalized groups, had the opportunity to determine their version of reality was accepted as real and the reader would find their experiences generalizable to and true to other populations within higher education.

Axiology

Axiology refers to the values associated with the research paradigm, answering the question of “what is the nature of ethical behavior?” (Mertens, 2010, p. 11). Researchers using a transformative paradigm concentrate on human rights and social justice as their initial set of values in the research process with the responsibility and recognition of furthering the benefits of those values to the participants and their communities (Romero de la Torre, 2013). As part of this philosophical assumption, researchers using a transformative paradigm directly confront social oppression and position themselves side by side with the underrepresented groups in an effort to bring about social transformation (Bradbury & Reason, 2008; Mertens, 2010). In the context of axiology, researchers address issues of oppression from historical, political, and sociological perspectives. Democratic and social justice values are employed by researchers using this paradigm in the co-construction of knowledge with participants while contesting issues and systems of oppression (Mertens, 2010).

Epistemology

Epistemology describes the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participants, thereby answering the question “what is the nature of knowledge and the

relationship between the knower and the would-be known?” (Mertens, 2010, p. 10). Since the purpose of the transformative paradigm is to understand and challenge systems of oppression and discrimination, researchers and participants must work together to define and construct knowledge (Mertens, 2010). This implies an equal interaction between the researcher and the participants in which multiple realities are being constructed while addressing issues of power and social justice. Transformative researchers work to minimize the distance between the researcher and the participants and to consciously engage the participants in the creation of new knowledge (Romero de la Torre, 2013). Thus, the social action needed to transform dominant and oppressive ideologies can begin. The engagement of participants in this study informs future practices and allows each to be informed and educated when addressing the inequity of dominant ideologies.

Section Two: Research Approach

In this second section, the research approach focuses on defining the methodology. I chose this methodology to “shape the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing the data” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). Connecting to the research paradigm, the methodology of portraiture frames the data collection of the study. Created by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, a woman of color and faculty scholar, portraiture was developed as a methodology that connects to the cultural traditions of Black women (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997).

Methodology

The methodology also determines how the researcher engages with participants and then how the researcher engages with the data collected as it connects with the research question (Mills, 2014). Methodology is “the study — the description, the explanation, and the *justification of methods*, and not the methods themselves” (Kaplan, 1964, p. 18). I used the portraiture

methodology to shape the data collection and how the findings were articulated. I found through my time in the doctoral program that I used storytelling in my writing to lead the reader in how they understood and made conclusions about the data. This way of telling the story of the data is well suited for portraiture.

Portraiture

History of Portraiture

When creating portraiture in 1997, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis focused on creating written story portraits of her data so that the reader could fully understand the focus on either the person being highlighted or the themes that arise from the data in her scholarship. Portraiture is a methodology that is a mixture of art through creative writing using imagery, metaphors, data collection, and analysis (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997). In the book, *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, the methodology combined artistic narrative writing and the scientific rigor of research (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997). Stemming from the research study, *The Good High School*, portraits of each character and culture were used to describe the differences between the high schools and the impact of that culture on the students and the administrators (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). In creating the methodology, the research of social science and developing artwork have had a longstanding relationship. Dating back to the 18th century, social scientists and novelists would come together to create stories about social phenomena (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997). “Philosophers turned from closed systems of thought to discerning observation of the world around them” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p. 5). Novelists and philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Denis Diderot began to read each other’s novels and treatises; their motivations became intertwined and purpose infused in each other’s writing (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman

Davis, 1997). This was common because it was easier for the general public to understand studies of life, and common social themes through narrative-like stories, rather than academic texts (Lahman et al., 2020).

Rationale of Methodology

Although portraiture is very similar to narrative and case study methodologies, it connects more to the topic of this study because of its focus on storytelling. Portraiture as a methodology may be argued to be more of a holistic case study design as it focuses on interviews, observations, and artifacts (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, 2002). I believe that it stands on its own as a defined methodology because of its focus on how to conduct data collection, engage in data analysis, and share the findings in a unique way that is different from case study or parallel structured narrative methodologies. By using portraiture, this study will bring to light the experiences of Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level administrative management positions and help to describe the multi-layered experiences that they share with the researcher through metaphors, rituals, and understanding their experience as a portrait. Portraits usually convey the likeness, personality, and even the mood of the person; and in this research, it conveys the multitude of experiences that created the journeys of these Black women who are entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrators.

In addition, portraiture was created by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, an African-American woman who is an award-winning faculty scholar at Harvard University. Lawrence-Lightfoot has written over 10 books, 20 articles, and was awarded over 25 honorary doctorates from universities in the U.S. and Canada. She has been the recipient of multiple fellowships, endowed professorships and upon retirement, the current endowed Chair position that she holds, the Emily Hargroves Fisher Endowed Chair at Harvard University, will become the Sara Lawrence-

Lightfoot Chair, making Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot the first African-American woman in Harvard's history to have an endowed professorship named in her honor. In one of my qualitative methods courses, my professor introduced the class to multiple methods that could be used in our dissertation work, and over time, I read three of Lawrence-Lightfoot's books in order to understand the methodology. In this dissertation work, the strong emphasis on storytelling allows the data to speak for itself, helping the reader come to their own conclusions as they take in the literature and findings of the study.

Tenets of the Methodology

Lawrence-Lightfoot focuses on three tenets to implement this methodology; first, how the researcher prepares for data collection; second, collecting the data with a holistic perspective, and third, understanding the themes to highlight in the data collection (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, 2002). As preparation for collecting data to create the portraiture, there are three different areas to be developed by the researcher; the writing style, the relationship between the researcher and researched, and the concept of goodness. After preparing for collecting the data, the researcher begins the data collection process with a holistic perspective, focusing on the context of the data, voice of the researched, themes of the data, and creating an aesthetic whole. The last step is the data analysis where the researcher looks for themes from the data using five criteria: repetitive refrains, resonant metaphors, institutional rituals, cultural rituals, and revealing patterns together creating a positive picture of a participant's experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, 2002).

Section Three: Data Collection Processes

The data collection processes include descriptions of the methods of data collection (interviews and visual mapping), the setting of the study, the participant information, and data

analysis procedures. Data collection is defined as the process of gathering and measuring information on variables in an established systematic fashion that enables the researcher to answer the research questions (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell, 1998, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Guido et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2014). Methods are defined as the actual research tools to guide the data collection (Mills, 2014). In this study, I planned to use interviews and visual mapping to collect data about the study topic. Because the timing of the study coincided with the coronavirus pandemic, virtual interviews and visual mapping were the best ways to capture data as this current work climate was shaped by waves of teleworking and limited time in the participants' physical office interacting with other people. After discussing the methods, I describe the setting of the study and information about the participants who agreed to be in the study. Lastly, data analysis is defined as the process of systematically applying logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data.

Methods

I used a combination of qualitative research methods to create a multi-layered approach to collecting data and understanding the experiences of the Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative management positions in my study. Since it was important to allow them to share their experiences of transition, I used both interviewing and visual mapping. The overall process was virtually interviewing each participant for 60 to 90 minutes for two sessions; then, between interviews, the participants used the visual mapping method to process some of the topics about transitioning to their new workplace. Between the first and second interviews, the visual mapping instructions were emailed to each participant to prompt them to connect emotions with their experiences (see Appendix A). The second interview focused on their current professional experiences and how they had transitioned into their

workplace. Because the world has experienced an unprecedented pandemic, specifically a highly contagious virus that impacted traditional higher education institutions, collecting data virtually made data collection effortless.

Interviews

Prior to the interview, each participant was sent a recruitment survey via Qualtrics where I collected background demographics, participants chose pseudonyms for themselves and their institutions, and the research consent form was provided. This survey helped to simplify the process of choosing participants and understanding their background information. Individual interviews were designed through a series of semi-structured, open-ended questions intended to elicit responses of the women's experiences of transitioning to new positions (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Since the participants brought a counternarrative perspective of transitioning to a new professional position as Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions as well as offer specific information that is relevant to the topic, it was important to give ample time to discuss their experiences (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002).

The semi-structured interviews allowed time for participants to develop rapport with me and discuss their journey of transition in their past positions and then in their current positions. The first interview focused on developing rapport with the researcher and participant and discussing the background of their journey of transition as it is connected to Bridges' (1980, 2009) transition theory. Because the research questions were open-ended, participants were able to share their experiences and how they connected to the various research questions. During the second interview, participants discussed their visual map and the second set of questions connected to their current experiences in their new position as connected to Bridges' transition theory. Lastly, the interviews focused on the participants' neutral zone, their transition to a new

campus, understanding the development of their sense of safety, and feelings of empowerment as they began the new position. These interview questions were piloted with an individual who had similar demographics to those required for participants in this study. I appreciated her time and the pilot was invaluable in shaping and adding additional interview questions to both scripts.

Visual Mapping

Between the first and second interviews, the participants were given a prompt to draw a visual map of some of their experiences as they related to the research questions. Visual methods are used to understand experiences through a visual means, including photography, film, video, painting, drawing, collage creation, sculpture, and artwork (Greenfield, 2011; Lenzy, 2019). These methods are a new approach to qualitative research and add value to already existing methods by capturing rich multidimensional data and valuable insights into the everyday world of participants (Balmer et al., 2015; Greenfield, 2011; Lenzy, 2019). For this study, the participants used visual mapping to describe their career journeys and their experiences of successes and struggles of developing a support system by drawing a map of their career journey and connecting their feelings of leaving and transitioning to a new position.

Participants

During the pandemic, there has been a strong focus on race in the media (Ferdinand & Nasser, 2020; Patton, 2020; Simien, 2020), specifically Black women in their administrative roles at higher education institutions around the country. Throughout my research, I began reading non-fiction literature that helped to give me context on why Black women should be studied and why Black leaders were feared. During this time, I stumbled upon the book by James Baldwin called *The Fire Next Time*. In the book he mentioned the reasoning why Black people in general were and still are facing discrimination.

You were born where you were born and faced the future that you faced because you were black and *for no other reason*. The limits of your ambition were, thus, expected to be set forever. You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity, and in as many ways as possible, that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence: you were expected to make peace with mediocrity.

(Baldwin, 1962, p. 7)

Thinking about the present state of Black women working in higher education, the lower statistics and the barriers to promotion, I often reconnected to this quote. I understand that although Black women might now be leading in achieving graduate degrees (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020), Black people in general only make up less than 0.4% of the population achieving doctoral degrees and less than 5% of those working in senior-level roles (McChesney, 2018). This study focused on Black women with the following qualifications.

Qualifications of Participants

As I study the experiences of Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level administrative management positions during the pandemic, the participants were 20 Black women who met the following qualifications: (a) Black women in entry-, mid-, or senior-level roles that are administrators in higher education, (b) who worked in a predominately and historically White institutions (c) who had completed at least a master's degree or their terminal degree (e.g. Ph.D., Ed.D., Ed.S., or JD), (d) had transitioned to a new job within the last year during the coronavirus pandemic; and € Black women in entry-, mid-, senior-level administrative management positions who were working in units or departments that included areas such as Academic Affairs, Student Success Centers, Academic Achievement Departments, Tutoring

Centers, Housing & Residence Life, Health Services, Counseling Centers, Student Conference Services, Career Services or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Centers.

Sampling for Participants

In this study, I used purposeful and snowball sampling (Patton, 2002), specifically because of the accessibility and relationships I had with participants (Lavrakas, 2008) as well as the limited number of professionals in the field of higher education who met the study's qualifications (McChesney, 2018). With the effects of the global pandemic, participants were recruited on social media, specifically Facebook pages that are for Black Women professionals in higher education institutions or who were pursuing terminal degrees. As well, snowball sampling occurred as more participants knew about the study and recommended others.

Recruitment of Participants

Approval was received from the University of Northern Colorado's Institutional Review Board about two weeks before recruitment began (see Appendix B). After that recruitment began. There were four steps for recruitment. The first step was creating a recruitment flyer (see Appendix C) for social media groups that included a link to an anonymous survey to collect data for potential participants. The recruitment survey (see Appendix D) information was only accessible to my research advisor and myself. The intent of this questionnaire was to identify and secure a diverse sample of eligible participants who met all the qualifications for the study and were located through all the regions of the United States.

The second step was to recruit through social media groups. After researching numerous social media groups that focused on Black women in higher education, I focused on social media groups with over 5,000 members. In these particular groups, members who are approved by administrators met the requirements of being African American administrators and faculty as

well as currently working in a higher education institution. The recruitment survey was posted on social media on December 13, 2021 and closed on December 23, 2021 in the following groups:

- Private Social media group for Black women with doctorate degrees, worldwide, titled “Phinished/FinishEdD (Drs/Future Drs): 20,019 members as of November 1, 2020
- Private Social media group for Black professionals within the United States titled “BLKSAP (Black Student Affairs Professionals): 12,370 members as of November 1, 2020.

After 10 days of posting the recruiting flyer on the two social media pages, 48 women signed up to be in the study. Based on the responses to the Qualtrics survey, I selected 24 participants fitting the same criteria from the qualification of participants’ section. Additionally, those chosen were compensated with a \$50 gift card. The funding of \$1,200 was provided by the Graduate Student Association Dissertation Grant.

Because of the number of participants, instead of emailing each woman to set up interview times, I created a Microsoft Bookings website (see Appendix E), where participants could sign up for all the following:

1. An information session. This gave participants the option to build rapport with the researcher as well as hear the background of the study. I also went over the consent information (see Appendix F); asked for their personal pseudonyms, position pseudonyms, institution pseudonyms; discussed the visual mapping exercise and scheduled the interviews, and the benefit of being in the study. Although only four participants took advantage of the informational session, if I had a secondary study,

I would include this session in the study because it allowed me to build rapport with the participants and clarify chosen pseudonyms.

2. Interview #1 – This interview focused on their previous position.
3. Interview #2 – This interview focused on their new position.

Originally, I emailed the senior-level administrators and the mid-level administrators first, not knowing who would respond. While waiting for the first round of reservations, I emailed the entry-level administrators because not many of the mid- and senior-level administrators signed up. There were originally 12 senior-level administrators, six mid-level administrators, and six entry-level administrators. All six of the entry-level administrators signed up first, then the mid-level, then the senior-level administrators. I attributed the order of signing up to the amount of work responsibilities each woman had at the time. Of the 24 participants, 20 participants completed both interviews and visual maps. Originally, because of the random order of participants signing up for their interviews, I had 10 senior-level administrators in Group A, five mid-level administrators in Group B, and five entry-level administrators in Group C.

Participant Information

Each group was categorized by their level of responsibility and looking at NASPA (n.d.) definitions of entry-, mid-, and senior-level administrators. For the purpose of this study, senior-level administrators were categorized by their supervision of one or more departments and over five professional staff members; mid-level administrators were categorized by their supervision of at least one department, with one to four professional staff members or student workers, and entry-level administrators had no supervision responsibilities. Table 2 displays the characteristics of each participant including their pseudonym, their role, and their interview dates. Table 3

describes the timelines for each participant leaving their previous position and beginning their new job.

Table 2

Profile Characteristics

Order for Group A	First Name	Role	Interview #1	Interview #2
1	Dr. Mya Star	Assistant Dean	12.21.2020	12.23.2020
2	Julia	Executive Director	12.21.2020	12.28.2020
3	Dr. Nia	Director of Career Services	12.21.2020	12.30.2020
4	Dr. Athena	Dean of Students	12.22.2020	12.30.2020
5	Dr. Nadia	Executive Director	12.30.2020	1.5.2021
6	Dr. Winnie	Director of Career Services	12.22.2020	1.6.2021
7	Dr. Joyce	Director of Therapy	1.4.2021	1.8.2021
8	Dr. Toya	President	1.6.2021	1.9.2021
9	Dr. Naomie	Director of Career Services	1.6.2021	1.17.2021
10	Dr. Camille	Vice President of Development	1.4.2021	1.24.2021
Order for Group B	Pseudonym	Role	Interview #1	Interview #2
1	Ashley	Associate Director	1.4.2021	1.8.2021
2	Monica	Assistant Director	1.5.2021	1.12.2021
3	Shane	Assistant Director	1.6.2021	1.15.2021
4	Alvora	Associate Director	12.21.2020	1.16.2021
5	Nysh	Assistant Director	12.28.2020	1.17.2021
Order for Group C	Pseudonym	Role	Interview #1	Interview #2
1	Jessica	Academic Advisor Financial Aid Systems	12.29.2020	12.30.2020
2	Michelle	Analyst	12.30.2020	1.3.2021
3	Zakiya	Recruitment Coordinator	1.4.2021	1.7.2021
4	Viola	Academic Advisor	12.29.2020	1.14.2021
5	Charlotte	Academic Advisor	1.12.2021	1.19.2021

Table 3*Timeline of Transitioning from Previous Position to New Position*

Order for Group A	Pseudonym	Administrative Level, Role, University (All pseudonyms)	Date of Leaving Previous Institution	First Date of New Job	Time Between Each Position
1	Dr. Winnie	Senior-level administrator, Director of Career Services at University of Syle*	February 12, 2020	February 16, 2021	~ 1 year
2	Dr. Camille	Senior-level administrator, a Vice President of Development, at Pink & Blue University	May 1, 2020	June 1, 2020	~ 1 month
3	Dr. Nia	Senior-level administrator, a Director of Career Services at Sterling Ash University	June 1, 2020	August 10, 2020	~ 2 months
4	Dr. Mya Star	Senior-level administrator, Assistant Dean at Midwest Red University	June 28, 2020	September 28, 2020	~ 3 months
5	Dr. Toya	Senior-level administrator, a President at Midwest Community	July 1, 2020	November 1, 2020	~ 3 months
6	Dr. Nadia	Senior-level administrator, an Executive Director at University of Low Peaks	July 15, 2020	August 10, 2020	~ 1 month
7	Dr. Naomie	Senior-level administrator, a Director of Career Services at Midwest Technical	July 15, 2020	August 1, 2020	~ 1 month
8	Dr. Joyce	Senior-level administrator, Director of Therapy at Blue Pride University	August 1, 2020	August 24, 2020	~ 1 month
9	Julia	Senior-level administrator, an Executive Director at University of Sia	September 1, 2020	October 1, 2020	~ 1 month
10	Dr. Athena	Senior-level administrator, a Dean of Students at West Coast University	November 1, 2020	December 1, 2020	~ 1 month

Table 3 continued

Order for Group B	Pseudonym	Administrative Level, Role, University (All pseudonyms)	Date of Leaving Previous Institution	First Date of New Job	Time between each position
1	Monica	Mid-level administrator, an Assistant Director at Downtown School	August 1, 2019	September 1, 2020	~ 1 month
2	Nysh	Mid-level administrator, an Assistant Director at Maze University	March 1, 2020	April 6, 2020	~ 1 month
3	Ashley	Mid-level administrator, an Associate Director at Maryland University	May 1, 2020	July 1, 2020	~ 2 months
4	Alvora	Mid-level administrator, an Associate Director at the University of Heach	August 1, 2020	August 10, 2020	~ 1 month
5	Shane	Mid-level administrator, an Assistant Director at Plymouth Rock College	December 1, 2020	March 12, 2021	~ 3 months
Order for Group C	Pseudonym	Administrative Level, Role, University (All pseudonyms)	Date of Leaving Previous Institution	First Date of New Job	Time between each position
1	Jessica	Entry-level administrator, an Academic Advisor at Tigers University	May 1, 2020	June 8, 2020	~ 1 month
2	Michelle	Entry-level professional, an Analyst at Midwest University	May 1, 2020	October 19, 2020	~ 4 months
3	Viola	Entry-level administrators, an Academic Advisor at Capital University	May 1, 2020	November 2, 2020	~ 6 months
4	Charlotte	Entry-level administrator, an Academic Advisor at the University of Linda	May 14, 2020	September 28, 2020	~ 4 months
5	Zakiya	Entry-level administrator, a Recruitment Coordinator at Higher Ed University	November 10, 2020	November 23, 2020	~ 1 month

* Dr. Winnie transitioned to three positions during the study, She left her first job in February 2020, to start at her second job – in February 2020, then resigned from the second position in February 2021, to start her third job in March 2021

Setting

In this study, participants represented various regions of the United States and American society in traditional higher education environments. Between 2019 and 2021, American society experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, a modern-day Civil Rights Movement, and an economic depression that included +40 million unemployed people (Patton, 2020; Simien, 2020). The wealth gap in the United States for the White population is ten times more than the net worth of

Black Americans (Bhutta et al., 2020; Kochhar & Fry, 2014) and the education achievement gap is within 20 percentage points for graduation, retention, and persistence in higher education (Bailey & Dziko, 2008; Bohrnstedt et al., 2015; Musu-Gillette et al., 2016).

To capture the impact of all these components, the participants were from various areas throughout the country. As it related to higher education institutions, I highlighted traditional higher education institutions with fewer than 10,000 students, with under 1,000 professional employees, that reflected a population of underrepresented students and professional staff that is 15% of the entire population. A study determined that underrepresented populations are African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics, which are usually under 10% of the population of the United States (Pollard & O'Hare, 1999). The study focused on professional higher education administrators who lived in places where they were the minority.

In addition, the population of the surrounding city and community was similar to this population, having less than 15% of underrepresented populations of the entire city or town. In these areas, underrepresented populations have typically have lower satisfaction with work/life experiences (Henderson, 1994; Mullen et al., 2018; Scott, 2007). Lastly, this study highlighted Black women who are higher education professionals as they have transitioned to a new institution within the last one to two years during the coronavirus pandemic.

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, my study took place on video calls via the Zoom platform during the time span of December 20, 2020 through January 24, 2021. The impact of the pandemic created a lack of boundaries between professionals' workplaces and their home spaces and all of the participants worked from home for at least six months before the interviews took place. Because of that, 29 of 40 of the interviews took place between December

20, 2020 and January 8, 2021 during the traditional higher education winter vacations. During all the first interviews, participants mentioned they were more than excited to meet during the holiday season because they did not have any plans for travel since the pandemic shut down majority of the world.

As well, the second set of interviews took place the week of the U.S. Capitol riots/uprisings (Leatherly et al., 2021). On January 6, 2021, thousands of supporters of the 45th president of the United States, Donald Trump, attempted to overturn the 2020 presidential election results by disrupting the joint session of Congress that would formalize the 46th president of the United States, Joseph R. Biden. During the riot, the Capitol complex was locked down and lawmakers and staff were evacuated because rioters occupied and vandalized the building for several hours. Although more than 140 people were injured and five people killed, currently government officials voted against having a special commission to investigate the event (Leatherly et al., 2021). By the time this dissertation was published, over 500 people have been arrested for their involvement (Leatherly et al., 2021). Some of the people were identified as millionaires, White supremacists, and anti-government paramilitary members (Leatherly et al., 2021).

Eight interviews coincided with this event, one interview with a participant who was 15 minutes away from Washington, D.C. Her interview included 2.5 hours for her to process her feelings about not being able to leave her apartment because the neighboring areas were shut down by police and government officials. The other seven interviews that occurred during the U.S. Capitol uprising had debrief times to discuss feelings about the event and if the event had affected their daily lives of between. Those seven interviews had 30 minutes to an hour of additional content connected to the event after the actual interview content was completed. Out

of the 20 participants, 19 of them turned in and discussed their visual mapping during their second interview. One participant gave a summary of her professional life in detail but did not provide a visual map for the study.

Data Analysis

Overview

In this section, I discuss the process of analyzing the methods used in the study. For the portraiture methodology, there were three areas to develop in the process of data collection as well as the data analysis. The areas defined in this section for portraiture were the data collection preparation, the holistic perspective of data collection, and theme creation and data analysis. The overall research process included the following: (a) conduct both interviews and collect the visual mapping data, (b) transcribe each interview, (c) submit transcriptions of both interviews to each participant for member checking, (d) submit any corrections to transcripts, (e) revise transcriptions, (f) create interview answer sheets, (g) begin data analysis and create data summaries of each participant to create individual portraitures, (h) send participants data summaries for member checking, and (i) revise the findings.

Data Collection Preparation

In portraiture, the researcher must develop three areas: writing style, the relationship between the researcher and researched, and the concept of goodness. In this section, I expand on those three topics. In developing the writing style, the researcher centralizes the data by creating a story that those outside of the academia and higher education can understand. The creators of portraiture want to “seduce the readers into thinking more deeply about issues that concern them” and felt that using a story approach would pull the readers into the content (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 2002, p. 9). Second, the relationship between the researcher and

researched is important for the portraitist (the researcher) and the participants (those being researched) to co-construct the portraiture through an in-depth process of seeking to explain the everyday actions and themes in the portrait by interviewing each participant twice. Creating a positive relationship helps the researcher to understand the context of the researched, a basic understanding of the phenomenon, and establish credibility (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 2002). During each interview, rapport is established to encourage credibility and interview questions are created to understand the basic foundation of the participants' experiences as they connect to the overall phenomenon of transition and promotion. The visual mapping added to the data collection in understanding the context and background of the researched.

Lastly, I sought to understand that the concept of goodness in portraiture was created to highlight the successes, while recognizing that imperfections would always be present within a system (Hackmann, 2002). Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) mentioned she used the concept of goodness to work against the way Black people had been historically researched through a pathological lens. Goodness in research was created because of the following: (a) focusing on the negative will lead to a view that magnifies what is wrong; (b) focusing on failure can lead to inaction; (c) negative findings can often lead to blaming the participant; and (d) it is much easier to find problems than it is to highlight positive outcomes leading to research not being as rigorous as it deserves (Dinise-Halter, 2014; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 2002). In this way, the researcher is preparing to have a different perspective of the data and change the relationship with the data, that is usually one-sided, but is mutually beneficial. Using the data gathered from the interviews and visual mapping, I sought to understand and highlight the concept of goodness in this study throughout the findings and descriptive tables.

Holistic Perspective of Data Collection

After developing those areas, the portraiture researcher begins the holistic perspective of the data collection process where they focus on four areas: (a) the context of the data, (b) the voice of the researched, (c) the themes of the data and (d) creating an aesthetic whole. This helped to create a clear focus of the data analysis, findings, and conclusions of my research. Within the context of the data, the researcher introduces the participants' background and setting of the portrait. In this study, the participants' backgrounds included their relationship status (which includes if they are single, partnered, or married) and the setting of their institution (disclosed as a pseudonym).

Secondly, there was a focus on the voice of the researched—where the researcher listens *for* a story of the participant rather than *to* a story of the participant (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 2002). The researcher is collecting data and the creation of the story is being sought out instead of collecting data based on the assumptions of the researcher. For this study, the stories of the participants were shared as they were connected to the themes of the findings. Lastly, themes that were used to create an aesthetic whole was one of the last processes to occur. The researcher highlights experiences and themes that emerge over several different participant experiences. In Chapter IV, the stories are prefaced with short summaries of the reason why each story was connected to those themes.

Theme Creation and Data Analysis

Lastly, during the data analysis process, the portraiture researcher uses five criteria to create themes from the data: repetitive refrains, resonant metaphors, institutional rituals, cultural rituals, and revealing patterns together creating a positive picture of a participant's experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997). Throughout the data analysis process, I

highlighted experiences and themes that emerged over the interviews and visual mapping of the participants as they answered the overall research question and the three sub-questions. This analysis technique was designed to “capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of the human experience in social and cultural context, conveying perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p. 3).

The data analysis took place during four stages: the data collection, the cleaning of transcriptions, the creation of the interview answer documents, and after all the interviews; all these stages were completed over the span of January 2020 through April 2020. As I interviewed participants, I took written notes in a researcher journal. After each interview, common traits for each participant were added to an Excel document to note similarities throughout the process. After all interviews were complete, the researcher re-listened to each interview and cleaned up each transcript. After cleaning the transcripts, I went back through each question and created an “answer document” that took out the additional conversational topics. The answer document for the purpose of this study was only the answers to each set of interview questions listed in Appendix G for Interview 1 and Appendix H for Interview 2. The process of listening to each interview, cleaning the data, and creating answer documents took 125 hours. After that, I hand-coded each interview with the following codes:

- A. Journey into the Higher Education Profession and exploring new positions during the pandemic (Interview 1)
- B. Developing a Sense of Safety (Interview 2; Sense of Safety Questions)
- C. Developing a Sense of Empowerment (Interview 2: Sense of Empowerment Questions)

Then I identified stories that connected with the portraiture style of understanding the data. Each theme highlighted stories from participants in various groups.

Data Handling Procedures

Data for the entire study encompassed 44 zoom video recordings, 44 zoom transcripts, 44 zoom audio recordings, 40 interview answer documents, the recruitment survey information in Qualtrics, 19 visual maps, all email correspondence between the participants, appointment logs in Microsoft Bookings, and two written researcher journals. All the zoom video recordings, transcriptions, audio recordings, and answer documents were saved separately on a secured electronic Dropbox file where I and my faculty advisor had access. All the Qualtrics survey information was stored in Qualtrics and was only accessible to me. The appointment logs were saved in Microsoft Bookings, a program only accessed by me. The visual maps and all email correspondence were saved on Microsoft Office in a password protected folder. Lastly, the researcher journals were in a physical safe that I only had access.

Each participant chose pseudonyms for themselves, their current positions, and their current and past institutions, which were used throughout the research process. During recordings, names were changed to pseudonyms so all recordings were saved in the correct names as well all institutions were changed to the chosen pseudonyms unless the participant added actual names on the visual mapping document. Any resulting publications would use the same pseudonyms used during the data collection. All data collected will be stored for five years and all consent forms were retained in Qualtrics and a PDF copy of the document will be saved in the secured electronic Dropbox file for a period of three years. Although confidentiality could not be guaranteed, I worked to ensure maximum confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms and non-identifying information attached to each narrative.

Section Four: Interpretation and Evaluation of the Study

This section covers the interpretation and evaluation of the study including the criteria for rigor, ethical challenges, and areas for consideration. Each section defines the topic and then connects the information for the study.

Criteria for Rigor

Credibility

In qualitative research, criteria of rigor are defined by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Bhattacharya, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guido et al., 2010; Mertens, 2010; Mills, 2014). These are often classified as trustworthiness criteria that give increased confidence in the rigor of the data analysis and findings. Credibility refers to whether the experiences recorded in the data are believable according to the lived experiences reported by the participant (Bhattacharya, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guido et al., 2010; Mertens, 2010; Mills, 2014). Through this study, credibility was established by developing rapport with the participants to have a truthful and honest representation of their lived experiences.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability to use the data findings in a setting similar to the study (Bhattacharya, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guido et al., 2010; Mertens, 2010; Mills, 2014). Transferability is similar to generalizability but it depends on how the reader wants to use the data in their own study as the setting might be similar to their population, physical setting, and knowledge of the data (Bhattacharya, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guido et al., 2010; Mertens, 2010; Mills, 2014). In this study, the focus on the data findings of participants who had similar backgrounds to Black women who worked as entry-, mid-, or senior-level administrators in similar university settings could be similar to studies about other underrepresented populations in

similar settings. For instance, in studies that included Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) being isolated in small communities working in Student Affairs or other higher education departments, they could have similar findings about safety and understanding how they navigate the culture of higher education. The hope was if the study was replicated, the data gathered would have similar themes and would be a representation of the experiences of other Black women working in higher education as an administrator or even as a faculty member who experienced a professional transition or promotion in their career.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the logic of how the researcher creates the research process (Bhattacharya, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guido et al., 2010; Mertens, 2010; Mills, 2014). In this study, an audit trail was used to analyze the soundness of methodological decisions made (Amankwaa, 2016; Given, 2008a, 2008b). This audit trail crosschecked the details of each interview in the transcriptions, answer documents, and the written researcher journal notes. The scheduling of each interview and informational session were accessed through Microsoft Bookings and the video and audio recordings confirmed each interview took place on the dates and times. These were all ways to confirm the logic of how I created the research process and to confirm each process occurred.

Confirmability

Lastly, confirmability refers to the process of connecting the data reported in the study with the original data sources (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guido et al., 2010; Mertens, 2010; Mills, 2014). This connects with the research procedures of the methods used in the study. I used interviews and visual mapping to prove to the reader there was an actual process to how I collected the data and demonstrated to the reader the pathway of collecting the data (Guba &

Lincoln, 1989; Guido et al., 2010; Mertens, 2010; Mills, 2014). As a part of the data collection, I had a researcher journal to record the process of collecting data and the initial themes that arose (Janesick, 1999).

Ethical Challenges

Two ethical challenges existed in this study. The first was the researcher-participant relationship and the second was the confidentiality of the participants. The relationship and intimacy established between me and participants in this study could raise a range of different ethical concerns as researchers face dilemmas such as respect for privacy, establishment of honest and open interactions, and avoiding misrepresentations (Waruszynski, 2002). In this case, I might have had a previous relationship with a participant, might have worked in the same higher education institution, or might have had very similar experiences related to transitioning. Ethically, I planned to recognize those issues at the beginning of each interview and do my best to establish boundaries that would address the issues of privacy, connecting interactions, and avoiding misrepresentations.

Second, issues of confidentiality of the participants were important because of the small number represented. Implemented in this study were several strategies to protect personal information and the data collected including using secure data storage methods, removal of identifier components, biographical details, and chosen pseudonyms (applicable to names of individuals, places and organizations; Orb et al., 2001). I secured the consent letters, interview records, visual mapping, and transcriptions collected in a Microsoft password protected file folder as well as a separate password protected external hard drive. The researcher has the responsibility of protecting all participants in a study from potentially harmful consequences that

might affect them as a result of their participation. My priority was to protect the participants' confidentiality and their experiences.

Areas for Consideration

Multiple areas needed to be considered when understanding the foundation of this research study. First, the volume of the data that was collected made analysis and interpretation time consuming but provided rich data and understanding of the experiences of participants as they transitioned to a new position during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, there were between 5 and 10 participants, two interviews, and a visual mapping artifact. There were 60 hours of written transcripts and 20 visual artifacts. Although about two months in the study timeline were set aside for data collection and analysis, there might have been a need for more time to synthesize the data into portraiture to clearly tell participants' stories.

Another area to consider was the quality of the research was heavily dependent on my individual skills as the researcher and the data analysis might have been influenced by my personal biases, idiosyncrasies, and experiences. This connected to a third area of consideration: my presence during data collection. Because the participants shared the same ethnicity, gender, and might have shared similar profession experiences, there might have been times my personal biases and experiences could have influenced the participants' responses. This might have been unavoidable but the goals were to be as impartial and open-minded during the data collection.

The last area to consider was the impact of collecting data during the COVID pandemic. The uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult to determine each higher education institution's calendar that was represented by my participants. Because of that, this study took place while institutions could be transitioning back from on-campus learning to online learning and limited teleworking to full teleworking. This could have caused a disruption of the data

collection or could have limited the data participants were willing to share. Yet understanding data within a pandemic is a unique challenge which in all likelihood yielded rich data around leadership.

Summary

Through this study, the focus on professional Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administration positions experiencing a professional transition and/or promotion to a predominately and historically White institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this chapter, I outlined in detail aspects of how I designed the research study that were authentic to my research paradigm as well as connecting the methodology and methods that would highlight the experiences of my participants. In using the transformative paradigm, my hope was to invite traditionally marginalized populations and myself as a researcher to engage in the co-construction of knowledge. The focus on critical race feminism theory called attention to the experiences of Black women's intersectionality and the impact oppression placed on these identities. Finally, my connection to the research methods used to execute the study and how the data were analyzed completed the chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

When I first started the data collection, listening to the lives of the women in the study meant digging into my own professional journey to understand why I moved away from my hometown to chase a career in a field my family did not fully understand. During this dissertation study, I heard the stories of many women who had similar experiences as myself: moving away from their families, finding new support systems, and thriving in a new environment. I was so thankful 20 women chose to spend, collectively, 60 hours of their time during the holiday season from December 20, 2020 to January 24, 2021 to process their professional transitions and create visual maps of their journey.

Moreover, during the coronavirus pandemic, while statistics showed unemployment rates steadily rising (Falk et al., 2021), these women took a step of faith to leave positions where they felt stagnant and unproductive for a new life in a new area of the country during one of the toughest times in the history of the world. While people were dying, unemployed, isolated from family members, and unsure of their future; these women chose courage, honesty, and their own happiness—and it paid off! Although the world was shut down because of a pandemic, they were thriving in new positions and moving in strength, confidence, and peace.

For this chapter, I focus on the four themes that evolved from the interviews and three themes from the visual mapping artifacts. Due to space, the visual mapping photos for all the participants are included in the appendix with the descriptive text for each of the 20 maps due to space.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Black women working in higher education who experienced a transition and promotion to a predominately and historically Black university during the coronavirus pandemic. Their experience, in contrast to others who have experienced unemployment during the pandemic, showed the journey of courage as they navigated new environments. It is often said to move into a mid- or senior-level position, a person may have to leave their institution altogether. Indeed, often, it is out of the institution (Alfred, 2001; Blackstone, 2011; Gamble & Turner, 2015; Hirschy et al., 2015; Yancy-Tooks, 2012). There is a Biblical statement that describes the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the God incarnate through the statement “a prophet has no honor in their own home town” that can be used to describe internal candidates being promoted at their current job. The phrase specifically speaks to the idea that as an internal candidate, the people who have worked with each other in their institution cannot see each other’s talents and the progression of each other’s gifts because they can only see the faults from each other’s past or cannot see their peers in a different position (Watkins, 2013). But is that really true? Can we see the evolution of people we work closely with? In addition, are we training those professionals to be promoted in their position, or are we hoping they would not take advantage of those experiences? These questions might connect to reasons why those in higher level positions move into new positions at other universities. The purpose of the study was to understand the experiences of Black women who have transitioned and/or been promoted to a new professional position during the pandemic.

I sought to explore the experiences of these Black women who have moved into a new institution and how they developed respect, rapport, and professional strategies that led to being a leader during their transition, all nested in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also

sought to explore the struggles they experienced as they settled into a new position with new staff and built new support systems. When considering all of the experiences of Black women in these roles, they are complex and unique.

Black women working in higher education as administrators have barriers that keep them from reaching their full potential. The literature detailed barriers as including a lack of mentoring (Bright, 2010; Glenn, 2010; Hylton, 2012; Johnson-Jones, 2009), navigating gender politics (Price, 2000; Sandeen, 1991; West, 2015), and isolation of support systems (Moss, 2014; Smith & Crawford, 2007; Wiggins, 2017; Williams, 2019). The experiences of Black women in higher education have been explored within the literature (Bagilhole, 1994; Carroll, 1982; Guillory, 2001; Moses & Association of American Colleges, 1989; Owen, 2004; Pollard, 1990), especially dissertations in the past 20 years. The literature highlighted qualitative research studies that focused on small populations of Black women in certain U.S. regions, often under 20 people (McChesney, 2018) but the experiences, findings, and conclusions could not be qualitatively generalized to the larger population. In short, the population of Black women was not largely represented working in higher education as their counterparts (McChesney, 2018). Over the years, the number of Black women working in higher education has decreased and recent literature has focused on the pushing out of Black women in higher education positions (Williams, 2019).

Research Questions

As a reminder, the overall research question was as follows:

- Q1 How do Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions, experience a professional transition and/or promotion to a predominately and historically White institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic?

This question led to the following sub-questions:

- Q1a How do Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions, who have experienced a professional transition and/or promotion, determine a sense of safety in their new role at a predominately and historically White institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Q1b At which point do Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions, who experienced a professional transition and/or promotion, feel empowered in their new role at a predominately and historically White institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Q1c How do Black women in entry-, mid-, and senior-level higher education administrative positions, express their career decisions and connected emotions through visual mapping?

Participant Profiles

The following section includes the profiles for each participant. Each profile summary includes the chosen pseudonym of each participant, important details from their interviews, and their pay increase. Three participants out of 20 were married and had a family and the remaining 17 women were single. Seventeen participants received pay increases between \$3,000 and \$54,000, with an average pay increase of about \$18,000. Three participants did not receive a raise; of those three, two participants took pay cuts of \$5,000 and \$10,000 and the third did not receive a raise from position to position. All of the participants worked in higher education positions that had a focus on student support and student affairs (see Table 4 for detailed information).

Table 4*Profile Summaries*

Pseudonym	Profile
Senior-Level Administrators	
Dr. Mya Star	Dr. Mya Star worked in the Midwest region of the United States. She mentioned a couple of times that her “angels are with her in her journey” signifying the role of spirituality and religion in her interviews. She completed her Ph.D. about three years ago and was the first in her family to complete her doctorate. She was raised in an immigrant family in the Midwest where her brother taught her English and during her K-12 years, she was the translator for her parents at school meetings. Her pay increase was \$6,000 in this new role.
Julia	She was one of three participants that transitioned from an HBCU. At the HBCU, Julia had a very negative experience where she felt continually micromanaged. Julia said people treated her like she was in the “out-group” since she had graduated from a PWI. She started in higher education during the 2008 downturn of the economy and alternated between housing positions and diversity positions. Her pay increase was \$18,000 in her new role.
Dr. Nia	She was the second of the three participants that had recently left an HBCU because of her negative experiences. She describes her supervisor, who was a Black woman, as a “person that had to be the smartest in the room, at all costs. She would emasculate Black men, make them feel less than human and would terrorize me.” In her new position, she took a \$10,000 pay cut, but she said the cost of living evened out her expenses and she left to keep her sanity.
Dr. Athena	She moved the furthest across the country, from the furthest point on the east coast to the furthest point on the west coast. In addition, she was one of three participants to receive the largest pay increase of \$50,000 and the highest relocation amount of \$6,200. All of her belongings are still in storage and she lives in campus housing for a reduced rate. While doing her interview she hinted at this not being her forever job and looking for reasons to leave despite the amazing benefits.
Dr. Nadia	She was the first of the three participants to have a family, with multiple children; they were all under the age of 10. She was the unicorn in my study because she worked internationally, then at a for-profit institution, then a top-tier national business, then back in higher education. With all of those jumps, she took pay increase and decreases over the years of up to \$25,000; depending on the location. In her most current job, she was the second participant in my study to have a \$50,000 increase. She did not request relocation expenses, but requested that even after the pandemic, that she could telework and not have to uproot her family. Her request was granted.

Table 4 continued

Pseudonym	Profile
Dr. Winnie	She was the only participant in my study to have three transitions to three completely different states. Her pattern in her career development was that she re-designed her position at each institution she worked in over the years. She left her first position because she wanted to have more supervision responsibilities and the second position because she had a micromanaging supervisor. She mentioned that she warned her new supervisor of the reasons why she left position number two, and feels like this could be her job for at least five to seven years. She had a \$15,000 pay increase to move to her current position.
Dr. Joyce	She was the third professional to transition from an HBCU. She reminded me of my best friend from Chicago and beamed with joy throughout both of her interviews. She told stories of her mom teaching her to codeswitch so that she could navigate various races. Her moves were all within the same time zone and region of the U.S., so she did not receive any relocation funds. She received a \$25,000 increase in her current position.
Dr. Toya	She was the only participant to stay at the same institution for her entire career. She told a story of how she had once dropped out of school and went back after a semester, not telling her parents. She was the second participant in the study to have a family, but with multiple teenagers and although she moved out of her state one time, in the last 15 years, for a different position, she returned after a couple of weeks. She received a \$25,000 increase in her current position.
Dr. Naomie	She was the third person to have a family, but was married without any children. She grew up on the west coast in a White neighborhood, so she worked in a HBCU to expand her understanding and appreciation of Black people and culture. She had a positive experience at the HBCU, mentioning that "Black folks look out for you in a way that other people won't." She left her last position because she felt like her leadership and experience as a Black woman was not valued. In her current position, she received a \$7,000 increase to have an \$85,000 salary as a director.
Dr. Camille	She had the top salary increase of all of the participants, with \$54,000. She began her career in AmeriCorps, then working at multiple research and teaching focused institutions. She mentioned that she didn't think she could go from a Director to a Vice President and she did! With this position, she moved closer to her family in the Midwest.
Mid-Level Administrators	
Ashley	She was a fast-talking woman that was very involved in housing throughout her career. At her present position, she is considered a director, but only supervises a couple of student workers because of the small size of the college. During the pandemic, she realized her dream job was to work from home and she started her own business. From being a Residence Director to a Director at a small institution, she received a \$3,000 increase.

Table 4 continued

Pseudonym	Profile
Monica	She was one of the first administrators that I talked with that was laid off from her position during the pandemic. This gave her time to process what she wanted to do with her career. Although she landed a new position after a couple of months of being unemployed, she is now thinking her next position will be outside of higher education because of how she experienced her current position. Her new position paid the same amount as her last.
Shane	Her higher education journey was described as being a floater to each institution. After a number of negative experiences, she would leave the institution in search for greener pastures, but they were always the same as the last. At one point, she described her newest position as being “Job Catfished” – saying that the committee lied about the issues of the institution, the supervisor immediately left the institution within 2 weeks of her arriving, and there was a number of issues with the department. Although she is having a difficult experience at the institution and received a \$14,000 raise from her previous institution, she is planning to leave this position by the end of the summer.
Alvora	Her higher education journey was completely in housing positions. Because she has not had a job outside of higher education and did not take a break between her degrees, she is younger than her colleagues and felt like age affects her more in her career than her race. She was also another person in the study to get furloughed and one of two participants in my study to take a pay cut of \$5,000, but also received the highest amount for relocation of the mid-level administrators - \$5,000.
Nysh	She was the only participant in the study who worked in for-profit companies, private institutions, and higher education institutions. During the interviews, she went on a vacation for 2 weeks outside of the U.S., for what she called a “pandemic vacation” where she did not talk with anyone at the all-inclusive resort, but was able to reflect on her career aspirations. In her newest position, she received a \$12,000 increase in salary.
Entry-Level Administrators	
Jessica	She realized that the pandemic showed her how “messed up academia really is.” She mentioned that “Capitalism has us working 9-5, when in reality she could complete all her duties in a couple of days. She has two full-time jobs currently; a housing position at a different institution, full-time Academic Advisor at another institution. Received a \$15,000 increase in salary with her new position.
Michelle	She was a recent graduate that went directly from undergrad to a Student Affairs Master’s program. She was one of the few participants that did not have a religious background. She mentioned that she went from “making a \$9 an hour in a part time position to negotiating \$42,000 with her new position.” That is a \$33,000 increase in her salary. She is also unsure of if her next position will be in higher education because she’s contemplating moving to the Social Work field.

Table 4 continued

Pseudonym	Profile
Zakiya	She had the most negative experience with gender and race as an entry-level administrator. “I worked with a Caucasian women, that was the director of the program; that treated people badly and treated women worse. The supervisor was not in support of others’ success and I left because I always felt on guard with my decisions.” She received a \$19,000 increase in salary with new position.
Viola	She recently graduated from a Research focused institution and didn’t feel prepared for her job search although she had a number of academic focused graduate assistantships. When she finally started her new position after a year job search. She had a great start with a virtual orientation, then her supervisor was fired, so she wasn’t able to discern her job description and which people to build partnerships with. She when from a part time, 20 hour a week, \$15 an hour position, to a starting salary was \$48,000. That is a \$33,000 increase in salary.
Charlotte	She originally majored in Radio Production in undergrad, but had trouble finding a job. She worked as a waitress and at an internet company before she went back to her alma mater to find a position with the alumni center. After a couple of entry level roles, she is made a lateral move to an institution that is paying her \$70,000 in an entry-level position, a \$9,000 increase from her past position.

Interview Results

Overall, the findings suggested first, the entry- and mid-level women did not plan to be in higher education at the beginning of their careers but now they were committed to making academia a better place; whereas all the senior-level women had a plan to work in higher education from the beginning of their career. Second, 19 of 20 of the women felt free to leave their past positions and explore new institutions because of the physical lack of connection to their campuses during the pandemic and because of the lack of in-person community development. Third, findings suggested it was difficult for 50% of women to develop a sense of safety in their new environment because of the isolating nature of the pandemic. Lastly, findings suggested senior-level administrators felt more empowered in their roles than entry-level and mid-level professionals. Senior-level administrators felt they had more freedom to use their skills and gifts and also felt that during the pandemic they were able to have more control over the guiding decisions of their departments.

To Stumble or Not to Stumble Upon Higher Education as a Profession

Over the course of the interviews, it was clear that having a dream of working in higher education was a rarity for entry- and mid-level professionals as their journeys started with a different undergraduate major and after graduating, they stumbled upon working in higher education as a career. Senior-level administrators planned to work in higher education from the beginning of their careers. Each administrator moved around to different institutions where they were at no longer than five years for each position with the exception of Dr. Toya, the President. Dr. Toya was at the same institution her entire career, starting at an entry-level position and working her way up while increasing her educational degrees. The differences between the entry-, mid-level, and the senior-level administrators might have been because of generational differences given they began in the profession at different times.

Michelle, an entry-level professional at Midwest University, was a recent graduate of a Student Affairs master's program. She spoke about stumbling into her higher education career journey:

When I was about to graduate from undergrad I was talking with my mentor and I mentioned I wanted to advocate for people around my age range. She mentioned working in higher ed, and I thought that sounded cool. Then she mentioned free housing and working in the housing department, so I started looking at higher ed masters programs so I could work and go to school. I was never really involved on campus, and since I became more involved during my senior year, she mentioned it would be an easy transition. I applied to a lot of programs and got accepted into XX University's college student personnel program and then after my first year, I realized higher education may not be for me. I graduated with my Masters in May 2020. I was job searching in higher ed

jobs and after months of no bites, then I got tired and started applying for social work positions. It took the pandemic for me to land a series of higher ed jobs that I somewhat liked.

Michelle's experience was fairly typical for entry-level professionals as she had a trusted mentor recommend pursuing the field.

Zakiya, another entry-level administrator who was a Recruitment Coordinator at Higher Ed University, spoke about zig-zagging through jobs based on her undergraduate degree but since she could not find her fit, she stumbled into a higher education career journey:

I graduated with a degree in advertising and hated it by the time I was a senior, but it was too late and I didn't want to change. And I was burnt out, so I couldn't. I didn't have the energy to do any more school work by my senior year too, you know, so I graduated and kind of piddled around...it was in 2008 so that was, you know, when you couldn't get a job. Because it's bad. So, I worked at a landscaping company as an office manager. Um, and then I worked part time at an advertising or marketing company and didn't like it. They were just starting up and I felt like I didn't belong there, then I ended up working at a Spanish interpreting company as an office manager for a couple years and then I applied for a job at my college that I graduated from in development from raising support. I just stumbled into higher education, now I love it.

Zakiya and I shared a similar experience with our undergraduate majors. Both of us completed our degrees in subjects we were once passionate about but realized too late that we did not want to work in that field. Her experience of trying different jobs in different fields ultimately led her back to working in higher education in a position where she was satisfied.

Monica, a mid-level administrator who was an Assistant Director at Downtown School, learned about a higher education career journey by reflecting on the support professionals had given her during her undergraduate:

I was about to graduate, but I felt like during that time, I kind of went through a little mini crisis of figuring out what I wanted to do and you know all the people that I went to for advice were student affairs professionals. And then one day it finally dawned on me. Oh, this is a career. You guys are getting paid for this. So, I asked them how they, you know, got into that field and the rest was history.

Monica leaned on student affairs mentors to get connected in the field and after doing some research with them, she realized it was a good opportunity for her future. She settled into the job and learned more about her new career.

Conversely, Dr. Joyce, a senior-level administrator who was Director of Therapy at Blue Pride University, approached her higher education career journey through national service work:

I got started in higher education in 2008 as an AmeriCorps Vista because I was looking to break into higher ed with just a bachelors, and my friend said the AmeriCorps position was a great way to enter the field. I was placed at a small to midsize school and very diverse, a Historically Native American Institution. I just graduated so it was a good first experience in terms of diversity. I had a lot of responsibilities that I honestly wasn't prepared for. But you know you roll with the punches; it was a great first glimpse into higher ed and making me realize this is a profession I wanted to go into... So, from there I went on for my graduate degree with my goal being a college president or a chancellor. My professors knew that and they encouraged me to go ahead and get my PhD, so that I would not be hindered in my pursuit of that. Now, obviously, hindsight is always 20/20. I

did not know enough about the field to really know what I wanted my trajectory to be; I just saw that the president is going to get a house, a car, and a lot of money... and not realizing how much of their personal life slips away while working at the institution.

For Dr. Joyce, her foresight for working into higher education started very early and intentionally in her career. She was able to navigate the field in numerous positions but also pursue a Ph.D. so when she was ready for a senior-level position, she would have equal professional experiences as well as equal educational credentials.

Although all the administrators in the study were still able to build successful careers in higher education, the journey of how they entered into the profession was different. The five entry-level and five mid-level administrators stumbled into the profession not having a clear understanding of the profession. Whereas, the 10 senior-level professionals intentionally planned their higher education career journey.

Moving Beyond the Lack of Connection to Empowered Choice Making

The idea of being free to explore new positions and institutions was not just a part of the life of a higher education administrator during the pandemic but for many around the world. During the global pandemic, people were forced to stay indoors and interact with families or connect with family and friends in a virtual capacity. As well, small businesses ownership and the use of virtual revenue generating campaigns increased all over the world (Davis & Toney, 2020). This led to people reflecting on their purposes and redefining their boundaries in a way that empowered them to make choices that prioritized their personal dreams and goals (Davis & Toney, 2020). For the women in this study, they had space to redefine their purpose in academia and start a business outside of higher education—all because of the lack of connection with the students and staff at their institution. Nineteen of the participants stated they were not as

connected to their campuses because of the lack of community on their campuses. All of them mentioned they were virtually meeting with students and staff they had never met in-person. They felt they lacked “water cooler conversations,” which were defined as conversations that were not focused on work but getting to know others personally. Some topics included family life, traveling for vacations, and leisure opportunities in the area. With the lack of community and water cooler conversations, participants mentioned that in their first position where they were working during the pandemic, they did not feel connected and considered leaving during the months between March 2020 and June 2020. During these months, most of the United States began imposing restrictions on global travel and implementing teleworking practices and policies for higher education institutions.

Dr. Athena, a senior-level administrator and Dean of Students at West Coast University, spoke of dreams of the future and how she desired to leave higher education to make a different impact in the world:

I realized while I was at this new gig that I want to do something related to civil rights, law and or human trafficking. Maybe litigation to human trafficking. I’m at the point with higher ed, like how many people can I kick out for rape, or stalking, or harassment before the school realizes it's not just Student Affairs’ job. I feel like I keep hitting walls and not making an impact. I hope the next move is where I buy a house, and I have 3 years to date and meet people and see if that turns into a long-term relationship. They can’t pay me enough money to be isolated and alone for the rest of my life. I gotta get out of here.

Dr. Athena’s isolation allowed her time to reflect on her dissatisfaction with her position and ultimately her greater purpose.

Dr. Mya Star, a senior-level administrator and Assistant Dean at Midwest Red University, spoke of the disconnected nature of leaving her past institution:

When I was furloughed [due to the pandemic] at the end of April, early May I didn't get to say goodbye to my students and I didn't have much work to do, so I wasn't surprised when I was furloughed. I packed my house and went back to Florida, and I worked on my dissertation. I kept the same routine 8am-5pm, writing my dissertation and taking breaks every three hours. I decided after I finished my dissertation that I would work closer to my family. So that's how my job search started. Now I get to see my family more and I feel more connected.

By relocating closer to home, Dr. Mya Star reconnected with her family and increased her personal and professional satisfaction.

Ashley, a mid-level administrator as an Associate Director at Maryland University spoke about her initial desires to climb the administrative ladder and how her experience during the pandemic made her redefine her dream and begin a business outside of higher education:

When I first started in student affairs, I wanted to be a VP of Student Affairs or a Dean of Students, up until two years ago [when the pandemic began]. But I wonder if I really do want to deal with the politics. Do I really want to be the person who makes decisions when things like Covid happen? I don't want all that pressure. Covid has shown us that our work life balance is very important. I am still trying to figure out what the future holds. My dream job is definitely to work from home. I love the flexibility. I still want to be working with students. But I am not sure what the dream position would be. That's why I started my business during the pandemic, I need the freedom to work differently.

During the pandemic, Ashley had more time to reflect on how she worked differently and came to the conclusion her dream job was to have more freedom in the way she worked and spent her time.

Nysh, a mid-level administrator as an Assistant Director at Maze University, spoke of her future dream and how they were redefined during the pandemic and how she planned to work outside but not inside higher education:

Professionally I see myself assisting students of color in their prospective job ventures. Maybe a consultant for other companies, how they can better serve their employees or students of color to be the best version of themselves. I don't have any passion left for higher ed. My passion is more in community development. I would stay in the advocacy space. I have always felt that one of my gifts is to empower others. Helping companies do soul searching so they can figure out how to serve people of color better.

Nysh realized her passion for higher education was gone and she wanted to work in community development while being at home during the pandemic.

Because the pandemic gave these women time to reflect on their personal purpose, regardless of their professional-level, they considered leaving the field, having more freedom, and overall prioritizing themselves more than before the pandemic. The lack of connection with their campus, lack of sense of belonging, and lack of relationships with others at their institution gave them the opportunity to choose themselves over the professional position.

Am I Safe Here?

The third theme that was prevalent in the study was the concept of safety. Safety was defined in two ways. First, entry- and mid-level professionals understood security in terms of job security. Second, senior-level professionals identified security as physical security. For entry-

and mid-level professionals, the understanding of job security was prevalent because of the pandemic and the abundance of unemployment as spotlighted by Jessica and Alvora. Lastly, in their current positions, they mentioned staying because of job security because of the uncertainty of the pandemic. For senior-level professionals, security was identified as physical security. Although all the professional moved to rural towns and mid-sized towns, they were concerned about their safety; this was spotlighted by Dr. Mya Star, Dr. Nia, and Julia.

Jessica, an entry-level administrator and Academic Advisor at Tigers University, talked about her concerns of job security:

I asked questions in the interview process to try to get a sense of how they are handling the pandemic. They mentioned they have not laid off anyone due to the pandemic. My position is also unionized so I know that they would need a legitimate reason to fire me so my anxiety calmed down.

By inquiring during the job interview for confirmation about how the institution was handling budget cuts connected to the loss of funding during the pandemic, Jessica was told her position was unionized and would have more job security.

Alvora, a mid-level administrator and an Associate Director at the University of Heach, spoke of her concerns about job security:

During my interview process I was asking about job security. I wanted to know what would happen if the budget changed? Essentially, they said they can't guarantee anything but that they haven't had to let anyone go. Before my interview, I read their statement that they put out when the protests happened and they mentioned that they have a legacy of racism that they are trying to address. So, in my interview, I asked what they are doing now about racism. Their response was asking me what I needed as a Black woman

moving from the north to the south which I responded, just give me the respect I deserve and help me to understand the institution's past so I can know how move forward in the future.

Alvora asked the same question during her interview about job security as it related to concerns about budget cuts connected with the pandemic. Although her institution was not able to promise her job would not be eliminated, she asked about other concerns she had connected with societal issues that were at the forefront during the pandemic. That gave her the peace of mind to take the position.

Conversely, Dr. Mya Star, a senior-level administrator and Assistant Dean at Midwest Red University, spoke of her physical security:

Since I got a feel of the Midwest prior to this position, I got a sense of the people so that part was not threatening. I live in the woods, so I make sure if it's dark I walk in a well-lit area. I had my brother help me move and he stayed for 2 weeks so that people saw that he was with me and that I was not alone. I was worried around the election time. I had someone write in the group chat I am in, "hey, I know it's been quiet but it is election day so be safe and don't walk around by yourself, call me if you need help." So, I was wondering, am I not supposed to feel safe? I asked if I should be worried, because I am new here, and they said no, but they wanted to share that knowledge because it's good to be careful.

Dr. Mya Star mentioned how she remedied her fearful thoughts about her physical security by asking her family to stay with her when she moved into her new apartment but also connected with a new support system through virtual networking to build relationships. Since she was

adjusting to her new neighborhood during the national election time, these relationships gave her peace of mind as she navigated her new community.

Dr. Nia, a senior-level administrator as Director of Career Services at Sterling Ash University, spoke of her physical security by talking about how she protected herself and also how she was not concerned about her job security:

I bought a pistol and I have a license. That's how I created safety. I knew I was the only person at my job that could do my job, so I made sure they remembered why I was valuable on the team. I knew why I left my previous job, so I did a lot of prep work for my interviews. I prayed about it. When I got the job and moved to my new state I got a new pistol. I transitioned my ownership license here. Because I am who am, I am fight or flight, so I knew I had to come home, on my own terms. You can't pay for your peace. I see my friends everyday. I am rebuilding relationships with some of my family members so while I have them here and I want to stay alive out here in these streets.

Dr. Nia spoke about protecting her physical security by having an actual firearm and being educated and prepared to use it if her security was challenged. She took control of her safety and mentioned that being closer to her family gave her a stronger peace of mind.

Julia, a senior-level administrator as an Executive Director at University of Sia, spoke of how she protected herself at her past institution and how she protects herself now:

At my last job I didn't live on campus, so I kept a hammer and I kept a Switchblade in my desk drawer. I also keep a Bible in my car. I also got a license to carry a gun. At this new job, I feel safe, it is welcoming and there are lot of people on the lookout. Even though there are only a few Blacks, I do not feel that my race is a big issue. A lot of professionals here say they do not feel safe when they leave campus, in the sense that

people are not wearing masks and are not social distancing, but they seem to feel okay walking around at night. But my hammer and switchblade are now in my car with my Bible.

Julia also spoke about having a weapon to protect herself. She mentioned how she kept her weapons in her car just in case something happened but also, she mentioned the concern with community members not using protective medical measures connected to the pandemic. She noticed that community members were not wearing masks or social distancing, which concerned her and her colleagues.

Overall, each group had a concern about security, whether it was their physical safety or about job security. Each woman who was spotlighted took control of their situation to create peace of mind and used safety measures to protect themselves.

Senior-Level Black Women Are in Charge!

Participants who were senior-level Black women administrators felt more empowered in their roles than entry-level and mid-level professionals. Senior-level administrators felt they had more freedom to use their skills and gifts and also felt that during the pandemic they were able to have more control over the guiding decisions of their departments. This finding was connected to positional power and the understanding of empowerment. Positional empowerment connects to not being worried about job security. If a person does not feel empowered in their job, they probably do not feel secure their job is secure.

Michelle, an entry-level administrator as an Analyst at Midwest University, spoke of how she did not feel empowered:

I don't know if I feel empowered yet, I feel like I am doing what is being told to me. I have to advocate for myself when I don't understand what is being told to me. Sometimes

I feel so frustrated, but maybe with time it'll get better. I don't think I realized I didn't feel empowered here until you asked that question.

Michelle expressed her frustration with the lack of empowerment as an entry-level administrator. She also expressed that she had not reflected on the trait of empowerment being a part of her role until the interview.

Zakiya, an entry-level administrator as Recruitment Coordinator at Higher Ed University, spoke of how she did not feel empowered in her new position and how she might leave this job to find a place where she did feel empowered:

There hasn't been a situation where I can be empowered. I'm not sure I enjoy this job right now, but I'm doing it because we're in a pandemic. Maybe in the future I'll find a new job; but for now, I'm not going nowhere, it's a pandemic and there's no reason to lose my source of income.

Zakiya also expressed the same frustration with not being empowered as an entry-level administrator. Although her frustration related to considering leaving her job, this would not occur immediately since she would lose her primary source of income.

Shane, a mid-level administrator as an Assistant Director at Plymouth Rock College, spoke of how she did not feel empowered in her position because of the influence of her supervisor:

I don't think I have been empowered at this job. I feel like any time I try to stand on my own, my supervisor tells me to shrink myself or if I bring something to someone's attention, she's flat out rude. She tells me to swallow my thoughts. I could go on for days about how I don't enjoy my job, but so can my mom. She listens to my meetings and tells

me; you just need to wait out this pandemic. Those people don't respect you, but you can use that money to survive now.

Shane, like Michelle and Zakiya, felt frustrated with her lack of empowerment and highlighted her negative relationship with her supervisor. Like Zakiya, Shane would not leave her job because she would lose her primary source of income.

Conversely, Dr. Toya, a senior-level administrator as President at Midwest Community College, spoke of how she felt empowered in her position even when she felt like she did not have the power to make decisions:

When I came in as interim I thought I was supposed to keep this thing afloat, you know, it's a global pandemic and it's not normal. But someone said, 'oh no, you're the new leader, that's just a temporary title, make the decision and stand on it'. And that's where it clicked, and I felt empowered in that sense. I had to make sure if there was a new person coming in after me or if I was the actual leader in this position, that I fixed the mess that I had inherited.

Dr. Toya discussed how another colleague empowered her to make decisions that would impact the college in a meaningful and lasting way when she was in an interim role.

Also, Dr. Joyce, a senior-level administrator as Director of Therapy at Blue Pride University, spoke of a conversation she had with her supervisor when she felt empowered and felt like she could be promoted in that institution:

When having an evaluation meeting with my boss, she asked me what are my aspirations and I told her I was fine at the Director level, even though in my heart I was thinking about moving up. I told her I was not ready for her level of position because she does a

lot. And she said she does do a lot, but she believes I can do this job. And I was like, OK, I'm getting ready!

Drs. Joyce and Toya had similar experiences with feeling empowered. In Dr. Joyce's story, she mentioned her supervisor believing in her abilities, which made her look forward to the future moving up in the institution.

Lastly, Dr. Winnie, a senior-level administrator as Director of Career Services at University of Syle, mentioned the most empowering moment at her job. She mentioned how the staff trusted her leadership and how validating that felt:

I felt empowered with the relationships with my staff. That has been the most rewarding part of being here. They have been so receptive, so adaptable, they have been eager, teachable, trainable. And how trusting they have been of my leadership. That has been empowering and validating. Some of my staff have said that it is empowering to watch you say no, so it means they can also say no. They supported my decisions even when others believed opposite... They knew I was the expert, and believed in me..... I was sad to leave, but in my new position, during one of the interviews, they asked me to solve a problem that they were dealing with currently. I gave them a specific solution with five steps to make it happen, then I said what the benefits of the solution would be. When they sent me the contract to be hired, they asked if I really wanted to make the decision about the problem because they had researched my suggestion and was going to buy the product the same week. That's when I felt empowered in my new position.

Dr. Winnie was the only participant who left her job twice while in the study. She left her first job to move to the second position in February 2020 and by February 2021, she moved to the third position. Although she felt empowered by her staff's ability to trust her as the expert in the

second position, she did not feel the same way about her supervisor and ultimately left the institution. In the process of moving to a new institution, she found her supervisor was more willing to trust her expertise even before she started the position by implementing an idea she mentioned in her interview.

It was not surprising that the entry-level/mid-level administrators had adverse experiences with feeling empowered in their positions and it was discouraging to consistently hear their experiences as compared to senior-level administrators. Senior-level administrators were more trusted with their knowledge and expertise as well as given opportunities to display those qualities in positive ways; while entry- and mid-level administrators were not given the opportunity because it was assumed they did not have the expertise to be empowered.

Visual Mapping Findings

Although there are 20 participants in the study, the analysis concluded three themes of emotions around career decision making through their visual maps. These themes were (a) career decisions were rationalized over emotions, (b) reflection on past career showed negativity and depression, and (c) reflection on future career showed hopefulness and potential. For each theme, two visual maps were spotlighted. In the appendices, the visual maps display emotions around their professional journey, how they found inspiration to continue moving forward in their careers, coping mechanisms, events that motivated them to leave their past positions, and even difficult moments in their careers.

For participants Dr. Camille (senior-level) and Alvora (mid-level), their visual maps displayed the first theme of career decisions rationalized over emotions. Both of them had personal descriptions that explained their visual map. For participants Dr. Toya (senior-level) and Shane (mid-level), their visual maps focused on the second theme of past career reflection

that showed negativity and depression. Dr. Toya's visual map did not have a description but I have provided the context and Shane's visual map has a personal story to explain her illustration. Lastly, Dr. Nadia (senior-level) and Charlotte (entry-level) connected with the third theme of future career reflection that showed hopefulness and potential. Both of their visual maps included additional context provided by me. As the reader, you might identify some of their photos and come to your own conclusions about their visual maps. For the remaining 14 participants, their visual maps are located in Appendix I through Appendix AA.

Theme 1: Career Decisions Were Rationalized Over Emotions

Dr. Camille, a senior-level administrator and Vice President of Development at Pink & Blue University, used her visual map to express her career journey over time through images that showed her rationalizing her career choice even though she had negative emotions connected with her work environment (see Figure 1 and Appendix R for her visual map).

Figure 1

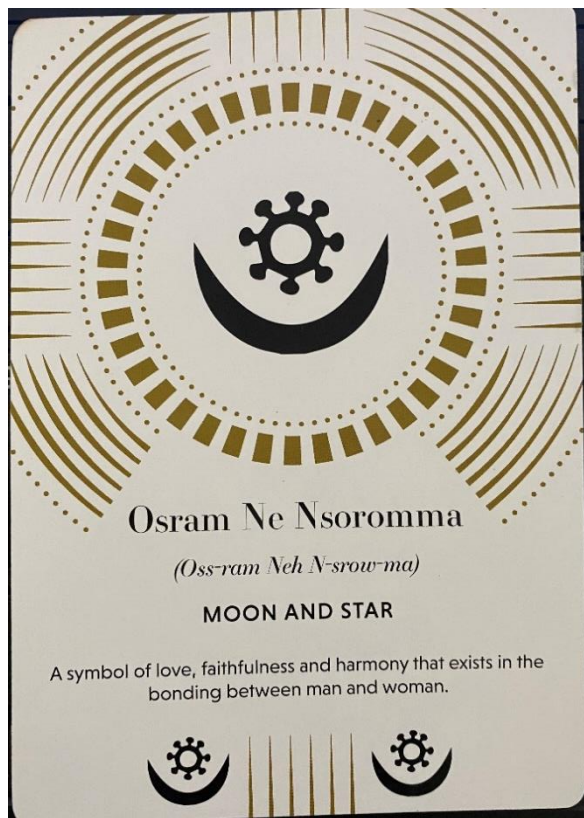
Dr. Camille Visual Map



Note.

- Picture 1: At every turn, it seems like there were experiences with doubt or questioning my decisions.
- Picture 2: While the picture shows a tree growing out of a book, I don't mean to say that all of my learning was book-based; instead, the book is representative of learning as a whole. And, the tree, with letters as leaves, are representative of my growth over time. And, the tree also makes me think about my ancestors who were hanged and though this comparison is not an ideal one, I sometimes have thought about higher education as a figurative master and that I could be hanged if I didn't comply with the established norms.
- Picture 3: I was regularly disappointed – not only by myself and missed opportunities, but by the lack of action in my work environments.
- Picture 4: In terms of community, building community was always slow and often hard. The first thing I thought of as a visual was a sloth.
- Picture 5: Small “community” of trusted people – seeking to build
- Picture 6: I want to remain hopeful that beautiful things can grow out of difficult circumstances.

Alvora, a mid-level administrator and an Associate Director at the University of Heach, used her visual map to express the emotions she had from her parents and how they passed on their understanding of working without balance. Figure 2 provides card 3 of her visual map. Her larger visual map is in Appendix V.

Figure 2*Alvora Visual Map*

Card 3:

This card means, “Balance, equally yoked, faithfulness. It is time to harmonize the energies between the masculine and feminine in your life, relationships and within you. Find the common ground between these two energies, appreciate the differences and form an unshakable bond that is diverse, in sync and true.”

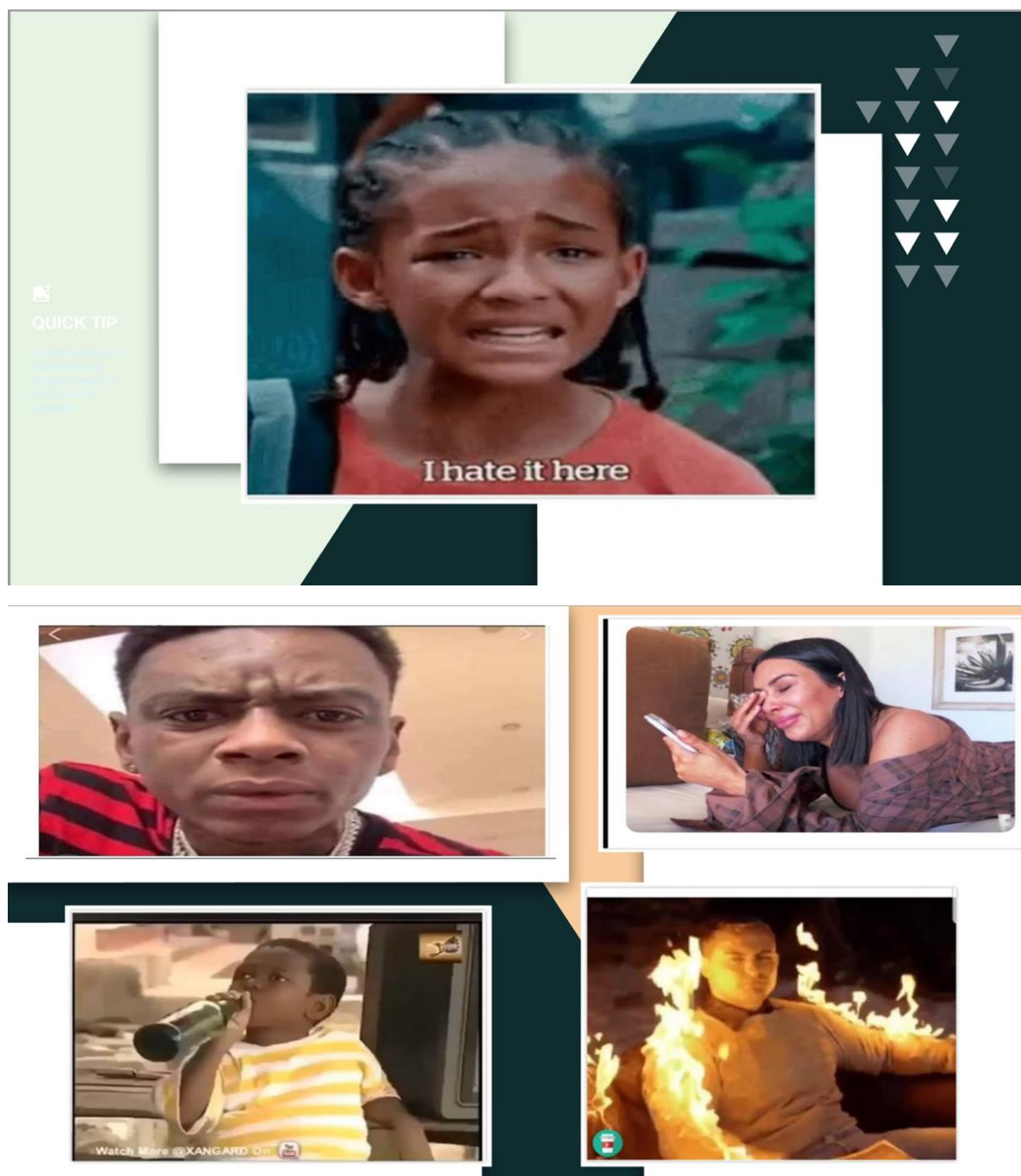
I was never taught how to create a work-life balance for myself or how to create healthy boundaries in ALL aspects of my life. Being raised in a two parent household where both parents were encouraged to follow the rules, not to take a sick day, only travel when it was convenient for your job, and don't complain. Where for one parent, there was no job security knew they were easily replaceable. Watching this led me to believe there was only one way to approach work; I thought I had to put my head down and work, always be perfect, never bring your personal problems to work, do not take a sick day unless you were dying, pay off all of your debt in order to live a life you think you want, but you don't inherently deserve. My perspective on how I approach work completely changed when I realized everything I knew was wrong. From working in higher ed, I started to value my mental and emotion health as much as I valued my physical health. If I wanted to take time off from work, that was okay and I should not feel guilty about it. Higher Ed essentially taught me to value me, value my work, what I produce at work has nothing to do with my worth.

**Theme 2: Past Career Reflection
Showed Negativity and
Depression**

Dr. Toya, a senior-level professional and President of a Midwest Community College, used memes in Figure 3 (a humorous image, video, piece of text, etc., that is copied [often with slight variations] and spread rapidly by internet users) to show how she reflected on the emotion of her past career. These images express the emotions of frustration, negativity, and anxiety as she describes her past career and her current position. A few of her most emotional slides are included here; the rest are included in Appendix P.

Figure 3

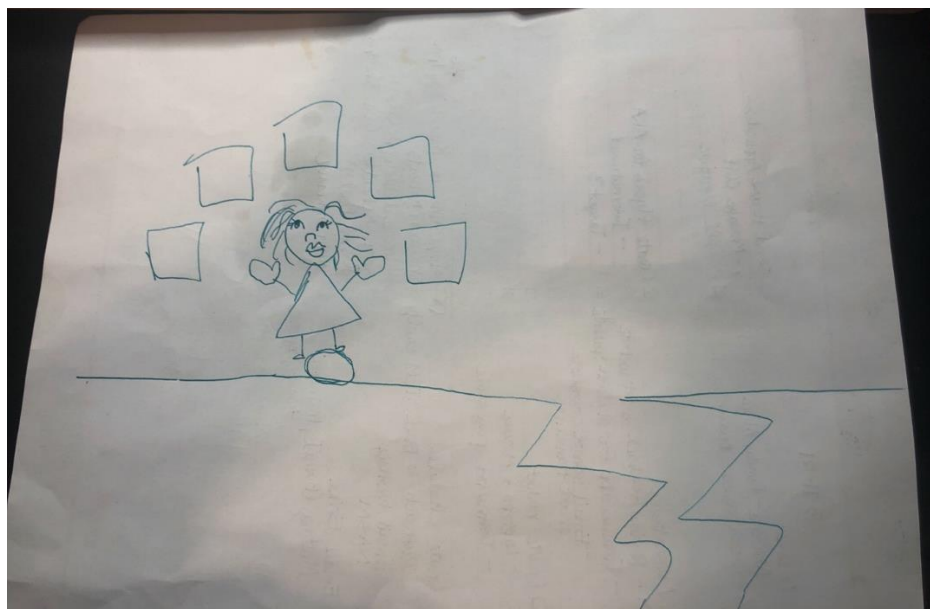
Dr. Toya's Visual Map



Shane, a mid-level administrator and an Assistant Director at Plymouth Rock College, drew a picture of her journey of her past and current career through the image of a disaster waiting to happen as she juggled various priorities of her personal and professional life. This image expressed her anxiety, frustration with her work, and the chaos she felt surrounded her. Figure 4 shows her visual map in her own words.

Figure 4

Shane's Visual Map



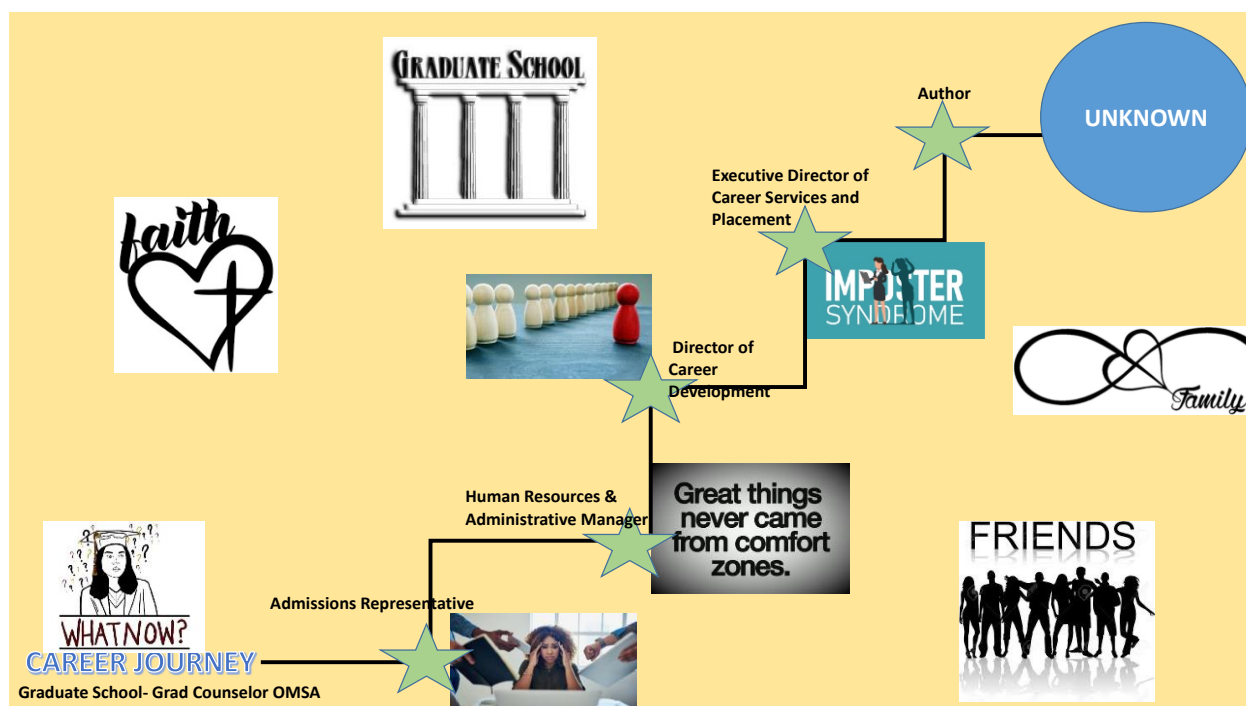
Note. So, it's a person on a ball, and I am juggling and there's a crack on the ground but I don't see it, I just roll with the punches. I feel like I am always trying to balance multiple things, I'm always moving, I'm never in the moment, I'm on autopilot. I think things are stable, but they're not. My earthquake moment at my previous institution, was the fact that the supervisor was spiraling from the email I sent. Me stating that she did something wrong, sent her in a frenzy. My moment in Res life, was when a student was sent from the central office to my office, because their roommate tried to commit suicide the previous night. I was confused as to why the central office sent her to my building. I called up to my supervisor and told them about the suicide attempt and the RA's never called me. So, my supervisor asked the students and the students said that I said I would not come out. They actually believed the students! And that's where I thought, these White students are able to say this lie and you will believe them. I think the earthquakes are part of life, but I don't think I should be somewhere where they are frequent.

Theme 3: Future Career Reflection Showed Hopefulness and Potential

Dr. Nadia, a senior-level administrator and an Executive Director at University of Low Peaks, used her visual map to describe her career journey and the hopefulness and potential as she climbed the ladder to the unknown. Although she did not provide a description, her images spoke volumes to her experiences (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

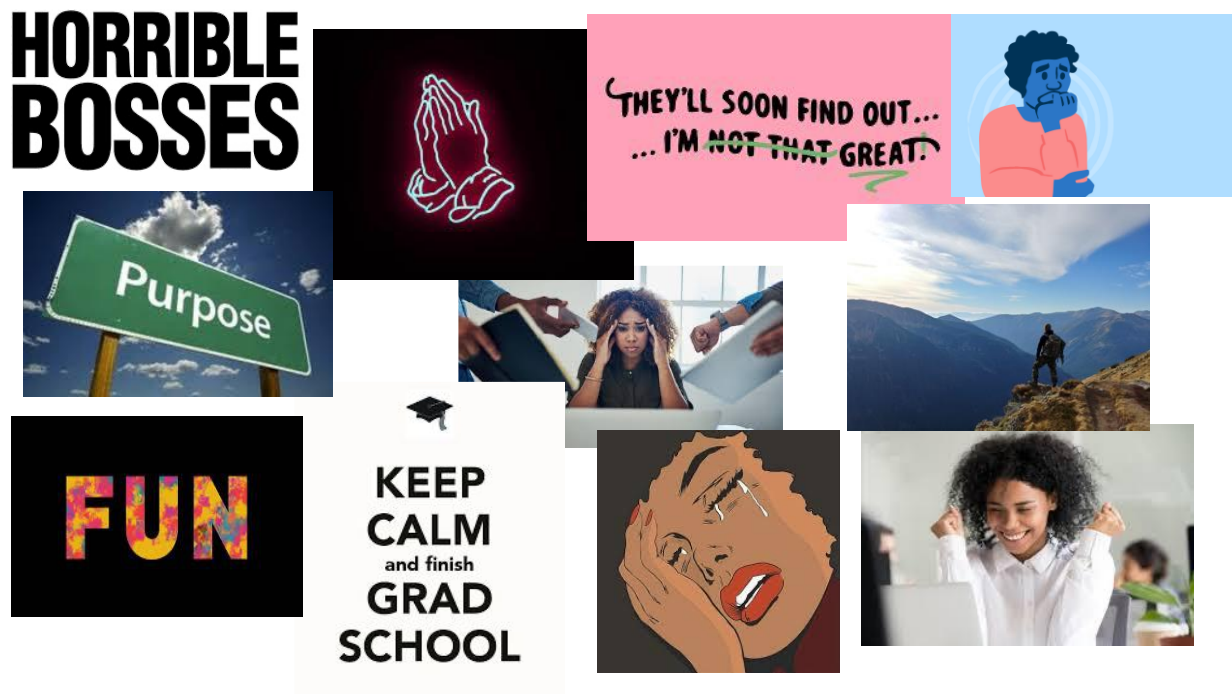
Dr. Nadia's Visual Map



Charlotte, an entry-level administrator and an Academic Advisor at the University of Linda, used her visual map to display the roller-coaster of emotions she had in the past year. Her visual map displays images from left to right ending with hope for the future (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Charlotte's Visual Map



During the data analysis, I noticed all of the participants mentioned the following shared experiences: (a) the exercise was extremely helpful in processing their emotions about the past; (b) they had not connected emotions to their professional journey and majority of the participants had negative feelings surrounding their past position even though they had left their jobs more than six months ago; and (c) they enjoyed using a visual map to describe their journey and compared it to making a vision board.

Summary

Overall, my findings indicated the entry-level administrators ($n = 5$) and the mid-level administrators ($n = 5$) often had similar experiences with their transition and promotion experiences than the senior-level administrators ($n = 10$). In the first finding, senior-level administrators made intentional choices to work in higher education as a career, while entry-level and mid-level administrators stumbled into the field when their other career choices did not work out. Secondly, participants were free to explore new careers during the pandemic in all three groups because of the teleworking nature of the pandemic. Because they had time to reflect on their purposes and redefine their boundaries, participants began to have empowered choices to create small businesses and make decisions about their future that were beneficial financially. Third, safety was understood in two ways: job security, which was prevalent in entry- and mid-level administrators, and physical security, which was prevalent in senior-level administrators. Fourth, findings suggested senior-level administrators felt more empowered in their new roles than entry-level and mid-level professionals. Lastly, the visual mapping exercise allowed participants to create visual artifacts that focused on = emotions connected to their professional journey. Some of their visual maps highlighted their coping mechanisms, events that motivated them to leave their past positions, and even difficult moments in their careers. The visual mapping themes were career decisions were rationalized over emotions, past career reflection showed negativity and depression, and future career reflection showed hopefulness and potential.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research was significant for three reasons. First, there is a lack of studies that focus on Black women in positions that range from entry-level to senior-level administration working in higher education institutions. Although several studies focused on the lack of Black women in higher education (Cruse, 1994; Hinton, 2001; McChesney, 2018; Mosley, 1980; Watson, 2001; Williams, 2019), this study included representation from each professional level. Second, focusing on the process of transitioning to new positions connected to the increasing retention of Black professionals. Third, this study highlighted the experiences of Black women in higher education administrative positions as they were promoted to new positions during the pandemic. There was a strong need for this study as it addressed these three concerns. In this chapter, I connect why this study was significant by discussing the themes, highlighting implications for theory and practice, listing limitations of the study, and providing recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Themes Connected to Bridges' Transition Theory

In the literature review, I focused on Bridges and Bridges' (2009) transition theory as the theoretical framework that shaped my design of the data collection of my study. The two interviews were focused around the three phases of transition defined as follows: Interview 1 and Phase 1: Letting go of the old ways and the old identity. This first phase of transition is an ending and the time when you need to help people to deal with their losses (Bridges & Bridges, 2009,

pp. 4-5). During the first interview, the women were given the opportunity to reflect on their experiences at their old position and the changes that occurred during the pandemic.

The second interview was connected to Phase 2: Going through an in-between time when the old is gone but the new is not fully operational. This time is called the "neutral zone" and is when critical psychological realignments and re-patterns take place (Bridges & Bridges, 2009, pp. 4-5). This phase of time was during the month of March. During the second interview, there was a focus on that particular month and their description of changes in their workplace.

The visual mapping method focused on the last phase: Coming out of the transition and making a new beginning. This is when people developed their new identity, experienced the new energy, and discovered the new sense of purpose that made the change begin to work (Bridges & Bridges, 2009, pp. 4-5). This phase happened about six to nine months after the participants began their new positions. In this study, the visual mapping exercise captured reflection on their identity, the new experiences, and discovering a sense of purpose.

To Stumble or Not to Stumble Upon Higher Education as a Profession

Overall, the findings indicated entry-level administrators ($n = 5$) and the mid-level administrators ($n = 5$) often had similar experiences with their transition and promotion experiences than the senior-level administrators ($n = 10$). In the first theme, senior-level administrators made intentional choices to work in higher education as a career, while entry-level and mid-level administrators stumbled into the field when their other career choices did not work out. While this finding indicated a difference in professional groups, the argument in the literature still stood if higher education and student affairs administration is a profession (Nuss, 2003). Although this finding did not directly connect to Bridges' (1980) transition theory, the notion of having consistent training and degree programs for the field would be beneficial.

Within the next couple of years, there will be more national associations creating pathways to connect to the field of Student Affairs.

Moving Beyond the Lack of Connection to Empowered Choice Making

The participants were free to explore new careers during the pandemic in all three groups because of the teleworking nature of the pandemic. Because they had time to reflect on their purposes and redefine their boundaries, participants began to branch out to create small businesses and make decisions about their future that were financially beneficial. During the coronavirus pandemic, one thing that defined the span of time was the ability to reflect on their personal purpose while creating a teleworking environment at home. Because of that, the implication on this study was participants had time to explore new interests, reflect on their values, and identify the priorities in their personal and professional life. After the pandemic subsides, I am concerned it will become difficult for people to reflect and they might stay at positions longer than they need to before advancing to a new position. Also, because of the time spent physically at work, not as many professionals might have the time to explore their own personal interests, which might lead to starting a business that could lead to additional wealth.

This theme connected with Bridges' (1980) transition theory and the third phase: Coming out of the transition and making a new beginning. During this phase, participants developed a new identity, experienced new energy, and discovered a new sense of purpose that made the change begin to work (Bridges & Bridges, 2009, pp. 4-5). This theme highlighted the participants' reflection and clarifying personal purpose as well as connected with the idea of creating a new beginning. By participants being able to reflect on the past and transition into a new world, it gave them the opportunity to make intentional choices that might change their career path in the future.

Am I Safe Here?

Safety was understood in two ways: job security, which was prevalent in entry- and mid-level administrators, and physical security, which was prevalent in senior-level administrators. This implication actually coincided with the pandemic as the unemployment percentages in the United States increased throughout the pandemic. It would be helpful for employers to be more transparent in the hiring process by discussing the length of the position and the funding source of the position. This helps potential employees to determine if this is the type of position they wanted to take but also the stability of the institution and understanding the funding implications of the position. The second part of this finding was connected with the state of our society.

Throughout the study and throughout the pandemic, there were numerous incidences of racial injustice toward Black men and women. U.S. society has to be able to move forward in a positive way by dealing with the issues of the past. White supremacy has not disappeared but has increased in subtle ways. Specifically, White supremacy is defined as the belief that White people are superior to those of all other races, especially the Black race, and should therefore dominate society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, 2001). This belief connects to the ideal and understanding that White people's lives are more important and valuable than Black people's lives. This belief is stifling our society and the foundation of higher education. Currently, in higher education, there has been an influx of Black women as Chief Diversity Officers across the country to solve some of the issues with White supremacy as well as equity, inclusion, and social justice issues but that is not enough. There needs to be transformation in curriculum that would diversify what students are learning in college generally. Focusing on how Black women and in general how Black people could begin to feel safer in society would begin with the implementation of a culturally competent curriculum that helps people to value the lives of

everyone and not just one race of people. Although, neither of these themes was connected with Bridges and Bridges' (1990) transition theory, it would be beneficial in the future to update the theory to include the impact of culture within the theory.

Senior-Level Black women Are in Charge!

Findings suggested senior-level administrators felt more empowered in their new roles than did entry-level and mid-level professionals. The implications of this finding were found in a section of the second interviews that discussed the women's experiences with orientation during the pandemic. Over 80% of the participants did not have a strong orientation that helped them to understand the campus culture or even understand their job responsibilities. I would suggest that as we near the end of the pandemic we use this opportunity to do three things:

1. Write out succession/transition plans for each position so incoming employees can understand the responsibilities of their new positions. This could even happen as a video outgoing employees could record.
2. Have outgoing professionals overlap with the incoming employees. Often having a connection meeting with the outgoing employee could help with the incoming employee understanding the new role and feeling more empowered earlier in the position.
3. Trust the new employee with the expertise they brought to the position and allow them the freedom and grace to do their jobs.

This connected with the second phase of Bridges and Bridges' (1990) transition theory: Going through an in-between time when the old is gone but the new is not fully operational. This gives professionals in transition the opportunity to overlap with the previous professional in that

position and also create more synergy as they move the institution and specific department forward.

Themes from Visual Mapping

The visual mapping exercise allowed participants to create visual artifacts that focused on their emotions connected to their professional journey. Some of their visual maps highlighted their coping mechanisms, events that motivated them to leave their past positions, and even the difficult moments in their careers. The themes were (a) career decisions were rationalized over emotions, (b) past career reflection showed negativity and depression, and (c) future career reflection showed hopefulness and potential.

There were a couple of implications for this finding. The first was it would be beneficial to use art more to reflect on our emotions as it relates to our professional and personal life. One published study used the experiences of doctoral students as they created collage portraits to describe their doctoral experiences (Lahman et al., 2020). As well, using visual methods in qualitative research gives participants an opportunity to expand on their experiences (Glaw et al., 2017), meaning of life, and beliefs about how they understood transition and promotion. Further studies could be conducted with the exclusive use of visual maps to help participants process their experiences.

These themes connected with the patterns of the overall Bridges and Bridges' (1990) theory where participants were reflecting on their past career decisions and how their future thoughts connected with the last phase where participants reflected on coming out of their transition and making a new beginning. As the study ended, my hope is the exercise of reflection assisted the participants in making decisions in their future career that reflected their priorities and desires.

Implications of Theory

Although Bridges and Bridges' (1990) transition theory has not been used or cited as frequently as other transition theories, I believe this theory was perfect for understanding professional transitions during the coronavirus pandemic. Although there is no definite ending for the global pandemic, multiple seasons within the pandemic have helped professionals and Student Affairs units navigate if they needed to let go of what they considered normal. Whether those processes were based on fully in-person working environments, this theory gave some direction on what happens in new seasons and helps professionals and Student Affairs units let go of the past instead of trying to go back and relieve past traditions. The hope is professionals and Student Affairs units will change after the pandemic, take on some of the new virtual processes including teleworking, how they engage with students, professional committees, how policies are developed, and how traditions are developed around persistence and graduation.

Implications for Practice

In researching this topic and understanding the findings, this section discusses the implication for future research and practices by theme. For Theme 1—To stumble or not to stumble upon higher education as a profession, there is no clear pathway to the profession. It would be important to consider if there could be a stronger connection with undergraduate leadership programs/minors, graduate programs, Student Affairs professional organizations, and student affairs units/departments in general. Professional organizations are creating training programs and short-term certificates to help professionals share knowledge and understanding of the field (NASPA, n.d.) but it would be beneficial if there was a clear way for students and professionals to enter and stay in the field for each institution.

For the second theme—Moving beyond the lack of connection to empowered choice making, there were two foci: the first being the lack of connection with others in the field and the second being that professionals should feel empowered to make choices that prioritize their calling and purpose in their life. Having strong partnerships with Student Affairs units on campuses would be a great place to start building relationships within the field. As well, it would be beneficial for supervisors to prioritize creating an environment where professionals felt they belonged just as we focus on students and their sense of belonging at the institution. The first six weeks of a semester is a strong indicator that students are connected on campus; maybe supervisors could use that same timing to gauge if professionals are connected on their campus.

For the third theme of recognizing if professionals were physically safe and had a strong sense of job security, a couple of ideas would be beneficial during the hiring process. The first is to be transparent in the hiring process about safety reports for the institution and the surrounding community. This would be beneficial in helping incoming professionals understand the holistic view of their commitment to the institution and the community. Being transparent about the funding structure of the position but also the funding structure of the institution would give the professional a full understanding of the institution and its financial health.

For the fourth theme of having Black senior-level women in charge, the focus on empowerment could be covered by having more professional development opportunities that focused on mentorship and understanding the field of higher education. It would be beneficial to understand how the field works, how promotion could be attained in both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, and also the politics of the environment. Often there is an unspoken culture of higher education that is implied in some of the processes and policies that occur while working and these professional development opportunities could cover subjects like that.

Recommendations for Future Research

In researching this topic, a couple of ideas erupted during the study for future research topics as they related to the findings. For the first research idea, it would be beneficial to follow up with a longitudinal study that focuses on the three different groups (entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level administrators), their pathway to entering the field, and how long they stayed in the field. These studies could assist with the retention of Black women who enter higher education field and could cover why they stayed in the higher education and student affairs field.

In focusing on theme two, a future study could examine the impact of sense of belonging for Black women in higher education administrative positions in their individual groups. This could be a qualitative study that focuses on aspects of how Black women in higher education administrative positions experience sense of belonging in their various positions. Entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level groups could be used as comparisons for each study to display if there were differences within those groups and how they experienced sense of belonging in their positions. Studies could also include various institutions as comparison groups. Another study could focus on Black women in higher education administrative positions, specifically focused on each individual level, and how they experienced sense of belonging at small liberal arts colleges as compared to a larger research-focused university.

In focusing on theme three, future studies could focus how Black women in higher education administrative positions experienced job security after the pandemic. This could be a quantitative study that focuses on asking Black women in higher education and their experiences with job security after the pandemic subsides. I would focus on each group separately and which group had a stronger sense of job security. Another study could focus on how Black women in higher education administrative positions experienced physical security and what made a campus

feel safe to them. This could be a qualitative research study that centered on the experiences of Black women at various types of institutions by having focus groups discuss safety on campus and their community. In this study, there could be opportunities for participants to share what drew them to their university and if they felt safe there.

The future research for finding four could include the focus on when and why Black women in higher education administrative positions felt empowered and compare how long it would take for each group to feel empowered in their positions. Future studies could focus on the differences between groups at different institutions and when they felt empowered as compared to other institutions.

The final research recommendation would focus on the findings connected to the visual maps. This qualitative study could focus on combining the use of reflection with Bridges and Bridges' (1990) transition theory. The focus on Bridges and Bridges' transition theory could be connected with audio journaling, visual mapping, and focus groups that would lead participants to focus on how they reflect during each phase of transition. This qualitative study could also be a longitudinal study that would focus on the seasons of transition with a group of 10 to 20 Black women over the course of three to five years since that is the typical time span when professionals transition between positions.

Letters to the Professionals

As a closing piece to this study, I wanted to write some closing to the groups in general as they have given me portraitures I will ponder about for years to come.

Dear Entry-Level Professionals

I hope you get the opportunities to explore the field of higher education and recognize that all colleges and universities have valuable experiences. There has been a ton of focus on the

value of four-year, research-focused degrees but that does not negate the experiences of community colleges, liberal arts institutions, and regional universities. The experiences at each of these places are so unique that your purpose and calling may also adjust. But also, focus on getting involved in the institution, not just being siloed in your own department. You will have a stronger sense of belonging as you get involved, but moreover, you may realize if the institution is actually for you.

Dear Mid-Level Professionals

I hope that you recognize that you do not have to leave the institution to be promoted. Be intentional about your professional development and how you navigate the institution. Continue to be a learner of your craft and get involved in national professional associations so that you can practice supervision skills on committees and understand the importance of our field. Lastly, use this opportunity to find a mentor, advisor, and a sponsor. Depending on how you view each of these people, they will assist you in moving towards your next steps. Do not discount their advice, skills, and wisdom for time really is the ultimate teacher.

Dear Senior-Level Professionals,

I hope that you reach back and connect with the entry-level and mid-level professionals. They need to know you and your journey. You were them once in your past, so remember the impact that your mentors, advisors, and sponsors had on your career. Also, do not forget to focus on how sense of belonging impacts professionals staff members, as well as students and faculty. That is a major part of the retention of professionals in the higher education field. If they do not feel like they belong at your institution, they will leave before they reach their maximum potential.

Conclusion

When I began this dissertation process, it was a year before the pandemic. I originally wrote about completely different topics I was interested in that I believed were simple topics to cover. But over time, I lost interest in those topics and found myself studying a topic so close to me that I was terrified to explore because I did not want to connect my pain and the myriad of emotions with others. My transition and promotion to a new position during the pandemic was filled with challenges but also excitement of the potential for change in my unit because we had to immediately adapt to the new virtual environment. What that meant for my dissertation was my idea of collecting data in-person would be impossible. The pandemic changed the very essence of my study, changing the topic to focus on how higher education professionals transitioned to new positions, moving data collection to completely virtual, and defending the dissertation virtually. Through the challenges, I found a sense of peace hearing the stories of 20 women spread throughout the United States and how they felt successful/empowered, frustrated/depressed, and anxious/overwhelmed over the last year and a half. My hope is this dissertation not only highlighted their experiences but was the foundation for how I conduct research for years to come.

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APPENDIX A
VISUAL MAPPING INSTRUCTIONS

Let's talk about what a visual map is: A **visual map** is a way to take an idea or concept and transform it into a **visual** aid for better understanding. Please create a visual map by writing, drawing images, or creating a narrative that explains your experiences as a Black woman, first-generation, higher education professional transitioning to a new job or your promotion. Please feel free to be as creative as you would like. For the purpose of this study, visual maps can be any art form

If you would like to write poetry, create music or use another art medium, please feel free to do so. You are also welcome to use any digital resources as well. General supplies such as writing utensils, crayons, paper, clay, etc. could be provided, but please feel free to use other items you have at your disposal as well.

- Pick a way that you would like to design your visual map—draw by hand, use of digital images, collage with magazine images.
- As you design your visual map, use some of these prompts to guide you:
 - Create a visual map to highlight some areas of your career journey in higher education.
 - Include some of the emotions that you would define in each area.
 - What were your experiences (successes and struggles) of developing a new support system in each area?

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Date: 12/03/2020

Principal Investigator: Margaret Sebastian

Committee Action: **IRB EXEMPT DETERMINATION – New Protocol**

Action Date: 12/02/2020

Protocol Number: [2004000138](#)

Protocol Title: REFLECTING ON THEIR JOURNEYS OF MOVING UP AND OUT! The experiences of first-generation, professional black women, mid- and senior-level higher education administrators who experienced an interstate professional transition and/or promotion to a predominantly and historically white institution during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Expiration Date:

The University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol and determined your project to be exempt under 45 CFR 46.104(d)(7)(2) for research involving

Category 2 (2018): EDUCATIONAL TESTS, SURVEYS, INTERVIEWS, OR OBSERVATIONS OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR. Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by 45 CFR 46.111(a)(7).

You may begin conducting your research as outlined in your protocol. Your study does not require further review from the IRB, unless changes need to be made to your approved protocol.



As the Principal Investigator (PI), you are still responsible for contacting the UNC IRB office if and when:

- You wish to deviate from the described protocol and would like to formally submit a modification request. Prior IRB approval must be obtained before any changes can be implemented (except to eliminate an immediate hazard to research participants).
- You make changes to the research personnel working on this study (add or drop research staff on this protocol).
- At the end of the study or before you leave The University of Northern Colorado and are no longer a student or employee, to request your protocol be closed. *You cannot continue to reference UNC on any documents (including the informed consent form) or conduct the study under the auspices of UNC if you are no longer a student/employee of this university.
- You have received or have been made aware of any complaints, problems, or adverse events that are related or possibly related to participation in the research.

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Compliance Manager, Nicole Morse, at 970-351-1910 or via e-mail at nicole.morse@unco.edu. Additional information concerning the requirements for the protection of human subjects may be found at the Office of Human Research Protection website - <http://hhs.gov/ohrp/> and <https://www.unco.edu/research/research-integrity-and-compliance/institutional-review-board/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Morse".

Nicole Morse
Research Compliance Manager

University of Northern Colorado: FWA00000784

APPENDIX C
RECRUITMENT FLYER

DISSERTATION STUDY

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

- **BLACK WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION**
- **MUST HAVE STARTED A NEW POSITION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**
(SEPT/ OCT 2019 TO PRESENT)



Participants will be asked to:

- Complete two virtual interviews (60-75 minutes)
- Participate in a virtual focus group (60 minutes)
- Submit a visual map

**PARTICIPANTS WILL
BE COMPEN\$ATED
FOR THEIR TIME!**

Contact:

Margaret Sebastian
Seba3914@bears.unco.edu
302-402-3809

**click or scan here
to take the survey!**



[HTTPS:// BIT.LY/ 37Q SFKX](https://bit.ly/37QSFkX)

APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT QUALTRICS SURVEY

Survey Link: https://salisbury.col.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5ABvhtvqHJtvmHX



Reflecting on their journeys of moving up and out!

The experiences of professional Black women, entry-, mid-, and senior-level administrators who experienced an interstate professional transition during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dissertation Research Study for Margaret Sebastian

Participant Selection Survey

You are invited to participate in a research study as a part of my dissertation research.

The purpose of this research is to focus on four aspects of professional Black women, who are mid-level or senior-level administrators who are or have experienced an interstate professional transition during the COVID-19 pandemic. These four aspects of the study are (1) experiences with transitioning into new management roles, (2) developing personal and professional support systems, (3) developing a sense of safety, and (4) understanding feelings of being empowered in professional roles.

You have self-identified as a potential participant.

Do you meet the following qualifications?

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Unsure (3)
Are you currently a mid-level or a senior-level administrator (such as Director, Assistant/Associate Vice President roles or Vice Presidents) in an Academic or Student Affairs Unit?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you currently work at a predominately or historically White institution?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you consider yourself a first-generation student?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you transitioned to a new job within the last year?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is the highest degree you've completed?

- ☐ M.S.
- ☐ Ph.D.
- ☐ J.D.
- ☐ Ed.S.
- ☐ Ed.D.
- ☐ Other

Which race/ethnicity do you identify yourself?

Which sexual orientation do you identify yourself?

Which gender do you identify yourself?

Page Break

This section includes questions about your work experience and pseudonyms that you prefer if you proceed with the study. Please answer the questions as honest as possible

What is the current role at your institution?

What was the first day of your current role?

What pseudonym would you prefer as it relates to your current role at your institution?

How long have you worked in higher education?

For privacy purposes, would you like a pseudonym of years as it relates to your years of experience? If so, please add the alternative number that you would like me to use. If not, please put NA.

What is your current institution?

What pseudonym would you prefer as it relates to your institution?

How long have you been at your current institution?

How long were you at your last institution before leaving?

Page Break

This last page has contact information. Please answer these questions so that I can connect with you to proceed for the study.

What is your email address?

What is your phone number? XXX-XXX-XXXX

What's the best way to contact you?

☐ Phone Call

☐ Text

☐ Email

What is the best time to interview you?

☐ Morning (8am - 12pm)

☐ Afternoon (12:30pm - 5pm)

☐ Evening (5:30 - 8pm)

What is your time zone?

☐ Pacific Standard Time

☐ Mountain Standard Time

☐ Central Standard Time

☐ Eastern Standard Time

☐ Other _____

Are you willing to participate in 2 (60 - 90 minute) interviews, 1 visual map, and 1 focus group via Zoom?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Page Break _____

Consent Form Page:

LETTER OF CONSENT FOR:

REFLECTING ON THEIR JOURNEYS OF MOVING UP AND OUT!

The experiences of first-generation, professional black women, mid-and senior-level higher education administrators who experienced an interstate professional transition and/or promotion to a predominantly and historically white institution during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Researcher's Name, Phone Number, and E-mail address:

Margaret Sebastian, 302-402-3809, Seba3914@bears.unco.edu

Supervisor's Name, Phone Number, and E-mail address:

Dr. Tamara Yakaboski, 970-351-1156, Tamara.Yakaboski@unco.edu

Dear Higher Education Professional,

You are invited to participate in a research study as a part of my dissertation research. The purpose of this research is to focus on four aspects of professional Black women, who are either mid- and senior-level higher education administrators who experienced an interstate professional transition and/or promotion to a predominantly and historically white institution during the COVID-19 pandemic. These four aspects of the study are: (1) experiences with transitioning into new management roles, (2) developing personal and professional support systems, (3) developing a sense of safety, and (4) understanding your feelings of being empowered in their roles. The researcher has identified you as a potential participant for her study.

The University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board has approved the study and its procedures. Participating in this study involves no foreseeable risks, discomfort, or harm because your identity will be protected by pseudonyms, as well as pseudonyms for the names of the institutions in which you work. **The procedure for the study includes that as a participant, you will be asked to participate in (A), two, one hour to one hour and 30-minute interviews to share your experiences as it relates to the study. (B) Between interviews, the participant will be asked to complete a life map that connects their emotions to the times of transitions. (C) And lastly, to participate in a 60 minute focus group.** As the purpose of our research focuses on the specific stories of the participants, the qualitative content of your responses will be used to guide and support the final product. All responses will be kept confidential. As compensation and an incentive for your participant, you will be given a \$25 gift card for each interview, totaling no more than \$100 for the entire study.

You are free to ask any questions regarding the study or about being a participant by calling me using the contact information at the top of this page. For Institutional Review Board (IRB) research questions, please contact UNCO IRB by phone at (970) 351-1907 or via e-mail at research@unco.edu or Nicole Morse, Research Compliance Manager, University of Northern Colorado at nicole.morse@unco.edu or 970-351-1910.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you are under no obligation to participate. You may withdraw at any time. By participating in the interview process and/or emailing any additional responses implies consent for participating in the study. To maintain confidentiality, this study will not be using your actual likeness or name. All data will be collected by Margaret Sebastian and will be stored in a secure place and identifiable data will be destroyed in five years.

You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. **Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please answer yes to the question below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference.** If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Research Compliance Manager, University of Northern Colorado at nicole.morse@unco.edu or 970-351-1910.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Margaret L. Sebastian, Ph.D. Candidate
Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership Department
University of Northern Colorado

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

 Do you consent to being in this study?

☐ Yes

☐ No

End of Block: Welcome to my Participant Selection Survey

APPENDIX E**MICROSOFT BOOKINGS RESERVATION PAGE**

<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/MLSDissertationStudy@bearsunco.onmicrosoft.com/bookings/>



MLS Dissertation Study

Select service

Info Session about the Study
30 minutes



Interview #1
1 hour 15 minutes



Interview #2
1 hour



Select time

< > April 2021

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Select a service and date to see available times.

Add your details

Please let us know if you have any special requests.
Thank you.

Book



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APPENDIX F
CONSENT LETTER



LETTER OF CONSENT FOR:

REFLECTING ON THEIR JOURNEYS OF MOVING UP AND OUT!

The experiences of first-generation, professional black women, mid- and senior-level higher education administrators who experienced an interstate professional transition and/or promotion to a predominantly and historically white institution during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Researcher's Name, Phone Number, and E-mail address:

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Dear Higher Education Professional,

You are invited to participate in a research study as a part of my dissertation research. The purpose of this research is to focus on four aspects of first generation professional Black women, who are either mid-level or senior-level administrators who are or have experienced an interstate professional transition. These four aspects of the study are: (1) experiences with transitioning into new management roles, (2) developing personal and professional support systems, (3) developing a sense of safety, and (4) understanding your feelings of being empowered in their roles. The researcher has identified you as a potential participant of her study.

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at research@unco.edu or Nicole Morse, Research Compliance Manager, University of Northern Colorado at nicole.morse@unco.edu or 970-351-1910.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you are under no obligation to participate. You may withdraw at any time. By participating in the interview process and/or emailing any additional responses implies consent for participating in the study. To maintain confidentiality, this study will not be using your actual likeness or name. All data will be collected by Margaret Sebastian and will be stored in a secure place and identifiable data will be destroyed in five years.

You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. **Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please answer yes to the question below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference.** If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Research Compliance Manager, University of Northern Colorado at nicole.morse@unco.edu or 970-351-1910.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Margaret L. Sebastian, Ph.D. Candidate
Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership Department
University of Northern Colorado

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

APPENDIX G
EMAIL TO ACCEPTED PARTICIPANTS

Email Title: **Reflecting on your journey of transition and promotion: The Dissertation Study Invitation**

Greetings First Name of Participant,

Thank you for completing the Qualtrics survey to be a part of my dissertation study entitled, **“REFLECTING ON THEIR JOURNEYS OF MOVING UP AND OUT!**

The experiences of black women, mid- and senior-level higher education administrators who experienced a professional transition and/or promotion during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

After receiving your information, you have been chosen for the study! To expedite the process and for your convenience, you can sign up for the first and second interviews via Microsoft Bookings on any of the following days at any time based on your *time zone at:

<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/MLSDissertationStudy@bearsunco.onmicrosoft.com/bookings/>

- December 21, 22, 23
- December 27, 28, 29, 30
- January 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
- After the first week of January, I’m free on Saturdays, Sundays, Mondays, & Tuesdays for the Month of January
- **When you are signing up for your interview, you can change the times to fit into your specific time zone. Please let me know if you have trouble**

During the first interview we can further discuss the study elements and the compensation for your time. Also, if you would prefer to meet to just discuss the study, you are free to also sign up for an **Info Session** on the Microsoft Bookings scheduler.

Thank you for being willing to be in my study! If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

~ ***Margaret Sebastian***

Ph.D. Candidate, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership

University of Northern Colorado

Cell: (302) 402-3809

APPENDIX H
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INTERVIEW #1

Professional Journey:

- Let's talk about your journey in higher education. Highlight some institutions that were on your journey to becoming a mid- or senior-level administrator.
- How has your race and gender affected your professional journey? Tell me more about that?
- Tell me some highlights, successes, and struggles of being a first-generation administrator.
- Has religion or spirituality been a part of your professional journey? If so, how?

Transition

Tell me the story about your move to this new job.

- What emotions did you feel leaving your former job and community?
- What emotions did you feel arriving in your new community?
- Did anyone move with you? If so, who?
- How much did it cost approx.? Were you compensated for the move?
- How did you go about obtaining housing?
- Have you found local doctors, hair stylists, etc. If so, how?
- Did you question your decision to transition during the pandemic?
 - What fears did you have?
 - What else should I know but didn't ask?

Support systems:

- What was your support system like when you started your new position?
- Were you able to develop support systems at your new position before the pandemic?
 - If so, how? If not, what other supports, if any, do you have?
- How would you describe your development of support systems during the pandemic?

COVID Questions:

- Tell me about March 2020.
 - Talk about your work life before and after?
- Talk about some of the things you enjoyed at work before the pandemic began.
- Talk about some of the things you enjoyed at work during the pandemic.
- What has changed about your job since the pandemic began? What things have stayed the same?
- What were the challenges of working (teleworking or in person) during the pandemic?

APPENDIX I
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INTERVIEW #2

Orientation Process

- How was your orientation process?
- How different do you think some of the processes that you've been doing would have been different without the pandemic?
- Was your moving process to the new institution affected by the pandemic?

Developing a sense of safety/Empowerment

- How did you develop a sense of safety (physically & mentally) in your job and your community during the pandemic?
- Describe a time when you felt empowered during the pandemic while working virtually?

Impact on your campus

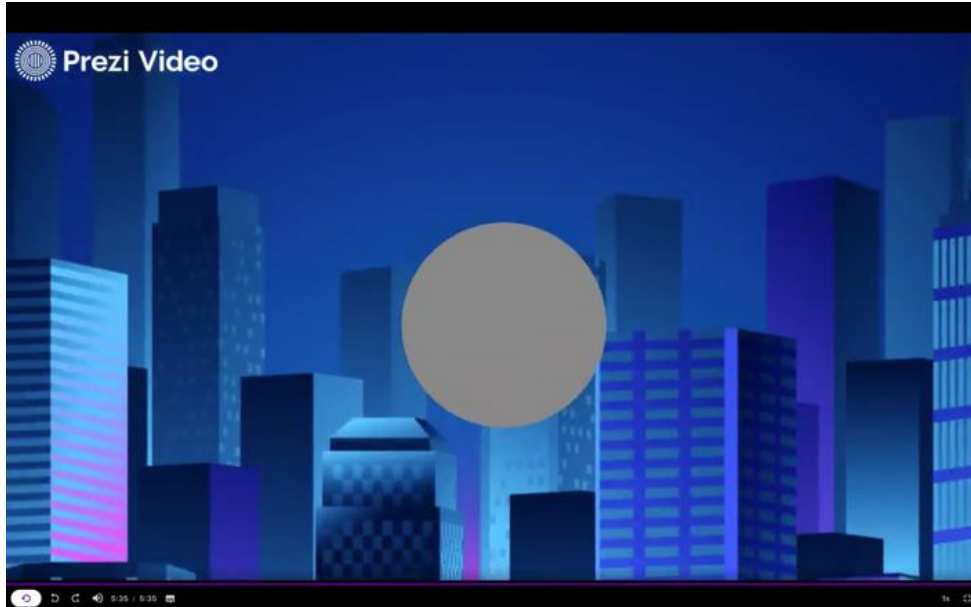
- During your time in this position, what impact do you believe you've made on your campus during the pandemic?
- What are ongoing areas you hope to impact?
- Has unanticipated areas of impact occurred?

Closing Interview Questions

1. How was the overall interview process?
2. How was it to create the visual map'?
3. What, if anything, surprised you about the research experience?
4. What, if anything, is left unresolved for you?
5. What questions do you have?
6. How do you think participating in this study has influenced you?
7. Is there anything else I should know but did not think to ask?

APPENDIX J**PARTICIPANT 1 VISUAL MAP: DR. MYA STAR**

Slide 1



I am the doctor and here is my story.

Slide 2



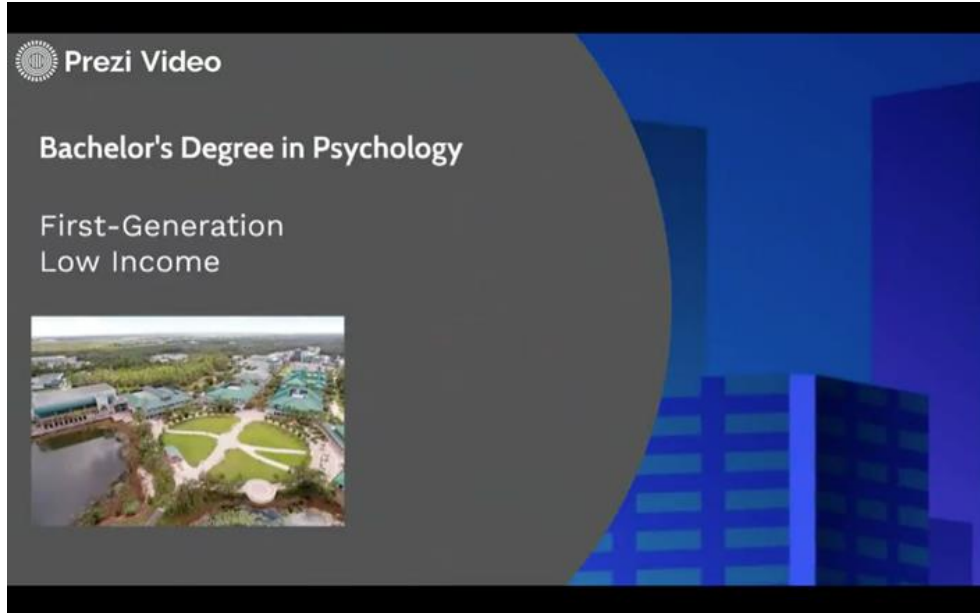
So I started off in higher education.

First generation, low income.

Neither of my parents graduated from high school and they are immigrants.

So when it came time for me to start my academic journey, it was hard.

There was no one to lead me into the directions of how to apply for financial aid or just give me encouragement to do all these things.

Slide 3

But I made it.
I learned how to apply for financial aid.
I completed all my college applications.
I did my SATs and ACTs.
And then I was admitted.
What a glorious today, that was, parents were proud of me.
It was tough, though.
Tuition needed to be paid. Housing especially!
When I walked on campus, I met some people, great people, who showed me the way.
They helped me financially, academically, and I gained so much community.
Graduated with my bachelor's degree in psychology, and knew I wanted to help people and continue my education.

Slide 4



So I started my master's degree in clinical mental health counseling while understanding that this degree was intense.

I tried my best, some of the workload was tedious.

I was working two jobs while maintaining a 3.9 GPA.

It was tough.

I couldn't pass my final exams. No, Well, not my final exams, but the certification of counseling, needed for graduation. Took the test three times until it was time for me to graduate.

While we're on the conversation of graduation,

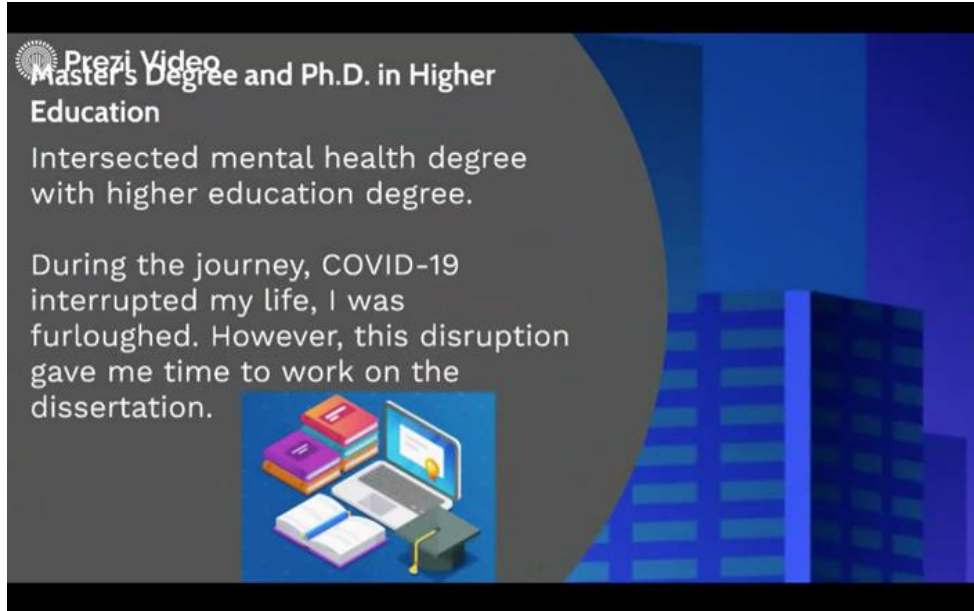
Professor asked me, What do you want to do? And I couldn't answer.

Professor told me.

Well, since you've worked in higher education throughout your undergraduate and you're doing a little bit of diversity work while you were taking these mental health courses, maybe you should take a look into higher education.

And I agreed.

Slide 5



So, when I was looking into schools for higher education, I knew I wanted to be with my family again.

So I did the smart thing to do. I headed back home, and I started my doctoral program.

When I started my doctoral program, the first class, they asked.

What would your topic be?

Well, for me?

After just graduating with my mental health degree, I knew I wanted to do something on the lines of helping my community specifically the black community, the Haitian community.

We don't talk about mental health.

There was numerous of tragic events that I've seen, and we just brushed it off or we didn't know how to cope appropriately. And I didn't want that to happen to another student.

So, I started looking more and more into mental health and how that impacts our students and then what university supports we needed to do to help our students.

While studying in this higher education degree, I got a plethora of experience working in school leadership, but I wanted to go back to something that I did.

While I was in my undergraduate and my master's degree.

I wanted to talk about, work with diversity.

What does that mean? Diversity.

What is inclusion and what is equity?

And so as I was doing my research, I started applying for jobs that surrounded those topics.

Finally, I got a hit.

After much trials and tribulations, endless of applications, rejections!

I started doing being a coordinator for multicultural programs. Wonderful experience!

Then COVID-19 hit.

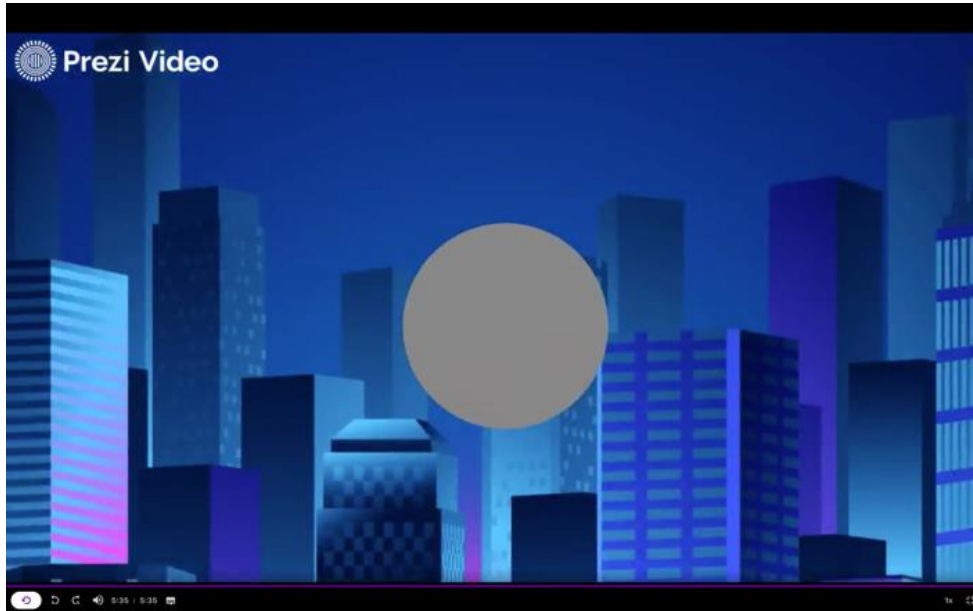
I was furloughed.

Now what do I do?

God, Where do you want me?

God showed me, a job posting opened up in August.
I applied.
I threw my name in the hat, Got the position.
Now I got my dissertation defended, completed, and I'm doing my dream job.
Working in diversity. Where I go from here.
Prayerfully, a Dean of Students, because I want to give back.
I want to repay what the dean of students did for me and my undergraduate to the next person.

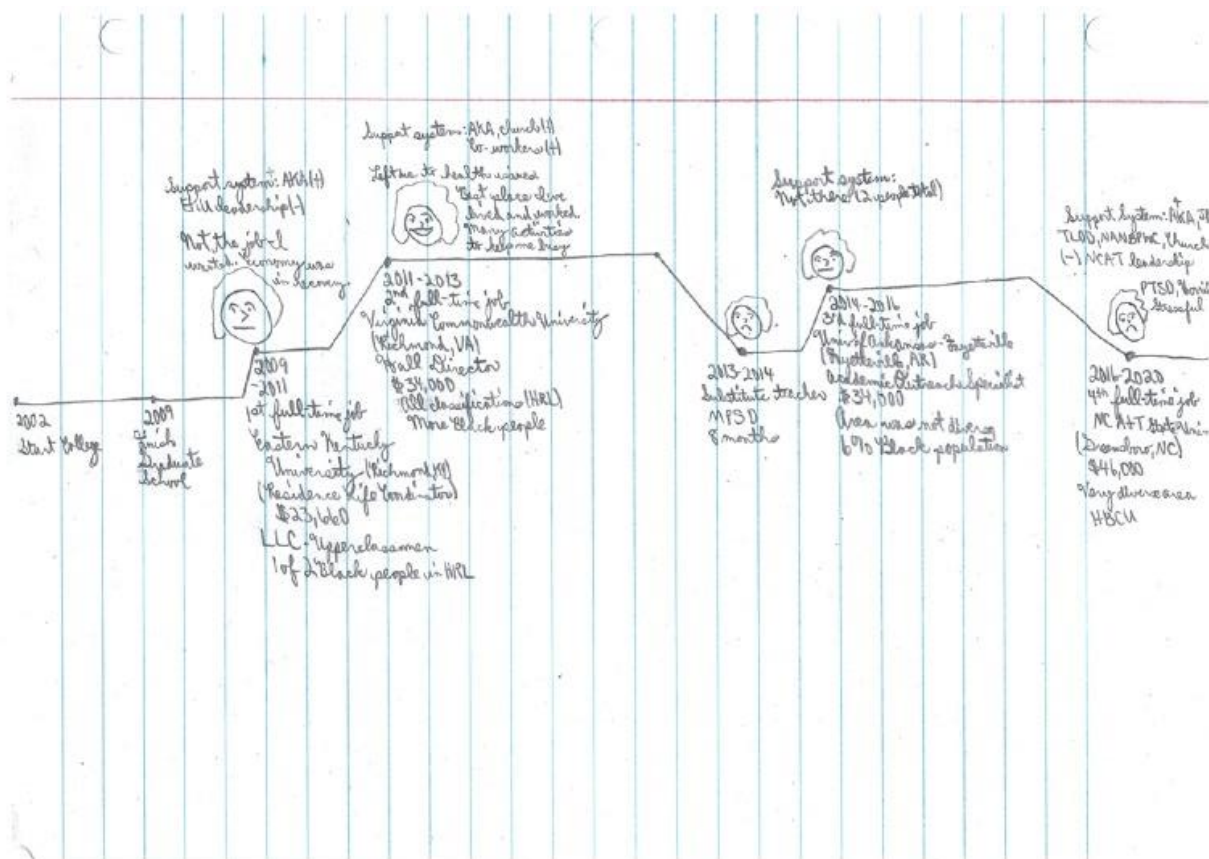
Slide 6



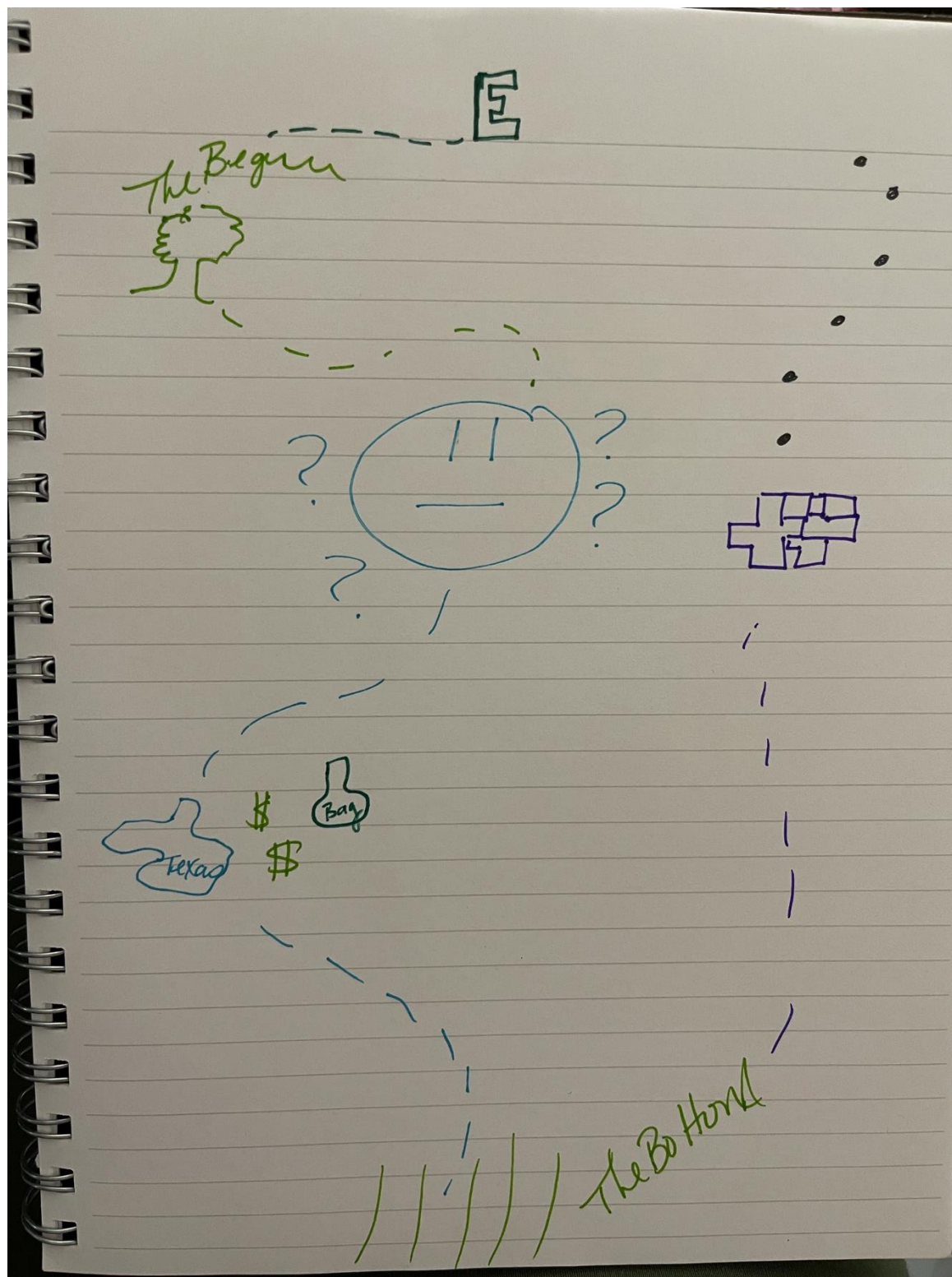
And this this is my journey.

APPENDIX K**PARTICIPANT 2 VISUAL MAP: JULIA**

My journey through my heartbeat line...



APPENDIX L**PARTICIPANT 3 VISUAL MAP: DR. NIA**



APPENDIX M**PARTICIPANT 4 VISUAL MAP: DR. ATHENA**



The lady at the bottom is a Black woman, she is Me): Seems very comfortable with who she is as an individual that likes lipstick, earrings, like me, when I first started in higher education. I came in real conservative, being worried about what people thought about me... so I cut my dreads off because somebody told me, like you are not going to be able to advance if you have dreads... you need to be real conservative. I was like fuck it; I want to advance, so I'll be like they want me to be. But after a while being in the field I started my dreads back dress like I wanted to dress, whatever. So that's why I picked her. It is sort of the foundation of where I'm at this point in my career, I just walk in my own truth and that's where I'm at. The two pictures on the side, the one is some girl walking down like a highway in you. It's foggy.. I picked that one because that's how some of this shit feels sometimes it was like, you be out here alone. You really don't know what you're doing because there are not a whole lot of black women, like they don't leave a guidebook behind. Like with white people they've been doing it so long. Like they know how to navigate some of this stuff. And it's not like a family member that did this and I can ask them for advice or anything. So, like you just have to pick your path and just be alone, sometimes you don't really see where you are going, you just are walking on the highway by yourself.

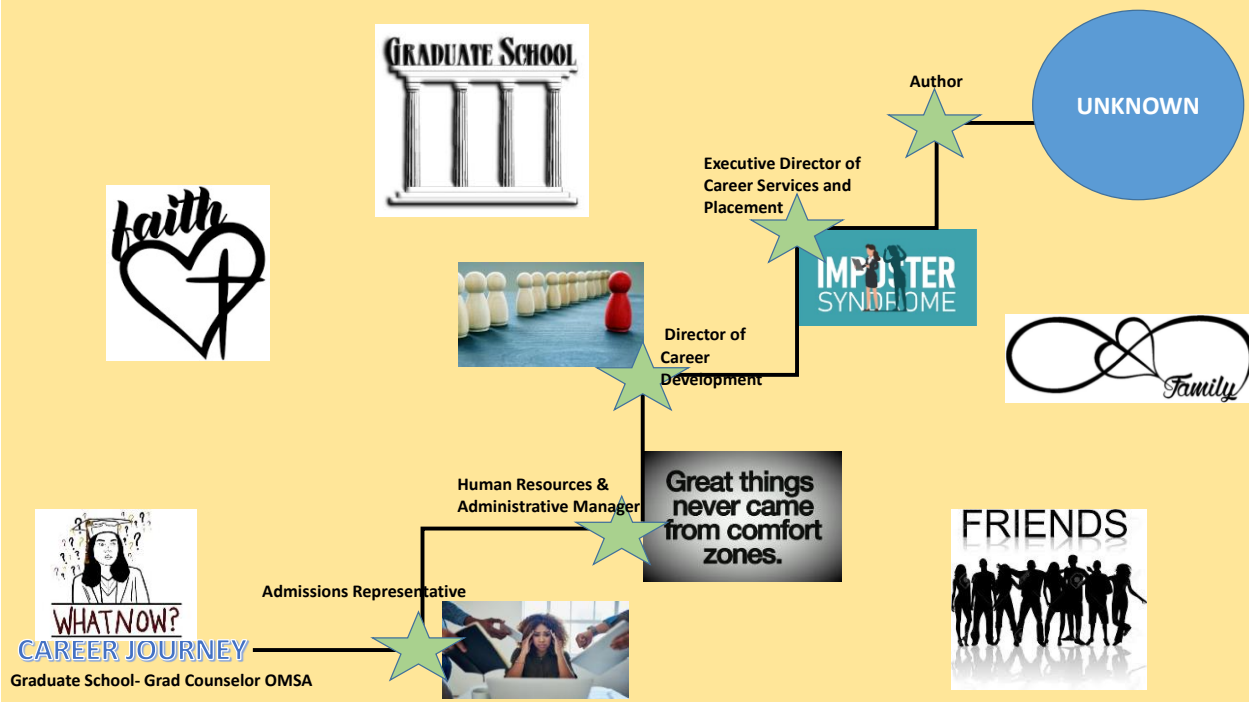
But the picture on the opposite side would her sitting like staring at the sunset. I think I tried to keep an optimistic view of like there's a purpose to this, I may not see where the road is going like directly ahead of me, but like I'm optimistic that I'm going somewhere and just being sort of happy that I have options. The women at the top, holding hands and in the LGBT picture I picked that because throughout my entire journey in higher ed, the two groups that have

supported me have been other women and then the LGBT folks and I mean I'm part of the LGBT community, but that tends to be the two people, the two groups that support me on a personal level that I end up finding my Support through but also professionally. Those are only people who give a damn about what I do, white dudes don't care. Unless they're gay, straight up, they do not care.

The reason why I picked the picture with the puppets, is because Black men get caught up in the politics. They are way too comfortable in the politics the white systems force us through. I asked a Black man about advice in the higher ed field and he basically said play the game. This same man I saw at a bar one time and he was with Residence Life and he was buying them \$15-20 drinks and that seems questionable. I expect that from Black men, to play the political game and to feel they can do some of the stuff white men do and feel like they can get away with it.

I picked lemons, because when life gives you lemons, make lemonade. And I think that is especially true during the covid stuff. I tried to make the best of everything. A lot of schools stopped hiring at the beginning of 2020 and then in the summer a lot of jobs were posted. So, I try to make the best out of it. The hand with the scale, it's ironic that it is a white hand because white people run everything around us. You just have to do you; I am not going to lose myself for a job. The money is nice, but I am going to keep doing me.

APPENDIX N**PARTICIPANT 5 VISUAL MAP: DR. NADIA**



APPENDIX O**PARTICIPANT 6 VISUAL MAP: DR. JOYCE**

Main Photo A

Visual Map - Joyce's HIED Journey

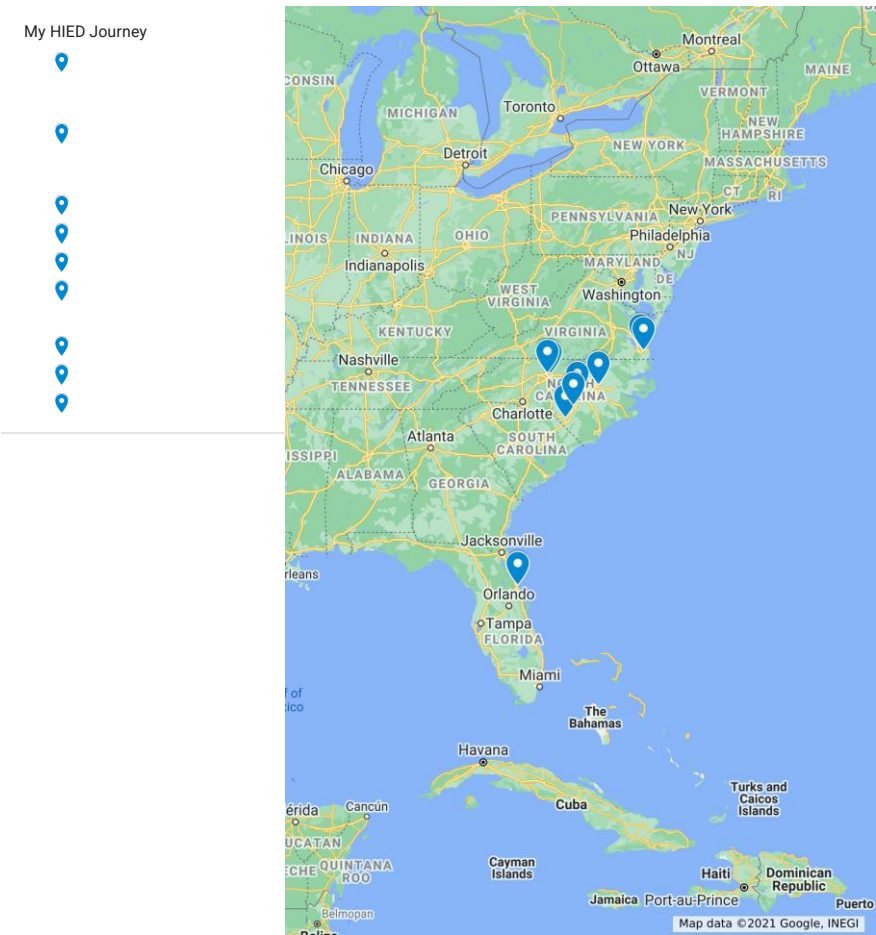


Chart B

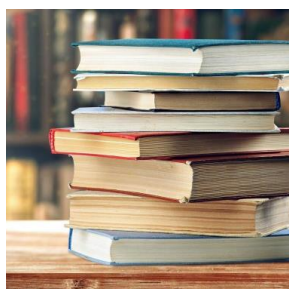
My HIED Journey	
Find in table	For a better printing experience, select "Print map" in the file menu in the left panel.
	description <input type="checkbox"/>
1	This was the beginning of my professional career. I learned a lot and truly enjoyed my time at this institution. The diversity here was awesome!
2	This is where I began my graduate studies. I got my first HBCU experience, and though I don't think I fully appreciated it at the time, in looking back it was an amazing experience and I have some wonderful connections from professors and fellow classmates from this program.
3	This was my internship location my second year in graduate school. This place taught me that everyone should be equal and I liked that everyone went by their first name. It made the various levels of administration not seem so intimidating. It was also my first venture into working with adult learners who were my age to my parents/grandparents age. It was a great experience.
4	This started my PhD journey and made me REALLY appreciate my time at A&T. My first year here I felt very alone and had serious imposter syndrome. There were not many faculty of color nor students in the PhD program. There were however plenty of black students in the masters program who were close to my age, so I made friends with them and some are still my good friends to this day. This is where I met my career bestie, who also began a career in career services. We both recently accepted director of career services roles at HBCUs and we continue to be wonderful colleagues providing references and supporting each others career and programs at our respective institutions.
5	This is where I got to work with who is now my mentor. A black woman who is in career services and encouraged me along my journey to finding my niche in higher ed. I met her at a career fair and she convinced me to try out career services and I fell in love with the area. She has been an amazing mentor who has been a reference at times but also a cheerleader and a sounding board at each career transition I've had. She is truly a gem.
	description <input type="checkbox"/>
6	This was a detour from my goal of career services work but a place that gave me a lifelong friend in one of my colleagues. I worked in residence life here and it was the worst time of my life. This was also where I was when I lost my mom. So not only did I hate my job, but I lost the person in the world most important to me and who loved me the most. It was an awful experience. But it did give me a great friend, and a new mentee in one of my RAs. So there were a few happy moments, but they were few and far between in my time here. But those of us who worked together formed a pretty strong bond because we went through the misery together.

Photo B

7	<p>This place was my reprieve. It was a breath of fresh air. It was my return to my home state and being near to extended family and friends that cared for me. It also was my first full-time job in career services and I loved it. I learned so much here and it was a great stepping stone for moving my career forward. Like any job it had it's challenges, and in higher ed, that main challenge was salary and title not matching. So I moved on, but I am grateful for the time I spent at Barton.</p>
8	<p>This was another step up in my career services career. I was able to start a department from scratch. Establish it in the way I saw fit and I got access to an administrative assistant and a graduate assistant, which was more than I had in my one woman operation at Barton. This place gave me some more skills in navigating difficult campus relationships as well as being innovative in marketing and partnering. This position was great for a salary boost and better title, but it still had me mostly doing career services alone and here I began to burn out and question if career services was still where I wanted to be.</p>
9	<p>This place has been such a welcomed surprise. The interview process was VERY long (8 months), but when I got the call offering me the job, that was such a glorious day. This not only was keeping my director title, but bringing me to the public school sector that I have wanted to be in for years while also bringing me back to an HBCU. It has only been 4 months, but I love this job, my staff, and the challenges that lie ahead. I am giving my time and talents to help cultivate the life and career of people who mostly look like me and it is so fulfilling! It is also a welcomed reprieve because I am no longer an office of one or 1.5, but an office of 6 and soon to be 7 employees. And it's crazy that I am the head of that office! I thought for the longest if I went to a public school I'd for sure have to take a lower titled position, but I am grateful to God that wasn't the case. This job was also confirmation for my in my prayer and spiritual life that for now, career services is still where I'm supposed to be.</p>

APPENDIX P**PARTICIPANT 7 VISUAL MAP: DR. TOYA**

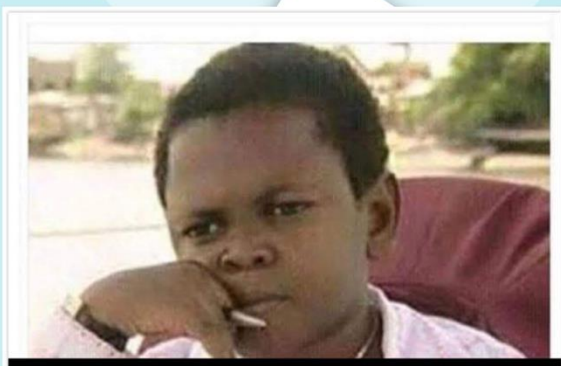
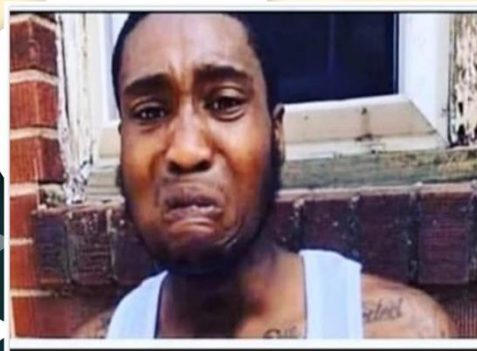
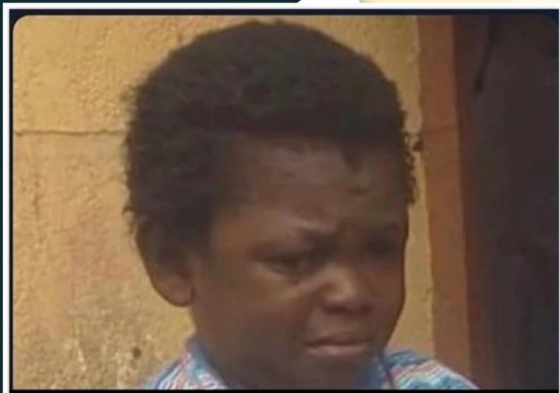
Visual Map “Toya”

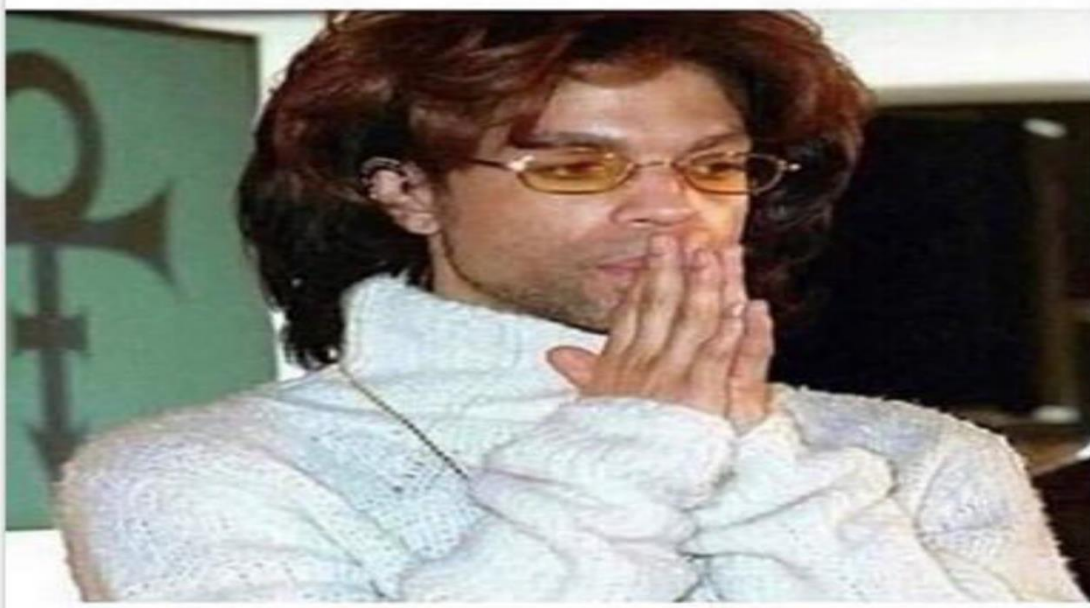


QUICK TIP

Use the Visual Map to help you understand the story and the characters in the story.









APPENDIX Q**PARTICIPANT 8 VISUAL MAP: DR. NAOMIE**

The top half is my identity as a black woman, and the bottom is about my identity as first gen.

The first column is while I was in my doctoral program. The second one is while I was in my first job post, well, I hadn't graduated but postdoc and then the third column is since I've been in my new role.

So as far as my identity as a black woman, when I was at The University, I had community. And that's been a thing that I've thought a lot about, as I've transitioned. Out of school until one job and until the next job is that community piece and even, you know, prior to being in my doctoral program, but Anyway, when I was at the University had a lot of community. I had a lot of community, specifically a black folks around me. And so even though I was at a predominantly white institution we had our own little HBCU going on, we Built a community for ourselves and we connected and we did things together. I was one of the people who would reach out to my classmates, like, Hey, let's write let's get together, hey, I'm writing at the host today, like a y'all come over and let's just do like a writing retreat at the house or planning writing retreat like at one point, a group of us went to the town which is about 45 minutes away, most of us lived nearby. We rented out an Airbnb. We stayed in there for the weekend so that we could write, went out to dinner. But, you know, it was just the group of us, I felt very supported as a doctoral student.

That next one in the middle for black woman was when we moved to the next state. So, my first position. You know, we have like the little lines for expression that's me and my partner and it was just the two of us without any community really and so I drew a laptop with people. Because that was how I was able to have a community like via zoom, Google Hangouts, phone. It was through an electronic device that I was able to, you know, keep those relationships going outside of my partner.

The last one has been since my transition to my new institution. So of course, me and my partner. We have smiles and now because we're in a better city it's a bigger city there's more people of color. You know, granted the Rona and pandemic. So, we're not doing anything. And there's more things to do so that whenever outside opens back up and we feel okay about being out and about more, you know, we'll have options.

The two other stick figures are the two other black women in leadership in my current institution. So that was the other thing in the middle. I was the only black woman leadership. I was the only black person in leadership. The only person of color. And so now my current institution, the President is a black woman and an Interim Vice President for diversity is a black woman. So just right off the bat, I have more support in terms of being able to see people who look like me. In positions that are higher than I'm in which is very encouraging to know and to know, I can call either one of them, like I have the president's number I have the interim VP number I could text them or call them if I felt like I needed anything. I just had a conversation with the President on Friday because we had been scheduling monthly just conversations because she said she wanted to just connect with me to just, you know, check in with me as a new employee. And so, this Friday she was like, okay, so I'm going to take these meetings off of the calendar. But know, you know, you have my number, you can reach out to me, you can text or call like if you need

anything. Just reach out. She was like, you know, I never wanted you to feel like you were like going to the principal's office. I just want you to know that I see you and I'm glad you're here.

And then I have the two laptops. So, the one laptop to the right of me, and my partner is that community piece so it still is building community in sustaining community via technology, mainly because of the Rona. But also, because with us moving to a new place we don't have community here. And then the laptop below us says Welcome to sunshine community, that's because I transitioned during a pandemic and I was working 100% remotely when I first started my job for the first four months. And that was very difficult. Just because it's being in a new role. So, I want to be there. But that's why I have that laptop there but also trying to build a relationship with colleagues, but a relationship with my team, lead a team lead a department, all of these things remotely was a very interesting transition to be a part of. And you know there were, there have been times where I'm like, I wish I was still at my last job, just because I felt comfortable but knowing you know as a black woman I didn't feel seen at all in my last institution. And in this current role I do, and I think it is because I have black women who are also in leadership.

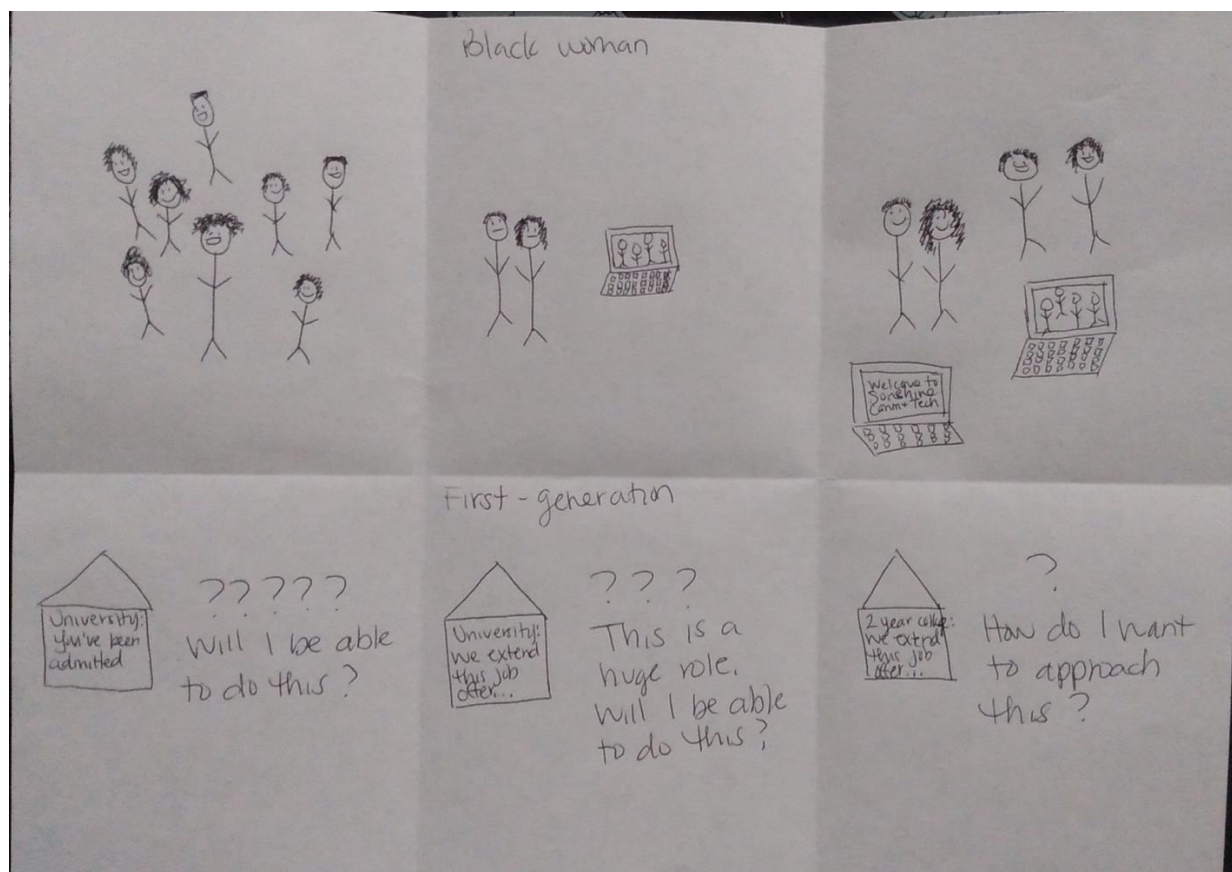
So, the bottom part related to my first gen identity.

So, the first one being in you know doctoral program has, you know, You've been admitted. You know, so it's like that process of okay now I'm admitted, but am I going to be able to do this like I can successfully navigate this thing that no one has done in my, you know, immediate family, my parents, nobody. Even my older siblings didn't go to college either. Literally, I'm the first person. And there's a lot of doubt my first year in my doctoral program I considered leaving school because I felt like I couldn't do it. I felt like I could just work a job because you know I had worked since I was 15. I know how to work. Let me just quit school and go back to work. So, there were a lot of questions that I had in terms of my ability to do it. However, two, I would say, you know, with my faith being important to me. That's something that I had to remember along the way that there was a greater purpose for me being there and that it wasn't in my own strength that I would even be able to do it because something I have to remind myself about as I navigate you know, life, as I navigate my career is that it isn't, it isn't me who is doing and you this, it's, you know, God giving me the strength; You know, and doing it through me. But yeah, definitely a lot of questions transitioning into my first role are still questions. You know, so the University extended the offer to me. And once I realized how huge of a role that really was, you know, I don't even know if institutions fully know what it is they want you to do all the time like they create this job description with what it is right now. But sometimes not really having the forethought of what it will be. So, there are things that get added as you are there. You're like, oh, wait a second. This wasn't a part of what I'm supposed to be doing. Right. But yeah, I still have questions about my ability to do that role, well. Especially being that it was my first director level position. My first time supervising full time people, moving across country away from family, away from my Community, being the only black woman. So, it's like all of these things happening at once and being first gen. So, you know, still asking the question, I will be able to do this, what is that going to look like. And also, being in the market that is within that context of the city. I was wondering if I'd be able to do this in terms of can I really make it here. Can I really stay here because when my supervisor recruited me he talked about three to five years? In so too, one of my strengths, like on you know the strengths from Strengths Quest, one

of my top five is responsibility. And I see how that plays out a lot of times, because I have a strong sense of responsibility for whatever it is I say, I'm going to do. I feel bad when I leave you know like if I, in my mind, like oh yeah 3-5 years I can do it. And you know, it's not like I signed a contract or anything, but it's like, oh gosh, I'm leaving before this three to five years. So, it's kind of like this wait. The responsibility that I feel for the people that I've come to know, the relationships that I built and things like that, but I think I have to just continue to work through that in order to understand that I have a greater responsibility to myself than I do to anyone else. And if I'm not in a place where.. you know I understand happiness is circumstantial so we shouldn't seek happiness because that shifts as The wind blows. It's the same thing with happiness. However, at the same time, I should feel seen in my work, I should feel appreciated and acknowledged. As a black person as a black woman as a leader and all of these things

So then that last box. You know, as I've navigated life you know I've navigated being a doctoral student And graduating navigating my first job even though I was only in it for a little over a year. It's always a process of just needing to shift my mindset. So, the question isn't, like, will I be able to do something because I know that I can. I've done a lot of things, but it's how I want to approach this. So, for me in this current role, you know, it went from five question marks to 3 to 1. Because I think You know, being first gen. There's always a little bit of imposter phenomenon that we deal with whenever we're encountering something new. And it's really this idea of being first gen all over again, regardless of what we do right, I'm a first gen Doc, I'm a first gen administrator like come first in whatever the case may be. We're still the first ones in our family having to navigate the level that we're at. So, I think it's kind of natural for there to be those questions along the way. Like, is this going to work well.

You know, going through my doctoral program and even being in my first job allowed me to develop my voice and develop a lot of confidence in my ability to do things. So, my transition into this role now as a first gen administrator and as a black woman is like okay, I can do this. So, I'm going to do the best that I can. It's not going to be perfect. And I'm going to mess up sometimes or, you know, miss the mark sometimes or have way too much on my plate to where nothing gets done. And I have to keep pushing things out or whatever. But that's a part of being a leader and just growing as a leader. You know, I had my six month review with my Supervisor this past week. And that was one of the things that I shared with him. Like I'm having to navigate like how to manage my time and how to manage all of the things that I have to do because it's all important. But that's when the power of prioritizing things is kind of difficult for me, like, as I learned more about myself as a leader and my personality and all of these things. It's my personality. I'm doing supervisor training and it says I'm an I. People's relationships are really important. But one of the things that says, like we need to improve on is like controlling time. And so, I'm like, oh yeah. Because, you know, for example. When I have one on one with my staff, depending on who the staff member is, you know, some of them don't know they like to do business but that 30 minutes we might not talk about business at all. We just talk about stuff. But for me it's like that's a part of building a relationship. Sometimes as a leader. It isn't just business and for me as a person, it isn't just business because your whole human being



APPENDIX R**PARTICIPANT 9 VISUAL MAP: DR. CAMILLE**

Picture 1: At every turn, it seems like there were experiences with doubt or questioning my decisions.

- Picture 2: While the picture shows a tree growing out of a book, I don't mean to say that all of my learning was book-based; instead, the book is representative of learning as a hole. And, the tree, with letters as leaves, are representative of my growth over time. And, the tree also makes me think about my ancestors who were hanged and though this comparison is not an ideal one, I sometimes have thought about higher education as a figurative master and that I could be hanged if I didn't comply with the established norms.



- Picture 3: I was regularly disappointed – not only by myself and missed opportunities, but by the lack of action in my work environments.
- Picture 4: In terms of community, building community was always slow and often hard. The first thing I thought of as a visual was a sloth.
- Picture 5: Small “community” of trusted people – seeking to build
- Picture 6: I want to remain hopeful that beautiful things can grow out of difficult circumstances.

APPENDIX S**PARTICIPANT 10 VISUAL MAP: ASHLEY**

MY CAREER JOURNEY IN HIGHER ED

.....

UNDERGRAD
4 YEARS

GRADUATE STUDENT
2 YEARS

RESIDENCE LIFE COORDINATOR
1 YEAR 7 MONTHS

RESIDENT DIRECTOR
3 YEARS 3 MONTHS

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
6 MONTHS (PRESENT POSITION)

.....

YOU WILL NEVER INFLUENCE THE WORLD BY BEING JUST LIKE IT.

PATIENCE - PERSISTENCE - HARD WORK - DETERMINATION
ACCEPTANCE - SELF-LOVE - RISK
FUN - INDEPENDENCE MENTORSHIP
COMMUNITY NETWORKING - TRIAL & ERROR - AUTHENTICITY - VALUE
WORTHY - POLITICS - GOALS
INDEPENDENCE - ADAPTABILITY

TRAYVONMARTIN
OSCARGRANTIII
GEORGEFLOYD
BREONNATAYLOR
BLACKLIVESMATTER

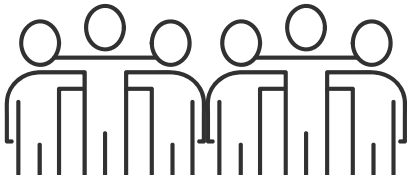
BLACK women ARE DOPE period.

TRUE LIFE: MY LIFE MATTERS

ORLANDO PULSE SHOOTING
2016 ELECTION
2020 #MESS





FUTURE
??????????

.....







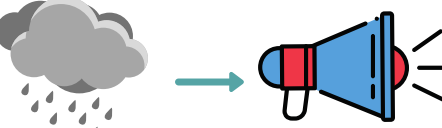





Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.
Brandi Brown

I WAS HERE



"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."
John Quincy Adams

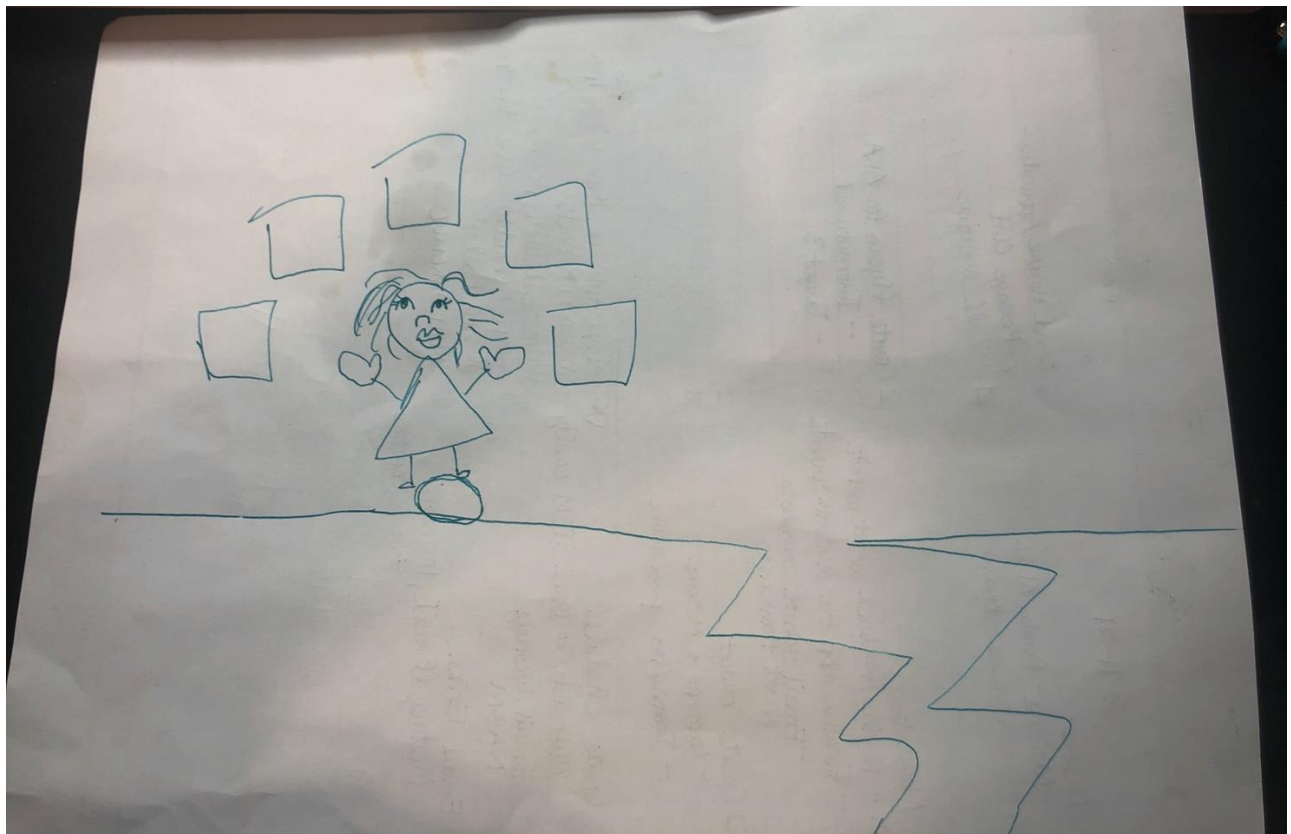
APPENDIX T**PARTICIPANT 11 VISUAL MAP: MONICA**

Undergrad	Grad	Post Grad Jobs
 <p>I came in bright-faced and excited</p>  <p>Reality, doubt and turmoil set in</p>  <p>I found hope in Student Affairs as a place to set my hope and career path</p>	 <p>I was so nervous and facing imposters syndrome hard</p>  <p>I went through low times personally but started to find my voice</p>  <p>Through turmoil and struggle, I left with more confidence and assuredness in my abilities</p>	 <p>First job post-grad school I saw the future on the horizon</p> <p>I had a great mentor that really helped me grow</p>  <p>I got laid off and I lost my idealistic notions of Higher Ed</p>  <p>I got a new job and the new never stopped, new students, new opportunities (teaching) and working during a pandemic</p> 

APPENDIX U**PARTICIPANT 12 VISUAL MAP: SHANE**

Juggling Towards Disaster

So, it's a person on a ball, and I am juggling and there's a crack on the ground but I don't see it, I just roll with the punches. I feel like I am always trying to balance multiple things, I'm always moving, I'm never in the moment, I'm on autopilot. I think things are stable, but they're not. My earthquake moment at my previous institution, was the fact that the supervisor was spiraling from the email I sent. Me stating that she did something wrong, sent her in a frenzy. My moment in Res life, was when a student was sent from the central office to my office, because their roommate tried to commit suicide the previous night. I was confused as to why the central office sent her to my building. I called up to my supervisor and told them about the suicide attempt and the RA's never called me. So, my supervisor asked the students and the students said that I said I would not come out. They actually believed the students! And that's where I thought, these white students are able to say this lie and you will believe them. I think the earthquakes are part of life, but I don't think I should be somewhere where they are frequent.



APPENDIX V**PARTICIPANT 13 VISUAL MAP: ALVORA**

Visual Mapping of Higher Education.

It took me a while to figure out how I was going to approach this visual mapping. I do not consider myself a creative person in the more traditional sense of the word. So, I spent some time racking my brain trying to figure out what felt authentic to me. I decided to draw three cards from my deck and the themes that popped up from the cards would be what I would talk about and how I wanted to be represented.

Card 1:

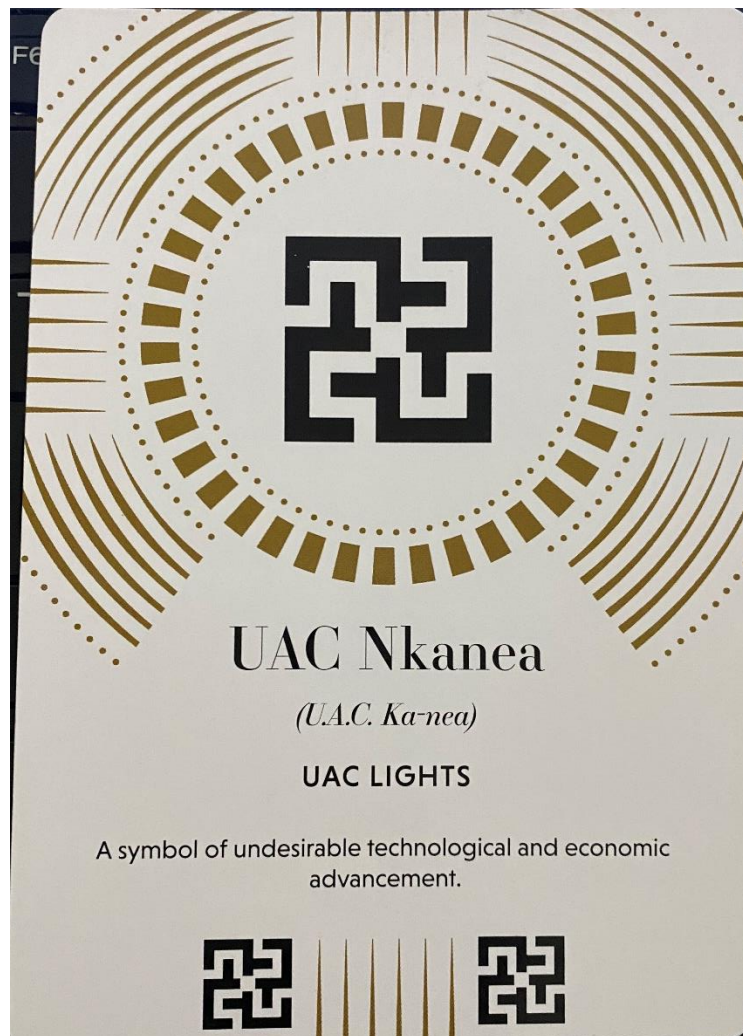


This card means, “Everyone will reach their destination in their own time. Allow them to do so with their own mistakes and in their own way. This includes yourself too. Remember this when you compare yourself to others, feel in adequate or frustrated with the progress of something. Remember, your journey is yours, that you will get everything you need and deserve as the universe and ancestors provide.”

This card describes how I felt very earlier on in my career. On paper I was living the dream. Living in New York City, working, finished my master’s degree by 22. In reality, I was not living my dream life. Every day I was seeing more and more people traveling, being minimalist, bringing in income for just existing, working their dream job, reducing their carbon imprint, and

starting business. Yet, I was in a field which required unhealthy working hours me, making less than \$40,000 a year, and steadily gaining weight. I was working for the institution where nepotism was the name of the game, there were no people of color higher than the Dean, and there would be no upward movement for me. This realization really put into perspective that I was showing my best self on social media and to the world even though I was miserable, so if I was doing that, who's to say others were not as well. From there, I decided to curate my social media to positive reinforcement. I unfollowed anyone who was making me feel bad about my life and followed people who were inspiring me to do better. I started the process of changing my mindset to help with the anxiety and depression that I was experiencing, decided to be more intentional in life, and lean into my support system that I was gathering.

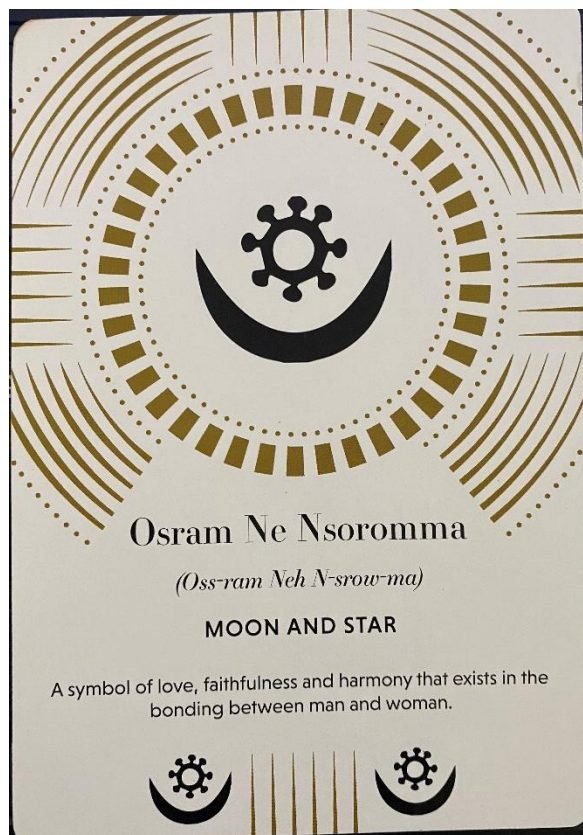
Card 2:



This card means, “Increasingly we’re seeing technology erase parts of our working life, as well as automating various human connections. Technology is changing the face of humanity as we know it and we must not lose what makes us human. Unplug from the matrix - switch off your Wi-Fi, smartphone, TV and every other gadget. Sit in your space, light and intention candle and soak up the atmosphere of tranquility, stillness, and your thoughts-untouched by technology.”

Working in Higher Education in America has made me realize how much capitalism dominates everything. I worked for an institution that would accept students even if they can only afford the first semester. We had so many students drop out after the first semester because they would receive their bill for the next term and realize that this was a dream they could not afford. No one had truly sat down with the students to give them the full picture of what going to this institution, that did not provide a meal plan or metro card would really cost. I remember having to have a frank conversation with a parent. The parent was barely able to afford the tuition and housing cost, but was trying to figure out a way to still send her daughter to the institution since it was her dream. I told her please do not send your daughter to this school if she will not be able to eat, get to class, or afford her books when she gets here. We continued to talk and she thanked me for my honesty. It made me question why, as a res life professional, I was the one having these conversations over and over again with parents and not bursar or evening admissions. These encounters allowed me to realize how much we encourage living a debt-full life in this country. Even as a working woman, we are taught to sacrifice everything in our being for the sake of a job that will limit the amount of sick days that we are allowed to have to 5 per year.

Card 3:



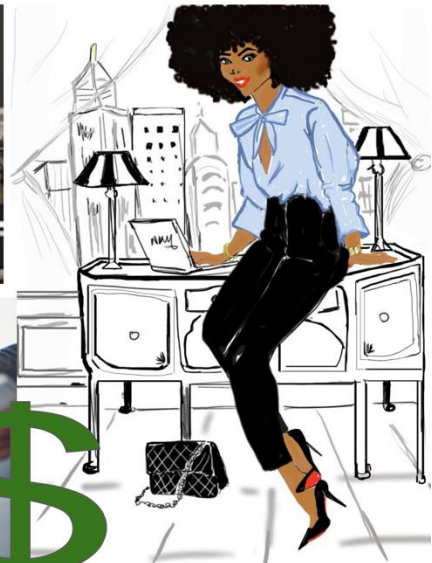
This card means, “Balance, equally yoked, faithfulness. It is time to harmonize the energies between the masculine and feminine in your life, relationships and within you. Find the common ground between these two energies, appreciate the differences and form an unshakable bond that is diverse, in sync and true.”

I was never taught how to create a work-life balance for myself or how to create healthy

boundaries in ALL aspects of my life. Being raised in a two parent household where both parents were encouraged to follow the rules, not to take a sick day, only travel when it was convenient for your job, and don't complain. Where for one parent, there was no job security knew they were easily replaceable. Watching this led me to believe there was only one way to approach work; I thought I had to put my head down and work, always be perfect, never bring your personal problems to work, do not take a sick day unless you were dying, pay off all of your debt in order to live a life you think you want, but you don't inherently deserve. My perspective on how I approach work completely changed when I realized everything I knew was wrong. From working in higher ed, I started to value my mental and emotion health as much as I valued my physical health. If I wanted to take time off from work, that was okay and I should not feel guilty about it. Higher Ed essentially taught me to value me, value my work, what I produce at work has nothing to do with my worth.

APPENDIX W**PARTICIPANT 14 VISUAL MAP: NYSH**

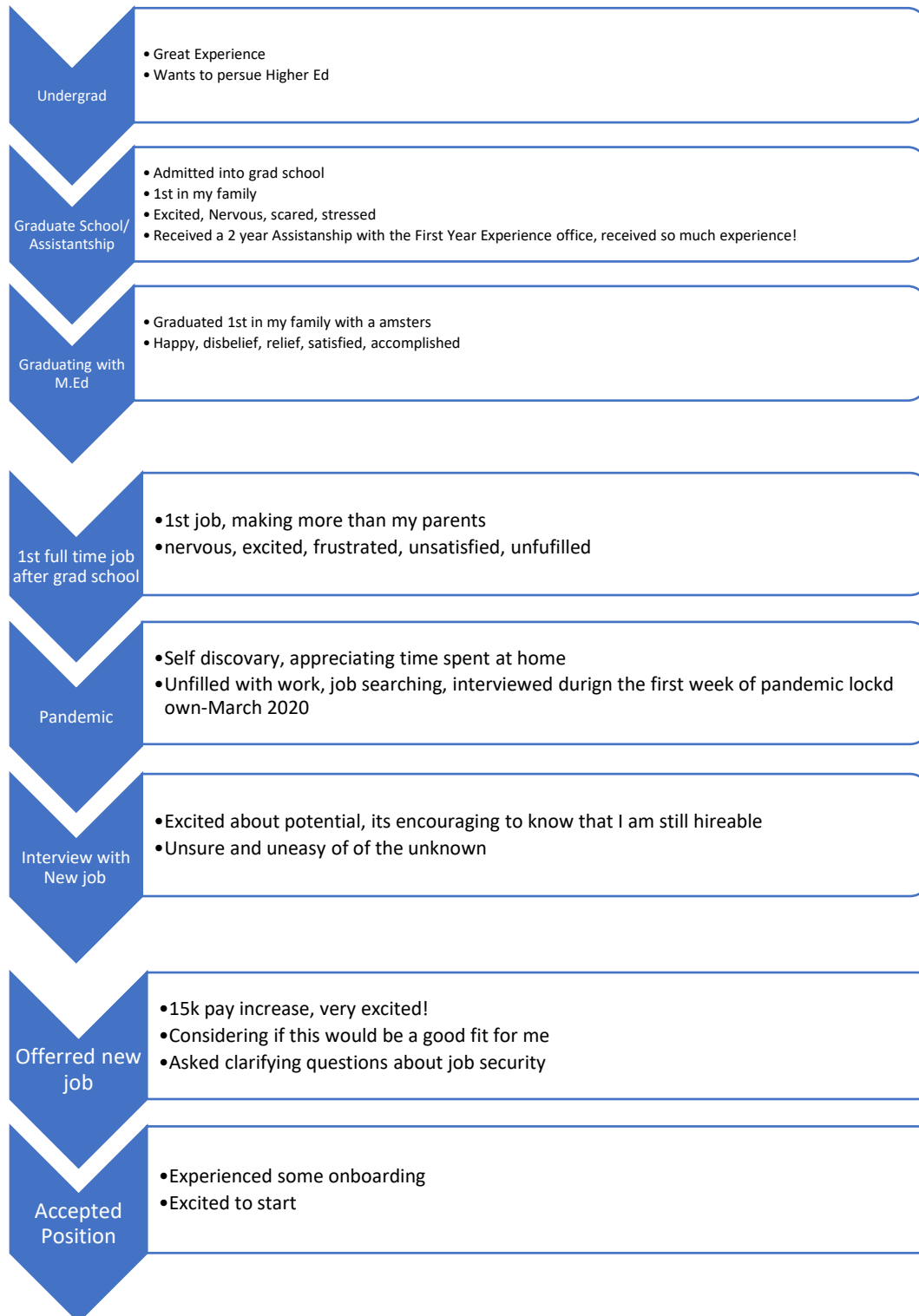




Blessings

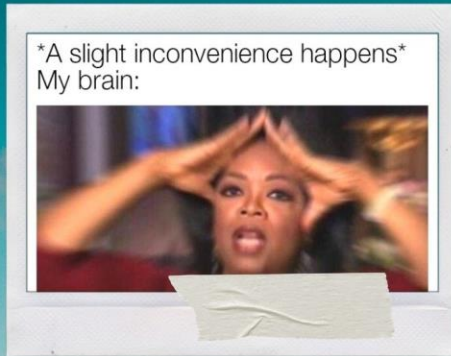


APPENDIX X**PARTICIPANT 15 VISUAL MAP: JESSICA**



APPENDIX Y**PARTICIPANT 16 VISUAL MAP: MICHELLE**

How I feel reading my supervisor's emails...lol



Me trying to figure out what career path I truly want to follow. What is my passion?

Me trying to figure out what's going on in my life...



Dammit 🤔🤔

Frustrated
Grateful
Settling into Columbia is taking longer than expected



How I meet folks

APPENDIX Z**PARTICIPANT 17 VISUAL MAP: ZAKIYA**



APPENDIX AA**PARTICIPANT 18 VISUAL MAP: VIOLA**

After trying to think of how to complete it I decided the idea that made the most sense to me was framing my reality against the ideals I was reaching for in every part of my journey thus far. I make vision boards every year, sometimes twice a year, and I framed the word cloud with 4 themes that have repeated on my board for the last 5 years, compared to some of the tensions of being in school and working in that same time frame. Thanks again for including me in this process!

**BLACK
GIRL
MAGIC**

**BE KIND TO
yourself**



MY MISSION IN LIFE
IS NOT MERELY TO SURVIVE
BUT TO THRIVE & TO DO SO
WITH SOME PASSION,
SOME COMPASSION,
SOME HUMOUR
AND SOME STYLE.
- MAYA ANGELOU

joy

APPENDIX BB**PARTICIPANT 19 VISUAL MAP: CHARLOTTE**

HORRIBLE BOSSSES



THEY'LL SOON FIND OUT...
... I'M ~~NOT THAT GREAT!~~




**KEEP
CALM**
and finish
**GRAD
SCHOOL**

