Working Mothers in Student Affairs: A Narrative Study of Maternal and

Professional Identity Development

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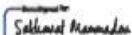Of the Dewer College of Education and Human Services
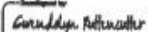
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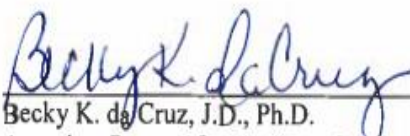**Dissertation Research Member**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the personal and professional experiences of working mothers in higher education student affairs to understand how they integrated maternal identity and professional identity in their lives. Using narrative identity theory as my framework, I retold the stories of working mothers in student affairs and how they navigated their experiences that contributed to their personal and professional development. From their narratives I discovered common themes that showed how their values influenced their successful integration of maternal and professional identity.

Study results provided useful information for institutions and mentors to understand the working mothers' experiences that positively affect retention and advancement of talented women with multiple identities and roles. This study also built on current research on professional and motherhood identity by focusing on a specific population of women who have already navigated raising children while working in student affairs. As an added benefit, the results from this research might give hope to young working mothers in their quest for identity role integration, as they see how other women raised their children and explored their internal and external expressions of self as mother and professional.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

This study is lovingly dedicated to the working mothers in my family. These women inspire me daily to be better.

Mina Griner, my mother

Kay Kopp, my sister (1955-2022)

Kasey Craven Ross, my daughter

Sydney Novik Craven, my daughter-in-law

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Identity roles assumed during a lifetime influence the difficulty or ease for how people make decisions within personal and professional domains. This phenomenon is evident in the lives of women who identity as mothers and professionals. In a time when women have more opportunities to work in professional environments than in previous decades, they are now juggling more responsibilities as they navigate different identities and identity roles (Ladge & Greenberg, 2015). Learning the stories of women who manage the intricacies of work and motherhood provided a lens to explore how these identity roles intersect with each other (Freeman, 2015). This narrative inquiry study examined how maternal and professional identities influence each other by retelling the stories of four working mothers in higher education student affairs.

A lived role is one way in which a person forms their identity. Motherhood and professional identity are two of many roles by which women might identify. When viewed from a broad perspective, identity formation is like a complex puzzle, made of intricate, delicate pieces of personality, behavior, choices, and relationships that evolve and move through experiences. The study of identity is multi-faceted, considering the biological, psychological, and sociological factors from which a person finds personal meaning through internal thoughts and feelings as an individual and external interactions as a social being (Vignoles et al., 2011).

At their core, a person has a set of stable, internal processes that shape their interactions and behaviors within their multiple roles (Serpe & Stryker, 2011). These processes consist of the categorization of self, roles, preferences, fears, traits,

connections, and social systems. Resulting emotions, cognitions, behavior, and attitudes form connections between self and identity (Knippenberg et al., 2005). A person's self-concept emerges from a person's purposeful reflection of these internal processes and external experiences (Leary & Tangney, 2012). To live a healthy balanced life, a person must seek congruence between internal processes and their external presentation and alignment in the world (Waterman, 2015).

The myriad of identity theories that have emerged from these varied factors shows the complexity of identity, how it is defined, and how it is manifested throughout a person's life (Côté & Levine, 2002; McLean & Syed, 2015; Schwartz et al., 2011). Many of these theories were influenced by Erik Erikson's (1968) early work as a psychotherapist. Erikson introduced foundational concepts of ego identity and identity crisis to create a theory of ego development throughout the lifespan. Erikson's groundbreaking eight stages of identity development inspired subsequent psychological and sociological perspectives of identity theory development (Côté & Levine, 2002). Scholars have learned from Erikson's work that the key to developing purpose and direction in life is understanding identity (Kroger, 2017). A person's identity can be represented through the independent or integrated way their unique personalities and traits, associations with others, and group memberships exist during various points in life as situations dictate (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001).

When considering the evolving nature of adult identity, an emphasis on multiple identities and the influence of society must be considered. Adult identity formation can be chaotic since there are many ways in which adult identities form and evolve over time (Côté & Levine, 2002). Technology, education, partnered status, career changes,

parenting, and other roles influence identity formation in adulthood (Ryan & Deci, 2012). Throughout life a person redefines identity through the construction of various roles and relationships (Oyserman et al., 2012). A person uses these multiple identities to determine how to behave with others in social systems.

Adult identity development moves beyond standard identity status models used in adolescent research of Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1967), to encompass comprehensive stories collected throughout life. These stories provide an avenue for furthering adult identity and examining the inherent traits and characteristics of a person along with different social roles and other influences (Kroger, 2015). As a person reflects on values and learns to trust their inner voice, they become more secure in the connections with external realities in life. The development of an internal sense of self prepares a person to create vision, make decisions, and determine responses within relationships (Baxter-Magolda, 2014).

"Society is a mirror in which people see themselves" (Serpe & Stryker, 2011, p. 226). While personal identity determines how an individual sets self from others through internal beliefs and values, social identity determines how self-concept aligns within groups (Hotho, 2008). The interplay between self and others influences life's choices and embodies the way people work together. How a person interprets identity internally and as part of larger social structures is central to human health and wellbeing and is often at the center of problems in society (Syed & McLean, 2014). As a reciprocal process between self and society, a person's social identity changes throughout life within the scope of relationships and experiences (Josselson, 1996).

To consider social identities as separate entities paints an incomplete picture of a person (Azmitia et al., 2008). Multiple identities develop within the context of work and life (Day & Harrison, 2007). A person develops self-identity through the personal beliefs and values that shape life's purpose (Waterman, 2015) as well as the roles played within relationships with other people, organizations, and social groups (Vignoles et al., 2011). The reciprocal nature of internal and external aspects of multiple identities has been determined by how a person finds personal meaning through their thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors within distinct roles (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

To understand the interplay between internal and external influences, social identity theorists examined how a person identifies as a member of a group and how that person compares with other members of a group (Spears, 2011; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Groups consist of individuals who join based on a common social category. These categories, such as race, gender, ethnicity, family, or occupation provide the means for which groups form and find value (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Groups are constantly evaluating problems and adjusting to find solutions, affecting the way people within the groups respond (Serpe & Stryker, 2011). A person's occupation is one way they might identify.

Professional institutions create organizational structure, culture, and language that influences the way a person socializes into a profession and builds a professional identity (Hotho, 2008). A person connects to their profession through their education and entry into the organization, gaining self-confidence, taking responsibility for attitudes and behaviors, and recognizing their own limitations and potential (Smitina, 2010). The concept of "job crafting," suggests people take active roles in the design and function of

their jobs and find purpose and meaning in their professional identities (Wzresniewski et al., 2013). As employees develop the skills, attitudes, and knowledge associated with an occupation, they begin to make meaning of their own professional identity (Neary, 2014).

As with other identities, professional identity changes over time and experience (Smitina, 2010). This fluidity is evident in student affairs, a field that is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the students who are served. In recent years student affairs professional organizations have created standards and educational systems to help professionalize the field (McClellan & Stringer, 2016; McGill et al., 2021; Porterfield & Whitt, 2016; Whitt & Schuh, 2015). Attention must be given to professional identity development of practitioners, including women, who work to inspire and transform the college student experience.

Women play a key role in student affairs, the setting for this study that examined the intersection of maternal and professional identity. Higher education institutions need talented women to take the lead in important levels of administration to help with a diminishing work force and the retirement of a generation of men and women (Hannum et al., 2015). Women provide a unique voice and pose different questions from men, and they serve as excellent role models and mentors who inspire transformational learning (Madsen, 2011). Women's leadership styles contribute qualities that are valuable in the workplace (Teague, 2015).

A Catalyst study (2013), surveying 7000 leaders across all business sectors, indicated women outperformed men on 12 out of 16 competencies including "relationship building," "developing others," "taking initiative," and "practicing self-development" (p. 7). Similarly, an empirical study that compared men and women's

leadership styles showed women bring critical attributes to the workplace that complement attributes typically shown by men (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). In that study, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) found that men brought assertiveness, directness, and deficit-based problem solving to the workplace, and women typically brought concern and care for others, solution focused problem solving, and the ability to ease tensions. Women contribute professional attributes that are valuable in the workplace and are vital members of professional environments.

Women who choose to combine a professional identity with motherhood continually juggle between the demands of both roles (Ladge & Greenberg, 2015). Just as socialization occurs when a person enters the workforce, women who have children experience additional factors when they re-enter the workforce after having a child, such as how others now view them or changes in support from their places of employment. These factors influence how they see themselves as professional and mother.

Working mothers have been stereotyped as less competent, making it more difficult for them to achieve promotion and raises (Cuddy et al., 2004). Women continue to take on most of the responsibilities in the home, creating disparity on women's ability to work the expected long hours in the workplace (Blair-Loy et al., 2015). They might sacrifice personal lives to pursue senior positions (Marquez-Santana, 2016). Some women opt out of parenthood entirely (Hannum et al., 2015) while others give up higher career goals to attempt to balance home life and work (Nobbe & Manning, 1997). Research conducted in the last decade revealed similar obstacles for working mothers in student affairs, including the dual responsibility and challenge of managing multiple and often conflicting roles (Bailey, 2011; Fochtman, 2015). There has also been a lack of

essential women mentors in upper-level positions to encourage colleagues to rise beyond mid-level leadership positions (Marquez-Santana, 2016).

With more than 75% of women with children contributing to the workforce (Women's Bureau, 2017), working mothers may bring comprehensive and complex skills that are gleaned from their multiple identities to benefit university settings and college student development, and their stories need to be shared. However, there has been little research on the positive influences of motherhood on professional identity. Prior research has focused primarily on the obstacles associated with work-life balance for women, such as conflicting roles, lack of respect, and lack of advancement opportunities (Bailey, 2011; Borelli et al., 2017; Clark, 2001; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Haslam et al., 2015; Lester, 2016; Vair, 2013).

Other people's negative perceptions of women leaders often create problems for those women (Lord & Hall, 2005). Women may be regarded as less capable of leadership than men and their leadership styles are regarded as less effective in traditionally male, hierarchical organizations, a phenomenon known as second-generation gender bias (Batara et al., 2018; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ryan et al., 2016). Women are often caught in a double bind from the effects of second-generation gender bias that hinders women's advancement as leaders in the workplace (Ibarra et al., 2013). Thus, women must constantly negotiate between the roles of woman and leader, a problem that men do not typically face (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

The field of student affairs can be demanding on a professional's time and expertise with the long hours on weekend and evenings and low paying positions (Collins, 2009), but the profession has evolved in the past few decades with more

opportunities for advanced education, socialization, and professional identity development (Herdlein et al., 2013; Komives, 2013; Liddell et al., 2014). Governmental and organizational policies provide more equitable opportunities for women in leadership (Ibarra et al., 2013). Women's leadership styles are becoming valued in the workplace (Teague, 2015) and more women are achieving prominent levels of leadership in student affairs (Wesaw & Sponsler, 2014).

As more women work in student affairs, the continued conversations must occur to build on the research and explore the challenges faced and contributions women make (Madsen, 2011). Academic literature about professional working mothers in student affairs has grown in the last decade (Bailey, 2011; Collins, 2009; Fochtman, 2011, 2015), but there is a gap in connecting the influence of motherhood and professional identity in student affairs. Professional identity is a key factor that leads to job persistence (Neary, 2014), and women have challenges navigating professional environments because of cultural attitudes of leadership based on traditional male models, role definitions based on gender, and a lack of access to supportive networks and role models (Ibarra et al., 2014). In fact, women typically approach professional identity within the scope of their human connections (Josselson, 1996; Patton, 2013). These connections often form informal or formal mentoring relationships and aid in the ability to navigate a male-dominated organization (Ford, 2014). Whether working mothers choose to be in positions of high-level leadership or in supporting mid-level roles, they influence other professional colleagues to achieve common goals for professional success.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers have suggested that a woman's path to career advancement is not often an easy one. Women may struggle and experience criticism between the need to be submissive and non-confrontational, competent, and direct (Block & Tietjen-Smith, 2016; Hannum et al., 2015; Montas-Hunter, 2012). They may over produce, over evaluate their own performance, or become resigned to the realities of their situation (Batara et al., 2018). Hidden in the fabric of society, these prejudices and stereotypes against women are bolstered within the values and beliefs of organizational systems (Batara et al., 2018). Obstacles may drive stereotype, prejudice, and discrimination against women leaders (Ibarra et al., 2013). These subtle and pervasive obstacles persist in the workplace and should not be ignored (Batara et al., 2018; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016).

Working mothers struggle to balance the many identities and roles that they juggle daily, making it difficult to choose not to work the long hours needed to be effective in their jobs (Borelli et al., 2017; Haslam et al., 2015; King, 2008; Lamar et al., 2019). However, the stories of working mothers are not necessarily all about problems and obstacles. Narratives are not always comprehensive and often only tell a partial story (Gergen, 2004). Narrative traditions might deter a woman's success in society. Might there be another perspective to add to the current narrative? Maybe working mothers experience their lives in positive ways through their unique approach to work and home. Without a better understanding of the ways working mothers positively contribute to the workforce, they are in danger of being undervalued and underutilized. Deeply

understanding the cross sections in women's lives might improve their experiences in higher education (Yakaboski & Donahoo, 2011).

In fact, there is evidence to suggest that working mothers may bring a myriad of experiences and success to professional roles. Women highlighted as accomplished working mothers by the She Runs It organization expressed multiple ways that motherhood enhanced their success, including boundary setting, efficiency, preparation, financial peace, flexibility, and a calm approach to work (Let Us Praise Working Mothers, 2019). Professional women positively influence their children by modeling personal achievement, independence, and perseverance, and working mothers may experience fewer problems associated with emotional stability (Drexler, 2013).

Women who work in student affairs have also reported positive experiences and benefits from their experiences as mother and professional (Fochtman, 2015; Lee, 2015). Working mothers do have much to offer in the wholistic development of college students and are needed in the academy (Bailey, 2011; Lee, 2015). The impact of motherhood on senior level student affairs administrators creates tension, but these roles often work together to enhance courage collaboration, mentorship, and empowerment (Lee, 2015). Understanding the motivations, values, and experiences of the participants of this study and the ways they integrate motherhood in the workplace provided unique perspectives on their professional identity development.

Research Purpose

As more people retire from the workforce, women can help fill the need for talent and leadership for the next generation (White House Project, 2009, p. 7). Literature demonstrates how women have already influenced the workforce in multiple ways. The

purpose of this study was to examine the personal and professional experiences of working mothers in student affairs to understand how they integrated maternal identity and professional identity in their lives. Current literature paints a monochromatic picture of working mothers as living in constant states of tension and stress. While there is merit in understanding the essential nature of a working mother's struggle, it may not be the only story. The stories of working mothers do not have to focus solely on the problems faced because their identities and experiences are complex, unique, and multi-faceted. Working mothers in student affairs might demonstrate full lives, contribute to the development of college students in meaningful ways, and rise to various levels of leadership throughout the field. They need the opportunities to tell their stories.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

Preliminary research questions helped frame the study's research design and provide focus for the study. These questions were the result of extensive review of the literature, research purpose, and theoretical framework developed around student affairs practice, women in higher education, mentoring practices, professional practices, professional identity development, and working mothers. During data generation and analysis, the wording of these research questions changed slightly as I learned added information through the data, but the revised wording did not alter the original purpose of the study (Maxwell, 2013). These questions provided the foundation for constructing narratives for a representation of working mothers, who spent at least 10 years as a student affairs practitioner while raising at least one child who no longer lives at home.

RQ1: How did working mothers in student affairs describe their maternal and professional identities as they navigated and integrated their personal and professional identities?

RQ2: How did university settings and/or policy impact the maternal and professional identity integration of women who worked in higher education student affairs while raising a child?

<div align="center">Introduction to Conceptual Framework</div>

A conceptual framework consists of the tools needed to create a cohesive study (Maxwell, 2013). This study's framework was built on the influence of Dewey's theory of experience, narrative identity theory, and narrative inquiry methodology.

John Dewey's educational philosophy of the interactions of knowledge and experience grounded this study through the research paradigm of pragmatism. The word pragmatism is derived from the Greek word, "pragma," which means "practice" or action" (Rosenthal & Thayer, 2020). Working from the belief that reality is negotiated over time and situations, Dewey argued that humans constantly adapt to their environments, learning from their experiences (Dewey, 2011). Through continuous interactions and active engagement with different situations, a person understands and learns.

Using Dewey's interpretation of pragmatism grounded this research, and identity theory structured it to explore the identity development and integration of roles by the participants. Narrative identity theory is defined as a method for studying how a person constructs life stories to create a sense of self meaning, unity, and wholeness in their life (McAdams, 2011). Stories provide the mechanism for a person to move toward

wholeness, purpose, and meaning (McAdams, 2011). Narrative identity theorists contend that stories reveal the motivations and beliefs of a person, how a person fits into society through relationships, and how a person makes sense of life by sharing past and present experiences and contemplating the future (McAdams, 2011).

Narrative identity theory also supported the narrative inquiry methodology for this study because exploring working mothers' dual identity roles provided a deep and comprehensive understanding of their multiple experiences in their personal and professional environments. Narrative inquiry is defined a way to explore and understand experience through the stories that people tell and retell over time, place, and society (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Stories provide the space for people to explore the intersections of situations in their lives and determine how they want to be perceived by others (Josselson, 2011). From stories people learn about self-understanding, culture, and values (Diaute, 2014).

<div align="center">Significance</div>

With women choosing the identity roles of mother and professional, a study highlighting the experiences of working mothers is timely. Many narrative traditions have followed a male perspective that often does not ring true for women (Gergen, 2004). With more women in the workforce, their voices and perspectives need to be heard in organizations. Women in higher education play a significant role for the work of student affairs (Duffy, 2010; Fochtman, 2011) and sometimes these women bring the role of mother into their work. Working mothers in this study provided critical narratives to help understand how maternal and professional identities impact personal and professional experiences.

Examining professional identity from the lens of motherhood provided the framework to understand how the personal, family, and organizational experiences of the participants and their stories contributed to a new paradigm of practice for working mothers in student affairs. By understanding the stories of women who are successful blending their multiple roles with the demands of student affairs work, researchers can set aside assumptions made by society about work life balance and build on Vair's (2013) metaphor of weaving together roles instead of constantly trying to balance roles. To counter the narrative about work/life balance, Vair stated, "The suggestion that women can weave work and motherhood together has very positive connotations, suggesting that women can make a harmonious and peaceful whole out of the various and disparate threads in their life" (p. 174).

Exploring the experiences of working mothers in student affairs provided additional literature on women's advancement in higher education student affairs by focusing on identity development for working mothers and their contributions to the field. Understanding professional identity development within the context of work roles and environments needs further exploration (Caza et al., 2018). Work-related, and nonwork-related identities can be compatible, shown through increased productivity and problem solving (Rothbard & Ramarajan, 2011). This study moved beyond barriers and obstacles associated with gender bias and sought to learn the benefits that come from blending the talents of contrasting, yet complementary, identity roles. Working mothers' experiences provided insight that might inspire other women who face similar challenges. Their experiences might also inform their institutions' administrators to adopt new policies and practice to support their professionals (Lester, 2016).

Organizations and individuals need each other to be successful (Schein, 1978). Just as women must bring the best they have to an organization, institutions must develop systems to support dual working families and single mothers (Haslam et al., 2015). The stories generated from this study added to the literature to guide higher education institutions leaders and mentors to consider new ways to develop and retain working mothers in student affairs (Marquez-Santana, 2016; Searby et al., 2015). Results inform professional development initiatives, supportive resources, and future research, as well as inform advanced professional practice policies for higher education student affairs communities. Organizations should be more aware of the needs and contributions of working mothers and implement formal and informal mentoring programs. University administrators can use the results of this study to learn the stories of their own employees and implement departmental policies and practices to support work/life balance, creating intentional relationships with supervisors and mentors to meet the reciprocal needs of each person. Results from this study can be used to create crucial conversations about the influence working mothers have on the changing culture of student affairs practice.

The stories generated from this study gave voice to women who not only struggle to juggle multiple roles and identities as a mother and professional, but also successfully integrate those roles and develop strong professional identities as student affairs practitioners. Working mothers' stories of identity integration can be a resource for other working mothers, higher education institutions, and leaders as women continue to be a thriving force in the workplace and provide leadership at multiple levels of responsibility.

Limitations

Limitations of this research include the incompleteness of participants' memories, the homogeneity of the women interviewed, and the video process for data generation. The process of narrative inquiry research consists of the telling, transcribing, analyzing, and retelling participants' stories within the scope of time and space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Participants shared their memories and often remarked that they had not thought about a specific instance or situation in a long time. It is natural that there were gaps in their memories and stories that impacted their meaning and purpose for sharing that experience.

I had hoped that additional identities might be explored during the interviews in addition to maternal and professional identity. While some of the participants incorporated a religious or spiritual identity in their narratives, and one participant was divorced, they all identified as White, cisgendered women. Some assumptions might be made as to the reasons for their absence. Possible reasons might include a reluctance to talk with a White woman, a lack of women of color who met the criteria, and the disruption that the COVID-19 pandemic created in people's lives.

Having to conduct video interviews created another limitation for the study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasized the importance of experiencing people's lives where they live to gain a wholistic picture of their lives, but that was not possible since the participants lived all over the country and the COVID pandemic was in effect. Three women were in their offices during the interviews and sometimes had their screen blurred to exclude any background artifacts. Only one participant provided a more detailed view of her surroundings, as she was at her beach home while being interviewed.

Delimitations

Limiting the scope of a study ensures researcher control over the amount and depth of data collected in a qualitative research study (Roberts, 2010). The purpose of this study was to examine the personal and professional experiences of working mothers in student affairs to understand how they integrated maternal identity and professional identity in their lives. To capture the stories that described personal and professional identity development for working mothers in student affairs, I set specific criteria to maintain focus for this study.

Parameters for participation in this study were established to ensure that the women telling the stories had already raised their children while working in student affairs. I chose the field of student affairs, not only because of my experiences, but also because of the rich history women have in the field and the desire to share their stories of challenge and success. After talking with a young working mother whose life is consumed by the day-to-day activities of life, I chose to interview women who had already raised their children while currently working in student affairs to see a more complete picture of past, present, and anticipated future, as a narrative identity process warrants. I determined that participants needed to have served 10 years in the profession while raising children to show the longevity of their careers while being mothers and provide the most comprehensive stories. Lastly, recognizing that maternal identity changes as children become adults, I only interviewed women who had at least one child who had moved out of the family home.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined.

Student Affairs: departments and offices that help holistically develop college students'

learning and development outside of the classroom, as well as provide academic, social,

and physical support outside of the classroom (Komives, 2013).

Identity: those internal and external characteristics of a person that answer the question,

"Who am I?" (Côté & Levine, 2002)

Maternal Identity: the way that a woman creates personal meaning through the

experience of motherhood

Narrative: any story or vignette that gives a person a sense of meaning or purpose (Kim,

2016)

Professional identity: the way a person creates a sense of purpose and meaning through

education and socialization within an organization or professional set of values and

standards (Hotho, 2008)

Working mother: women who are raising children or who have raised children while

working in paid positions outside of the home

Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter introduced the focus of this study through the lens of

comprehensive identity development for the purpose of learning how motherhood and

professional identity influence the lives of working mothers in student affairs. An

overview of women in higher education and student affairs was discussed, leading to the

purpose, and research questions. The conceptual framework was introduced, and the

significance of the research was highlighted, to discuss why a new narrative for women

who have blended motherhood and professional identity was warranted. The chapter

concluded with a description of limitations and delimitations to consider.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter I introduced the concept of multiple identity development in working women in higher education student affairs and outlined the purpose of this study. Campbell et al. (2019) recognized the multifaceted nature of identities that exist simultaneously over time and space, through many contexts and relationships. They emphasized that identities change over time, becoming relevant depending on context and situation. To understand the framework of this study, this chapter highlights literature associated with professional identity within higher education student affairs, as well as motherhood identity and working mothers in student affairs. Mentoring practices are discussed as an example of the importance of relationships in professional development for women. The chapter begins with a discussion of the theoretical framework, Narrative Identity Theory.

Theoretical Framework: Narrative Identity Theory

The study of identity spans psychological and sociological perspectives, painting a complex picture from which identity forms and changes over time, and providing deeper understandings of self, uniqueness, and belonging (Caza et al., 2018). Common themes of self, self with others, and self in society emerge from the varied definitions of identity development. When considering separate roles that people play in their lives, multiple identities integrate to establish a comprehensive sense of self (Galliher et al., 2017). Identity is intricately tied to relationships that define roles. Since many of these roles emerge in adulthood, they have not been studied as carefully as adult identity has not been explored to the extent of child and adolescent identity (Galliher et al., 2017).

After extensive reading and contemplation of different identity theories, narrative identity theory emerged as the best option to frame this study because of its comprehensive focus on past, present, and anticipated future. Narrative identity theory is one of many theories that frame how a person understands self in relation to others and can be used to show the evolution of a person's life, changes that occur over time (McAdams, 2011). As discussed in Chapter I, narrative identity theory is defined as a method of studying how a person constructs life stories to create sense of self meaning, unity, and wholeness (McAdams, 2011). A person's stories tie together the distinct roles played through life (Eagly & Chin, 2010; McAdams, 2011). Narrative identity theory cuts across the fields of psychology and sociology, integrating internal traits, values, and goals that make up personal identity with different social and role identities (McAdams, 2011).

Narrative identity involves a person using stories of their past, present, and what they think might happen in the future to internally create "some degree of unity, purpose, and meaning" (McAdams & Pals, 2006, p. 209). A person will often convey their identity in the way that they want to be perceived, through their own self-reflection, how they tell the story, the intended audience, and story's setting (Waterman, 2011). People organize their stories through plots and context in ways that reveal the complexity of social identities and how they want to be seen by others (Hoene, 2013). New stories and new situations influence how a person's identities are refined (McAdams, 2011). Stories told from personal perspective and memory reveal the various aspects of self-concept through the lens of their multiple identities.

By exploring the intricate aspects of multiple identities from a holistic and comprehensive process, the totality of a person's life experiences can be revealed (Laney et al., 2014). Caza et al. (2018) discussed the nature of self-reflection and cognitive discourse as one way to make sense of multiple identity integration. In professional environments, working mothers must constantly consider how their multiple identities influence their personal and career decisions and how they want to be perceived. Women are socialized to share deep, emotional experiences throughout their lives and have significant stories that shape meaning in their lives (McLean et al., 2007). Using narrative identity theory as the framework, this study examined the lived experiences of women by listening to, reading, and retelling their stories, a process known as "re-storying." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). By retelling their stories, I discovered how the participants learned to work through the tension associated with professional identity and motherhood. This chapter continues with a deeper exploration of professional identity and maternal identity.

<div align="center">Professional Identity</div>

Professional identity was the first of two primary role identities used in this study as there exists a strong connection between work and identity (Arminio & Ortiz, 2016). Individual and organizational perceptions influence how a career is defined, creating a complex process of individual capabilities and organizational expectations and needs (Schein, 1978). A person's professional identity expands the discovery of self-meaning, purpose, wellbeing, and positive relationships through interactions with their occupation and professional environment, enhancing further discovery for self-meaning and purpose, as well as enhanced wellbeing and positive relationships (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011).

To socialize into a profession, new employees use their own innate characteristics and personality in the way they adopt the language, skills, and customs associated with a chosen profession. This combination of personal and professional identity encompasses a dynamic process that is highly influenced by the profession, the organization in which a person works, the relationships with others in the field, and the opportunities for growth (Ibarra, 2003; Neary, 2014). A person's professional identity demonstrates the attitudes and behaviors associated with that profession or organization (Armino & Ortiz, 2016). Of course, the professional must have a clear knowledge of the standards expected.

Many professions have standards from which practitioners are expected to focus (Arminio & Ortiz, 2016). These standards provide structure to the profession and serve as developmental guides for professionals. Hotho (2008) examined the reciprocal nature of a professional's identity with the individual members of that profession by examining the purposeful choices and actions found in social structures. Hotho concluded that individuals created a sense of professional worth through the expertise and skills they bring to the profession. Skorikov and Vondracek (2011) contended through an extensive review of literature that professional identity correlated highly with career success. Professional identity predicted perseverance in career roles and performance and provided another lens for a person to examine self-meaning and purpose and understand past, present, and future choices. From the intentional process of adhering to professional standards, employees gain experience and expertise and are more likely to make meaningful contributions to the work environment.

In addition to professional standards, individual organizations help form professional identity. Organizational influences include the norms, customs, expectations,

and language from which employees work daily (Hotho, 2008). A new employee should quickly learn these institutional policies and responsibilities and determine their role within the organization (Arminio & Ortiz, 2016). Professional goals are developed through reflection, conversation, and actions within the boundaries of the social or work situation (Caza, et al., 2018). As the employee gains experience, confidence builds and the ensuing skills, customs, and goals work together to create a sense of purpose. The employee becomes committed to the organization and takes personal responsibility as a member of the organization or profession (Hirschy et al., 2015).

The combination of personal identity, professional standards and organizational values and expectations provide the foundation from which employees build professional identity. Professional identity is multifaceted and must be considered within the contexts of multiple identities and roles (Beijaard et al., 2004; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). Since identities cannot exist in vacuums, they naturally influence the way a person views the world and makes decisions. Higher education student affairs, the focus for this study, is a field where professional staff influence and guide college students' learning and development throughout out of class experiences. The field is varied and includes different specialty areas, creating some confusion for the development of an identity as a student affairs professional. The next section provides a discussion of the student affairs field, its struggles for identity, and the socialization process for practitioners.

Professional Identity in Higher Education and Student Affairs

Student affairs has a rich and varied history in higher education, but professionals in the field struggle to establish a strong identity because of frequent changes and inconsistencies in university structures and demographics (Porterfield &

Whitt, 2016; McClellan & Stringer, 2016; McGill et al., 2021; Whitt & Schuh, 2015). To best understand this struggle for professional identity in student affairs, this section begins with a brief overview of the field and outlines the subsequent challenges for practitioners to establish professional identity. Professional standards and graduate school preparation are discussed as potential solutions for a strong professional identity for student affairs employees.

Starting in the early 1900s, student affairs practitioners began to specialize in the creation of extra-curricular activities and organizational development opportunities for students (Komives, 2013). These services were typically offered by faculty as part of an academic program. In 1949, because of the specialization of industry after World War II, a model to create specialized operations for student activities and development emerged, and the functional area known as student affairs took shape as a unit for student resources and services outside of traditional academic departments (Roberts, 2007). Activities were later added to include leadership development, service learning, and civic engagement (Komives, 2013). As demand became greater, professional organizations expressed the need for increased rigor for student outcome development, stronger financial resources, and an expansion of technology (Porterfield & Whitt, 2016). Student affairs expanded to include many different units, such as student activities, counseling, career planning, admissions, orientation, residence life, conduct, and leadership development.

Ongoing Challenges for Student Affairs

Student affairs units are structured differently, depending on the institution. For example, in my own professional experience, I have held positions in admissions, counseling, orientation, and leadership development during a time when the name and

structure of the division changed three times. It was not until a few years ago when I became a leadership educator that I began to identify as a student affairs professional. Before then, I identified professionally through the individual units in which I worked.

My experiences are not unique. Individuals come into the student affairs field from a variety of experiences and educational paths (Carpenter, 2003; Clarke, 2016; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). A clearer process is needed to understand and develop professional identity in higher education practice, including understanding the common skills, values, and attitudes of those in the profession, appreciating the differences that exist among members, and self-identification with the profession (Trede et al., 2012). Multiple entry points for new professionals, along with a variety of specialties within the field add to the inconsistency of practice. To add to the confusion, names for the unit may also differ, such as Student Affairs, Student Services, or Student Development.

In fact, whether higher education student affairs can be considered a profession has been debated through the years. Carpenter (2003) and MGill et al. (2021) expressed the concern that while student affairs may never fully qualify as a profession because of its lack of a certification or licensure process, it is imperative for practitioners to display professionalism in their work with students. Student affairs requires an inclusive perspective because of the varied entry points and specialty areas within the field (Carpenter, 2003). In contrast to Carpenter's thoughts Pittman and Foubert (2016) argued that the student affairs field does meet criteria as a profession because of the sense of community that is present, the theoretical foundation of the work, and the specific training that graduation programs provide. Even with these different entry points and

perspectives, connected theoretical viewpoints are valuable as professionals strive to serve students and institutions to the fullest capacity.

Additionally, changes in student dynamics, culture, knowledge acquisition dramatically affect student affairs practitioners and how they accomplish their work. Many challenges face student affairs leaders, including shrinking resources, demands for accountability, and the expertise needed to guide deep learning experiences for students outside of the classroom (Roper et al., 2016). Environmental factors, including advanced technology and increased student diversity have created inconsistencies in professional practice, which affects professional identity (Kuk et al., 2010).

As diversity increases on campuses, student affairs professionals face challenges to meet the needs of their students. When considering the future, Whitt, and Schuh (2015) predicted changes in student enrollment, with more students from diverse and socio-economic backgrounds, international backgrounds, and disabilities. Moving forward practitioners must be willing to embrace the complexity of a changing world, be open to different disciplines, perspectives, and learning platforms, and be committed to challenging existing ideas and methods for student affairs programming and services (Shushok & Perillo, 2016). Changing times requires institutions to consider the diversity of professional staff members to meet the diverse needs of students.

Along with the need for diverse practitioners, changes are also needed in organizational culture. Student affairs leaders must respond to growing needs of students with organizational structures that support diversity and evolving culture (Kuk et al., 2010). Whitt and Schuh (2015) advocated institutional administrators to think differently about the current structure of a student affairs vice president, suggesting the field move

back to the academic umbrella of higher education. Whitt and Schuh concluded, however, that the culture of the institution must drive organizational structure and that there was no one right way to create that structure. They discussed the importance of intentional experiential programming that focused on soft skills, leadership, and service because these skills play a crucial role in the professional identity associated with student affairs practice.

Thus far, this literature review has outlined the challenges associated with higher education student affairs and the need for practitioners to develop a strong professional identity to meet the needs of their students. One area of change involves the need for more robust education and professional practice (Herdlein et al., 2013). Trede et al. (2012) discovered confusion regarding professional identity definitions, inconsistent theories driving professional identity development, and unclear connections between professional, personal, and social identities when evaluating articles about teaching practices of student affairs professional programs. They also determined a variety of descriptors used in the practice including self-awareness, worldviews, professional agency, and shared relationships. Additionally, theoretical frameworks varied from situated learning, community learning, self-identification, reflective practice, and adaptive learning. These broad descriptors and frameworks create confusion within the profession.

Professional Standards

To address inconsistences in practice and education, the ACPA-NASPA Task Force examined the future of student affairs and, in 2010, concluded a "need to redefine roles and structures, focus on success for all students, build partnerships without borders,

make decisions based on evidence for accountability, and broaden definitions of the campus itself" (Porterfield & Whitt, 2016, p. 14). From this Task Force, basic, intermediate, and advanced level competencies emerged (ACPA/NASPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators, n.d.). These competences included personal and ethical foundations; values, philosophy, and history; law and governance; leadership; human resources; social justice; student learning and development; technology; and advising. In keeping with changing trends, the competencies were revised in 2015 (Arminio & Ortiz, 2016). The identification of ACPA/NASPA student affairs competences has impacted how graduate programs have structured their curriculum to strengthen student affairs professional development. In the work environment, professionals and supervisors can use these standards to set goals and determine strategic plans for practice and development.

Professional identity development has also been enhanced by the formation of formal academic degree programs designed to prepare student affairs professionals for practice in the field. In fact, the number of student affairs educational programs doubled during 1999-2014 (Ortiz et al., 2015). Ortiz et al. (2015) conducted a study to determine the changes in student affairs education practice by interviewing teachers who taught in both 1996 and 2014. They learned that graduate students in student affairs more recently were open to diverse perspectives and were more adept to embracing multicultural issues, which is good news when considering the increased diversity on college campuses. However, results also revealed that students were less prepared in writing skills, interpersonal skills, and exhibited behaviors and attitudes that indicated they were less emotionally mature than students were in earlier years. This study showed the need for

continued evaluation and improvement of student affairs advanced education practices and experienced professionals to meet developmental, cultural, and global needs.

A comprehensive educational program can be a first step toward the development of professional identity. As seen in the following literature, professional identity builds from the socialization of new professionals through educational and early employment experiences and continues throughout a person's career. Socialization provides the initial entry for identification as a student affairs practitioner (Pittman & Foubert, 2016). Socialization refers to the way a person emerges as a member of a profession through education, internships, and entry as a new professional (Pittman & Foubert, 2016). Weidman et al., (2001) identified stages of socialization: "anticipatory, formal, informal, and personal" (p. iii). According to Weidman et al., these stages provide the process for graduate students to gain knowledge and engage in the academic culture of the program.

A student affairs practitioner incorporates values, beliefs, and professional standards through the socialization process (Hirschy, et al., 2015). Graduate school and early employment provide the platform for socialization into the profession. Professional identity emerges from educational experiences that connect personal and professional values and beliefs (Pittman & Foubert, 2016). A person embraces professional identity by incorporating common professional characteristics into the person's personal identity (Liddell et al., 2014). Student affairs professionals prove their allegiance to the field when they exhibit responsible and ethical behaviors and attitudes that are aligned with other student affairs professionals (Hirschy et al., 2015). Through his reflections of his own career trajectory, Clarke (2016), discussed the significance of his early mentors,

caring administrators, and graduate studies in student personnel in his identity development and perseverance in higher education student affairs.

Professional identity emerges from the socialization process within a career and the integration of personal identity development into that socialization process. Liddell et al. (2014) explored socialization and its contributions to professional identity development for new student affairs practitioners using values, commitment, and intellectual investment as research variables. Liddell et al. determined that graduate students who attend graduate programs that use standards developed by the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) identified with professional values more so than students who were not exposed to professional standards. Further, students who were provided strong peer groups and an applied academic program by their universities ranked intellectual investment higher than students did from universities that did not have strong peer groups or student affairs related academic programs and experiences. Liddell et al. concluded that students' professional identity development was strongest when they completed student affairs degrees from universities that grounded their programs in professional standards, strong peer groups, and applicable academic content and experience.

Professional identity is a fluid process, extending throughout a person's career. For those student affairs professionals who persist in the field and continue in their development, they may take on new responsibilities as mid-level managers. Mid-level managers enforce policies, report directly to senior level administrators, oversee functional areas, and communicate institutional and departmental mission and vision to employees and communities (Wilson et al., 2016). Like new professionals, Wilson et al.

(2016) discovered that mid-level professional development is influenced by values and career contentment as well as by connections in the organization. Doctoral level preparation is also an emerging trend. Seasoned professionals must also stay current with changing trends and skills needed to be competitive in the field and can use supervision and mentoring other practitioners as tools for seasoned professionals to develop professional identity (Haley et al., 2015). Thus, professional development does not end when a person enters the student affairs profession but continues with added responsibilities and education. It is evident from the literature that professional standards, strong peer groups, and applied academic settings create strong opportunities for professional identity development and contributions to the field of student affairs. New professionals must have strong self-identity, as well as a strong professional identity to effectively help college students in their own identity journeys (Cutler, 2003).

As the literature has indicated, the path toward professional identity in student affairs is varied. Exploring the professional identity journey of working mothers in this study provided the history and context of their work. To continue an examination of professional identity development for women, a discussion of women's contributions to higher education and student affairs is relevant to this study. Women have traditionally played a strong role in student affairs. This literature review continues with a discussion of some of the challenges that women face in the workplace and ways women contribute to organizational development in higher education and student affairs.

Professional Identity for Women in Higher Education and Student Affairs

People often choose environments with specific social groups in which they feel most comfortable. It is not surprising that women are drawn to higher education and

student affairs because of the long history of women who influenced higher education structure and policy, both inside and outside of the classroom (Duffy, 2010). Women, like Mary Ingraham Bunting, the 5th President of Radcliffe played a significant role in the development of student affairs (Duffy, 2010). Bunting paved the way for women in leadership through a model she created that included professional networks, mentoring, work-life balance, and policy change. Bunting changed academic language to include women in traditionally male dominated intellectual learning conversations and encouraged women to pursue science and math fields, as well as career development and advancement opportunities. As a result, Duffy believed that Bunting's legacy inspired women to pursue senior levels of leadership in Student Affairs. Duffy asserted that early deans of women influenced the practices of student affairs through their discipline, research, and publication.

Even though women have historically influenced higher education, there is a myth that there are not enough qualified women for leadership positions in higher education (Johnson, 2016). Even though women account for 57% of all college students (White House Project, 2009), as well as 50% of all doctorate degrees since 2006 and 50% of all master's degrees since 1991, the numbers did not translate to women achieving faculty rank or status in colleges and universities with only 32% of full-time professor position being held by women (Johnson, 2016). Further, to add to the struggle, pay gaps continued to exist with men out earning women by $13,616 (Johnson, 2016). These statistics show the disparity between numbers and pay scales of women in higher education positions and their struggle to advance to higher levels of administration and rank.

The struggle for recognition of women's contributions in higher education is evident in research. One of the ways that recognition might grow is by providing a voice for women to share how construct meaning in their work in student affairs. To be effective with students, student affairs practitioners must have strong personal and professional identities of their own (Cutler, 2003). Women need to perceive themselves as important to an organization and seek to develop relationships that create a sense of belonging (Schultheiss, 2014). Alignment with institutional values also play an important developmental role for women, who should build their careers based on a specialty focus, commitment to lifelong learning, and knowledge acquisition (Wegner, 2018).

Along with intentional professional development initiatives and alignment with their institutions, women need to establish relationships to help define their professional identity. Relationships are defined as "a space where knowledge, understanding, and multiple perspectives are created and transformed through dialogue and lived experience" (Schultheises (2014, p. 52). Mentoring plays a significant role in professional identity development for graduate students and young professionals (Pittman & Foubert, 2016). The benefits of a professional mentoring relationship are varied and can be particularly helpful during times of growth or identity crisis (Cutler, 2003). Through meaningful relationships, women build a culture of support and networking within their work environments (Wegner, 2018). Career women who were expecting a child benefitted from role models during their transition as a working mother (Hennekam et al., 2019). These relationships opened doors for more effective problem solving, professional growth, and advancement.

Mentoring is not only beneficial to young professionals. Mentoring also provides professional growth opportunities for upper-level administrators. Mentoring is described mentoring as a dynamic and personal process that benefitted both mentors and mentees careers (Murphy & Kram, 2014). Career, psychosocial and role-modeling for younger professionals helped more experienced mentors achieve and advance in their own careers. As a result, mentors experienced increased job satisfaction, promotions, and increases in salary.

Women do not attain leadership positions as frequently as men do and must seek resources to help them thrive and advance in the workplace. For women who are facing work-life balance struggles, male dominated environments, and gender bias, mentoring provides the foundation of support professional growth (Fochtman, 2011; Marquez-Santana, 2016). Both Fochtman (2011) and Marquez-Santana (2016) interviewed high achieving women in student affairs and learned of the importance of mentoring for their participants' ability to manage their work-life balance and determine their own level of career advancement. Additionally, Muir (2014) found mentoring beneficial for developing a leader identity and advancing professionally because these relationships fostered self-discovery, self-direction, and self-knowledge.

Women face many challenges as they navigate professional environments. To build a professional identity in student affairs, women must have a strong understanding of themselves, their institution's culture and values, as well as establish strong mentoring relationships for support. As women continue to find their place in the professional arena and use the resources and tools available, they have the capacity to integrate and use their other role identities to build on their professional development. These multiple identities

provide context, knowledge, and experience to organizations and (Haynes, 2008; Josselson, 1996; Laney, et al., 2014) and can be examined through their personal stories that blend their past, present, and anticipated future. Maternal identity is among the identities that influence all aspects of a woman's life and is defined and examined next as part of the framework for this study.

<div align="center">Maternal Identity</div>

What can people learn about the experiences of working mothers who weave their multiple identities in constructive ways? As a person acquires new roles in life, adjustments need to be made to integrate those new roles into existing identities (Laney et al., 2014). To understand the maternal/professional experience comprehensively, this study focused on women who have already raised their children while working in student affairs. The previous section highlighted research on professional identity. This section provides a brief overview of maternal identity and a summation of literature focusing on significant experiences of working mothers.

The transition to motherhood creates a paradox for some women and can feel staggering. "The shift to motherhood may fix or free, trap or libertate. Likely, it does both" (Baraitser, 2006, p. 236). Maternal identity development is a comprehensive process that occurs gradually and systematically and incorporates biology and psychology (Rubin, 1984). Women experience significant changes in their personality when they become mothers (Rubin, 1984). The power of the maternal identity is strong as women explore self, child, and environment. As the mother bonds with the child in and out of the womb, women establish a new sense of self as they identity as "mom," (Laney et al, 2015; Rubin, 1984).

Motherhood as an identity is grounded in the integration of self and the influences from the child as well as society. Transformation begins during pregnancy when women experience surprising and almost magical feelings as they feel the baby move in the womb, creating day to day connections with the baby (Baraitser, 2006). As they prepare for the baby's arrival women reflect on self, purpose, physical changes to their bodies, emotions, and social situations (Arnold-Baker, 2019; Laney et al., 2014). Women begin to anticipate how it might feel to be a mother, often having feelings of fear associated with change, the unknown, and questions of worthiness by imagining what motherhood will involve (Rubin, 1984). Women use their surroundings and experiences to find optimal aspects of the potential mother identity as they contemplate motherhood, including role models, such as their own mothers.

Women feel an extreme connection physically and emotionally with the child, initially finding it difficult to separate their own feelings from the child. Challenges associated with the transition to motherhood include identifying as a mother, contemplating the loss of self as an individual, and the need to redefine self as well conflicting feelings of choosing between self and the child, and the messiness associated with that transformation (Baraitser, 2006). As the child becomes the primary focus in mothers' lives, women try to maintain a sense of autonomy while incorporating this new and overwhelming identity as mother, however, the boundaries of mother and child become confused and blurred (Laney et al., 2015). The mother experiences the process of re-definition to allow room for the child to be incorporated into existing identities (Laney et al., 2015). This process requires more than just the act of mothering, but also deep

reflection of their own identity and changes that are occurring with the addition of a child.

When studied from an existential lens, identity is fluid, influenced by life experiences (Arnold-Baker, 2019). From her interviews with women whose babies were under that age of six months, Arnold-Baker (2019) suggested that society dictated how mothers should identify. The women in her study struggled to find balance between their own feelings and their beliefs about how they should be as mothers. As a result, Arnold-Baker argued that the act of mothering influenced identity formation through self-reflection and societal expectations.

Research on maternal identity centers primarily around new mothers, but research has also suggested that a woman's maternal identity evolves as her children age and develop (Green, 2010; Francis-Connolly & Sytniak, 2015). A mother's role changes as her child grows toward adulthood; however, the path of these changes in the mother/child relationship are not linear (Green, 2010). Mothers experience their own confusing feelings and are sometimes not prepared to let go and move toward an evolved identity as mother of adult children. Francis-Connolly and Sytniak (2015) discovered through interviews with women of emerging adult children that mothers do not consider an end to their mother identity once their children are grown. Mothers continue to care for their children in new ways, by listening to adult problems, supporting them financially and emotionally, and worrying about their wellbeing. Some women may even dive further into their professional roles to adapt to their child's leaving home, giving them a new sense of purpose (Green, 2010).

Once established, a motherhood identity continues throughout life. From the day-to-day care of infants and children to the support and worry over adult children, these experiences do not turn on and off as women assume other identities and roles in their lives. When women become mothers, relationships with others change (Rubin, 1984) and renegotiating these relationships can be challenging (Baraitser, 2006). These relationship changes are prevalent for women in the workplace no matter the age of their children. By focusing on working mothers whose children have left home, this study explored the evolution of their relationships and the impact of their experiences on their dual identities as mother and professional.

<div align="center">Working Mothers</div>

Continuing the discussion of identity and its many layers, this section highlights the strong focus on work-life balance and role tensions for working mothers, the challenges and importance of organizational support, as well as the glimpses of a different narrative that can be drawn from working mothers' experiences. With the birth of the child comes a sense of self-loss and redefinition. A complex shift in identity transpires as they incorporate a new sense of self that folds the child into existing identities (Laney et al., 2015). Women with a new baby experience tension between losing self and expanding self to include the child (Oberman & Josselson, 1996). Women might initially experience this paradox of being a new mom but not necessarily feeling differently in a significant way (Arnold-Baker, 2019). As time passes, however, Arnold-Baker (2019) explained that women in her study expressed acknowledgement of the changes occurring in their lives that must be examined and reflected on. One such reported change in a study of thirty faculty women involved increased compassion,

empathy, and accountability to others, as well as an increased openness to others (Laney, et al., 2014).

Many women establish their careers before becoming mothers. In a study that examined factors influencing career decisions for pregnant women, Motherhood identity often develops after professional identity has begun (Spector & Cinamon, 2017). Introducing a mother identity into a life of a woman who has already established a professional identity within a profession or organization can be challenging. Millwood (2006) identified the ways pregnant women are treated in the workplace before they go on maternity leave. Millwood's participants relayed feelings of insecurity, lack of confidence, guilt, and exclusion as they prepared for maternity leave.

These feelings continued for those participants who returned to the workplace after maternity leave, as they struggled with professional worth, negative perceptions of their ability from colleagues, and the challenge to integrate their role of mother into their role of professional. Cuddy, et al. (2004) also reported changes in other people's perceptions of working mothers. These researchers discovered that women without children were regarded as more competent than women with children, making is more difficult for working mothers to compete for promotions and raises. The pressure associated with incorporating a maternal identity into a work identity can influence decisions on how much the woman can work or if will even stay in the workforce (Ladge et al., 2012; Spector & Cinamon, 2017). There is no denying that working mothers face obstacles when returning to work after the birth of a child.

Literature highlighting working mothers often includes the term "balance" to describe the tension between roles of mother and professional. In this context,

work/family balance is defined as "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of conflict (Clark, 2001, p.349). Balance, however, is difficult to measure (Bailey, 2011). Working mothers face significant obstacles when forced to attempt to balance responsibilities at home and at work. Women often see balance as an ideology, a symbol of comfort rather than a reality (Vair, 2013). Vair (2013) described the work/family struggles as "a terrible dance" (p. 155) that men often do not have to endure. Women feeling the need to accomplish 100% at home and 100% at work. While "balance" may be the term that is generally used to describe the life of a working mother, the reality is women often do not experience the actuality of achieving balance.

While the challenges of working mothers are evident in the research, opportunities exist as well. Issues associated with maternal identity and professional identity are multifaceted and should be managed at multiple levels, simultaneously with family systems, organizational systems, and societal systems (Hennekam et al., 2019). Working mothers used multiple strategies to integrate professional life with home and work, including time management and optimal childcare options (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). The more women prepared and anticipated their multiple roles, the easier their transition back to the workplace (Spector & Cinamon, 2017). This preparation allowed them to be better prepared, receive more workplace support, easily weave multiple roles, and have a stronger, positive emotional response.

While earlier studies focused on the problems for working mothers, Laney et al. (2014) suggested that the integration of motherhood and work elevated a woman's sense of purpose and ability. The challenges of managing time needed for parenting were offset by the contributions they brought to the workplace, making them contributing employees.

Similarly, Sinha (2017) compared women in the workforce with homemakers and found that women who work outside of the home were more satisfied with their quality of life. Sinha clarified that positive mental health for working mothers was associated with the level, status, and power associated with the position they held. A woman's happiness and sense of wellbeing is influenced by a variety of variables, including age of child, job status, and job situation (Hamplová, 2019). To declare that working women are happier than stay at home mothers could be misleading. The research does show, though, that women can have well lived lives weaving motherhood and career (Hamplová, 2019; Laney et al., 2014; Sinha, 2017).

Environmental influences are significant for working mothers' sense of purpose in the workplace. As women explore identity through their experiences in problem solving and decision making, they learn about themselves and the multiple ways they identity and connect with social groups, including work organizations (Spector & Cinamon, 2017). Organizational support, structure, policies, colleague and supervisor support, and financial support are key factors for women who contemplate returning to work after having a child (Hennekam et al., 2019; Millwood, 2006; Spector & Cinamon, 2017). Women seek work environments that support working mothers' needs, and organizations have a responsibility to help working mothers through coaching, mentoring, and policy development focusing on childcare and working hours (Hennekam et al., 2019). When considering the skills and experiences working mothers bring to a professional environment, stories can uncover they ways women blend the experiences of their multiple identities as they share their stories, enhance their own personal meaning, develop a healthy professional identity, and inspire others who follow in their path.

Working Mothers in Higher Education and Student Affairs

There is much to be learned about the unique experiences of working mothers in higher education. Until the past decade research on working mothers specifically in student affairs was scarce, but fortunately the literature has grown in the last decade, primarily through doctoral dissertations. (Bailey, 2011; Collins, 2009; & Fochtman, 2011). This section highlights the challenges and opportunities for women in the field of higher education.

One of the challenges that exacerbates the tension for working mothers lies in the way that institutions develop policy. In an older study about women in student affairs, Nobbe and Manning (1997) showed the early pattern of struggle that working mothers faced. They identified themes associated with managing organizational maternity leave policies, attitudes of co-workers upon returning to work, difficult choices between family and work, and mixed levels of support from supervisors as problems for working mothers to navigate. Over 20 years later these challenges continue to exist with inconsistency associated with organizational policies and attitudes in higher education and the need for a new way to support working mothers (Lester, 2016). Gender inequality continues to be a problem with unequal pay, social gaps, and continued disparity between women and men's responsibilities in the home and at work (Blair-Loy et al., 2015). Organizations continued to value employees who can work longer hours, creating tension for women who had the bulk of responsibility in the home. With obstacles at home and work, balance seems unachievable (Blair-Loy et al., 2015).

There are ways, though, that women and educational institutions can work together to provide more balanced experiences. To address organizational responsibility,

Lester (2016) advocated for a balanced work-life culture within universities that consider flextime, additional funds for child-care tailors to the needs to individuals who have caretaking responsibilities outside of work. Vair (2013) asserted the need to change language entirely and consider the term "weaving" instead of "balance" to describe the ways working mothers create meaningful lives within their multiple identities. People naturally move between work and family with each influencing the other (Clark, 2001). When women change their perspectives and organizations recognize the advantages of working mothers' contributions, opportunities can be created for the advantage of all concerned.

What advantages do working mothers bring to higher education student affairs? This literature review showed that working mothers can thrive while managing family and work. Senior level administrators who are mothers have been the subject of literature in recent years and the results were not always negative. In her research of student affairs women administrators, Fochtman (2011) noted that professional women who are mothers recognize the struggle of balancing both roles but also indicated a sense of reward in balancing both responsibilities. She concluded that women in her study were successful because they understood the importance of mentoring for career advancement, the necessity to establish support networks, and the importance of balance between personal and professional responsibilities. In a similar study, Lee (2015) explored the experiences of higher education senior level administrators who were mothers of small children. She learned that the roles of mother and administrator created challenges for integration of work and family life, however, her participants also suggested that motherhood positively

influences personal and professional lives. These positive experiences should be explored further to create a new discourse for women's professional and identity development.

Chapter Summary

The review of identity research provided the background for conceptualizing this research study. A review of higher education student affairs practice revealed the field as an emerging profession, struggling to create its own professional identity. Additionally, the student affairs field suffers from a high attrition rate and inconsistent practice associated with socialization and professional identity. Literature about working mothers has focused on work life balance issues, obstacles, and struggles, however, Lee (2015) and Fochtman (2015) provided glimpses of a different narrative that speak to positive experiences for mothers who work in a student affairs environment. Women play a significant role in higher education and working mothers provide fresh perspectives, skills, and knowledge to enhance student affairs work with students. As can be seen in the literature, the synergy existed for a robust study to examine the lives of women who chose student affairs for significant part of their professional experience while raising children and how their experiences impacted their work and the organizations with whom they were employed.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

The research purpose and questions for this study were designed to comprehensively examine working mothers' personal and professional experiences in higher education student affairs. The research questions warranted a methodology grounded in qualitative inquiry because of the in-depth exploration needed to understand the interconnectedness of motherhood and professional identity (Merriam, 2002; Riessman, 2008). Narrative inquiry, a qualitative research methodology, provided a comprehensive and sustained method for examining life experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This chapter begins with a philosophical framework for the narrative inquiry methodology, a description of narrative inquiry, and a focus on reflexivity and my individual experiences, followed by outlining the research methods of data selection, collection, and analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of maintaining integrity in the study through trustworthiness and ethics.

Research Paradigm

A person's sense of reality is constantly negotiated and interpreted using a variety of tools at our disposal (Pretorius, 2018). Narrative inquiry methodology focuses on questions that arise from human experiences. Narrative inquiry methodology is one way in which researchers can examine life experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry is defined as:

> "A way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participant, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interactions with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in a midst and presses in this same spirit,

concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving, and

retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both

individual and social. Simply stated…narrative inquiry is stories lived and told."

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

These lived experiences impact other experiences and result in changing relationships

and situations over time (Caine et al., 2013). How do people live and how do they

negotiate meaning from their stories? It is within this pragmatic view of reality that

narrative inquiry lives.

Talisse and Aikin (2008) described pragmatism as a philosophy of thought that is

fraught with differing opinions about definition and practice. Pragmatism was first

discussed as a theory of meaning by Charles Sanders Peirce in the late 1800's, and his

ideas were heavily analyzed and challenged by Williams James and John Dewey in the

early 20th century (Talisse & Aikin, 2008). In the broadest sense, pragmatism focuses on

the usefulness of an idea (Rosenthal & Thayer, 2020). Change is inevitable and action is

constant. Ideas create plans of action and truth comes from seeking information. Dewey

combined Peirce's focus on logic and James' focus on the human condition to integrate

these experiences to find truth (Rosenthal & Thayer, 2020).

Dewey's theory of experience was based on two criteria, interaction, and

continuity (Dewey, 2011). Throughout life a person continuously adapts to their

environment, and through these continuous situational interactions, they become actively

engaged in the world around them. Dewey (2011) asserted that knowledge comes from

actively engaging with one's environment. Knowledge is active, not passive helping a

person work through problems and create connections (Dewey, 2011). In other words, a

person learns from their experiences, which influences subsequent experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Experience is personal and social, in that a person needs to be understood, not only through internal or learned personality traits, but also in the way they present within social systems. Interaction and continuity provide the foundation for experience within Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality that guide narrative inquiry. Stories are told within a period of time, in a particular place, and within social contexts.

Narrative identity theory provided the framework to explore the influence of working mothers maternal and professional identities over the course of their lives. Dewey's understanding of knowledge as it relates to human experience parallels narrative identity theory and its focus on the ways people find personal meaning through their stories of past, present, and anticipated future. Dewey's focus on the principles of continuity and interaction supported the framework to study identity formation from internal and external perspectives of a person. From their imagination and memory, a person creates what Dewey refers to as an "aesthetic experience" (Dewey, 2011; Kim, 2016). It is through an aesthetic experience that a person finds joy and meaning through knowledge (Dewey, 2011). Our past stories influence the way we interpret and live out present and future experiences.

If knowledge is to be negotiated and interpreted within the context of the lived experience, stories provide the impetus for a person to connect past, present, and anticipate futures. Participants in this study told the stories of their experiences with their own mother figures as well as other family members, as well as professional mentors and supervisors who influenced the way they identified in their distinct roles. Using memory

and imagination they recounted their lives and filled in the gaps in their stories to connect the process of knowing with what is already known.

<p style="text-align: center;">Narrative Inquiry Methodology</p>

Following Dewey's focus on the importance of experience as a means for self-exploration of past, present, and anticipated future events, this study used a narrative inquiry process to gather the stories of women who have experienced life as a mother and a student affairs professional. Narrative inquiry was the appropriate method because of the focus on the stories of participants to reveal to the reader who the storyteller is and how they have become who they are (Riessman, 2008). Narrative inquiry was also a strong method for studying identity development (Chase, 2011). Dewey's application of pragmatism in education, the pursuit of knowledge through personal and social experiences, drives narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Experience should be studied as a mode of inquiry and learning, directly connecting narrative inquiry process to Dewey beliefs about knowledge and experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The narrative process can be described as a quilt made of the personal and intricate stories of a person's life and should be practiced from the aesthetic view to fully capture the nature and purpose of lived experiences, as circular experiences that influence all aspects of life (Kim, 2016). Narrative researchers explore stories to discover the varied facets of meaning that are constructed. "Life is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17). Narrative inquiry follows the assumptions that people's lives are expressed through their

stories. These stories have many interpretations and represent meaning in people's lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016).

In a narrative inquiry study, participants use perception, memories, imagination, and language to create meaning (Kim, 2016). The researcher is an integral participant in the restorying of a person's experience by listening, reading, and writing the narratives of people in a logical order (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The researcher has the daunting responsibility to honor the retelling process and maintain the meaning constructed by the storyteller (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). Thus, it is important in the retelling of stories that particular attention is given to the language used within the context of each story (Kim, 2016). The inter-relatedness between a story's content and its structure drives the analytic process (Merriam, 2002).

Narrative inquiry analysis requires that the "story remain the central focus" of a participant's experience (Johnson-Bailey, 2002, p. 323). As a former therapist, I understand the importance of a person telling their life story. However, no story is complete because of the complexity of life and the imperfect nature of memories (Britzman, 2003). People tell their stories for others to hear; thus, the listener's responses become part of the story (Riessman, 2008). "We are forever composing impressions of ourselves, projecting a definition of who we are, and making claims about ourselves and the world that we test out and negotiate with others" (Riessman, 2008, p. 106). Stories tell us as much about society and culture as they do the individual (Riessmen, 2008). As I took on the responsibility of retelling my participants' stories, I had to seriously contemplate my role as working mother and researcher. The next section outlines the responsibility associated with the role of researcher.

Subjectivity Statement

A person's life's journey results in the culmination of many identities, some that are given at birth, others acquired through experience. As a young southern woman in the late 1970's, my identity was strongly influenced by my family and environment. My mother, a master's level elementary school reading specialist, encouraged me to take control of my own life and not ever depend on another person for my survival. She challenged me to use my "God given" intelligence and abilities to find my own career path and forge into my future with confidence. My bold personality and talents shaped my early attitudes about what it meant to be a professional. I saw leaders as people in charge, directing others, setting the tone for a group. However, in the deep south, women were expected to be demure and submissive, two characteristics I did not have.

Plans for a career as a corporate executive seemed farfetched and impossible in a community where women were expected to stay at home with their children. In the 1970's south, teaching or nursing were the accepted professional roles for women who wanted or needed to work outside of the home. While I heeded my mother's advice to take charge of my own destiny, I allowed external factors to influence my career decisions and chose a career path in higher education. Even with my mother's influence to be independent, I married before my 24th birthday.

As my career in college admissions gained momentum and I advanced in position and responsibility, my husband and I chose to start a family and I put further education and career advancement on hold. I was in my late 30's when I finally earned a master's degree in professional counseling and forged ahead in a variety of positions in higher education student affairs. To preserve my family, my dream to earn a terminal degree did

not become reality until my children were grown and out of our house. My woman/mother/professional superpowers had hit a limit. I settled into a variety of midlevel management positions in student affairs and never considered upper-level administration. However, I never stopped gaining crucial professional attitudes, skills, and behaviors.

Until I embarked on this study, I never really considered how my professional and maternal identities intersected. My primary professional identities within student affairs have been as a college counselor and a leadership educator. The skills and knowledge I learned in these areas played an influential role in my parenting style. Conversely, my parenting knowledge and skills came into my professional setting when working with students, either in counseling sessions or student groups. I have watched my adult son take on leadership roles as a soccer coach, building up young people to excel in their gifts. My daughter followed my footsteps and pursued a career in counseling, working with different populations while taking on leadership roles. Like the participants in this study, I have found my success as a mother in the success of my children.

The influences of family, friends, and community had a profound impact on my identity choices as a woman, a mother, a wife, and a student affairs professional. These identities and the organizational cultures in which I worked influenced my professional development. The weaving of my identities, particularly my role as a working mom, contributed to my effectiveness as a mother and wife and to my success in higher education. As I approach the end of my professional career, I am confident in my ability to build relationships and work toward positive outcomes for our students, qualities essential for a strong student affairs practitioner.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an essential methodological tool in qualitative research. As the researcher I was the primary instrument in the research method, the participants and I constructed meaning together through our relationship with each other (Riessman, 2008). Reflexivity required me to take a step beyond self-reflection and deeply consider all observations, assumptions, and conclusions (Kim, 2016). Kim (2016) emphasized the importance of the reflexive process to reduce risk and maintain the integrity of the study by acknowledging researcher limitations, thus strengthening the rigor of the research process.

My personal experience as a working mother in student affairs, as well as the current literature regarding identity and working mothers inspired my interest to explore the experiences of other working mothers. I wanted to learn how mothers leveraged their motherhood identity and professional identity within their lives. As a young professional in higher education student affairs, I thought I had to act in a manner that men would respect to achieve recognition and advancement in my career. My perceptions derived from my observations and encounters with other men and women with whom I worked. My experiences mirrored Gallant's (2014) observations that women often fall into the trap of believing that directness and deficit-based problem solving were more valuable leadership capacities than compassion or relationship building. Understanding my own story helped me to consider how I might influence the research.

As the researcher, I influenced the interview setting, the social circumstances, and the interpretation of the narrative (Riessman, 2008). I influenced the interpretation of my participant's stories by my own voice, my own lens, and my own experiences as a

working mother in higher education student affairs, and I had to be mindful of the space in which the story was shared. Awareness of my role in the process was the first step to minimize risks to the integrity of the participants' stories and their voices.

While the role of teacher/learner is reversed when comparing a research interview to a therapeutic interview (Josselson, 2011), my experiences as a therapist partially prepared me for this journey with my participants. I understood the importance of honoring my participants' reality, recognizing my own preconceived ideas and biases, listening deeply beneath the words, and most importantly, not jumping to conclusions but allowing truth to come forward on its own accord. I referred to my researcher memos and lessons learned from the pilot and bracketing interviews that I conducted prior to starting the interview process with participants to continually remind myself that the outcome for this narrative study would be different from standard counseling outcomes of problem solving and growth. As Kim (2016) described, "I want my research project to tell its own tale with grace or dignity, consisting of harmony, balance, consistency, and integrity" (p. 86).

Examining my own experiences as a working mother in student affairs provided the intellectual and emotional space for me respect my own experiences while allowing my participants to relive their experiences (Kim, 2016). To challenge my assumptions and create space for my participants' voices to be authentic and represented with integrity, I identified my own experiences and suppositions about life as a working mother in student affairs through a process called bracketing (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Bracketing is defined by Tufford and Newman (2010) as a method used by researchers to reduce the risk for using individual experiences and beliefs to unduly influence the

research process. A more comprehensive explanation of my use of bracketing is described in the Trustworthiness section of this chapter.

This process of checking assumptions began while reading the literature associated with the obstacles and struggles women face in the workforce and continued with a bracketing interview before interviews began. I wrote researcher memo during and after each interview and reflected on my reactions to the participants as they shared their own stories of relationships with their mothers, children, families, and colleagues, as well as their educational pursuits and career decisions. Since I process information externally, I talked about my research process with colleagues to challenge the way I was retelling participants' stories while considering the similarities and differences from my own experiences. Their stories influenced how they made sense of their lives, how they negotiated their reality, and how they defined being a mother and student affairs professional. By carefully considering my own assumptions and retelling their stories, I learned how their lives unfolded and how their identities wove together to create their life mosaic. A more comprehensive explanation of my use of bracketing is described in the Trustworthiness section of this chapter.

<div align="center">Participant Selection</div>

To understand how women in student affairs integrated motherhood identity and professional identity, this study examined the experiences of working mothers who have already raised their children. The decision to focus on women whose children have left the home resulted from an understanding of narrative identity theory, as well as my own experiences. As discussed earlier, narrative identity theory is grounded in the understanding that self-meaning comes from past, present, and anticipated future

experiences of a person. Working mothers with children still in the home are often busy juggling the day-to-day responsibilities that come from home and work and may not have the capacity to deeply reflect on issues of identity. Mothers whose children are grown and on their own can reflect on past experiences and retell their stories to make connections to memories and consider their futures as the mother of an adult (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; McAdams, 2011).

Fochtman (2015) revealed that often women choose to stay in midlevel management positions to help keep balance in their lives, so years of experience, rather than level of position, was a factor used to choose my participants. Since working mothers in student affairs reach various levels of responsibility and title, I did not limit my participant search on a particular level, such as midlevel or advanced positions. My participants shared the following characteristics: an adult child or children who no longer lives in their home; and a professional identity grounded in an area of higher education student affairs but not bound by leadership position. For this study, the participants needed to have worked in student affairs for ten concurrent years that their child/children were in the home. The 10-year span provided time and room to allow for memories associated with the child's development and their own professional journey.

The next step in participant selection was to determine the appropriate sample size. Identifying appropriate sample sizes for qualitative research is dependent on the purpose, usefulness, time, resources, and credibility of the study (Patton, 1990). Determining the optimal sample size required much thought. While Seidman (2013) expressed reluctance to determine specific numbers of participants for a qualitative study, Kim (2016) suggested narrative inquiry sampling guidelines of six to ten participants or

as small as five and as large as 25. Determining the optimal number of participants to interview also depends on two factors, sufficiency, and saturation (Seidman, 2013). Seidman instructed that sufficiency occurs when people outside of the study can identify with the experiences of the participants and saturation occurs when their information becomes redundant and there are no new themes emerging from the participants. After careful consideration of the nature of student affairs, the limited sample pool, the intensity of the interview process, I determined that I would interview four women who met my criteria. The small number of participants allowed time for longer, more intensive interviews to collect comprehensive data to meet sufficiency and saturation of experience.

The nature of student affairs also played into the participant selection process and sample size determination. In Chapter II, a discussion of higher education student affairs revealed that the variety of specialty areas in the field and multiple entry points for professionals contribute to a nebulous sense of professional identity. To incorporate a diverse perspective and explore maternal and professional identity across the student affairs field, I planned to interview women who have worked in different areas of student affairs and settled in varying levels of position. Fortunately, even with the limited sample size, the participants' experiences covered a wide range of areas, including residence life, student activities, conduct and integrity, leadership, counseling and advising, and orientation.

Finding participants proved more difficult than I anticipated. I relied heavily on colleagues and social media to find participants. In the past decade, the use of social media platforms has become a more prevalent method for recruiting research participants

(Bhatia-Lin et at., 2019; Gelinas et al., 2017). I used snowballing, a purposeful sampling technique and shared my research project in the following Facebook groups: Georgia College Personnel Association, Black Student Affairs Professionals, Student Affairs Working Moms, NASPA, Region III, and College Student Affairs Administration University of Georgia (UGA). I sent emails to colleagues in the Association of Leadership Educators, Kennesaw State University Senior Leaders, and my Dissertation committee members. Colleagues shared my research study with their colleagues in GroupMe: Metro Atlanta/Georgia Black Higher Education Professionals, UGA EdD student Affairs Leadership 2021, UGA Black Student Affairs Leadership, and Black Folks at NASPA. An invitation to participate can be found as Appendix A. I had hoped to find participants who came from racially or ethnically diverse groups to capture their unique voices and experiences, but I was not successful in that venture. All participants identified as White, creating a limitation for the study. The participants did not naturally talk about how their race impacted their decisions and as a White woman, and I did not ask questions to address their race. Adding the stories from women of diverse backgrounds might have given a richer perspective to the discussion and outcomes of the narratives.

Over the course of six weeks, I found one participant through FaceBook, one through a professional email and the final two through referrals. I set up initial Zoom meetings with each woman to verify their eligibility to participate and to discuss the interview process and timeline. Once each woman agreed we set up interviews through a password protected Zoom platform and began interviews.

Data Generation

While qualitative research is not strictly prescriptive in design, it does require a systematic process that is strategic, yet flexible, fluid, and exploratory (Mason, 1996). This process must allow for the development of the participant/researcher relationship and the opportunity for participants to express themselves through their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Once I received IRB approval (Appendix A), I began the data generation process.

Before I began interviews, I conducted a pilot interview with a friend to see if the interview questions were provided enough openness from which to generate relevant data. This friend did not exactly meet the requirements for this study, so I did not include her narrative in the results. However, I learned essential information that helped me in the design of the interview guide. The initial questions that I created to discuss maternal and professional identity integration did not bring forth the depth of experience for which I had hoped. My friend suggested I create open ended questions that encouraged participants to share all aspects of their experiences, including their behavioral and emotional responses to situations. This suggestion proved helpful to the overall outcome of the study in that the participants' stories were deeper and more meaningful.

Riessman (2008) emphasized the strength in conducting multiple interviews and strategically spacing them to listen attentively to the participant's story and allow for the adjustment of questions in subsequent interviews, as needed. As a result, I decided on two data generation methods, individual interviews, and a focus group with all participants. I chose Seidman's (2013) method to conduct three 90-minute interviews and added a focus group with all participants to deepen the scope and experiences that I

would glean from the resulting data. Individual interviews provided the platform for participants to share longer stories and share personal information that they might not share in a group. Whereas, during the focus group session, participants responded to each other's stories, creating a rich environment for shared experiences to be explored. Adding a focus group provided additional time to explore organizational influences and other shared experiences and provide the opportunity for the participants to share any advice with younger working mothers (Ary et al., 2014). At the time of the focus group, I considered adding a third research question to address advice these women had for other working mothers, but after I analyzed the data, I decided the question did not fit as a research question, since it was more of an interview question. The advice shared by participants was interspersed in their individual narratives. The following sections provide an explanation of the individual interviews, and the focus group interviews. The section ends with a description of the video process for both individual and focus group interviews.

Individual Interviews

Narrative interviewing provides the conduit by which the researcher gets to the heart of a person's experience (Seidman, 2013) and generates a comprehensive account of a participant's story (Riessman, 2008). The three-interview structure provided the space and time to delve deeply into their experiences and examine maternal identity and professional identity comprehensively before discussing how the two identities weaved together. Thus, interview content was structured to discuss maternal identity experiences in the first interview, professional identity experiences in the second interview, and the integration of maternal and professional identity in the third interview. I chose interview

questions to ensure that I was following narrative identity theory to allow participants to reflect on their past, their present, and their anticipated futures.

All the participants lived too far away to meet with them individually so individual interviews and the focus group were videorecorded through a password protected Zoom internet platform. Using an interview guide to aid in the process, I used a semi-structured format to allow participants to share stories that explored their identity as mothers and professionals in student affairs. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility to explore the unique challenges and rewards that maternal and professional identity created for the participants and to discuss contributions made to the profession as working mothers (Patton, 2015). Questions were developed to evoke deep feelings, motivations, meanings, and experiences (Patton, 1990). The interview guide for this study can be found in Appendix C.

My original plan for scheduling interviews was to space each participant's interviews so that I would have several days between interviews to watch and prepare for the next interview. However, adhering to this plan became problematic. A family emergency took me away from my research for over a month, and to stay on schedule I pushed the interview schedule for the last two participants closer together, creating challenges in preparing for the next interview. I had to structure my time carefully to watch each interview and create research memos to record my observations before the next interview. For the first two participants, I watched each interview (while taking notes), while reading and correcting the transcripts created in Zoom before the next interview. For the last two interviews, I watched each video and took notes before the

next interview but waited until all interviews were completed before I read and corrected the transcripts.

Focus Group Interview

After the individual interviews were recorded and transcribed, I invited the participants to participate in a focus group to fill in any potential data gaps from the individual interviews and explore together the challenges and rewards for integrating motherhood with student affairs and discuss personal and professional relationships and mentors. After I watched and read the Zoom transcripts for all the individual interviews I wrote, and reviewed researcher notes and discovered gaps in information needed to tell the women's stories and answer the research questions. As a result of that initial evaluation of the data, I revised my original focus group interview guide to incorporate the influence of organizational structure and policy, work relationships and mentors, and provided time for the participants to share any advice they would give other working mothers. The focus group interview guide can be found in Appendix D.

The Video Interview Process

Videos and other online qualitative data generation methods have become more common in recent years (Lobe et. al., 2020). The use of videos as a data generation method served as a helpful tool for this study since I could not meet with each participant in person. Advantages of using video format included the ability to see the participants, their facial expressions, and their surroundings during the interviews. It was also helpful to be able to watch the videos or segments of the interviews multiple times to process the extensive stimuli from the participants.

During both the individual interviews and the focus group, I listened and watched the participants and noted their voices, their points of view, their intimate relationships with their stories. I asked clarifying questions when appropriate, took notes, and checked personal assumptions by writing my thoughts and interpretations in researcher memos (Kim, 2016; Patton, 1990). Reflection-in-action is a process by which a researcher thinks about the practice undertaken and adjusts during that practice to modify the learning process (Schõn, 1983). I practiced reflection-in-practice during the interviews by writing quick notes and watching the participants' body language, voice cadence, and tone during the interviews. From my practice I was able to make immediate corrections as the interviewer to ensure that I was keeping my questions open-ended and not interjecting my own experiences. More extensive researcher memos were written after each interview and during every phase of analysis process to determine how to share their stories accurately.

To complete the data generation process, I downloaded the written transcripts provided by Zoom. This data was used to construct the retelling of their stories and create common themes (Saldaña, 2016). I watched the participant videos and focus group video while reading the written scripts, pausing often to make detailed notes, correct the written transcripts, and omit identifying information. Transcripts, identified by the participants' pseudonyms, were then transferred to ATLAS.ti (2022), a qualitative data analysis software program to aid with coding. All transcripts, researcher memos, and other data were stored on thumb drives and locked in the researcher's home. All data stored on ATLAS.ti were destroyed when the dissertation was completed.

Data Analysis

"At the very heart of what it means to be human is the ability of people to symbolize their experience through language" (Seidman, 2013, p. 8). Data generated from the interviews focused on extended accounts of each participant's experiences as mother and professional (Riessman, 2008). I used a thematic analysis process to re-tell the stories of the participants. Thematic analysis is a process that focuses more on the story that is told rather than how the story is told (Riessman, 2008). The participants provided the lens from which I explored their experiences (Kim, 2016). Through the analysis of their stories, the voices of these women provided a unique perspective within the field of student affairs. Once the narratives were written, general themes were developed to highlight common values the women used when making decisions. The analytic process for re-storying and theme development follows.

Re-telling Participant Stories

Narrative analysis differs from other qualitative methods in that a researcher must look within each person's narratives more so than look across the different interviews in the study (Riessman, 2008). Because of this emphasis on individual story analysis, Riessman (2008) emphasized that transcription and analysis are one process to seek the underlying meanings within the stories, more so than the actual events relayed in the stories. I found this symbiotic process to be true as I watched, listened, read, and wrote memos throughout the interview process.

I conducted three semi-structured individual interviews with each participant and used the videos, researcher memos, and the Zoom transcript to analyze the data. I read transcripts and watched videos multiple times and wrote notes to become familiar with

the data (Riessman, 2008). After each interview I watched the video, pausing as

necessary to make notes regarding content, facial expressions, pauses, and speech

patterns. I then watched the video again and cleaned up the transcripts to have an accurate

written account of the interview and omit any identifying information. Once all

individual interviews were completed, I read the transcripts and created a demographic

chart that identified information needed for the retelling of their stories. To protect the

identity of the participants, a sample of the demographic information I collected is shown

below.

Table 1

Demographic Chart for Participants

Name	Marnie	Julie	Goldie	Laura
Age	mid 60's	early 50's	mid 60's	early 50's
Marital Status	Married	Married	Divorced	Married
Education	BA Journalism; MS Counseling	BA Communications; MS student affairs and higher education PhD Leadership studies	BA Human Development; Masters in College Personnel	BA History; Masters in Curriculum Instruction; PhD; Interdisciplinary Education
Children	3 girls	1 girl	2 boys	2 girls
Professional Identity	leadership educator	campus activities, student engagement	generalist	generalist with residence life roots
Years in Student Affairs	37	30	39	20 in student affairs d

To prepare for analysis, I uploaded all interview transcripts, including the focus

group transcript into ATLAS.Ti and applied in vivo coding to protect and honor the

language of my participants (Saldaña, 2016). In vivo coding, also known as "verbatim coding," is the process of identifying a word or phrase that derives "from the actual language found in the qualitative data record" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 105). I chose in vivo coding because that process would keep me intricately connected to the participants' language. I was able to use their words to retell their stories. Once I had coded all transcripts, including the focus group transcript, I had over 1000 in vivo codes to consider.

To continue analysis, I applied pattern coding as a second cycle process. Pattern coding is defined to condense data into smaller numbers of categories (Saldaña, 2016). I chose pattern coding because, among its uses, it is appropriate for examining human relationships, which were a significant part of the participants' stories (Saldaña, 2016). From this second cycle process, I condensed the 1000 codes into 24 broad groups. From those broad groups, I condensed the codes into three sections using the structure I created for the interviews: Maternal Identity, Professional Identity and Maternal/Professional Identity Integration. I downloaded the transcripts and codes from ATLAS.Ti, into word documents to organize the individual narratives.

Once the transcripts for each participant were coded and organized, I combined the transcripts for each participant and began preparation for writing their profiles. I organized the individual profiles based on the interview topics, Maternal Identity Experiences, Professional Identity Experiences, and Integration of Maternal and Professional Identity Experiences. I created a separate Word document for each topic and identified potential quotes for each section. Once I had the quotes under each topic, I read the quotes and grouped them to create a cohesive flow in their narrative. The quotes were

then organized within the topic. I followed Seidman's (2013) suggestions and deleted

typical patterns of oral speech, such as "uhm," "like," and "right," if those iterations did

not contribute to the story. I also omitted phrases that did not add to the purpose of the

story or change the overall voice of the participant. To honor the voices of the

participants, I used long quotes to allow them to tell their own story. My voice served as

narrator to provide transitions to help with the flow of their stories.

From this in-depth analytic process, I retold each participant's story to respect

their authenticity and reality, using their expressions through language (Kim, 2016). I

honored the emotional lens from which my participants shared their stories, respecting

that they at times shared negative experiences that elicited a level of pain (Kim, 2016). I

added researcher observations at the end of each participant's narrative to highlight key

insights (Majorad, 2019). Once I completed the interviews, I sent a copy of their profile

to each participant and asked for their honest critique of my representation of them. I

asked that they correct any informational mistakes and invited them to delete any stories

that they were not comfortable sharing. Two participants had no changes, one participant

provided grammatical suggestions, and one participant did not provide feedback.

Theme Development

To determine common themes among the participants, I reflected on the stories of

the participants and their motivations for their decisions. Each woman talked about the

beliefs and ideals that were important to them as they journeyed through their lives at

home and at work. As I reflected on their descriptions of their value systems, I drew on

my knowledge as a leadership educator to consider how these women used their values in

their decision making. "When you identify your core values and take the time to define

them, you are identifying the clear set of criteria you will use for decision making"

(Dudley, 2018, p. 34). From this reflection, I decided to pursue theme development by

concentrating on these women's values as the decision drivers for their successful

integration of maternal and professional identity.

I returned to the transcripts and applied values coding. Values coding is a way to

"reflect on the participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 131). Values

are the moral codes by which we live. Attitudes are the ways we process information and

reflect on ideas and people. Beliefs are the system we use to incorporate our values and

attitudes (Saldaña, 2016). I identified 31 values across the participant's transcripts and

associated values that were reflective for each participant. The values these women used

to determine the course of their lives were foremost in their stories and experiences. As I

reread and coded the transcripts, I began to list the values that stood out for each

participant. I also reviewed field notes and researcher memos to check to see if those

values were identifiable in my notes. Table 2 lists the values I heard repeatedly from and

most aligned with each participant. These values represented the core beliefs that were

consistent throughout their interviews.

Table 2

Participant's Primary Values

Participant	Value Category
Marnie	Child and Student Development
	Problem solving
	Innovation
	Social Justice
	Education/Learning
	Quality Time
Julie	Education/Learning
	Flexibility
	Logic/Reason
	Problem solving
	Mental/Physical Health
	Focus
Goldie	Determination
	Confidence
	Variety
	Education
	Work Ethic
	Independence
Laura	Problem Solving
	Variety
	Flexibility
	Creativity
	Faith
	Goals

To further explore these women's experiences, I looked for commonalities within the different values to see if there were common themes (Seidman, 2013). As I reflected on the different values, I again applied pattern coding as a second cycle process to create major themes (Saldaña, 2016). The values could be grouped to suggest broader themes that connected these women's experiences. The first theme focused on the attention these women gave to their children's development, student development, and staff development. Another theme emerged in the way they thought through problems to create innovative decisions and home and at work. A third theme focused on ways the

participants worked to meet the needs of people in their lives and advocate for themselves and others. I also noticed the sense of purpose and intention that each woman brought to her decision making and practice. I developed four primary themes which represented the values these women used to make decisions and integrate their personal and professional identities. I named the themes Human Development, Critical Thought, Personal and Professional Advocacy, and Intentionality. When I looked back at the chart that aligned the participants and their values, I saw that each woman reflected at least one value from each theme. The values that I associated with each theme can be found in Table 3. These themes are discussed extensively in Chapter IV to highlight ways in which these women used their values in their intentional decision making as they blended their personal and professional responsibilities.

Table 3

Common Themes and Associated Values

Themes	Associated Values
Human Development	Child and Student Development Problem solving Social issues Education/Learning Quality Time Goals
Critical Thought	Education/Learning Flexibility Staff needs Problem solving Mental/Physical Health Focus
Personal and Professional Advocacy	Determination Communication Variety of experiences Education Work Ethic Independence
Intentionality	Problem Solving Variety Flexibility Creativity Faith Goals

Trustworthiness

Participants must feel safe, connected, and passionate about their stories. Trust is integral to the researcher/participant relationship (Kim, 2016). Researchers must reduce risk and acknowledge limitations by being reflexive, and objectively observing their subjects and reflecting on their own reflections of their interpretations (Kim, 2016). Deep data analysis can only occur when the researcher genuinely cares for all participants and their stories (Kim, 2016). Researchers must act ethically and morally, "be phronetic

researchers who navigate the world of narrative research with caring reflexivity" (Kim, 2016, p. 106).

Guba (1981) outlined four criteria to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research and evaluation, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is achieved the researcher has taken all aspects of the research into account and considered alternatives that are not readily explained. Transferability is achieved when the parameters of the study and detailed descriptions are maintained. Dependability is achieved when consistent procedures are detailed, data generation and analysis processes are established. Confirmability is achieved when the researcher maintains a neutral party to the data. A variety of tools are used to ensure that a study is rigorous and trustworthy. I incorporated tools of a rigorous interview process, member checking, and bracketing and found that these tools worked in tandem to ensure a rigorous and trustworthy study.

Reflexivity is described earlier in this chapter as an essential methodological tool in qualitative research. Reflexivity required me to take a step beyond self-reflection and deeply consider all observations, assumptions, and conclusions (Kim, 2016). The reflexive process reduces risk and maintains the integrity of the study by acknowledging researcher limitations, thus strengthening the rigor of the research process. Using Britzman's (2003) terminology of "methodological humility" and "methodological caution" (p. 35), I became mindful of my influence in the analysis process. Methodological humility ensured I fully understood the role of outsider in a person's story and recognized that I might miss or misconstrue information I heard.

Keeping methodological humility and caution in mind, I developed a rigorous interview process. It was important to balance between my voice and my participant's

voice (Kim, 2016). I was cognizant of my own personal convictions and made notes during interviews to make sure I was setting those convictions to truly listen to the stories shared (Patton, 1990). Based on my immediate observations and notes, I adjusted my responses to provide longer pauses for participants to consider their answers. Other adjustments included refraining from adding my own story when tempted and reframing questions to encourage more in-depth answers. This process of reflection in action (Schon, 1983) added to the strength of the interviews and improved my expertise as the interviewer. To maintain integrity of my research, as I transcribed, read, and coded data, I was aware of my influence regarding the topic, my participants, and my interpretation of their stories, and challenged my thinking to be willing to change directions when necessary. Conscious awareness of my role reduced the risk of my own subjectivity in the process.

To reduce the risk of altering the participant's point of view, I incorporated member checking as another method to ensure trustworthiness. People have many voices from which they interpret and share their stories (Britzman, 2003). Britzman (2003) stated, "Voice permits participation in the social world" (p. 34). Dunworth (2017) cautioned that researchers often do not see their limitations until fully immersed in the experience, a statement I found to be accurate as a researcher. He added that awareness and willingness to change directions are keys to a successful research project. To ensure that honored the voice of my participants, I incorporated member checking and my interpretation of their narrative with each participant to allow them to make revisions or corrections (Merriam, 2002). I followed Carlson's (2010) recommendations and was clear during the consent process that I would be sharing their profiles with them prior to

completion to receive their feedback and suggestions. I asked them to check facts and chronology of events. I also invited them to omit any stories that they were not comfortable with me sharing.

Bracketing proved to be another valuable tool to examine my own subjectivity with the research. "Bracketing is positioned between the researcher and the research project as a mechanism to both protect and enhance the research process" (Tufford & Newman, 2010, p. 87). Prior to conducting the individual interviews, I shared my proposal and research questions with a professional colleague who has conducted narrative research and invited her to interview me. This bracketing interview provided the opportunity to talk through my own assumptions, individual experiences, and any emotional or ethical issues that may arise during the research process (Rolls & Relf, 2006). Through this interview process, my friend who interviewed me shared her observations and helped me consider potential blind spots. I challenged my subconscious assumptions, checked my personal boundaries to allow the voices of my participants to shine through their narratives. From this interview I considered the ways I was influenced by social influences of the 1990s and 2000s. I examined my own understanding of professional identity in student affairs and considered when I had been successful integrating professional and home life and when I had struggled. I was aware of the danger of assuming that my participants' experiences would be the same as mine because of our similar ages, and our experiences as White women.

Another bracketing intervention involved writing researcher memos (Tufford & Newman, 2010). I wrote researcher memos and talked with other working mothers, my daughter, and colleagues to examine my own experiences as a White, married, Protestant

working mother in the southern United States. I explored my personal history and the

emotional journey mothering entailed. Before I began the individual interviews, I

pondered my own autobiographical narrative to bring to awareness my own experiences.

From these interventions, I worked through my own subjectivity throughout the research

process.

The pilot interview mentioned earlier in this chapter also provided an opportunity

for me to check my subjectiveness. I realized quickly during the pilot interview that I was

listening from the lens of a counselor and not as a researcher. I internally interpreted what

she was saying and interjected comments from a psychological perspective. I also

realized my desire to interject my own experiences and share my own stories that were

similar or different from hers could detract from her story. From these lessons learned, I

went into the research interviews with a clearer picture of my own shortcomings as a

researcher. As a result, I practiced self-awareness and changed my approach when I

found myself listening as a counselor or responding more as a friend sharing stories.

Integrating an environment of trust throughout the research process was essential

to the success of a study. However, the mere incorporation of standard techniques did not

ensure a trustworthy process (Maxwell, 2013). Kim (2016) called narrative inquiry a

"sacred space" (p. 103), an opportunity for researchers to look beyond their own

assumptions and preconceptions to explore fully the lives of others. With such an

opportunity comes great ethical responsibility.

<div align="center">Ethics</div>

Ethics is grounded in the reflexivity of the researcher and is driven by the honest,

open relationship between researcher and participant (Josselson, 2011). To maintain an

ethical environment throughout the study, I followed institutional requirements for conducting a study, I developed protocol for ensuring confidentiality, and I treated my participants with respect for their voice, while challenging my own thoughts and assumptions.

Once I received approval to move forward with my dissertation, I submitted a request to the Institutional Review Board to ensure that I address any potential risks to human subjects and protect my participants from harm (Roberts, 2010). As per the university's Institutional Review Board I created a consent statement using their template, (Appendix E), to provide complete information to participants about the project, potential risks, time required, explanation of procedures, benefits, and confidentiality. This statement was read at the beginning of the individual interviews and the focus group, and I allowed time for any questions or concerns. I assigned pseudonyms or allowed my participants to create their own pseudonyms to replace their names and changed all identifying information (family names, places worked) to protect their anonymity (Seidman, 2013).

While I did not anticipate that the subject matter would pose any physical risk to participants, I was aware that there might be emotional distress when participants share personal or professional experiences. Once I received IRB approval, I began the data generation process. The IRB, while important, however, did not cover all ethical issues, defined as "moral principles that govern our human behavior" (Kim, 2016, p. 101). Ethical dilemmas often emerge from unexpected places, with small, inconsequential issues arising in everyday situations (Kim, 2016).

Researchers must be mindful of potential breaches in confidentiality that can occur when the circumstances of the participants' lives identify them to readers of the narrative. Because of the specific criteria I used to identify participants, it was crucial that I protect the confidentiality of my participants, particularly since their stories might reveal their identities. To safeguard my participants' identities, I asked my participant if they would allow me to contact them after the interviews to discuss any questions or concerns, I had about their stories and receive written feedback through email of their final consent to include the entirety or a revised version of their profile.

Using narrative inquiry methodology created ethical challenges in that "narrative researchers often publish or perform longer stories from individuals' narratives" (Chase, 2011, p. 424). There were challenges that I considered as a researcher. First, I recognized the challenges associated with narrative analysis, and learned quickly that I would have different experiences with each participant (Merriam, 2002). I allowed the participants to review their retold stories to provide the opportunity for clarifying and retelling their stories. Third, throughout the interviews I asked clarifying questions to fill in gaps in their stories and make sure that I was interpreting their words to accurately reflect their intended meaning (Clark, 2001). To ensure that I was accurately sharing my participants' stories, I sought validation from participants to reduce the risk of misinterpreting stories (Maxwell, 2013). The integrity of this study relied on my professional response to the ethical demands of narrative inquiry.

Chapter Summary

Stories permeate all areas of life and take on "lives of their own" (Kim, 2016). My experience as a counselor and a working mother in student affairs influenced my

decision to pursue a study examining the experiences of working mothers in higher education student affairs whose children have left home. This chapter outlined the research paradigm, reflexivity, and the qualitative method used for data generation and analysis. The plan for data generation and analysis was described to align with the narrative inquiry method. Issues of trustworthiness and ethics were addressed to ensure accurate outcomes. From this research, voices of women who have persevered in student affairs while maintaining responsibilities of motherhood opened doors for continued conversation about women's contributions and challenges in the field of student affairs.

Chapter IV

NARRATIVES AND THEMES

The purpose of this study was to examine the personal and professional experiences of working mothers in higher education student affairs to understand how they integrated motherhood and professional identity into their lives. The stories of these women provide a holistic view of their experiences and how they made meaning from those experiences. Using a systematic qualitative research process, these narratives were crafted carefully and deliberately to honor the voices of the participants. Following a narrative identity theory framework, each narrative delved into the participants' past experiences, present experiences, and explored their anticipated future (McAdams & Pals, 2006).

The individual interviews served as the framework for the narratives of the four participants, who used the pseudonyms Marnie, Julie, Goldie, and Laura. After an introduction of each participant, the narrative was written using their own stories. The individual interview guide provided the structure from which their lived experiences were shared exploring maternal identity experiences, professional identity experiences, and the integration of the two identities. In vivo coding was applied to identify the stories relevant to the topics and ensure that the voices of the participants remained authentic. Because each participant came from a specific time and place, each narrative took a unique shape as they reflected on the influences in their lives, how they interpreted the questions, and what they decided to share.

Meet Marnie

Marnie and I first met at a leadership symposium in 2010 and made a connection because of our shared experiences as working mothers in higher education, student leadership development, and our similar educational experience in counseling. During the symposium we exchanged stories of our families, our lives, and our careers. Eight years later when we reconnected at a professional conference, Marnie expressed interest in my doctoral research topic. Remembering her interest, I shared my invitation to participate hoping she might have colleagues who would be interested. She responded to my email quickly, and to my surprise expressed interest in being a participant in the study. We met over Zoom soon after to explore any concerns that our pre-existing relationship might have on the interview process. We considered our relationship and any undue influence that relationship would have on research results. We determined that beyond any surface details, we did not know much about each other and decided to move forward with the interviews. We also confirmed that she met the criteria for participation in the study. She has served in higher education student affairs for over 30 years while raising three daughters who now live on their own.

Three interviews were scheduled, spaced a week apart. Marnie was at her beach house for all sessions. The bright room, ceiling fan, and large windows provided a casual environment for our conversations. At the beginning of the first interview, I read the consent form and received verbal consent for her participation as required by the university's Institutional Review Board. All interviews were conducted in a password protected room on Zoom. The first interview focused primarily on maternal identity, the

second session on professional identity, and the third session on the integration of the two identities.

Conversation with Marnie was easy, possibly because we had met before. She was relaxed during the interviews, often sipping on a beverage while she shared her stories. She maintained a balanced cadence, tone, and inflection in her pitch. She was funny, poignant, her emotions emerging in her smiles and outward laughter, and in her long pauses as she spoke of difficult memories. Her eyes would brighten when she shared a funny story and she would become more reflective and somber, often taking long pauses to decide how to speak to the difficulties she faced in her personal and professional relationships.

Marnie identified as a mid-60-year-old, White, cisgendered female. She grew up with her biological parents, both deceased when they were in their 60s, and two older sisters, one now deceased. She was younger than her siblings by 7 and 12 years, and shared, "I was the little sister who had to tag along." At the time of the interviews, Marnie had been married for 39 years to the same man and has three adult daughters, 31, 36, and 37. Her undergraduate education was in journalism and her graduate degree in counseling.

Maternal Identity Experiences

Marnie's journey to and through motherhood was driven by her expectations of what she believed motherhood would be based on societal expections and culture of the time and her matriarchal relationships. She talked about growing up in the 1960's and 70's and the expectations that society placed on women to marry and have children. Many of her friends married before her, and she described herself as "always the

bridesmaid, never the bride." Marnie described how she interpreted and managed these sometimes conflicting factors.

> It was a combination of things that made me just really want to be a mother, and none of them would have been this overpowering maternal instinct that I had. We grew up in an era where that was just the expectation, the normal course of life that happened. I just always expected to be a mother. We were at the age where people got married right out of college. All my friends did.

> I was the last of my friends to get married, the last of my friends to be a mom. I was 30 [when] I had a kid. I don't know if I was comparing myself to other people who felt that you should have achieved by now, and why was I behind the eight ball. I felt less than. I think about it a lot and I work really hard on not comparing myself to others and focus more on feeling really blessed about the things that I have in my life, but that doesn't mean that comparison doesn't sneak in.

As Marnie reflected on feeling left out based on societal expectations, we pondered together whether these concerns are as relevant today with young women. Having been raised in the same generation, we had similar experiences about the expectations that were placed on women. We felt a sense of relief together that our daughters may be receiving a different message, a message of independent thinking and decision making about their lives.

> Judy: There was so much pressure. Back in the day people criticized and judged those women who opted not to have [children]. There is that expectation of, "I'm supposed to want children."

Marnie: Right and religion was tied to it. Marrying into the Catholic faith, this is the output of your marriage. It was expected and I didn't question that. I think our daughters are less impacted by it. They've grown up in a time where there was a lot more attention given to inequities around society's expectations of women and things, and I think they will not grow up with that same sense of feeling insecure.

Along with societal expectations, another significant factor of influence in Marnie's maternal identity was her relationship with her mother. She described their relationship in the following way and reflected on the influence that relationship had on the ways she mothered her daughters.

[My mother] was 40 when I was born. She never worked [outside the home]. She was always the room mother and very active in the PTA. As a little girl, I remember spending time playing with her, her playing dress up with me. She and my dad came to every game I cheered. They came to any dance recital, any theater performance. They never missed anything. I did want to replicate that.

As I got older our relationship wasn't bad, it was just dutiful. She was never the kind of mom I could talk to about things. She was very judgmental and very conservative, so I could never talk about sex with her, or boy problems, or any kind of thing that adolescents and young adults go through. I know she loved me, but there was there was a lot of judgment and unforgiveness about mistakes. They never put unrealistic expectations on me in terms of school or things, just very unforgiving if I missed a curfew or went out with a guy that she thought wasn't appropriate.

There were a lot of things I felt like I missed out on [with my mom] that I tried to do in terms of the relationship with our girls. I wanted to fill in what I didn't have. Not that I wanted to be their friend, but I never wanted them to think they couldn't talk to me. From the get go, I wanted to have a really open, honest nonjudgmental relationship.

I tried [to emulate] the good things about my mom. I did not want to be an absent parent. Even though I worked full time I always was their room mother. I never missed a game. One of the reasons I think I landed in student affairs is I realized that I could probably have a flexible work schedule. If I'm working nights and weekends, then I can leave in the middle of the day or in the afternoon to go to a game.

I wanted to be seen as a loving, caring mother. I wanted to be a mom with whom they can communicate about anything. My children come first always and I don't know if they always realize that. I also wanted them to see me as a professional, as an accomplished woman, because I want to be a role model to them. And, honestly, I think they see me that way, especially when they come to me for advice about professional kinds of things or problems at work.

Marnie learned that her children did not always interpret her actions the way in which she intended. She revealed her parenting goals were not as easily reached as she hoped when she fell into the pattern of judging her daughters, even though she had not intended to extend that pattern of parenting that she had absorbed from her mother.

My husband and I are doing some counseling right now because our middle daughter is having some really difficult times and we're just struggling on

how to deal with it. This counselor has helped us see how judgmental we were as parents, even though we didn't see it that way. The counselor has taken both of us back to our childhoods a lot and pointed out where we have been our mothers, and why that is linked to regret usually. I can't allow myself to dwell on it.

I want to say, specifically to our middle daughter, "I know that you must have felt really judged by us and I'm really sorry." I don't know how to just jump into that conversation, but I feel like I need to have it. Let her know that I acknowledged it was not our intention to do that, but I understand how we may have put expectations on her and judgments on her that she felt much, much more strongly than we intended.

Marnie expressed some surprise as she reflected on life as the mother of an adult child. She struggled as her middle daughter struggled with adult situations. Marnie had the realization that being the mother of an adult child was more difficult than she might have originally expected. As children age, their needs change and she had to alter they way she supported them. Even with the uncertain challenges of supporting her children, Marnie concluded her thoughts of her maternal identity by sharing the extreme love and joy she has experienced as a mother.

I expected as my children grew older, they would need less, and I would get more invested in my career. That's what I always anticipated would happen. But as they got older, they didn't need me less. We had one who got in trouble a lot, helped them with college searches, and supported all the things they were involved in. Our youngest was diagnosed as a Type One diabetic when she was in

seventh grade. That was a whole new level of responsibility that I wasn't anticipating.

I've often thought being a parent to an adult child is much more difficult than being a parent to a little child because the emotional stuff. You can complain about having to get up in the middle of the night to feed somebody, run to PTA meetings, and be busy busy busy. But as they get older their problems are so much harder to help them solve, and you can't solve them. It isn't caretaking as much as developing and really parenting that takes more time. If I've had an "aha" moment about motherhood it's that it gets harder as we get older, in different ways, from an emotional standpoint.

All three of them are fantastic young women. One of the things I enjoy is mother-daughter weekends. We are all theater junkies. We've all performed. I love being able to go out and get a drink with my daughters and talk about their finances, talk about their marriage, or whatever. It's exciting to see them move into different adult phases.

I've loved being a mother at every phase. My husband and I often say, "How did we do it? How did we work full time, go to all their games, coach their teams, choreograph their shows? How in the name of God did we do it?" Now I can't keep my eyes open at seven o'clock. It's crazy, but I loved that time. When I think of the energy and just that bustle of LIFE. I loved it, and I love, I love it now. I understood, for the first time, the times my mother would say, "You'll never know how much I love you. You can't possibly understand a mother's love until you're a mother."

Professional Identity Experiences

Marnie's foray into the world of student affairs happened organically by way of a brief stint in secondary education and a natural transition to higher education academic advising and counseling. She landed in student affairs primarily because of the structure of the community college where she served as an academic advisor in a TRIO program for underserved students and found her passion for working with students. Her identity as a student affairs professional solidified when she began her experience as the Director of Student Involvement and transitioned to Manager of Student Life at a small university. Her love for teaching and working with students became the catalyst that would drive many of her professional decisions. Marnie shared how her professional identity developed from childhood dreams of being a teacher to her career in student affairs and highlights what her professional identity means to her.

When I was really young, I wanted to be a teacher because I can remember my favorite thing in the world was playing school. I would teach my dolls and on really good days my friends would come, and we would take turns being the teacher or the class. Really vivid memories of that.

[Toward] the end of elementary school, I wrote something for class and it got published in the elementary school newspaper and I got a lot of praise from my writing ability. I ran with it and I got really involved in journalism and just always assumed all through high school that I was going to be a journalist. That was my major in college, English journalism.

My first real full time job was the editor of a new weekly newspaper. Had my own office, my own photographer, and a boss, a publisher, who was an

asshole. Pardon my French. This was on the the tail end of Watergate, so I think every newspaper publisher saw himself as a Woodward and Bernstein. I wanted to write human interest feature stories. I wanted to write sports stories. I did not like hard news, but as the editor of this paper that was my main job. My publisher asked me to break into offices. He asked me to go hang out in a bar where a county executive was known to frequent and cozy up to him to try to get stories. This is not what I signed up for.

I started substitute teaching at my old high school and really liked it because it was a performance. I was always a performer, always did theater, and I'm like, "Yeah, I can grab an audience even as a substitute." I think I began to develop my professional identity when I was a high school teacher. Students would gravitate to me and that happened with the student athletes, and that happened at the community college."

Marnie's professional identity in student affairs began to take shape within the structure of the organizations in which she worked and her as a result of her participation and growth from her involvement in professional organizations. From these experiences, Marnie found her identity as a student affairs professional and leadership educator. Marnie helped create a national student leadership conference, served on the board of a national leadership educators professional organization and won awards at national conferences and in her own insittution where she currently works. Marnie spoke of these experiences and the impact they made on her. The attitudes and behaviors she assumed as a student affairs professional came from her values and her relationships with students and staff, not education or title.

My degree is not in higher ed. I didn't really know anything about the organizational structure of a university as a professional. I was in the athletic department doing student affairs work, but that's not what it was called. When I went to the community college, I was in this transitional studies program TRIO grant, a student support services grant, and I remember going to an ACUI conference, American College Unions International, because they were having sessions on TRIO programs. That's the first time I remember being made aware of the idea of a student union, the idea of student affairs, because I was at this student affairs college union professional conference. I became aware of the bigger picture and probably the first time I started thinking more broadly about my career.

I would say I didn't identify as a student affairs professional until I went to another univerisity as a Director of Student Involvement because there the structure at the university was super clear. I learned a lot and started going to a lot more professional development in student affairs during my time there. My involvement in professional associations has helped me connect with colleagues who have inspired me, who have become friends and who have challenged me in a variety of ways to dig deeper, become more innovative, and to improve my programs. These involvements have also increased my self-confidence. Whether it's receiving positive feedback on a presentation, serving in a decision-making capacity on a Board of Directors, or winning awards, being acknowledged by a larger professional circle of colleagues whom I respect has given me a tremendous sense of accomplishment.

Even with her success at a national level, Marnie shared one frustrating point about her involvement in professional organizations, feeling like she was a little less respected by other professionals because she did not have a terminal degree.

> To be honest, at times, my participation in one organization increased my imposter syndrome when it is so often assumed that I am "Dr." When I correct that assumption, there is an ever so slight, but real, hesitation or doubt in the eyes of the person who made the assumption. This is an association of mostly educators, people who have achieved doctoral status, and there is definitely a hierarchy of respect in that organization. It's one reason that my involvement with the national student leadership conference meant so much. That group of professionals is much more honestly accepting of diversity of experience and education.

Marnie's spoke adamantly about her decision not to pursue higher levels of leadership. Her love of working with students and her commitment to her family played the most significant role in her decisions. She was also influenced by women she observed in the field.

> I consciously did not pursue a fast track of ambition. I don't need to have a bigger title to feel good about myself professionally. My family was always more important, and I was content with being at a director level and having my own little world. I learned that the higher up you go, the further away you are from student interaction, and that was my wheelhouse. I didn't want to do budgets and HR issues. I wanted to work with students. I wanted to be able to direct programs and have input that creative input, but I also knew I didn't want to be at the top

because that took me away from what I love about the work. I saw some professional women who I thought must be running away from it because they were at work 20 hours a day. I just felt like I don't want to be that mom.

I used to look at the women who were higher up in student affairs and a very small percentage of them were in happy marriages and good family situations. I noticed the number of them who were divorced or childless. I don't want to be married to my job to the point where I can 't engage in my children's lives and be a good partner. I don't know if that was just my unique circumstance, where I happened to work. [A] president who was divorced and childless; my boss who I adored was divorced and had one child; my other boss at the university was divorced, and I think she's a fantastic mother. My next boss was divorced, one child. Just lots of women in higher up positions. I want to be there for my kids, so I think that, not intentionally, but that impacted my ambition, too.

Marnie talked about the effects her pending retirement on her identity. I asked her what she meant when she said, "Who I am outside of work is really influenced by who I am at work." She responded by admitting to the fear of identity loss now that her children have left home and she contemplates retirement.

Stepping into the next phase of my life, as I start thinking about retirement, it scares me to think about not having those relationships. Now that I'm an empty nester and I'm not raising children anymore, what gives me confidence and the ability to feel good about myself is what I do at work. I don't feel like I bring that same level of value to other things that I do, and part of it might be because I don't get the same kind of positive reinforcement and feedback

from friends and family that I get from students and staff. At work I'm seen as accomplished. I don't feel that I'm seen that way outside of work, because I don't talk about my work a lot.

There's this divide in my two identities. It's not that my kids don't know what I do because they've come to see me. They've come to some of the conferences that I have put on, and they know I present at national things. But I don't think they get it really. I remember I brought my sister in as a speaker for an event one time as part of a career panel. She spent the whole day with me and saw me coordinate this event, and she saw the students' response to the event. She's like, "I had no idea how effective you are at your job. I am so impressed." Why would she have any idea? Why does anybody who's not working with us have any idea?

Another aspect of Marnie's professional identity was impacted by her age. She talked about the importance of students' continuing to see her as relevant especially as an older professional.

I think my age has always impacted my identity, because professionally, I don't ever want to be perceived as old, out of the loop, or written off in that way. I am lucky in that people don't often realize what my age is for my appearance, and I never correct them, ever. My biggest fear is that my students, if they knew how old I was, would write me off.

I did a service trip last year to Puerto Rico with 30 students and we were there for two weeks. The last night there we did our last reflection. We have everybody sitting in a circle talking about what memory they're going to take

home from this experience. This one kid said, "I'll never forget the day we were working when it went over 100 degrees. We're all dying, and there's Marnie in the backyard with a weed whacker going crazy chopping weeds. There's this 50 year old woman and she's gone crazy!" And I'm like, "Yeah I'm pretty good for 50." Right, like there's no way I'm gonna say I'm actually 65. Isn't that crazy, but that was this moment of pride for me that they see me as this energetic person who's younger than my years.

From her experiences, Marnie concluded that student affairs offers an environment that expands the mind and keeps one in touch with the changing world.

> I think [my professional identity] meets a lot of my values, innovation and creativity, the idea of taking something and doing something with it. Relationships is a huge value for me. My inbox is filled with letters and notes from emails from students thanking me. I'm making an impact on students and on people. It's really important to me that I know I've been able to help someone get to the next level, or get over a hump, or feel good about themselves. I'm really worried about not being able to do that, because that gives me a sense of value and self. I hope I'll be able to continue to find ways to be innovative through some consulting work.

> One of the things that I love about working in student affairs, it keeps us young at heart. We can't allow ourselves to not be in tune with the times. If we do allow ourselves to not be in tune with the times, we're not going to be in tune with our students. I think that we're really lucky that we do get that continual education that helps us with our relationships with our students. Who I am outside of work is

really very influenced by what I learned and who I am at work. I've looked at friends who never worked and were stay at home moms, I had moments when I thought, "Gosh, wouldn't that be nice." I don't think I would have liked it. I think I would have pulled my hair out.

We are lifelong learners. The education that I got as a student affairs professional I can share with my children, my whole family, and my husband too, who's working in a corporate environment. He's not learning about identity and intersectionality and all the things that are on the cusp of lifelong learning. Being able to share all that and have conversations that if I was in another field those conversations might not ever happen.

We are constantly engaged in professional development. We are learning how to respond to things that are happening in the world that are going to impact our students: mental health issues, politics, you name it, climate change. I have to be informed to be good at my job. And I don't know if I would feel that need if I wasn't in this field and teaching students how to how to be leaders in this world. I think of the way I view the world now, how different it is from the way I viewed the world [in] 1976. Crazy, right? I don't know if my view would be that different if I were not in higher ed. I don't know. I hope it would.

Professional and Maternal Integration Experiences

Marnie's own experiences are excellent examples of the impact that maternal and professional identity has on the total life experience for a working mom. Whether we coin the term "balancing" or "weaving," the two identities are constantly influencing

each other. She shared stories and examples of the integrated nature when these identities exist.

My role as a mother and my role in student affairs, each of those roles, I became better at because of the other role. Having the jobs that I've had and being a mom has given me a sense of identity and has given me a sense of self-confidence and self-worth, quite frankly. It's always been a challenge to be a mother and a professional, to make sure I'm giving both the time and making conscious decisions about not going further in my career because family was more important.

I went back to work full time when my youngest was a little over a year old and then our middle daughter was three and our oldest was five. I never stopped being involved in their school, but my youngest said her memory is that I was always at work. That just cut me to the core because I took so much time to not always be at work. Five nights a week I read books to her. It doesn't matter how often you do something; they're going to focus on the one time they miss it. Which is why I made such a concerted effort to never miss big events and or even small events. I'm sure they remember many dinners when mom wasn't there. Dad was cooking dinner because mom had to go back to work, because she took off in the middle of the day. So you know, we do our best.

I have always valued the the flexibility, the potential for flexibility that lies in the field of student affairs. It's always been hugely important to me that I worked for somebody who either was also a mom or understood that my role as a mother has to come first. I'm not going to be an absent mother. I'll do the work.

I'll work my butt off, but if I have to leave in the middle of the day to go to a concert, for example, I'm going to do it.

A comparison of Marnie's experiences with her students and her experiences with her own children provided insight into ways in which her maternal and professional integrated but with different results. Even when she gave similar growth opportunities to her students and to her children, they responded differently. She felt the students were more appreciative. Her children took her involvement for granted.

I get more consistent feedback from students that validate me that I'm doing a good job, or that I provide value, or that I am in the right place. I don't get that feedback consistently from my kids. I'm not going to say I don't ever get it, but not in the same way. My students who see that professional side of me, see me as somebody who gets them from point A to Point B. They are in our lives for that one moment in time, so they're thinking about when they graduate. They're thinking about the past four years.

From day one we are helping our children create that path, getting them from point A to Point B. It's just what we do as parents, [but] I don't think our children often stop and think about it and give us that feedback the way our students do. The milestones our children experience are just different. They don't stop and think they have a graduation milestone. They might thank us for helping them through college.

It seemed to be difficult, if not impossible for Marnie to compartmentalize mothering behaviors from professional behaviors. Marnie talked of ways her professional identity crept into her conversations with her daughters. She also talked about the

advantages that her professional life in student affairs gave her daughters. In all she was thankful for the influence that each role has had on the other role.

Being a student affairs professional helped me be a better mom in terms of understanding developmental stages that our kids go through. My primary professional strengths, one is in creative innovative program design and the other is in building relationships with my students especially. So [counseling] comes into play a lot and I am very comfortable helping students in counseling situations, whether personal, academic, social, whatever. The double-edged sword is I feel like I should also have that strength as a parent, and my kids [respond], "Mom, you're not my counselor. Take your counselor hat off," when I tell them "What you're feeling?" I use any emotion cliche lines like, "Tell me more about that."

Despite my kids rolling their eyes, my background in counseling did help me. It was overkill sometimes, but I think there were a lot of times it was probably great. I try to counsel my kids, trying to approach helping my daughter solve a problem in the same way I would approach helping a student and it doesn't always work. You know either way. But it works way less frequently with my own kids.

The professional environment can be a place of learning and fun for the children of working mothers. Throughout her children's lives, Marnie has involved them in professional activities on campus. She also shared examples of ways her adult daughters continue to interact with her professional environment.

I would have staff parties at my house. [The children] thought that was fun when my staff would come over because my staff were always young. There would be certain days like we had a block party every semester. I would take the kids and take your daughter to work day.

I try to include them in work [to make sure] they're familiar with my work environment. I do an etiquette dinner every year and I invite alumni to come and interact with my students. I invite our daughters and their significant others to be guests at that event. Our youngest daughter, who works for juvenile diabetes research foundation, has been one of our nonprofit partners in our part of our program that works with nonprofits.

Marnie's maternal identity influenced the way she related and worked with students. She spoke with great affection about her students and the relationships she shared with them. It is evident the joy that Marnie brought to her student relationships.

A lot of my students call me mom. You know "she's my school mom." I've gotten cards addressed to 'mom' from my students. I share stories about my kids, too. I [have] pictures of my children in my office. They definitely know I'm a mom and I think, I've never thought about this before, but I wonder if that's why they do tend to come to me more than they come to my two young staff members. Not that they don't go to them, but I think they come to me more often with more serious things. I lead with my heart and it's completely obvious, so I think students may, depending on what the issue is, be drawn to me when there's more emotion involved.

Being a mom helps me be better with my students. I don't know if there's too many careers that you can say that about. I bring a lot of my motherly traits. The way I'm with my kids I often am with my students, compassion, humor, and fun, silliness. I think it's mainly compassion and by compassion it's like, "I want to get to know you. I want to have these conversations with you. I want to have fun with you. I want you to come to me with issues with problems. I want to take care of you." I'm not a disciplinarian with my students. I feel like I bring a cool factor.

During our time together, Marnie and I talked about the experiences supervising staff members who are the same age or younger than our own children. Her experience as a working mother played strongly in her values and expectations for them.

I am not hesitant to stress upon them my philosophy and the importance of making family time as a supervisor. "Your family comes first, and I will be as flexible as I possibly can be, when you need me to be." I think that makes more loyal employees, quite frankly.

I look at the competency of my colleagues who are in their 20s and early 30s, the same age as my children. I don't question it. If you ask my staff, "Does Marnie treat you like children?" I don't think they would say "Yes." "Does Marnie try to mother you?" I don't think they would say "Yes." I want them to know I'm there. I share things with my staff to let them know that I'm open and they can come to me with things.

Observations from Marnie's Narrative

It is not surprising that Marnie and I made a strong connection when we met in 2010. We share a similar educational background, hers in journalism and counseling, mine in communication and counseling. We both entered student affairs from other related roles in higher education, hers in teaching and advising, mine in admissions, orientation and counseling. Neither of us pursued higher levels of administration and chose time with family and children's activities. Similarly, as we both approach retirement, we question how it will affect our identity. However, as I separated my own experiences from hers, I identified two key observations specifically from her experiences to highlight in this analysis.

Professional organizations and relationships played a primary role in Marnie's identity development as a student affairs professional. Marnie's professional identity and ultimate success in student affairs was not the result of her having a degree in the field. Her professional identity developed through the different positions and responsibilities that she had, as well as the relationships she built along the way. Marnie talked at length about professional associations she was involved in and the influence those organizations had on her identifying as a student affairs professional. Her interaction in the professional organizations solidied her as a student affairs professional and led to toward a specific focus on leadership education. For the past 10 years, her primary professional identity has been grounded as a leadership educator within student affairs, which again came from the opportunity to learn within her positions within student affairs and her contributions to professional organizations, not from a terminal degree.

Marnie observed the negative effects that admininstrative positions had on women with whom she worked, and she made the conscious decision to choose a different professional path that would ensure her ability to be present for her family. Marnie shared many examples of the ways her maternal and professional identities integrated through her relationships with her children, her students, and her staff. It was clear that Marnie's heart was with her children as well as with her work relationships. She took great pride in her relationships with her daughters and her relationships with her students and she carefully nurtured those relationships. Additionally, she mentored younger staff members, who routinely sought out her out for advice and support. From her ability to impact her relationships from both roles as mother and professional, she embraced and excelled as a working mother.

Professional identity came from deep within her own personal identity and was influenced by her role as a mother. Marnie saw herself as a product of her environment, from her relationship with her mother, her birthorder in the family, societal influences and expectations, and the influence of religion. Marnie's personal core values of innovation and creativity drove her desire to transform students' experiences and lives. Those values and experiences also influenced the professional decisions that she has made with regard to where she worked, how she want to be in those spaces, and how far she wanted to go in structural organizational hierarchy. She was adament that she did not want to move into a professional role that did not involve direct contact with students or that took her away from her family. Marnie identified motherly traits of compassion, humor, and fun that she brought to the workplace, positively impacting her students. She

also discussed how her professional knowledge about current events and issues positively impacted her daughters.

Marnie did not want to compare herself to others but admitted that there are times she felt left out because her life path did not follow the same timeline as her friends around her. These feelings of exclusion were resolved when she had her own children. She now longs to be a grandmother and share those experiences with her friends. Age and pending retirement have recently impacted how she views herself from a professional lens and the sense of loss that may come after she retires. She is actively pursuing avenues to continue to be relevant when she retires.

In summary, Marnie's passion for teaching and counseling were evident in her work with her students, as well as her relationships with her daugthers. She loved seeing the transformation that comes of student development and her professional knowledge and experience, coupled with her maternal knowedge and experience were catalysts to help her achieve her goals as professional and mother. From Marnie we can learn to embrace life, focus on what is most important in our lives, express our needs in the workplace, and intentionlly strive to limit regret that will inevitably materialize when we compare ourselves to others.

<div align="center">Meet Julie</div>

Julie expressed interest to participate in my research when I posted the invitation on the S.A.M.S. (Student Affairs MomS) Facebook® group page. We scheduled an introductory meeting on Zoom to discuss the research and confirm her eligibility and interest. Julie has worked in higher education for over 20 years while raising an adult daughter who now lives on her own. She shared that she wanted to support my journey

because she had experienced the challenges associated with completing a doctoral degree and she understood the struggles associated with completing a dissertation.

Following the pattern of my interviews with Marnie, we scheduled three interviews a week apart, however, a family emergency on my end delayed our third interview by several weeks. At the beginning of the first interview, I read the consent form and received verbal consent for her participation as required by the university's Institutional Review Board. All interviews were conducted in a password protected room on Zoom. The first interview focused primarily on maternal identity, the second session on professional identity, and the third session on the integration of the two identities. As with Marnie's interviews, the mutual influence of maternal and professional identity was explored throughout the interviews.

Even though we had only just met, the conversation with Julie flowed naturally. While she was introspective in the way she pondered and answered questions, she shared stories that were relevant to her experience and to the research. Her tone of voice was of a lower register. She spoke with an even cadence and laughed often throughout her stories. She would sometimes take long pauses as she reflected on her responses. Her eyes would often leave the screen as she thought and reflected on memories. At times I wondered if she was trying to determine what information she wanted to share or merely put her thoughts together fully before she answered. Based on our conversations and her nonverbal facial expressions, I concluded that she is a pragmatic, straightforward, introspective woman, and she concurred when I offered those observations.

Julie identified as White, female, cisgender, and as an educator. At the time of her interviews, she was in her early 50's. Her parents divorced when she was three years old.

She grew up with her mother and extended family. She has two older siblings, a sister who is 7 years older and a brother who is 10 years older. She has been married for 27 years to the same man and has one 25-year-old adult daughter. Julie earned a bachelor's degree in public relations, a master's degree in student affairs, and a Ph. D in leadership studies. She is currently the director of leadership, student engagement, and first year experience at a small, private, religious based institution in the northern United States.

Maternal Identity Experiences

Julie's entry into motherhood began after she was established in her career. Julie met her husband while working as a hall director, her first professional job. She admitted that he, being the more emotional of the two of them, was more excited about her pregnancy than she was. She said his enthusiasm helped her along. She was 26 when her daughter was born. Throughout her narrative about motherhood, matriarchal relationships with her mother, grandmothers, and her daughter as well as professional identity influences were paramount as primary influences for her maternal identity.

> I don't remember as a kid ever thinking that's definitely something I'm going to do (having a child) or that I wanted to do. But as I got older and had nieces and nephews and enjoyed spending time with them, that was when it started to be like, "Oh, okay, that could be fun."

> I finished my master's program. I was probably about eight months along and had applied for some positions, but people weren't super interested in hiring someone pregnant. This was never the stated reason, but my due date was about the same time most colleges were starting fall semester classes. [My daughter]

was born in late August and I was not working until the next January. It was a bit of a surprise but after that initial surprise, it was fine. Yeah, after that it was fine.

Julie's mother was the primary parental influence in her life. She mentioned early in the first interview that her parents divorced when she was three years old, and she did not talk about a relationship with her father during any of the interviews. As I reflected on that fact, I concluded it might be because I did not ask about him.

> For most of my memory she's been a single mom for us. My mom has worked outside of the home for most of the time that I can remember. As a kid I didn't think about this. As an adult, [I realized] we clearly could not have had very much money. But as a kid you just don't think about those sorts of things.

Julie was young when her mother was in a serious car accident and suffered some serious injuries that required multiple surgeries. Julie's memories of the incident and time were hazy, but she shared the reslience of her mother's recovery, a reslience that Julie shows in her own life now.

> When I was five, she was in a pretty serious car accident. For a while we went and lived with grandparents and stayed with them. My memory for that is a little hazy, but when the first happened, probably a month or so, I ended up at a different set of grandparents than my brother and sister. There were a couple of surgeries in there. We'd end up going to stay for a few nights here and there as things happened. [My mother] worked really hard to get back on her feet. She went back to school at a community college and was able to get work after that.

Julie added that being the youngest of three siblings had its rewards in that her mother allowed her to be her own person. She became independent and strongwilled early in life.

I got to do a lot of things [my siblings] didn't get to do, but by that point [Mom] was like, "Okay, you can make some of these decisions on your own." I really took to heart [that] it's necessary to work hard to be able to help provide. I would say one of the other things that I got from [Mom] is the importance of stating your opinions, standing up for yourself.

One time she was able to assist me in high school. I didn't want to have to take a particular math class my junior year because I didn't particularly like the teacher that would have been teaching it. I knew that my senior year was going to be a different teacher. Our guidance counselor was trying to convince me that I had to take it my junior year, otherwise I would not get into college. And we kind of went round and round, and she finally was like, "Okay, well I'm going to call your mother and talk to her about it." I'm sure she assumed that they would be on the same side. But they were not. I remember her making that call and hearing my mom say, "No, if that's what she wants to do then she has the right to do that. And if she says she's going to take it next year, she'll take it next year. There's absolutely no reason for that to have to happen this year."

Julie's relationship with her mother and her grandmothers influenced her relationship with her daughter, whether it was the pragmatic way she approached her role as mother or remembering the importance of spending time with her child. Julie talked her mother's work ethic and practical approach to life and parenting.

I would say that probably is something that would describe my mother, logical and purely pragmatic. That probably describes my whole family quite honestly. I would not describe her as a real touchy feely emotional type person. That's one of the things, especially when our daughter was younger, I tried to be more purposeful about, trying to be more more touchy feely with her.

[My daughter and I] always had a good relationship. When she was younger, we spent a lot of time together, even if I was working. I felt like she was kind of a momma's girl because she was a little clingy sometimes, but we spent a lot of time together and did a lot of things together. We had a tradition of going to see the Nutcracker together before Christmas. Now as an adult she and I have season tickets to the performing arts center that's nearby.

Julie and her husband decided that they only wanted one child and she was aware of the challenges an only child might experience in life. Julie made sure that her daughter had social opportunities with children her age and not only interacted with adults. Even as Julie was experiencing a serious health issue when her daughter was 15 years old, Julie was encouraging her daughter to go out with her friends and have a social life.

When she was in high school I had been diagnosed with breast cancer. It was caught very early, the prognosis was always good. That happened at about the time that I thought should have been the time where she was starting to be more rebellious and push back on boundaries. I felt like how do you fight with your mom if this is what you're worried about?

Honestly I managed to go through treatment without truly needing a lot of of assistance, which was very fortunate. But also too, she was 15 and I was trying

to make sure, "Go with your friends, do your things. This is not a thing you have to be concerned about." I just remember thinking, "You should be arguing with me more."

What Julie did not realize was that her daughter struggled with anxiety. Julie admitted that she did not understand the signs when her daughter was younger. Julie initially tried to help her daughter work through her emotions and behavior with logic and reason. She can now look back and see that her daughter's problems required a different approach.

When our daughter was younger, like middle school or younger, she'd be crying about something I would sometimes say, "Okay, I understand you're upset but crying isn't helping. Let's move into doing something. This is a lot of energy for nothing to come out of it." "Let's move forward, what can we do differently?"

Now knowing that she has anxiety, I can look back to some things when she was younger and think that might have been a sign. I had no idea at the time, but she'd spend the night at a friend's house and often we'd get a call in the middle of the night to come pick her up. Or if I was leaving, even for the just for an afternoon, she'd be really upset about it and cry. There were just things that in my mind [I am thinking] she's our only child. This is just kids, right? I had no idea.

Her daughter's anxiety came to a point of crisis when she went to college. Julie struggled to discern the to best way to handle the situation. She spoke frankly about the experience and shared the struggle she and her husband faced while trying to help her daughter make wise decisions.

She was in college where I work. She had struggled academically some, and partway through her fall semester junior year she really started to have some issues and decided that she wanted to stop out and not go to college anymore. She didn't know what she wanted to do with the rest of her life, and she seemed to think that everyone else did. We talked a lot about [how] nobody really knows.

It was difficult because she at first tried to move in with a friend. In trying to set some boundaries with that, we said that the car wasn't hers, the car stayed here. Eventually she decided [the car] was a thing that she probably really needed. So she came home, but then we also said that you can't just sit here. You've got to work. She had a bit of a struggle with that and she ended up not being in classes that spring semester either. We ended up going to see a counselor as a family to talk through some of those logical consequences. That was helpful to us negotiating some of that.

I was frustrated because, of course, I place a very high value on college education. How could I not after working on a college campus? At the time I was concerned that she'd stop out and then just never feel like going back. I was upset because she was clearly so upset and struggling, and she couldn't seem to figure out what to do next or how to power through whatever it was that was happening for her. It was one of those things that I don't even know how to fix this which made it even harder because I feel like I know how to fix a lot of things.

Since this has happened, we've also discovered [the] issues around anxiety which I still don't know that I 100% understand, but I know that's not always in

her control, so she's figuring that out as she goes. She's gotten some treatment and that has helped. She finally would go back to college and finish up.

When I asked Julie about her successes as a mother, she immediately went to the success of her daughter, which made me wonder how many mothers gauge their own success by their children's success. Ulimately, her relationship with her daughter persevered, even through the college crisis.

I mean this is her success, not mine, but she did ultimately graduate from college. She's working, and while she still has some anxiety, she's seemed to figure out how to manage that better or to be assertive enough to stop things. If she finds herself going into a situation, she's better able to stop things before it gets to the point of creating a meltdown. That is a success that that we came through that issue and are still good with everything.

Julie's logical nature and strong penchant for problem solving was evident when she talked about her identity as a mother. She saw her maternal role first and foremost as a life navigator for her daughter and equipping her to solve her own problems as much as possible.

I would say I'm pretty open minded and will try and help problem solve. And I have figured out now that I need to ask, "Do you want me to help solve the problem, or do you want me to just listen to the problem." Even [when my daughter was] in high school I would try and talk about, "Okay, if this is the problem, and you want me to help solve it, here's how I'm going to help you solve it. I'm not gonna walk in and create this big fuss to make this all go away. You've got to figure out how to have these conversations," which I think at the time she

really hated. Even now she realizes that there are some positives about that because she's figured out that she does have to actually pick up a phone and call somebody, no matter how much you don't want to. If you have a question, you've got to get that figured out.

Professional Identity Experiences

As might be the case for some other student affairs professionals from the 80's and 90's, Julie did not begin college with a plan to work in higher education. As a teenager she became interested in business and writing and was determined to pursue public relations as a career. However, while she pursued her undergraduate degree in Communication, she had the opportunity to work as a Resident Assistant (RA) in one of the college's residence halls. This experience opened a different option for her professionally. Her undergraduate experience as an RA had a significant impact on her decision to pursue a career in higher education student affairs, more so than the coursework in her degree program. The following stories reveal her professional trajectory from childhood through the present day.

In elementary school, I remember wanting to be a librarian because I thought that meant I got to read all the books in the library. In high school I really liked my business and writing classes. I figured out that you could combine the two in doing public relations. The undergraduate institution where I attended had a strong communications program which included an emphasis in public relations. That was my undergraduate major and what I assumed I would go into when I graduated.

As an undergraduate, Julie became a Resident Assistant in the residence halls. Julie's college provided extensive Resident Assistant training, which built her confidence and significantly impacted her professional direction.

There was a course that was credit bearing that you took to prepare to be an RA. We learned some basic student development theory. We had the opportunity to think through hot topics that would have been introductory to things that I ended up doing in my grad program as well. I felt like it was really good preparation for what I did as a hall director.

Even my sophomore and junior year, we would joke about "Wouldn't this be great if we could just live here and not actually have to do classes? We could do all the other things." The central office staff did a program about careers in student affairs and I thought "Oh, that sounds super interesting." [After graduation] I applied for both student affairs and public relations positions and assumed whatever job I got, that was what I was meant to do for at least a couple of years. But really I was looking at hall director positions because I was straight out of undergrad entry level. I recall sending out a few resumes to PR positions but didn't really get the same sort of response, and then really focused on hall director positions. The position that I accepted was at a small private liberal arts institution. It was a completely different environment than the state school that I attended for undergrad but, I really liked it.

I really liked that opportunity to interact with people and build those relationships, to be able to mentor students in their own leadership roles. I liked the environment. I liked that it wasn't a strict eight to five sort of a thing. It was,

"Yeah, so it's eight o'clock at night and I'm gonna go wander down the hall and just see what's going on." I liked that it wasn't that traditional go to work, come home. It was all wrapped up into one thing.

As Julie progressed as a student affairs professional, she learned practical lessons about moving through the field from supervisors and other mentors. She learned the valuable lesson that no one is indispensible and there are often many other options available.

The Vice President of Student Affairs when I was at one college was really good about encouraging me but also really good about challenging me when there were some things that I definitely needed to think through from a different perspective. When I left there to come to my current college, she was getting close to retirement. When I had said, "Hey, I got this job offer and I'm really seriously considering it," her response was, "You know I'm not going to be here very much longer. If you stay here, there is a possibility." She definitely tried to help me see that wasn't the only way that I might be able to try something new or do something different. But once I made a decision [to move], she was also really good about supporting it as well.

That same person also subscribed to what she called the mack truck theory about making sure that you had documentation about the things that you're doing or need to do or that happen on a regular basis. If you get hit by a truck, somebody else can do that job. They've got to be able to walk in and pick up a binder, get onto your computer, and move forward.

I learned that you've got to look out for what's best for you and your family. It's not just about what's the best for the college. Sometimes other folks have mixed feelings about you leaving, and you've got to make sure that you can set that to the side and know that you're doing what's best for you. There's always someone else that can be hired no matter how much someone or other folks think that you're the person that gets these things done.

As Julie continued her work as a resident hall director, she began to get involved in professional organizations and explore other options to work in student affairs. She became interested in student activities work and wanted to leave residence life. To move forward in the field, she pursued a master's degree in higher education student affairs and found leaving residence life was more difficult that first imagined.

I was three years as a hall director at in my first job out of college. In my master's program I specifically did not want housing because I lived in residence halls all four years of my undergrad. I was getting a little tired of people playing the piano in the lounge at three o'clock in the morning. I specifically looked at graduate assistantships that were not housing. I talked with somebody about a program and I asked about assistantships. I said, "I have some specific things that I'm interested in terms of an assistantship. Where do I indicate that on this application?" The person said "You can put down some ideas you have for preferences, but we decide what your graduate assistantship will be. That's part of the offer package." I remember thinking "There's no way in hell I'm applying to this graduate program, because if I were them and I saw somebody walk in with three years of professional hall director experience, I'm going to put them in a

high rise building with disciplinary issues. They're going to be able to handle

some things that people right out of undergrad are not going to be able to handle."

I was like "Yep, that is not happening."

Doors opened for Julie to get the student activities experience as a graduate

student that would help broaden her professional porfolio. Julie was excited to learn that

she could incorporate her interest in business within her work as a student affairs

professional.

During the last quarter of my graduate program, the director of student activities

ended up going on a leave to go to travel with his wife. They needed someone to

fill in. I ended up leaving my graduate assistantship and acting as the director of

student activities for the last couple months. We had a major concert while I was

there and I really enjoyed that. I learned that there's a business piece to what we

do in terms of booking acts and negotiating contracts, and I enjoyed doing that

sort of thing.

After Julie earned her Master's degree, she continued her journey working with

students in a variety of capacities. Her experience after graduate school involved another

position in residence life and new responsibilities in student activities, and ultimately

leadership development, the area she focused on for her doctoral work. She counted her

doctoral education as a highlight in her professional career, partly because of her

perseverance to complete the work.

After my master's program I did go back to housing position for a couple years

where it was two thirds housing and about a third of student activities. My goal

was to get more towards student activities, but I knew that I had that housing experience, so that was a way to get towards that.

Completing my doctoral work took me nine years because I was doing that part time while working full time. I changed jobs and relocated, which meant there was at least one full year, maybe two where I did nothing doctoral related. Then I was like, "I gotta get my butt in gear and finish this."

Julie found that professional organizations also provided excellent ways to build her professional identity by networking with others in the field and sharing best practices.

[My involvement in professional organizations] really helped me find people who had been in the profession a little longer, helped me find mentors that I could bounce ideas off of. It allowed me to learn things that I didn't necessarily learn in my job to help me prepare for things outside of housing or to even just think about student affairs in a different way than what I had previously experienced it.

Almost always [I] will volunteer to be a program reviewer when it's time to review program submissions for national conferences because that gives me ideas about how I might try something new. I am also on a national board of directors right. I really value the things that the professional associations are able to offer for professionals.

Julie incorporated many of her values as a leadership educator while talking about her professional identity in student affairs. She also talked about the responsibility for helping students discover the best ways to work with others and grow into responsible adults. Her love for learning shines through her story, showing her passion for the work.

If I think about it in terms of characteristics, I would say things like being assertive, maybe not necessarily for myself, but definitely for others in different situations. Being inclusive. Helping people find their place, which is huge in working with first year programs. And leadership. That is something that I've worked with even as a hall director. We created a leadership program that still exists in the housing office where I used to work. Working with leadership programs and helping students understand how to lead in a way that's relationship focused not just task focused. I work with them to learn how to do things in a way that will help them become good leaders, while also them helping younger students also become good leaders.

I always love to learn new things. It's always learning new things, whether that's about a new generation of students, whether that's about how we need to help them understand implicit bias and how that might have an impact on how they're interacting with one another, whether that's having a better understanding of Title Nine policy and guidelines and how I need to help students. How we can help educate students about that? I go into every situation expecting that I'm going to learn something something new, and I want to learn something new and more about whatever that might be.

As Julie contemplated her future, she did not rule out the possibility for advancing to a higher administrative position. She continues to leave that door open if the right opportunity comes along.

If there were positions that were open I would probably at least look. I'm one of those people that when I get my daily email from The Chronicle and from Inside

Higher Ed, I always look at what's at the bottom because I'm curious to see what's

open where. It [would] have to be the exact right thing. It has to hit all the all the

markers for me in terms of not moving and right salary and some things like that,

but but I wouldn't say that that's off the table.

I'm pretty happy with the things how they are as long as I can continue to

have opportunities to learn new things, and to do things that challenge me.

Because of my involvement with different professional associations, I'll make

that happen for myself. I don't just sit and think, "Oh, woe is me." I'll make it

happen.

Professional and Maternal Integration Experiences

Integrating professional and maternal identities for a woman can be challenging

but Julie's relationships with family, work colleagues, and students helped bridge the

gaps that might exist with competing responsibilities. She expressed gratitude for

supervisors who gave her the flexibility to be effective at home and at work, family who

supported her, colleagues who mentored her, and students who spent time with her

daughter. She also talked about the advantages that being a mother had on her

relationships with the parents of the students she worked with. She shared funny

experiences of the two world's colliding when her daughter attended the college she

works for and brought friends home at odd times. In all, Julie shared rich experiences that

exemplified how her two identities blended.

I've been really fortunate in the places that I've worked with the supervisors that

I've had. I've really been able to either leave and go do things that I needed to do

in the middle of the day, or my daughter could come to work with me and sit and

color while I was here. I had a Sunday evening meeting with a student group

every week so she'd come to that Sunday night meeting. If I needed a sitter it was

a student that would come and babysit, too. She would sometimes come to work

and and spend the time with students which, of course, the students loved too.

Before work from home was really a thing that wasn't always an option. I

think that probably violates the human resources policy, but my supervisors have

always been really good about that and I've never had anyone tell me that was a

problem. I'm pretty confident at my previous institution that if HR knew she was

there, that would have been a problem. The folks that I was working with were

fine.

Several participants talked about how their connection to college students

enhanced their awareness of current trends and social norms for young people. Julie took

her role as professional and mother seriously and often used the knowledge from one role

to influence relationships in the other. Julie used her professional knowledge to not only

help guide her daughter through potentially dangerous situations with social media, but

also educate other parents in her daughter's social circle. In the following story, Julie

shared how her professional experiences helped her with a disconcerting situation.

I knew about some things that other parents maybe didn't. [My daughter] was in

fifth grade. I was curious to Google her name and see if other people show up. I

googled it and her MySpace profile showed up, and it was fully her, because it

was an accurate photo. I was like, "What the hell is this?" There wasn't anything

on it that was bad, and she had like two or three friends and the one friend that she

spent a lot of time with. I looked at hers' {the friend's profile} and she had all this

stuff on it that was like double meanings, sexual innuendo. They were in fifth grade. They didn't know what that meant.

That night there was a thing at the school, and so I screenshot and printed her friend's profile. I knew I was going to run into her mom that night, and I was like, "Okay I just saw this today. I don't know what this is all about. My daughter and I are going to have to talk about it, but I think you should know that this is out there on the Internet. I'm sure that your daughter doesn't understand what some of these things mean, but you just don't know who's on the Internet." I am assuming you weren't aware."And, of course, she wasn't, because most parents didn't know what the heck MySpace was.

A primary advantage that Julie highlighed when she talked about how her professional identity enhanced her maternal identity related to her daughter's development. As a child her daughter was exposed to positive student influences, whether on campus or in their home. She found that her students enjoyed experiences at her house as much as they enjoyed her daughter.

It made the line between work and home very thin because students would be babysitters in our home, or she'd come to something at work. Students that I work with were fully invited into my entire life, professional and personal. I mean there were still boundaries, but we opened up our homes to students who were excellent babysitters that also helped with her growth and development. They helped do face makeup the day of Halloween because that is not my skill set. Sometimes my daughter would say, "Can I come to your office? Beth knows how to French braid my hair." and I'd be like, "Okay, whatever. Beth's fine with that."

Julie talked of her daughter's transition to college and the different ways Julie's experiences in student affairs helped her navigate that developmental stage. Her logical nature came out as she processed the way she approached responding to her daughter and educating her about college life.

How I helped her transition as a college student was to set some things up with her in advance. Telling her, "I'm going to want to text you. I'm going to want to call you, but for those first few days I'm not going to be the one that makes that first move. If you want to text me great, but I'm going to leave that up to you. It's not that I don't want to talk to you. I'm just gonna leave the ball in your court and you figure that out. Plus, you're going to see me at all these things happening these first few days before classes start, so you might have enough of me. It's okay. You're not hurting my feelings if that's how this works out. I'm gonna let you do what you need to do." I felt like I needed to say that so she wouldn't be thinking I'm not paying attention or that I'm not interested. I was trying to give her that space, so I wanted to make sure to say that out loud.

Once my daughter became a student where I worked, she started [to] understand what I actually do for a living. That really helped how she understood some of the things that I had said to her previously. I would say, "No, you have to make that phone call." "I'm not going to fix this for you." or "Hey, you're going to start to wash your own towels because you're not going to go to college and not know how to do laundry." At the time she was just like, "Whatever, my God, why would you make me do this?" But then she started to understand because there's literally a 10 minute thing we put together for first year students about how to do

your laundry. I was like, "You're going to do this because you need to understand this is a life skill you need to have."

Along with helping her daughter learn the everyday responsibilities a student encounters, Julie used her knowledge and experience in higher education to help her daughter through academic decisions, although her daughter did not necessarily appreciate the suggestions at the time.

When she first went to college, she was "Yep, I'm going to be pre-dental. I'm going to dental school." Before the first week of classes even ended she found me in my office and was like "I can't do this biology class for science majors." "I gotta get out of this class." I was like "That's fine, what do you like?" She's like "I don't know what I want to major in." I said, "That's fine so don't know what you want to major in." She responded, "No, I have to know." I said, "No, you don't" She argued, "But I do." At the time she's like "I need to find another class to take in place of it," and I said "You're a full time student with one less class." It's your freshman year, just take one less class. It's fine."

Julie's professional expertise came to particular use when her daughter navigated through the difficult period of dropping out of school for a period of time. Through Julie's own struggles of how to help her daugthter, she relied on the skills and expertise she learned as a student affairs practitioner and a member of a higher education institution.

I've been better able to kind of take that step back and be like, "All right, this is clearly something developmentally happening," and been able to kind of talk myself through it. "This is not the end of the world. This is what's happening.

Once she gets through whatever this transition is, things will be better for her and for us." It definitely had an influence over how I worked.

When my daughter was at the point where she decided she was going to stop out from college for a little while, my professional identity kicked in too. At that point, I was like, "Okay, if this is what you want, I'm upset about this. I think you should be finishing out the semester at least. But you need to go to the Counseling Center if this is what you want to do. You need to get a medical withdrawal mid semester if it's about mental health." There were definitely points I would push some of my personal thoughts out of the way to be like, "Okay, this is what we've got to do to make this happen and make it work the way it needs to. You can't just ghost college and not show up. You've got to figure this out. That's part of being an adult."

Julie shared some humerous stories of the ways her personal and professional life would collide when her daughter was a student in the college where she worked. Trying to maintain boundaries at times was challenging.

Because we live so close she would sometimes just show up at the house with a new friend. But also this new friend is a student and I'm sitting here in my pajamas at eight o'clock at night. I'm not sure how I feel about this. "If you're going to bring somebody you've either got to tell me ahead of time or maybe come a little earlier." She'd bring her laundry home, which was fine. But then she had a friend from campus in our laundry room and I'm like, "I have private things hanging to dry in the laundry room. Let's not bring students to the laundry room. They can wait in your bedroom."

Julie provided examples of ways her maternal and professional identities combined to make her a better mother and a better professional. The lessons learned from each role and the manner in which she was able to manifest those lessons enriched her experiences and the experiences of those around her. Julie's life as a parent helped her in several ways as a student affairs professional, particularly as a supervisor. She brought those personal experiences into the workplace and provided an added element of support to staff members.

> It helps with some of the younger professionals that I can give that parent perspective. It makes me giggle too, because we have younger professional staff that are like, "These parents shouldn't be involved with this." And I probably was that person 20 or 30 years ago. But we're not going to just be able to say, "Your kid's here. Now go away." That's not how that works." That has helped me share that perspective.

One example of advocating for a male staff member was a powerful expression of support. Julie looked beyond gender when considering parenting to include the rights of fathers. She believed they should have the same opportunitites to take time off for family matters.

> This isn't just advice for young mothers. It's advice for young dads as well, because as long as it's mostly just women that are talking about this and sharing it with other women, it's only going to be women that care about these things. It's got to be everybody that cares about these things.

> I've had male staff members who have had kids, I've also been very much like "Nope, you should take this time off. You should be at home." "If you want

to go to the doctor's office with with your wife and the baby, great do that." This male staff member of mine was going to take a couple of afternoons off. They were doing something with their kids. His wife didn't want to be the only person there with both kids. My supervisor made a comment about "Why can't she just handle these two kids?" I was like, "Even though this is for a male staff member, to me this is a feminist issue because everybody should be able to get that time, and he's got the vacation time. I don't understand the big deal." And my supervisor's response was, "Okay you're right."

When Julie talked about her own professional journey, she incorporated her love for work and her love for students and their development. Talking with Julie and hearing of her vast experience across several areas within student affairs helped me see that her work is more than a job, it is truly a career for her.

I could not imagine going and sitting in an office from eight to five and doing I don't even know what. I would still much rather have been out and doing things and talking to students and having an evening program to do or this them other. I didn't even consider trying to do something else. I like doing educational programs outside of the classroom where you still learn something.

Students in leadership positions, I tend to treat them as though they are also staff members. They feel heard, they have a voice in the things that we're doing. They get to help decide about this leadership program that we're going to do, or they help decide how we're going to train the other orientation leaders. I value their opinions in those things. Of course as time goes on I am further and further away from that age group, it really helps to get those opinions as well and

to hear about what is going to keep people engaged in this conversation, and how we want to continue to talk about this particular topic.

Another way in which Julie supported her students was to support their parents. As a parent, Julie had first hand knowledge of the fears, questions, and concerns that parents experience when their child goes to college. The parents trusted her judgment and advice.

> I talk to a good number of parents who are trying to help their sons and daughters navigate what they need to do in college. If they're talking to me, the parent is probably angry about something the college has done. It does give me a little bit more of what I would call street cred with the parents. Once I say, "Oh yep, my daughter's a college graduate," or, "She's a student here," that tends to take them back a step from whatever they were going toward. I've especially had conversations with parents at orientation that live close by who say things like, "I'm worried that this is actually too close for my son or daughter." I am able to talk with them about how the campus is really as close or as far away as you want to make it. I live a mile and a half from campus so it's super easy to get back and forth, and we were able to kind of set some boundaries about what that looks like. Typically I've been able to talk with those parents about [how] you probably shouldn't just show up on campus. That's not cool. You should act as though you really are a couple hours away. If you want to see your son or daughter you should text them ahead of time. Maybe they should text you when they want to come home and not just show. It has really helped me talk with parents, especially

parents that are from close by about how to navigate some of those boundaries and give their son or daughter a bit of space while they're on campus.

I'm also trying to make sure that parents understand the things that we're talking about, and not just from that first gen perspective. Our office was one of the first that started to provide Spanish translations of parent documents at summer orientation. A number of our LatinX students come from families where their parents don't necessarily know much English. We knew that we needed to be prepared for parents that weren't completely fluent with English.

As I've aged, students have become closer and closer to our daughter's age. I find myself able to identify with the parents when they're posting things on the parents Facebook page, even when they're posting things I disagree with. We just we just sent out an email this weekend telling people that they'd have to be masked on campus again because our county has risen in terms of the number of COVID cases and breakthrough cases, and there are some parents on that Facebook page that were really upset about it. I find myself being able to identify more with that parent perspective, regardless of whether or not I agree with it. I can put myself in their shoes a lot more often than I ever did before.

Julie has over a decade left before she considers retiring and admitted that she has not given the future much thought. She enjoys a close relationship with her daughter but also enjoys the time she has for herself, now that her daughter has moved out of the family home.

I don't know that I've given a ton of thought when we retire. Just in the short term, I find myself staying at the office until later. My husband works 4:00 pm

until midnight, So I go home, make my own dinner, do my own thing which I

quite enjoy.

Observations from Julie's Narrative

I enjoyed listening to Julie's pragmatic approach to her life and how she

navigated professional and personal situations. Her laid back, relaxed style of telling her

stories gave insight into her personality and the way she approaches relationships. She

laughed often as she shared her stories and reflected on what she had learned. The two

primary observations made from her experiences focused on her logic and reason and her

passion for student advocacy.

Logic and reason drove Julie's approach to motherhood and work. Julie

approached her life as a working mother in higher education student affairs in much the

same way her mother modeled life for her, with reason and logic. Even though Julie was

quite young when her mother was injured, she learned the importance of perseverance

and resilience. She learned to advocate for herself, make her own decisions, and take

responsibility for her actions. She conquered her education with a sense of determination

and purpose, never faltering in her goals, even when it took her more time than expected

to complete her doctorate. She knew what she wanted as a student affairs professional

and stayed true to her goals. She sought wisdom and guidance from her supervisors and

ultimately excelled in her role as a student affairs practitioner and leadership educator.

She imparted her love of learning to her daughter, her students, their parents, and her

colleagues.

Julie integrated the knowledge and skills she learned from residence life, student

activities, and leadership development to help her daughter navigate tricky situations and

grow to be a responsible adult who gives back to the community. She drew from her knowledge, challenged her own thinking, and reflected on her reactions when her daughter made decisions with which she did not agree. Julie set boundaries but allowed her daughter to make her own decisions, a feat not easily achieved as a mother.

Julie's passion for advocacy was evident at home and at work. Julie is an advocate for diversity and inclusion. As an ally, she instructed her students and her family the importance of acceptance and learning. She shared the importance of helping students grow into responsible adults, taught them to be assertive problem solvers, leaders who worked from values of inclusivity, respect and positive relationships.

Julie's position put her in line with the parents of new students and she saw her experiences as a mother beneficial to connecting with them and being patient with their concerns. I admired how she incorporated parents into their children's experiences in college. She supported parents who came from diverse cultures and offered programs to help them connect with the institution. She did not judge parents when they disagreed but tried to impart knowledge to help the parents make wise decisions about their children's transition to college. Julie's influence with parents went beyond the workplace into her personal social circles. Because of her experience working with college students, she provided education and advice to her friends and parents of her daughter's friends.

Julie expressed her concern for working fathers and gave examples of the ways she supported male staff members who needed time off from work to care for their families. She talked of the importance of bringing men into the conversation about work/life balance, saying, "As long as it's mostly just women that are talking about this,

and sharing it with other women, it's only going to be women that care about these things. It's got to be everybody that cares about these things."

Finally, Julie advocated for herself, her family, and her right to her own life and decisions. She learned that she must always look out for her family and what was best for them. Her confidence and determination came from her pragmatic approach to life and her desire to do the right thing for others as well as herself. Julie had grand expectations for herself and understood the power of seeking help.

In summary, Julie provided important insights into the integration of maternal and professional identity. She shared difficult stories that resulted in growth and learning for both her and her daughter. She provided a humorous glimpse of the challenges of having a college daughter who lived so close to home. For a woman who did not seem to have a fervent desire for children, she embraced being a mother while supporting staff development and student development and learning for her students at work and showed how it can be done with success.

<div align="center">Meet Goldie</div>

I met Goldie through my participant, Marnie. They had worked together over a decade ago and continued to have a strong friendship. Marnie introduced us through an email, and Goldie and I set up an initial meeting in Zoom to talk about the study and confirm that she met the criteria for participation. Goldie easily met the criteria having served in higher education for over 30 years, while raising her two sons who now live on their own.

Because of a family emergency that I encountered during the interview process, Goldie and I scheduled our interviews much closer together than I had with my first two

participants. I also made an adjustment in the preparation for her interviews by sending her the interview questions prior to the first interview. I learned from the first two participants that these questions required a lot of thought and conjuring of memories, and I wanted to give her time to think about the stories she might share. As a result, she was able to ask her sons for stories and gained much insight from them.

At the beginning of the first interview, I read the consent form and received her verbal agreement for her participation as required by the university's Institutional Review Board. All interviews were conducted in a secure room on Zoom. The first interview focused primarily on maternal identity, the second session on professional identity, and the third session on the integration of the two identities. As with the other participants, the mutual influence of maternal and professional identity was explored throughout the interviews.

Goldie is in her early 60's. She identified as cisgendered, White, with a Russian German heritage. She does not identify with an organized religion but described herself as "faithful." Her family of origin consisted of her mother who died when Goldie was 11 years old, her father, an older brother and sister, six years, and five years older than her, respectively. Her father remarried and both he and her stepmother died a few years ago. Goldie divorced her husband and raised her two sons, ages 28 and 30 at the time of this interview. Goldie earned a bachelor's degree in human development in 1980 and two years later completed a master's degree in college personnel. She chose not to pursue a doctoral program.

Maternal Identity Experiences

As with my other participants, Goldie started her career before she had children. Goldie met the man she would marry in high school, but it would be years before they became a couple. She remarked, "I was not a young chicken," as she shared her age of 29 when she married. Goldie remarked that children were always in her plan, but her sister did not evoke confidence in Goldie's ability to be a good mother. Goldie used her own professional identity, particularly all that she had learned as a residence hall director to determine her ability and readiness for children and prove her sister wrong. She had her first son at age 33.

> I knew I always wanted to be a mother at some point. There was never any doubt that from the time I was a little kid, at some point, I'd have children. My sister thought I'd be a terrible mom. Came back years later, and said "Always surprised you were such a good mom because I didn't think you'd be a very good one." I think it's because I worked. I'm not into sitting down on the floor and playing with kids. My own kids, nieces and nephews, different story. But I'm not the warm and fuzzy type person overall. I'll coddle a baby, but I'm not that person, whereas my sister always was.
>
> I don't know whether it's that biological clock. As I think about it, I knew I could have good impact, even then. I had been a hall director. I'd done a lot of that, and I was really good at my job in terms of interaction and counseling, in understanding people. I knew I could do something really good with a child.

The death of Goldie's mom had a profound impact on the way she approached life and developed goals for her future as a mother and a professional. She described her

memories of her mother as what she considered typical, but then went on to describe the different dynamic the family took on with her mother's illness. Goldie did not go into detail about her mother's illness or the circumstances around her death, she but implied some doubt about the adequacy of her mother's care.

> My early years with my mom was pretty much stereotypical. But somewhere along the line she became ill and had continuing problems. In hindsight, I think they were hormonal. But back in 1963 it was a lot of "It's in your head," "It's just your nerves." "Go home and have a beer and relax." There were issues where there was some fearfullness of going out of the house, so I became very independent very early. I remember going to the dentist by myself in second grade. Where we lived afforded that kind of flexibility, but she was a very good mother. And obviously left this earth far too early.

> It wasn't as if she was ill and bedridden. She was still up cooking, taking care of the house but her inability to go out impacted her nerves greatly. Things that were milestones for me, she wasn't there. My father was there. An aunt and uncle was there, but she wasn't. But she'd be home waiting with dinner or a festive little group party. It was a bit of an odd kind of thing, but it was just the way it was.

> We were living in the city at the time. She didn't drive, so the older kids would go to school, and we would get ready and go downtown shopping to the shopping district, go to Woolworths and have a chocolate coke and a hamburger. There was about a year of some pleasant memories where she was a little more traditional mother rather than being ill.

To be expected, when Goldie' mother died, life changed for her and her siblings. She described the family dynamic and how each of them reacted and adjusted to a new life. As she talked about the level of responsibility she took on after her mother's life and decisions she made as a result provided insights into the ways she continued to go through life as a professional and as a mother.

[My sister] was 16 when my mom passed and was out of the house and got engaged quickly at 18 and pregnant before she got married. Didn't tell anybody for six months. [She] still is married, more than I am all these years later. But it impacted my father's reaction to me, and the fact that he was going to be sure that it wasn't going to happen to his younger one. Every book, backpacks, looked through. No driver's license at 16. Very, very cautious, I would say.

After my sister left, I became chief cook and bottle washer at home. My first Thanksgiving dinner, when I was 12 I cooked for about 11 people. I took care of the house. [My father] did grocery shopping, but I had a lot of responsibility really early and I did even before my mom died. I was cooking dinner every night.

I got very involved at school. School was my outlet. I did things that were very different for a child in my family to do. I played sports. I got involved in class leadership positions. I went out, did junior miss my senior year, just very strange things for those in my family. That was my way of doing something different.

After Goldie lost her mother, she turned to other people in her family circle to fill the gap in her life. Goldie's influences came from a myriad of relationships, including her grandparents, a neighbor, aunts and uncles, and her siblings.

> I had loving grandmother. I saw a lot of how you treat your children and how you raise your family, a big family, by watching her. And I had a neighbor that was very instrumental for an 11-13 old where you could stop by after school and chat and tell her about your day and talk about boys and do all the things you would probably do with your mother until you started hating her at 14-15. Since it was my neighbor I never had those issues of fighting with mom.

I asked Goldie what she learned from her grandmother. Her story of cooking and cleaning for the family after her mother's death was a great example of the values of hard work and tenacity she learned from her grandmother and instilled on her sons.

> You roll with the punches. She lived in a poor Western Pennsylvania mining town, Depression, raising eight kids in varying ages. Grandfather out of work. She just did what you needed to do to keep things moving and do the best you can and having clear standards. This is how you behave, this is how you don't behave, and here's your expectations for the family. You are part of the family and everybody does has a role with that, whether the little guys or the older kids. You do what you gotta do.

She talked extensively of the family dynamic that resonated through both sets of grandparents, labeling one set as positive and one set as negative. She described her father's family differently than she described her mother's family, suggesting that the paternal grandparents lived by a set of values did not align with hers and were more

critical and judgmental than her mother's side of the family. Her values aligned more with her maternal grandparents than her paternal grandparents. She wanted to spend more time with her maternal grandparents, but distance made that difficult.

> I learned a lot by the positive and the negative. My paternal grandfather and my grandmother disowned one of their children because he got involved with a divorcee as a 20 something young man, and that side of the family was very Catholic. And again, this was the 60's, so watching that and being a kid and listening to that, hearing my grandfather and grandmother talk about it, I think was hugely impactful in hindsight.

> On the maternal side, it was you work for a living. Regardless of what you need to do, you provide for your family. The paternal side was do it with the "right" job. You have to have a career, you have to have a something that sounds right or is professional, position versus work. So [it] was those kinds of things I learned from because of the comparison to the other side, more so than just what they were saying.

Goldie's response to her childhood was to live life differently. The extended family provided her different perspectives of life and her brother and sister modeled ways of living that did not appeal to her. She was determined to find her own path.

> My idea was I was going to get married and live a very normal life with no drama, where you have a husband and wife, no big deal. Nobody's going to die early. That was it that was my goal. Did it happen? No!

> There was a clear decision in high school after watching my brother and sister about how I was going to live my life. I was like "I want the traditional

thing, graduate, get my butt to a residence hall, and live the college life." If I'm going to do this, I have to do things differently, as well as juggle whatever balls at home that needed juggled.

Goldie grew up quickly and took on considerable responsibility at an early age. Her strong will and determination would influence her decisions regarding school, career, her marriage, and her family as she continued to navigate difficult relationships and situations. As she talked about her divorce, she admitted that her dream for a normal life would not come true in the way she imagined as a child, but she found ways to protect her sons and create a full dynamic life for them. Goldie identified her response to her divorce as one of her successes as a mother.

> Obviously any divorce is going to be difficult, but I think it could have been a lot a lot worse than it was. When I first divorced, I took the kids to therapy a couple of times, and I myself was in therapy. I was very worried about the kids. They were very small, four and seven, and the therapist said that moving houses is not a big deal for kids, usually moving schools is.

> When we first split up, for a year or two, the kids stayed in the house and mom and dad moved back and forth. [That was] the schedule that we had up until I moved into another house. He was a police officer. When he had custody I packed up and moved out for the weekend. [I stayed with] family, friends and I just went to work from there every day. He had a small apartment, and he would move back into the house when he had his custody. It worked really well, because the kids' schedule was the same. [At home] they had their rooms, nothing

changed, their furniture, other than you know my ex husband's clothes leaving, things looked pretty much the same in the house.

We then moved out of the area, from the typical four bedroom colonial to a 1947 Cape Cod that had a living room and dining room, two bedrooms upstairs, one real bathroom. At one point I was telling the boys, "I really wish that we had put on a rec room when we first moved in and given you guys more space." And they were like "Actually no. It's really nice that we were forced to be together." They see that as being a positive now that they're in their 20s and 30s We were forced to sit in the same room. We were forced to watch the same TV because there were no TVs upstairs. Even the bathroom forced us to figure out how to manage a schedule in the morning, so that everybody had time to get through what they needed to do. Unexpected consequence, positive consequence.

[My ex-husband] ended up following me and moving not far from where I live, so we ended up having both of us within about a mile and a half, two miles of each other, which has pluses and minuses. It was easy for the kids in that way. They ended up spending more time with me anyway by the nature of what happened. And dad was fine with that and kids were fine with that.

Goldie's success as a mother who was divorced also created challenges in helping her sons navigate a sometimes-difficult relationship with their father. When her ex-husband remarried, she worked diligently to provide support when her sons came home to spend time with them.

When they were young, it was a lot of trying hard not to bash dad. They would come home with stories about [their step mother]. They weren't seeing her

contributing to the house like they thought that she should. They'd come back and they'd talk and I'd listen and give some feedback. And that's kind of what I do now. They go and have dinner with their dad on occasion and they always both end up back at my at my house, and I could guarantee there'd be a two hour conversation after it.

I think my older one who really saw and understood more about what was happening and why I left. He has a different perspective than the younger one. The younger one was always trying to get everybody together and make people happy. It's to the point now where [my younger son is] done and there's still a lot of trying to figure out what that means for the future.

Amid the challenges of life, Goldie embraced motherhood and spoke lovingly of her sons as a bright spot in her life. She described an open relationship with her sons, filled with conversation, time together, and laughter, even with busy schedules that included her work and activities.

I know that I was definitely a 60-70s mom, like the free range philosophy. I was lot less worried about many of the things other parents were worried about, and so my kids were out doing things that probably parents who are five or 10 years younger than me weren't allowing, which I actually still think is a good idea. I have a lot of memories of laughter. Hopefully they do as well. But at the same time, I was busy. "You kids have got to get to school and I gotta get to work, so let's move it."

I had two kids on travel sports teams and they were never in the same end of the county at the same time, so we were constantly running. I learned very

quickly that if you can capture your children in the car for a long period of time they start talking. I made sure that I found time to be alone with each of them, leave one with somebody if I had to travel with the other. Because I got time with them that way.

My older son saw me as always working. They appreciated that time when things stopped. It got to be the running joke when we'd watch a movie. All the lights had to go out because mom would be doing something. If I was folding laundry, but the lights went out, I would stop, and we would watch the movie or play a game. Everything stopped. When we were together as the three of us, the lights went off.

We talk about things. [Conversations] range from string theory to values. The one rule I had when I raised my kids was when you sat at the table anything was open for discussion. It was everything, whatever people wanted to talk about was fair game. Maybe not away from the table, but at the table. It has continued as they've gotten older.

My youngest son was always, "When I get older, I'm gonna buy you the grandma pod in the back." "[I] will build you the little grandma pod and you're going to live there with us and be a part of the family." And the older ones like, "Love ya, and I'll text you, but we'll talk next week." The younger one's going to have a wedding, that traditional wedding. The older ones going to come back from Vegas and say this is my new wife.

Goldie talked of her relationship with her boys as they grew up and became adults. She continued to have a strong relationship with them and is currently involved in

their lives to the extent that they want her there. Goldie shared about current

conversations and connections that she has with her sons today.

> As they got older, I was obviously a lot more open with everything that was going
>
> on, whether it was work related or dad related. I tried to present things as
>
> objectively as possible and keep a lot of emotion out of the things that were
>
> emotional.

> We didn't talk as much as we texted. When they were older, even when
>
> they were in high school and running around it would be, just send one word, and
>
> it was "Alive?" and they would text back going "All's good." That was my way of
>
> checking on them. Even in college, it would be like quick emails. I would hear
>
> from them because they would have questions about policies or school or
>
> whatever. I could obviously help negotiate some of those registration issues or
>
> questions they had.

> Their relationship has changed because now they are investment partners
>
> and doing things to work with each other. I hope I can still have a grandma pod
>
> built for me in the back of somebody's house if I ever needed it down the road.
>
> But it's fun to watch them, watch being a third adult rather than two children and
>
> adult. There are three adults in the room.

When her sons both left for college to begin lives of their own, Goldie adjusted to

being an empty nester. The relationships that she had established with her sons, as well as

her professional work, made the transition much smoother.

> One graduated high school in 2008 and he went off to college. Then one
>
> graduated in '11 and followed to the same college. Other than coming home at

Christmas, they were pretty much out of the house. I don't remember being sad or happy. I had a dog, I still had a schedule I had to maintain. I was happy for them. It was nice for me not to be running around to soccer games, or all the things in high school. I had a huge social group with those parents so that continued. I don't remember it being heartbreaking.

As we talked about how she described maternal identity, she spoke of patience as a virtue and as a struggle. Ultimately the meaning she makes from her maternal identity is rooted in her relationship with her sons. Her son shared with her the best gift she gave him as a mother.

My son said to me the biggest value that he thought that I taught him was the importance of learning, of education. This is the one who reads books on string theory, who doesn't do that for a living. He has such a wide range of interests and great curiosity. He will read a book on anything so that probably is the best thing if anything that I did for them.

Professional Identity Experiences

Goldie's early career aspirations as a medical professional were inspired by her mother's illness and death, other deaths in her family, and the medical professionals in her extended family. She shared the story of how her professional identity developed from childhood dreams of working in healthcare and her unexpected experiences in college as a resident assistant (RA) and hall director, which led to a master's degree in college personnel and a full career in student affairs. As with the other participants, one career path took her to college, but another path opened for her. We began the conversation of her professional journey by talking about her early career plan as a young

girl. Her hunger to build a life of her own inspired her to go to college, which opened

new opportunities that led to her career in higher education student affairs.

I mentioned my mother died in September of '69. Her father died in March of '70.

I had two cousins that were killed in a car accident in June of '70. Basically sixth

grade was taken up with with funerals and hearing discussions about their medical

issues. And my mom's situation was more related to a medical error than not. All

of those things I think were, "You can make an impact of some kind." I was really

good in the sciences. It's an area that I leaned on in high school. So it was [a]

perfect choice. It was like, "Well, this is a good place to start college as a bio

major, and I'll kind of figure it out in the next year."

Once Goldie began college, she found related interests in psychology and

philsosophy and was not as interested in biology courses as she thought she might be. We

talked about the difference from the peroid of time when she started college to declare a

major and the pressure that students feel today to make career decisions while they are

still in high school.

I went to a small school that sits on a river. Beautiful spot, you drive down this

road, and you come around the bend and open before you is the river and the

college sits up on a hill and the azaleas were in bloom. I remember driving with

my father going, "Well, I don't know what they have here, but this is where I'm

going." And that's, quite frankly, how I chose a college. They were all of 1800

students. They had the very basic majors at the time in the mid 70s. I went to

school there thinking, "I'll start here, and if I decide I want to be a nurse, I'll

transfer somewhere where there's nursing. If I want to do something else, I'll

figure out the best place to go." I started college as a bio major. Got through the first first semester with straight C's, going "This ain't gonna work." I hated every class.

I found this other major, a blend of biology, psychology, and philosophy. I took my first psyc course and my first philosophy course in the spring, both of which I really enjoyed. I had no clue what this would do for me and where I'd be going with it, but I wasn't worried about that career path at that point. [It was] not something that took a great deal of analysis. Let's see what they have. This doesn't work, that doesn't work. By the end of that freshman year I declared.

As with two other participants in this study, Goldie's was introduced to student affairs work through her experiences as a resident assistant. While her major provided a broad range of experiences in biology, sociology, and psychology, it was not the primary influence on her decision to pursue student affairs. Goldie's experiences as a resident assistant and her relationship with mentors in student affairs gave her the confidence and ability to pursue student affairs as a profession.

I lived in the residence halls. Was active as a first year student, but you're still getting your feet wet and everything. During RA recruitment season the director of residence life knocked on my door and said, "You should think about doing this." And it was the last thing I really would have thought about doing. "You get free room and board with that." And I was like, "I could do that." I was paying for school on my own, so it was a chunk of change. I applied and got the position. I got to be an RA that next year on a hall that was mostly older juniors and seniors. That stretched me to be working with people who are older than me

and presenting challenges that were new to me. It was an interesting experience to work with older people. These were all experienced people. Some of them were the popular people, soccer teams' girlfriends, so the soccer team for the most part lived on my hall. I made really good friends. It was a confidence builder. I could do it. I could be liked. I could be listened to. My floor was tight, you know.

My first hall director was a woman, married, and lived in the hall that I happened to be an RA. We got really close. Our relationship lasted until she passed away four years ago. [She and her husband] both talked to me about this profession I didn't really know about it. People go to school for this? How does this work? People get paid for this? That's when I started saying this could be a possibility. By the end of that first year as an RA, our sophomore year, I knew what I was going to do.

Senior year I was a head resident. We lost [our] hall director, so I was actually managing a hall. And somewhere in the middle of December, I woke up going "I can't go to school next year. I need to take a break." I had already been accepted to graduate school. They gave me a deferment to the next year. The vice president of finance hired me for the summer to do an ADA {Admerican with Disabilities Act} audit of campus. I went to work in his office every day and did this audit through the summer. Then found a job in a nearby state as an assistant director of activities.

I went in for the interview, really being totally unprepared with 'underdeveloped' interview skills and I think what got me the job was I was dating a guy at the time, who was doing a master's degree in ichthyology. He was

studying this brown little ugly fish. During the interview, I was sitting with the vice president and she's like, "Oh, so what are you doing this weekend?" I'm like, "I'm going to go fishing," and I explained to her what we were doing. Told her some funny stories of things that had happened and later, she said, "That's when I knew I was hiring you, because if you're willing to do that kind of stuff, you'd be willing to do anything."

I was hired and got great experience with activities and learning about other aspects of a small campus. I ran athletics towards the end of that year. They gave me a great offer to stay, but I was out the door the next August/September to go to graduate school.

After a year working in higher education, Goldie returned to school to earn a Master of Arts in College Personnel. Throughout her story, she reflected on her life experiences and significant people who had a profound impact on her professional development. She talked of the importance of graduate programs and professors investing time and sharing their expertise with young professionals in student affairs. She also talked about the advantages of her graduate program offering practical application experiences that helped her prepare for subsequent jobs in the field.

I've always been sensitive to people, and I think a lot of what happened in my youth brought that on. I've always been cognizant [that] there is a lot going on in someone's life that one does not see. You have to be careful about the decisions you make. That's why student affairs was perfect. To be in student affairs you did a little of everything within the hall director position. My professor was like, "Why a hall director? You know you've done this, you've done that. You've been

a hall director. Let's get you into a generalist position." I'm like, "No, I want to be hall director, because you get you get to do all those things." I would probably do it again. I loved being a hall director. Loved it.

The combination of how they integrated the work you were doing with the academic portion was just marvelous. I was fortunate that I got a hall director position. I had incredible faculty members. I got offered to be the program director's assistant for my second year and I did not take that opportunity to stay because I would have had to live off campus. That would have been financially more difficult. And that is probably one of the only regrets I really have of student affairs.

Goldie considered pursuing a doctorate at a point in her career but expressed strong feelings about her decisions not to continue her education. We talked frankly about whether a doctorate was necessary for student affairs professionals. She felt that a terminal degree was not necessary to be successful as a student affairs practitioner. She counted experience as the best indicator of productivity and success.

I think as a field [a doctorate] is important in some areas. It's less important in others, and I think it's not utilized very well. We put people through a lot of pain and a lot of agony and a lot of money for something that's not necessary for the jobs that we're hiring for. I'm not sure that it's needed now. I understand that they want that doctate, but in reality, the job doesn't entail what you're learning in a doctorate program. That was wasn't happening in my life, particularly once I had kids.

After graduating from her master's degree in college personnel, Goldie worked as a hall director for two years before moving into student activities at a university where she would spend the next 34 years. She spoke of the distinct roles she played in that university.

I moved to a smaller institution, there was no activities organization. They had actually gotten rid of their varsity athletics the year before that and put money to develop their activities program. The vice president oversaw the director of career center, the director of athletics, me, disability, all the other people that were part of student affairs. They were meeting every week and working on each other's teams. It was a small group. The whole student affairs professional group was probably half the size of my former residence life team.

[I] went to [the] university as director of student sctivities. The vice president for institutional advancement really liked me [and] got me over to work is in development for two years. I hated it. Fortunately, the person who was hired to fill my activities role left. I went back as director of activities and was there for two years. Then I became assistant dean for student development. I had some other things put on my plate, along with activities and then became associate vice president. At various times over the years, I supervised every student affairs office or all of them at the same time, depending on what was going on.

And then a new vice president came in, and he made me dean of students. That's where I stayed with varying job descriptions, depending on the vice president, and the president, and the year, and whatever was new and exciting [with] the Federal Government and compliance. I taught as an adjunct, business

ethics, for 17 years years. I also taught a variety of psych courses, learning, communication, basic counseling skills.

I have a really strong work ethic and I knew that as a kid. I got told that in high school, I got told that in college. I taught my kids the same thing in terms of if you're going to do it, do it right, do it well, and put yourself into it. I had a good reputation about who I was on campus, the kind of work I did, what I knew, what I could influence. I got pulled into a lot of the committees because of my knowledge base, and I was one of the few people that had a more traditional student affairs education at the time. People were coming up in different directions for other positions so that early part of my career was very helpful.

Goldie described the benefits of working at one university for a long time. At a time when new professionals see a long-term commitment to an institution as professional hinderance, she argued that the benefits outweighed the disadvantages.

When I was younger, there was all the discussion about, "You can't stay too long at the same institution." "If you're going to do anything, if you're going to achieve in the profession, you have to move." I argued with that idea that to be a good professional you have to move around and do different things versus sit tight and make an impact where you are.

Part of my reasoning of sitting tight was the personal side of things. At the same time I'm making a huge impact. My boss says I'm making a huge impact. I see people graduating who said they would never have graduated without all the support. Why do I have to go anywhere else to be considered a good professional?

There was somewhere at that five year mark where I knew my job really well. I knew my students really well. I knew the institution really well and everything started jiving. Impact was able to happen because I knew enough about the institution and the players and the culture, and I knew enough about my own field, and what we were capable of doing at the institution.

I had credibility and people listened to me more than they did the first couple of years. I had institutional knowledge and as people came and went my credibility increased because I was able to understand why things happened the way they did. Up to literally the last month, I was there trying to explain to a new president, why this, and this, and this had happened because no one remembers that there was a whole life before they got there. I think the confidence level increased because you just know your job better.

Goldie emphasized the importance of relationships between colleagues at work and regarded her co-workers as a second family of sorts, another example of the importance of relationships in her professional life.

My life really has revolved around work and home and whatever's going on in those two things. The people I work with are very much that second family. I still meet regularly with a bunch of them for lunch or the people that are working out here now. They're not family, I mean it's not the same. But that it's an important group to me that I try to develop as much as my relationships with my family. Work people I was close to were very involved when I found out my husband was cheating. The very first people I talked to were two people at work. It was a very mixed, blended group.

Relationships did not always come easily though. Goldie talked extensively about the problems that happened when a new President came to the University. The work environment suffered under this president. She described that damage to relationships and morale as well as the biases that she faced as a woman who had been there for a long time.

The university where I was had a president for 23 years. He retired. New president came in. Some political reasons why he was there. Not a higher education person at all. Basically said his philosophy was if you were here with the old president, you were broken. He was going to clean everyone out. This is where this idea of being there a while and having a great deal of knowledge about a lot of things came in. I didn't get released, unlike many others across the board.

This [new president] was an older man than me. He wanted fresh people in the job. He wanted young people in the job who looked 'right'. And whether that was was age, whether that was race, pick. He tended to fire people. People just left and bailed because they saw what was happening. All of those middle management people, a lot of the positions went away so it wasn't even like they were getting filled again. It was really problematic and then everyone was all down. You didn't breathe unless your dean or president told you to. You could not do anything. It was real hard for for good operations to happen.

There was the usual very low key sexism that occurred. The [new] president at one point, demanded time from three women, one was me. And one woman said, "Look I got kids. I got to clean my house. I can't do all of this. You

can't ask for all this time." He looked up, and it was like, "You clean your own

house?"

Unfortunately too much damage had been done when this president finally left the

university.

> We were wounded. It was definitely a culture that had been traumatized in a lot of
> ways. First of all, campuses like ours operate on a mid-level. All the mid level
> people had strong working relationships. If you needed something you called the
> associate dean of the liberal arts college and they made it happen. All of those
> people knew each other, knew what each other did, knew how they could be
> supportive of each other. We're willing to back people up when they needed help
> because everyone was understaffed.

> When the next new guy came in, it was better in terms of breathability.
> You certainly weren't afraid of somebody getting laid off. But by then money was
> so bad. It was just a tough situation at that point so layoffs continued, but again
> they've laid off lower people and not any of the senior leadership.

Goldie is the only participant in this study to have retired from higher education.

She might have stayed longer, but she became concerned with the direction the university

was taking and decided she needed to leave. She retired somewhat disillusioned.

> I retired in July of 2018, and it took me a year to stop talking about my institution
> with the word 'we.' I was leaving on a more negative note than I would have
> appreciated. I'll be honest I'm a little disillusioned with higher education in some
> ways, and which is one reason why I retired when I did. Some of it is specific to

the institution I worked, and I think some of it, overall, probably hits across the board.

I think the fact that so much money has gone up in the institution to positions, and where some of those positions are financially. Money is drained out of direct support or direct contact to students, yet senior leadership positions continue with no disruptions. I watched it happen at my own institution to the point where if they survive the next five years I'll be surprised. They laid off a ton of staff who are direct support; academic advisors, student affairs staff, others, but they haven't touched any of the senior leadership. [The university] used to have student enrollment of seven to 8000. Now is 4500, if that. They are less concerned about what's actually happening across campus. I think classrooms sometimes are okay, but the support outside of the classroom just isn't the priority.

It was a messy out too because when I retired, I was supposed to come back for about six months to carry things through a transition and then there were all kinds of things that happened in my last week, and I was like, I just I can't come back with those decisions being made.

My sons were excited to see me retire. They were happy when they called, "What are you doing?" I'm like "I'm on the porch having a drink." I had a long list of to do's when I first retired. I could sit on my porch and drink coffee and read the paper till 10 o'clock this morning, if I want to do that. My book list [increased]. I renovated my second floor of my house. I traveled. I had very specific things to do up through about November. That's when the projects got done and the traveling slowed down.

By January, it was like "This isn't gonna work." I can't do this forever. I

need to figure out what to do. I needed to be producing something or doing

something. I'm by myself. I am a little stir crazy, why not work. I have a nephew

who got hired [at a company] and he said, "This place is really perfect for you."

They build educational online educational programs for the government. He's

like, "Can I pass your resume along?" and I said, "Okay." I gave him my resume.

Friday she called me. I was employed the next Monday. This job is very balanced,

I very rarely go beyond eight or nine hours here. I don't take work home.

Reflecting back on her time in student affairs, she knows she made the best

decision to move away from the field.

I miss the time with the students absolutely. I miss the ability to provide direction

and help them find a path which I thought I did pretty well. Again, the bruise was

so big on the forehead by the time I left, I was kind of glad to leave. As I've

watched my own campus since I left, I give myself a little sign of the cross and

say thank you almost daily.

As a student affairs professional, Goldie's focus was on the student and the

student's need outside of the academic classroom. She summed up her experiences as a

student affairs professional and expressed concern that she did not see the same sense of

urgency from current professionals at her former institution to focus on immediate

student needs that she had experienced as a practitioner. We talked about the variables

that impacted the shift in focus, including the changes in organizational policy and the

way an individual professional approach their work.

The first thing that comes to mind how I'm describing [my professional identity], I would be the person who cares about the student outside of the academic realm. I was that first step, first person to be there to help someone. We got people through graduation that would not have gotten through to graduation with the current situation.

One of the things that I prided about my people in my area and me is that student comes in crisis, unless there's some other crisis, you drop everything and you deal with what's in front of you. The person in there now will not see someone without an appointment that is scheduled at least 24 hours in advance, and it has to be prescreened by another staff person. The job hasn't changed, and it's not like there's additional responsibilities. It breaks my heart. Because I know those students and I know the needs of those students and I know the kinds of crises these students have. They're not things that can wait, or should wait.

Dean of Students is a hands on position. It's not a go sit in the office and supervise everybody kind of thing, which is why I liked it. But I think that's the way it's been interpreted by the person who currently sits in it. It's again another leadership position who doesn't have day to day interactions with students. I just think that the institution isn't giving enough care. It looks okay, it sounds okay. In reality, it's not, and no one's questioning it because it looks okay from the outside. I think more and more people are hiring out of student affairs. I don't know where we're going to be in another 30 years.

Professional and Maternal Integration Experiences

Goldie began her career before she had children. She gained confidence to pursue motherhood partly through her positive experiences as a residence hall director. However, like Marnie's experience, she also received mixed messages from other women in the field and initially wondered if being a mother fit within the field.

There were very few role models of student affairs people who had been successful, who are mothers. The people that I was working with were not [mothers]. The senior people were not. They were single women or married women, but without children, and doing very well in their field. I was like "What does that mean for me?"

I knew [having children] was what I wanted, so I started with it. This is the way I'm going. Student affairs can come with me or not. I know I want kids. I remember specifically in graduate school having those conversations with my peers because people that we were looking at as exceptional people, none of these women had children. But that's not the case anymore.

Goldie's maternal identity played significantly into her professional development, beginning with her decision to have children while changing roles within student affairs. She talked of the impact that having a baby while transitioning from student affairs to an associate dean position had on her and her identifying the need for flexibility.

I was slowly moving out of activities and in late '89, moving into more of the generalist position. I'll still keep a finger in activities, but there was someone there to handle all the evening and weekend work. I became more supervisor to all of that. Got pregnant promptly in early 1990 and about a month later, it was

like "Oops, nevermind. You got to have a little bit more responsibility back in activities." Fortunately that ended by the time my son was probably six or eight months old. But it did put a dent in in those first few months of him being born and all the things resulting from my being out for three months. I still took 12 weeks [off]. I did actually have him in the office when he was five days old because of a budget issue. I walked in and handed him to someone and said "Here's a bottle. Just keep him busy for 20 minutes while I talk to the VP."

Up through the birth of my second, my boss was amazingly flexible with [my] taking time off, working from home if I needed to. That worked out really well, and fortunately I had him and the same president up until my kids were 11 and 8. When the president from hell came in and life changed on campus, fortunately I still had a little flexibility. When they got a little older, that's when things got really tough and there was less flexibility to do things.

Goldie talked about the struggle to maintain balance at times. Particularly as a result of her divorce, Goldie was determined to blend the two roles and find success at work and at home.

The laptop came out at home. You make sure the homework done. You chauffer for them to soccer or whatever it was that they were in. Once they're in bed, you do a quick pick up with the house and open the computer. Run a load of laundry at the same time, whatever you needed to do around the house that was quiet enough to do.

You don't realize how tired you are. There was one point when I driving home from work, I needed to go and over set of train tracks. They didn't have

safety arms. One day I just blew across those tracks and I looked and the train was probably 35-40 feet [away]. You would have seen the train from the distance. I just realized how really totally unaware [I was].

Goldie's higher education knowledge and experience helped her navigate problems that her sons encountered in school. She shared a specific example of a time her son got in trouble with a teacher and her conduct and knowledge of hearings helped her advocate for her son.

> Both my boys went to an all boys school, and there's a certain amount of stuff that happens at a boys school that would never happen probably at a traditional coed school. They hire some of their younger alumni, who have graduated with their teaching degree. There was a teacher that was giving my son grief about soccer. They lost a game or something like that. At the time if you did this (she raises five fingers up), was basically throwing the finger at somebody. And he started it and realized what he was doing. The teacher nailed him on it and he comes home that night and he's like "I'm in trouble. I think I'm in the in-house suspension and they want to meet with you."
>
> [I] went in the next day and sat down with their their dean of students and the teacher, and come to find out that the teacher had basically lost control of what was happening. I'm like, "So these are 15 year old kids. Do you do this often?" It's the kinds of things that came out [when] I was going into a hearing. If he was guilty, fine. Whatever happens happens. But tell me what happened. The more that the dean of students heard, he was maybe this isn't such a smart idea.

Finally, it was like "Okay there's no in house suspension." And I'm like, "Son, apologize for what did happen."

My son walked out and said, "Is this what you do every day?" and I'm like "Sorta." He was so grateful. He wasn't getting a chance to share his side of the story. That's one story I remember very clearly drawing from my work knowledge base. Kept trying to be very objective and not mama at the same time.

Goldie recognized that there were times she missed activities that her sons were in because of job responsibilities. However, that is not what one of her sons talked about when she asked them about the influence her job had on them. Her son was able to give her a specific example of what he learned from her.

[I asked], "What did you learn from me as a result of my job that you don't think you would have learned?" The very first thing from my youngest son was anything regarding sexual assault or sexual harassment, because I would come home and talk about stories that were happening at work, the idea of consent, the idea of of being careful what you're doing. There was that balance of being a boy, and there are women who may take advantage of you because you're a decent looking kid, and you've got at least more money than the average. Also, how you treat a woman, particularly when you're in a party or social situation, making sure you're doing what you should be doing. He said that was hugely impactful when he went to college and got into situations that involved alcohol and those things.

Goldie's sons also learned a lesson in balancing work and personal life, which was essential to their personal development. This lesson might be applied to any children of any working parents.

At the end of my career I was putting in 140 hours per pay period. [My sons] know they have a good work ethic, but they have the same work ethic I do. I was working all the time. They're trying to balance their work hours more. I've tried to help them do that as well, because one's a lawyer in a big firm and they own you. The other one is more of a perfectionist, and so he'll work at two o'clock in the morning, and he'll sleep during the day. He doesn't have a clear work time, personal time so he's trying to balance that. They're trying to figure out what work means for them after seeing me work a lot.

Stories of relationships with colleagues came up often during the interviews with Goldie and more than once she regarded them as family. While we were talking about the integration of work and motherhood, these relationships emerged again as significant to her life experience, particularly during her children's births and during her divorce. These people helped ground her and provided support and advice that was invaluable for her.

You have that circle of people at work, your work husband, your work sisters, those people. They were really family, very supportive with my kids even from birth on then after the divorce. In some ways they buoyed me through a lot of what would have been negative times and gave me opportunities to vent and workout options how this might work. Some people had been in those shoes before me and said, "Well here's what I did," or "Here's some options for you." One woman that I was very good friends was very helpful and as I was weaving my way through all of the garbage that came with that.

Goldie's maternal identity shaped her experiences with college students. She used the knowledge she learned while raising young boys into adulthood and applied her mothering tactics to her students.

Some of my student employees would call me mom, so I think the hats didn't come off as as easily between work and home. A lot of my students, particularly a lot of my international students didn't have place to go for dinner. My sons got to meet people that they wouldn't have met otherwise. It was really good for them.

We had a lot of academic integrity concerns. I would talk to [students] like I talked to my sons, "Okay, you've done this. Let's talk about why you took stuff off the Internet and put it in your paper. Is this a time issue? Is this you don't know what the hell you're doing? How do we move you to the next level where we're not going to have to suspend you or expel you down the road. You get this one time to get your act together."

There were times I treated them very much like my kids. "You need to sit down and figure out how to get your ass in order here." And that's the kind of thing people would listen to. Whether I figured that out at work or whether that's part of my nature, or whether that mom training. I don't know where it came from. I've been doing it all the time.

Goldie found her rhythm in the university and at home, but at times she did consider looking for positions in other universities. The routine she had established and the family connections in the area caused her to stay where she was.

I think the challenges for any single mom [are] when you're trying to get from A to B and you have a deadline to do it. I probably would have changed jobs at

some point in that 34 years but didn't because of the kids.   [I was in] a good

place. People understood what I did, and how I did it. I had some flexibility that I

probably would not have had, definitely wouldn't have had a new job. [With]

family in my home state, I did have some support and backup if I needed it.

Moving away from that into a state with no family would have been difficult. And

then just pulling the kids out yet again from another school. They had they moved

once when we moved homes. They were happy in the school.

Even if the perfect job would come in at a school that was closer to where

I lived actually, it would have had to have been the perfect job. A lot of those

positions where I was wanted PhDs. I've got years of this experience more than

the people they're hiring, but they wanted the PhD. It wasn't worth looking.

Goldie worked in higher education for 34 years and left when she became

disallusioned with the direction her university was going. By that point, her sons were

grown and making their own lives. She found a new job that she enjoys but reflected on

what might have been.

I probably would have stayed till I was 70 I guess, if things had been better. I

didn't really want to retire, but it was time to retire. There's wonderful life out

there. It's just different.

Observations from Goldie's Narrative

My decision to send Goldie the interview questions prior to our time together

resulted in rich stories since Goldie had pondered the questions and even talked with her

sons to gather their thoughts. Determining her most salient stories proved difficult

because of her deep insights into her childhood and its impact on personal and professional decisions and their impact on her maternal and professional identities.

As I considered my own journey in relation to Goldie's, there were similarities in our experiences as working mothers but mostly significant differences. We are the same age, but my mother is still living, while her mother died when she was young. She was forced to grow up and take on adult responsibilities at an early age while I was still playing outside. She is divorced and I am still married. As I listened to her reflect on her experiences though, I was acutely aware of our different lives and wondered, if I had lost my mother and my marriage, would I have excelled in life as she has. Goldie exemplified for me the power of resilience in adversity. Two key observations I gleaned from her narrative were her ability to take the darker sides of life and use them to thrive and her ability to stand for what she believes in.

Adversity breeds resilience. Goldie developed deep relationships with those around her and did not take life for granted but understood that life is fleeting, that true living lies in connections with friends, coworkers, and family. She learned from her grandmother that everyone has a role in a family, and she had a role she needed to play when her mother died. As Goldie put it, "You do what you gotta do."

Goldie's childhood experiences, loss of her mother, observations of her siblings' decisions, and expectations of her father and extended family shaped the way she would approach her life. She observed others around her, learned the value of arduous work and determined her next steps by examining all the variables around her. She was planned and purposeful in all her decisions and took advantage of the opportunities that came her way. As a teenager, Goldie dreamed of a "normal life with no drama." She laughed as she

talked about that not happening. However, when life did not go the way she hoped, she dug in and created a life for herself and her sons that would help them not only survive but thrive.

Goldie's resilience translated into a strong work ethic professionally. She did not have working mother role models, but she persevered in her desire to have a career while raising her children. She was seen as a diligent worker, responsible and intelligent. She rose to levels of responsibility in the 34 years she worked in student affairs. Staff members, faculty, administrators sought her out because of her expertise and experience. During the times she worked for difficult leaders, she did not give up but continued the work she knew was needed for her students.

Goldie is the only participant in this study to have retired from student affairs. It was sad to learn of her frustrations and reasons for leaving the profession sooner than she had anticipated. She talked passionately about the direction her university took, which was the antithesis of her own value system. The concern she expressed about her perceptions of the state of higher education made me pause to consider my own institution and policies of the state I live in. There are no easy solutions to the problems that exist in higher education today, but we can learn from Goldie's experience and voice as to understanding the needs of students today and how we can best holistically educate them to be contributing citizens.

Focus and resolve grounded her decisions as mother and professional. In her personal life, Goldie made sure her sons received the attention and focus needed to grow into responsible men. She altered her life and made professional and personal decisions with their needs as a priority. I enjoyed listening to her stories of memories with her sons

and imagined them sitting in the dark as they watched a movie or tackled complex questions at the dinner table. She loved watching them grow into the responsible men they are today. She not only modeled the values that she wanted her sons to live by but also shared her knowledge as a student affairs professional to help them understand the importance ethical, respectful behavior, particularly toward women. Her sons were exposed to difficult and challenging topics that might not be shared in families outside of higher education. Her sons admitted that their mother's knowledge from her work in student affairs positively affected the way they approached situations.

Goldie's resolve and emphasis on experience drove her decisions from the time she started college and pursued her degree, going to graduate school to pursue her career in student affairs. She was adamant in her belief that experience trumps education and stated emphatically her concerns that a doctorate was seen as more important than experience. Goldie also made the case for staying at an institution for the longevity of a career instead of moving frequently. Her longevity and advancement showed that she did not need the doctorate to be successful as a student affairs professional nor did she need to change institutions. She significantly impacted the lives of her students without a terminal degree.

What got Goldie through the tough times were the people with whom she shared the belief that students should be the priority for student affairs professionals. It is in those relationships and that responsibility where her professional identity lived. It was reassuring to learn that Goldie has landed in a new work environment that continues to give her purpose and meaning, showing that student affairs is not the only field from which a person can have influence.

Meet Laura

A mutual friend in Student Affairs introduced me to Laura. After an exchange of emails, Laura and I met on Zoom for an introductory meeting to talk about my research project and confirm her eligibility for participation. Laura met the research criteria having served in higher education student affairs for over 20 years while raising two daughters. Both daughters have since moved away from home, the younger recently leaving for college. Laura was my fourth and final participant.

As with Goldie, Laura and I scheduled her interviews close together to allow me to make up for the time I lost earlier in the interview process. I sent her the interview questions and consent form prior to our first interview to allow her time to consider the stories she might share. At the beginning of the first interview, I read the consent form and received verbal consent for her participation as required by the university's Institutional Review Board. All interviews were conducted in a secure room on Zoom. The first interview focused primarily on maternal identity, the second session on professional identity, and the third session on the integration of the two identities. As with the other participants, we explored the mutual influence of maternal and professional identity throughout her life.

Laura identified as a cisgendered female in her early 50's. She is of Scotch Irish descent and described her family as "just white folks." Laura earned a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in curriculum design and instruction. Her PhD. is in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus on critical thinking.

Laura described herself as an extrovert who loved shiny new things. Her stories were all engaging and detailed and I struggled at times to discern which of her stories to

include in her narrative. Her stories gave depth of her perspective for life, work, and motherhood. Her convictions and strength were evident as she talked about the decisions she made as a mother and professional. Interesting to note was the path that Laura took professionally to find balance between home and work. She advocated for herself and was able to work part-time while her daughters were growing up. Throughout our interviews, she talked about the advantages and challenges that this arrangement with her institution afforded.

Laura has been married for 25 years to the same man and has two daughters, aged 21 and 18. When we met, my younger daughter had just moved into her residence hall as a first-year student in college when we met. She is the oldest of 3 children, with a brother 4 years younger and a sister 8 years younger. Her father is deceased and her mother who lives near her continues to be a strong figure in her life.

Maternal Identity Experiences

Laura had a shaky beginning when she first contemplated the concept of motherhood. As her stories revealed, she had a strong mother figure from whom she learned wonderful life lessons, however, Laura admitted that she did not particularly like children. Laura's stories of getting pregnant and being a mother were full of conflicting emotions. What started with "abject fear" resolved to joy and fulfillment as she found her footing and gained confidence as a mother. She drew on her friends, her mother, and her husband, as well as her faith to help her through the challenges of daily life.

> I was not necessarily planning on being a mother and I don't mean that I had ruled it out, but I just don't like children to be honest. They fill my heart with fear. I

don't get them. I never babysat. Once they get to high school, I think they're fun. In college, I'm in. When they're little, tiny, I don't know what that is.

I burst into tears [when I found out I was pregnant]. One morning I went to work stealing myself to the reality that this is happening, and I called my husband. As soon as I heard his voice I burst into tears. I tell him, "I need to see you. Can you have lunch with me?" And he notices I'm crying and I'm not a big crier. And he's like, "What's happening? Are you Okay," "Yes, I'm okay. I just need to talk to you about something." And he's like, "Are you leaving me?" I'm like, "No, I'm not leaving you." "I just need to see you in person." So, I meet him for lunch. I burst into tears and tell him. "This is going to be terrible. It's going to be so bad." And then you start to think about, "Well, you know there's got to be positives to this." At the end of the day it was kind of a done deal. We're pregnant. It's going to be fine. But yeah, lots of ups and downs during the pregnancy as far as enthusiasm level.

Laura's imagination seemed to run away with her, and she was thankful that she had friends to help her gain some perspective. Between advice from friends and her own meticulous research, she began to come to terms with being a mother.

I remember being at church with someone who had three girls. She was a physical therapist, worked part time and was really smart. Her kids were cute and sweet and very polite, appropriate. I just made this confession to her one time, "I just really don't like babies." And she goes, "Oh, I don't like babies either. I really don't like them until their about two and a half." And, for some reason, there was

such freedom there. I'm not some sort of genetic mutant that shouldn't have been given this child, but that actually people do this. I think I felt a lot freer.

Laura's fear of children had more to do with her her lack of experience with children than with her own upbringing. Her own relationship with her mother was an extremely positive experience, and her mother continues to be a strong force in her life. She spoke of the love and devotion she had for her own mother and what she learned about being a mother from her.

I had an absolutely fabulous mother and continue to have one. She was a stay at home mom in a time where that wasn't very popular, and but she will tell you it's because she just loved us. She loved having us. She loved being around us. She loved doing things with us. She was the mom who would just throw us in the car and we would drive until we found something fun. She was the one who was always playing games with us on the floor.

We had all kinds of people in and out of our house all the time. I used to come home from high school, and there would be people in our house that didn't even live there, because my mom was always home. She always had her hands in what was going on, and she just was a really good parent. She was very fair. I didn't grow up in a, "Because I told you so" [enviornment]. We could say terrible things to each other, but we weren't ever actually able to strike one another. When we were like "Why is that?" she would say to us, "First of all, you are so big. You could do actual damage. At the end of the day we're supposed to love each other. You're stuck with these people forever." We had a very reasoned existence.

She was just very patient, very clear. But also, not a pushover. If there was a situation where she felt that something was inappropriate, or someone was being treated inappropriately, she was not going to let that go unnoticed. She gave us an idea of what being empowered looks like. She was a great example.

I also learned the value of as close to you can get to unconditional love. I mean we would be terrible horrible people, and she would still love on us. I'm sure we hurt her feelings all the time, and I'm sure we did crazy stuff. We just felt loved and cared for. She's very wise, my mom. That wisdom came from her faith and being analytical about her own family background. I think that kind of pushed me to more analytical about what was going on around me and understanding things and being more perceptive before I move forward, creating some networks of people that were smarter than me. Having people around me who could offer either things that I don't have or things that that I can learn from or that would be challenging.

I actually had a friend of mine, when my kids were little, and I was feeling totally overwhelmed by the task, she said to me, "Laura, you grew up with your mom. If you can't be a good parent, there's no hope for any of us."

Laura did not take her relationship with her mother for granted. She relished in the memories of growing up with a woman who modeled the values she would take with her into motherhood. She incorporated the lessons she learned from her mother to build relationships with her children and provide rational reasons for her decisions. As Laura shared the story below, I could imagine her mother saying something similar to her when she was a teenager.

I really learned the value of having a real relationship with my children, to understand where they're coming from [and] why they're making certain decisions; and be able to have them understand why I'm making decisions. I'll give you an example. My daughter wanted to go with a bunch of her friends to rent a beach house. There was going to be about 25 of them, guys and girls and no supervision. I told her, "No, I'm not for that." "This is the deal." I said, "I understand. I would just love there to be someone on the premises, somebody's parent, a grown up. You guys are not even 18. I trust you implicitly. I think you make great choices. But there's two experiences that I don't want you to have. I don't want you to get into a situation where you have a friend who has had too much to drink or is high as a kite on something and needs medical attention. You have to make the choice between getting them in trouble or getting them assistance. If you don't call that correctly at 17, that's going to stay with you forever. I also don't want you to have the experience where you've got a friend who's had too much to drink or is high on something and comes into your room and tries to take advantage of that situation because there is no one else around. You thought they were your friend." And I said, "I don't want to think any of your friends would do that. But, I'm telling you I don't want you to have that experience on my watch."

[My daughter] went back and said, "This is why my mom has a problem." And she outlined what I had said. It wasn't just, "She's being a jerk. She doesn't trust me." She was able to articulate back why I was doing this because I said, "I know this is embarrassing for you. I know I'm the deadweight here. Everyone

else's mom's being cool and I'm dragging you down." I felt like she internalized

that and I learned that from my mother. I just need to have that kind of

relationship with my children where I am honest with them.

Laura and her husband were intentional to create an honest and open environment

for the family, modeling the natural emotions and behaviors that happen. They taught

their daughters valuable lessons about dealing with conflict and loving each other through

the conflict.

I feel like we were authentic with our kids. I always felt like it was okay for us to

have a disagreement in front of our kids because I wanted them to understand that

didn't mean we didn't love each other. It didn't mean that the world was ending,

that you can manage conflict. Conflict is not detrimental or terminal or shouldn't

be. There were healthy ways to do that.

Laura used self deprecating humor to describe the challenges that she experienced

raising her two daughters. When she mentioned telling them they would need therapy, I

had to laugh, having said the same thing to my own daughter. With motherhood come

many decisions, some better than others.

I always told them when they're growing up, "You know you're going to

need therapy. I'm just trying to minimize the number of hours." There are things

that you just totally miss. I would let my guard down around my children, always

trying to be a good example and be kind to people around me and do the right

thing. Sometimes when I would get in the car with them, I might say something

that was unkind or vent in a way that maybe wasn't appropriate. As they got older,

they would say something snarky, where you see pieces of yourself, and you're

like, "Oh yeah, that's doesn't look so good in the mirror." I think that was a challenge. I wish I had been a little more intentional than I was and the example that I set for them. They will never make a case their mother was perfect.

With her stories of challenge, I was inspired by Laura's description of her relationship with her daughters and they way she encouraged them to be responsible to themselves and others. Whether it was a concept as simple as sharing crayons, to body image, to appropriate role behavior, Laura's stories were filled with images of her mother's influence of reasoned responses and unconditional love.

When they were fighting over the red crayon, they had to share the red crayon with me. I wanted them to understand when you are playing with people, you have to share with them, whether it's your mom, whether it's the kid next door, whoever. This is how you make friends. I learned that from [my mom].

I spent a lot of time with them talking about how a healthy weight for me looks differently than a healthy weight for my sister. It doesn't mean that one of us is less attractive or overweight. It just has to be what our bodies look like when they're healthy We were just different body styles. If I weighed what she weighed I'd be in the hospital. And if she weighed what I weigh, we'd have to roll her out of the car. You can't compare yourself, you have to be healthy for your body.

Laura also shared examples of the different ways she approached her daughters. She appreciated that each was unique and different, requiring a an appropriate response to each one's needs.

As they've gotten older, I became a sounding board [for my older daughter]. She would go out into the world and then she would come back to me and tell me

about situations or tell me about a decision she had to make. And it evolved from kind of "What do you think I should do?" to saying it to me to see what my response would be. I do understand that my opinion and what I say to her is very important, so I pick my words very closely and very carefully. I was very careful to listen.

The younger one has always been a little bit more dependent because she had a sister who bossed her all over the planet but also that's her personality. With her it was just trying to spend as much time around her as I could, without being creepy. Trying to get her friends to come over. Trying to get her in my sphere. I want to be near them, so I can see what was happening, and if there was something that went south I was there, so she could talk to me about it. I can be available because I knew if I missed the minute it was going to be gone.

As can be seen from her above comments, Laura's role with her daughters shifted as they developed into young adults. She still considered their individual needs but transitioned to a more advisor role.

My mom gave me some really good advice. Two days a week somebody else would pick them up at school. When they went to middle school and high school my mom said, "You pick them up every day because that's the data dump. When they come out of school they're going to go 'blah blah blah' and give you everything, because by the time you get home and ask them how was their day, they're gonna say 'fine.' And she was totally right. I knew a lot of what was going on because they would tell me right when they got in the car. That's when I became more of an advisor.

I don't know that I give the best advice. My strategy has always been just to ask questions. "Well, how did you feel?" How do you think that can go south?" "What made you feel good about that?" "How do you think you're going to talk to them in the future?" "What do you think they were thinking when they said that?" That's another way I function in their life, to help them think through what they're doing with their thinking.

I never sat down and did their homework with them. They were both very responsible, and I just let them go. When they would come home and say, "This teacher did this or said this." I would say, "Well let's talk about that. What do you think a good strategy would be?" And I would tell them, "If I need to get involved you let me know when that is. But I would really like you to take the first pass of this." I think you move more into the advisor role, less into the like domineering "I'm in control of everything" role.

Her daughters leaving for college also influenced her relationship with her children and created a time of reflection on the transition of the family unit, realizing that life would probably never be the same.

When my kids got into college I realized how jealously you guard that time with your own family. We dropped my daughter off junior year of college last year. We start driving away and I just start bawling. My husband is like, "What's wrong with you?" I mean I'm like ugly crying. And he's like, "What is it?" and I said, "We have just all been home together." It was that realization that I will get them home for holidays, here and there, but to be together like that, that's never gonna happen.

Early in our conversation Laura talked about her lack of interest in children, and her lack of confidence walking into the role of mother, but she ultimately shared a completely different perspective, one that was more thankful and appreciative what she learned as a mother. Her thoughts of motherhood emphasized wholeness and humility.

I'm very thankful that I had children. I remember, at one point when my kids were in elementary school, [my mother] said, "Aren't you glad you didn't miss this." It has been fun. It was completely befuddling and marvelous all at the same time. [My daughters] have been probably the biggest surprise of my whole life, and they've been just amazing. Nothing has humbled me as fast as being a mother, because I had no idea what I was doing. I feel kind of fortunate that I didn't waste the time with my kids. We didn't fight all the time, and we spent time together. We did things together, and we have a good relationship. I'm thankful for that. I feel very privileged to be a mom. I don't know that I would have said that 25 years ago. There's a richness and there's a creativity and a wholeness in our lives. I'm just very privileged to have had that experience. It's been an adventure. It's been very humbling, very humbling.

Professional Identity Experiences

Laura's professional journey in student affairs began before she became her mother, mirroring Goldie's and Julie's experiences in that they each served as resident assistants in college. Like Marnie, Laura did not pursue a traditional educational path to student affairs, having received her bachelor's degree in history and her master's degree in curriculum design and instruction. Laura would work in different areas of student affairs at the same institution during a span of 20 years. Laura advocated for her family

and was able to work part-time while her children were growing up, creating a unique narrative that is not seen in the other participants' stories. An exploration of her professional identity experiences follows, beginning with childhood dreams and following her education and professional progression.

Laura mentioned her love for animals and for riding horses as a child and had the childhood dream of being a veterinarian. By her admission, this dream was short lived. In college she would find the degree path that would eventually take her on the path as a student affairs professional, mostly because of her interest in people.

I always thought I would be a veterinarian because we always had animals in our house, and our mother was always nursing them back to health. I rode horses. Followed the large animal vet around. Then one time he put on a glove and I find his arm somewhere that mine will never be, and that was it. That was the end of my veterinary aspirations.

I went to my college because I was an equestrian. I was able to take a lot of different courses and found that I was interested in history, which was sort of revolutionary to me. Political science was interesting because I think I really liked the stories of people. I was interested in people. I ended up as a history major and my father said, "I just don't want you to be a teacher," which is ironically interesting.

I wanted a car when I was in college. My father said, "That's great. You need to get a job." I got a job as an RA, and so I was an RA for two years and then I was a head resident my senior year, which means I ran a building. I had RA staff. I really liked it and it was super fun, but kind of a means to an end.

Then when you graduate with a degree in history, what do you do? I don't want to be a teacher, but maybe I want to design curriculums. I don't know why I thought anyone would let me design curriculums having never been a teacher but thought that was going to work. I went to get a masters in curriculum and instruction. I did get a teaching certificate and that's when I realized I'm just a terrible teacher. Classroom management is not my strength because I think the students that are misbehaving are funny and I think the honor students are annoying. So that wasn't going to be my deal.

To pay for graduate school I got an assistantship as a grad hall director. I knew how to program. I knew how to deal with crises. I knew how to do a lot of other things. I just was really fortunate to have had those experiences almost by accident. You know there wasn't a lot of intentionality there.

Laura's work as a graduate hall director played a significant role in her future as a student affairs professional. After choosing the university she would begin her career, she ultimately has spent her entire career there, having an active role in its institutional growth. As she shared her professional journey, she talked about the variety of responsibilities she has had over the years and the advantages for working in the field. Her career portfolio is impressive and varied, attesting to her knowledge, talent, and her ability to solve complex problems.

I decided I didn't want to teach and no one was gonna let me write textbooks since I've never been a teacher. My supervisor in graduate school said, "Well, why don't you do this?" Which was a revolutionary idea to me. No one had ever introduced student affairs to me as a field, even though I had worked with a lot of

residence life people as an undergrad, particularly as the head resident. I ended up as a Hall Director and I was planning to stay there for two years and was then going to move on to the next thing. Because of a lot of different issues, they were able to offer me a pretty hefty promotion after two years and have just continued to offer me more interesting things to do.

One of my biggest challenges early on in my career is that I was young and I was a woman. When I'd go to housing director meetings, I was probably the youngest by four or five years. I was sitting in a table with all men and two women. This was in the mid 90s. I learned a coping strategy of being constantly underestimated. That worked to my advantage because I could assess information and people in a way that wasn't threatening to them. And then, when it came time to actually do something, people were always like, "Oh my gosh, that was amazing." and I'm like, " Yeah, it was." You know because their expectations were lower.

I moved into the director of residence life position and was doing conduct at the same time. I worked in that area for probably for five years as director. We kept growing as an institution and the dean of students said he was concerned because there had been a spade of suicides at another university. People were taking swan dives in their library, and it was just horrifying. And he said, "I really don't want that to happen here." The fact that students are getting to crisis that quickly without somebody noticing was unsettling to us. "I need you to put something in orientation that is suicide prevention oriented."

Laura's used her talent for creating new initiatives and showed how valuable she was to the institution. It is no wonder that she continued to be promoted and offered new roles to play. Her penchant for critical thinking, creativity, and drive were present in the following story of her putting together a much needed program to support students.

I went to a professional conference and happened along these people who had put together a student of concern program. I talked to them and said, "Hey would you mind if I take this back to my institution and personalized it?" They're like, "Knock yourself out." So we brought it back and put the bones together into what became our student of concern program, which was very much proactive and designed to get our hands around students before they got into a crisis. That was a tipping point, and I was coordinating with faculty, counseling center, and academic services.

Then the director of student activities left. I was given the opportunity to apply for that job, even though I had zero experience in student activities, but I had had so many years as director of a department. It was a small department. They moved me over there, and that's the year I found I was pregnant.

I really had to do some soul searching at that point, because I was in a new area that I didn't have a lot of expertise in. And student activities, even more so the residence life, it's all hours. I'd been thinking about it for a while, I met with my boss, and I was like, "You know, I think I can be a wife and a mother. I think I can be a wife and an employee. I think I could probably be a mother and employee, which was totally naive, but I could probably do those things. I don't think I can do all three, and I think the person who's going to lose is you. Because

you can replace me but, my husband only has one wife, hopefully, and my kids are only gonna have one mom, so I'm probably going to have to do something different."

Fortunately, I always like to say, because God loves me, the woman who had been hired to replace me in residence life was finding that the job was too big. So, they came back to me and said, "All right, look, why don't we do this? If you will take conduct and if you will teach two courses, we will let you come back, part-time, 25 hours a week, but we'll give you benefits." And I was like, "Where do I sign up for that?" I was paid for 25 hours. I was on call 24/7.

I was assistant to the dean of students. The bad thing was with the title that I had no one wanted to talk to me because everyone assumed I was a staff assistant. The university made a decision to change my title, so people would talk to me. I became an associate dean of students at that point, still part time. I grew the student of concern programs, orientation, and victim advocacy. We've been pretty consistent in our outreach to victims of sexual relationship violence and our service to them, understanding how traumatic that is, how that has long range implications for our students, and how getting ahead of that can really be healing and educative for for students. I'm really proud that program has held almost 30 years.

[When] our dean of students was going to retire there was a lot of assumptions at the institution that was going to be my path. I really did some soul searching and I think to the disappointment of our dean, it just wasn't the right

time for my family. I was going to have to come back full time if I was going to be a dean, and it just wasn't the right time.

The vice president of operations and planning came to me, and she said, "Hey, I really need a number two. Would you be willing to do it?" I said, "I don't want to work full time. That's why I didn't go the dean route." I was like, "I'm salivating thinking about working with you but I just don't want to do that." She came back about two months later, and said, "If I could make it a part time position would you come?" I said, "Yes, I would come in a second." She got it as a part time job, so I worked for her and have been there ever since. I took students of concern with me. I left orientation and I brought victim advocacy and then I got safety compliance, Cleary, and emergency management. I'm the one watching the sky and manning the weather station and all that. But it was in my skill, my problem solving stuff.

Every year they [would] ask me, "So are you ready to come back full time yet?" And I was, "Well?" I always had an excuse. "I'm still running the kids around." "I'm still working on my PhD." But once I got into my dissertation phase and once the kids were both in high school, it was like, "We've been really nice to you. We've let you do this for a really long time." I ran out of excuses not to be part time. My kids were driving. No one had any sympathy for me anymore. I had to come back full time. They had been gracious for 18 years. You got to give it to them. I went back full time and this year they made me assistant vice president for operations planning. Now I supervise campus safety also they gave me the title of associate vice president of operations and planning.

Once her children were older, she began to consider options for a terminal degree. She explored many avenues including an MBA or a law degree, but ultimately decided to pursue a PhD. in Interdisciplinary Studies.

I found this interdisciplinary education program. It didn't matter what my PhD was in. It was that I had to have one. I did not get a PhD in college student affairs. I would not have finished it because [I'd] been there, done that. I had been, coming out of conduct where I had watched students' problem solving skills going down, and their ability to think was diminishing. I was interested in why that's happening, how can we fix this. That's really what I studied. Overall, I really loved it.

Laura's experience was extensive and she is valued in her insitution for her ability to take on new roles and create new experiences. Over the years she was offered new positions and was provided the opportunity to work part-time. She talked about the different facets that student affairs work offered her, what she contributed to student development, and the advantages of working part-time.

I always tell people I kind of have wanderlust. Some people can sit in a lane and stay there. I'm like, "Ooh, shiny things over there." I've never been driven by ambition necessarily. I'm driven more by interest. I love to put programs together. I really like to do the research and I like to put the program together. I like to assess what's missing, and how can we fill the need. Once the need is being met and it's running, I want you to run it, and then I want to do something else over here.

When I went into student activities, I was only there for a year, and I don't know how much longer I would have lasted, because I discovered about myself, I'm problem solver. Residence life was interesting to me. Orientation was interesting because I felt like I was confronted with issues that I had to solve and was also given an educational component. Conduct was fascinating because I got to have these really good educational conversations with them about "Why did you make this choice?" "Why are you here? Just really have some of those informative conversations with students and I loved it. It also allowed me to see patterns.

As Laura further contemplated her professional identity, she summed it up as an expression of self worth that resulted from the contributions she has made to the field and to student development. Working in a college setting provided an avenue to contribute to a greater good in a way that another avenue might not have.

I realized how my identity as an employed person was important.There had to be something that I was doing that was contributing positively. I'm in a role where I'm making differences in communities or with students. That was very important to me, so it wasn't just enough for me as an identity to be pouring into my children, which was very important, kind of first tier. But just to have that identity as someone who is making intentional positive contributions. Could I have done that by volunteering? Maybe, but I think I just needed some part of my identity to be in the fact that I have a skill set that will help people. That goes into my self esteem, idea of self worth, contributing is important. There needs to be giving

back, there needs to be contributions made. I have the skill set that I can use to do those things. I don't know that I would have gotten otherwise.

For me, I need some type of other identity outside of family, outside of children, and that I guess was my professional identity. I have a skill set that's unique to me. I understand weather patterns, I understand evacuation zones, I understand victimology, I understand how to put a presentation together, I understand how to measure learning objectives. I have a skill set that I can apply in lots of places but it's important to me that I have that.

I've been given a lot of responsibility. I was given a lot of autonomy. Both of my supervisors later in my career really just said, "This is what I need you to do. Go do it." That really works with me. I'm going to get it done. I asked a lot of questions and they would answer them. I do have epic fails. When I screw something up it's usually pretty good.

I have been blessed to be allowed to operate in an environment that has allowed for flexibility, has allowed for continual professional and personal growth, that has offered me mentorships and continued education. Hopefully, in return, I have offered a great deal of contributions to the institution, contributions to the field, mentoring younger professionals, and program establishment, and hopefully improved the educational experience and life experience of some of our students.

Integration of Maternal and Professional Experiences

Laura's ability to work part-time offered her the affordabililty to weave her life as mother and professional in ways the many women do not have. As she talked about her

ability to get more things done in 25 hours than many people take 40 hours a week to accomplish, I pondered why institutions do not offer this option more to working parents.

My mother, when I was younger said to me, "You know, Laura, I just don't think you're meant to be a stay at home mom." "You just have too much energy. I just don't know if that would work for you." To her point I was home for three months with my first daughter on maternity leave and my husband came home at one point and said to me, "I don't care what you do, and I don't care if they pay you. You cannot sit here all day."

I had a sweet friend when I first got married [who] was a professor and I was working residence life at the time. I would be on campus lots of different times right middle of the night, on the weekend. What I started to notice was her car was on campus all the time. She had gotten her PhD. She was doing research in marketing and ethics. She'd coauthored a book already so I'm thinking, "What the hell am I doing with my life? This woman has done all this already, and she's my age!" Then I started to realize that every time I would come on campus her car was there, and I realized that basically she had one lane. This was her lane, so she ate slept drank university life and scholarship.

I really had a moment, where I don't want that to be my life. I want to be a big highway. I want multiple lanes, and I think that helped when I found out that I was going to have a child. I had a scholarship lane, I had a higher education professional lane, I had a family lane, I had a marriage lane. Now I was going to add a child lane. I had a faith based lane, I had a volunteer interest lane. I was going to be much wider than I was going to be deep.

The part time piece was just so beautiful in my life because I need to make sentences. I need to talk to people who are asking me intellectual questions. I think in a way the professional part was meeting a personal need that I had to keep engaged. I didn't want to do anything half assed. If I was going to do a job I needed to do it correctly, so I think it was just gauging what my capacity was. How much can I actually do while managing these two people and managing all this other stuff on the side. Fortunately, the way that my university structured my job, I was always in a place where I felt like it was manageable, and I could pump the brake if I needed to.

Flexibility has always been most important to me. I don't really care what my title is. I just I wanted to be employed. I wanted to have a job I like that was interesting that I can make complete sentences. I also want to be able to walk out when I need to walk out. I got a kid that's sick, I need to get out. I've got a kid who has some program that I need to go to, I need to be able to do that. I made a deal, where I was doing a lot of work, but I was doing it on my terms. And I was happy with that. People would joke, "You know you get more done in 25 hours than a lot of people get done in 40 hours a week."

To be honest with you, a lot of the things that fall away when you're working part time, like watercooler discussions. I didn't know who was dating whom. I didn't know who was pissed at whom. I would come in, do my stuff and take off. I really did do a lot of work on the fly. I'd be sitting on the monorail at Disney reading my phone, making sure all was okay. When the kids were at swim practice, I was doing all that. I had lots of conversations with suicidal students and

city managers in the carpool line. That's just the way my life ebbed and flowed and it worked for us. It wouldn't work for everybody, but it worked for us, and my kids knew if I gave them a sign, they had to be. I had my email on [my phone] so I could look and see if anything was on fire. If no, then it went away and, if so, I could send a quick thing. Everyone was very accepting of the fact that I was getting the work done so they didn't matter where I was. Had I been in a place where I had to be sitting at my desk for that eight to five shift I probably would no longer be in student affairs. The fact that I was where I was enabled me to be more successful in that climate.

As a woman who worked part-time, Laura experienced a different challenge within her relationships with other women who chose to stay at home with their children fulltime.

I was still in an environment where I was working and having contact with people who were talking about ideas and theories and movies and books and current events, and I socially was with people who were hand smocking dresses, redecorating their dining room again, and trying to figure out if their kids should take violin lessons at age two. I wasn't interested in any of that, none of it.

What hamstrung me a little bit is that I also wasn't part of the full time working mom crowd either. I still could pick my kids up after school and I did have some flexibility to do things, so I was kind of in a group by myself. It was okay, it just took me I think a little bit longer to embrace the identity of mom because I didn't have a crew.

Laura's vast experience in student affairs gave her an advantage with her children, as well as with people in her personal life.

I have all this education in student development. I've got all of this experience trying to work with students and analyze where are they in their development. I took those skills and I applied them to my children. When they were freaking out about whatever, crying or exhibiting a negative behavior, instead of leaning into the latest sort of parenting book or getting on the mommy and me website, I had more of an analytic approach to it.

I have learned from being student affairs. So let me look at this. Let me look at the totality of it. Let me figure out where they are, where they sit. I was leaning into more examining them from a personality point of view, trying to figure out who they were as people, because my children are very different. I would credit that to student affairs and I would hope that they've been more successful because we were personalizing their experience, rather than just being like "This is how we parent. You guys have to figure it out."

I also think my tolerance for crisis is much larger. Little things did not become big things in our in our house, and I think that was advantageous to our children. Most of the things they got involved with, instead of making a big deal and calling the school and teaching them to be vindictive or harbor those things, we just were like, "Okay, that sounds terrible. Let's figure out going forward how can we resolve that. How can we make sure that you advocate for yourself?" "How can we mitigate the experience, because I'm sure that this is not just happening to you. This is also happening because of you." We worked through it.

What I learned in student affairs I've totally transferred. I think it's totally made me a better parent.

My children have told me, "Mom, you're strict about stuff that other people's parents don't care about and things that other people's parents are strict about, you care zero." A lot of that comes from what I've seen. I think that made me hard to argue with. It wasn't that I was using "Well, this was the worst case scenario, and this is what could happen." I'm telling you about students who have been in my office, who I've spoken with.

I have to remember that when I watch my children flounder, whether it's in a relationship, an academic setting, a professional setting, they have to learn how to do this. And it's hard and it's ugly and it makes me sad. But I think I'm more tolerant of that than other people because I've seen it on the other side. I've seen that it works out. It's hard to let your children suffer. It's hard to watch them struggle, and but knowing that that's part of the educational process, I think that was a comfort to me that other people maybe don't have.

Laura's professional acumen was also helpful in social roles in her personal life. She talked about the talents and knowledge she would bring to a PTA meeting or other social function.

I am great at having uncomfortable conversations with people. I am totally fine with conflict. If there was ever something ratcheting up in the PTA, they would bring me on in, and I would talk to people and we could mediate stuff. I also was a really good source of research. I remember when gender education was going through, and people were really struggling with do girls learn differently than

boys? Should there be more of this? I'm like, "Let me tell you this is a body of research. These are some articles you should look into." I was able to contribute some of that research and became a resource in that area for them. I could plan a program in five minutes or less with no committee required. I knew where to get the helium tank filled. I had a list of people we use to make T shirts. I brought some stuff to the table that maybe they didn't have.

As with other participants, Laura's daughters interacted with the professional environment in which she worked. They were exposed to and experienced opportunities that other children might not have. As she talked about her children helping at orientation it reminded me of many memories when my children would be at orientation with me.

I would pick [my kids] up after school, and we'd have to come back to orientation events. They'd be in their plaid skirts, handing out programs to students. They would be sitting in the back of highly inappropriate talks about sexual violence. But they grew up on campus surrounded by students. They were involved. We would take them trick or treating through the residence halls. They would come and watch movies on campus. They got an understanding of what community looks like.

As they went off into their college experience it's been validating in that "My mom was away from us and actually doing something worthwhile, because now someone's doing that same thing for me, which is nice." I think they've just been so much more comfortable. My daughter is an orientation team leader at her college and they were like, "What do you know about orientation?" She's like, "Actually my mother ran orientation at the college where she works. I was kind of

an orientation team leader as a kid. I would work with students when they came in." And they were really surprised!

Then the same kid, they were reading the book *Missoula* in their English class, which is about sexual assault with college students in Montana. They were talking about it in class and she said, "My mom works with victims of this, and so this is what I've learned," and offered it to the class. Afterwards the teacher goes up to her and is like, "Nobody's mother does this." And she goes, "Mine does. This is her job." I think it's a neat way for kids to grow up. They're confident, they've met a lot of people. They're good talking to adults, it's not scary.

Becoming a mother had a profound impact on Laura's professional identity. She talked about seeing people and situations from a new perspective and appreciated the importance of tapping into each role appropriately.

I became far more empathetic to students and other staff members. Because being a mother, things became real. I became more relevant because I had children and kids in my house. I understood student culture a lot better. It's easy to dismiss parents. It's easy to dismiss families when you're working in higher education, because you're so focused on the student without understanding the package that it comes in. It was always informative when I had a student who was really struggling and then I would meet their parent. I was like, "Ooh, this makes more sense now." As a parent when you're walking through some of these struggles, you just see things a little bit differently, just widens your experience, gives you more tools in your toolbox.

I would not have been a good professional if I always had my mom hat on. I don't know that I've ever felt terribly maternal about any of my students. I don't ever feel like I mothered them. I understand more of the function of their family unit and how that factored into their development, who they were. I was a lot more empathetic and dealing with family, so I think broadened my understanding.

With the integration of motherhood and professional identity come challenges and rewards and Laura had specific challenges that I did not hear from the other participants. Laura spoke of decisions and regrets when one identity superceded the other, but ultimately talked about how these two identities have worked together to help her live a more full life.

There were some people in my life who wished that I was all in professionally, who wished that I was full time all the time, who was singularly focused. I think they felt I had a lot of potential that I could have done some things, and it was difficult for them to reconcile that with the fact that I had other priorities and other things going on.

I became okay with that. I had different people in my career, who were like "You know what? If you would do these three things, you could be on a national level with this, or you could be an authority in this." All that was very tempting, but I was just like, "No." I was happy. I had that moment where I knew I was just going to be wide and shallow. People gave me a lot of room. I was given a lot of grace and a lot of space, but it was professionally where I felt like I didn't meet people's expectations or what they would like to have had me do.

I feel like my boss wanted me to be the next dean of students here, and I didn't want to do it. It just wasn't gonna fit with my family. I also feel like when I was in student conduct, I had a mentor who wanted me to do several studies and publish in that area, and I didn't have time to do it. My kids were really little.

When I didn't get into the dean of students job, there there's an institute at Harvard where they kind of dive deep into different topics, and I have always wanted to do that. After we hired our dean of students they sent that person to Harvard, and I was sad. It was really good lesson, though, because these are the choices that I made. I really think that's probably the one time that I maybe I made the wrong choice.

[Professional identity] relates to motherhood. I have never been someone who has been after a career. People are like "I want to be the best lawyer I can," or "I want to be the best doctor I can." And that becomes who they are. That has never been my ambition. I was in a job that I liked, around people that I liked, and I wanted to do work, work I felt like was valuable. I'm around people who very driven, they're very career minded, and if that's what gets you up in the morning knock yourself out. I support it, I admire it. It's gear I don't have.

Observations from Laura's Narrative

Laura's stories provided a deep look into the mind of a working mother in student affairs. Her stories were poignant, funny, full of details, misteps, and celebrations. She advocated for what she wanted, stood up to the challenges that came with motherhood, and discerned the best decisions for her job and for her family. She embraced her faith and her strong values in her decisions.

Of all of my participants, I had the least in common with Laura. While we both have served in our institutions for many years, her ability to work part-time created a unique experience, an experience that I confess made me somewhat envious. Laura figured out how to create as close to a semblance of work life balance as might even be possible. Two key observations that I took from Laura's story related to her resolve to make life decisions that were grounded in her priorities, and the roll that the institution played in her living out her priorities as a working mother.

Her priorities drove her professional decisions. Laura reiterated her need to work and said that her work experience helped her be a better mother to her daughters. She gained wisdom and and established a symbiotic experience by setting her prorities and advocating to her supervisors her needs to be successful in both roles. Laura's mother had taught her the values Laura knew she wanted to replicate in her life. She emphatically said, "I really learned the value of having a real relationship with my children." To nurture those her relationships with her daughters, she made a determination about her work. She loved working and knew that she needed the intellectual creativity and wisdom to thrive. She identified her skills in problem solving, creativity, organization, and advising. She also talked about the importance of her daughters seeing her succeed professionally as a woman. Laura's ability to analyze and apply reason in her personal and professional relationships, abilities that she learned from her mother, were put to use daily. She used her professional expertise to help in social situations outside of work, and to teach her daughters important life skills.

Most importantly, Laura wanted to continue to contribute to her institution and to her students but not at the expense of her children. Laura made it clear to her supervisor

what she felt she could and could not do as a working mother. She set her expectations and declared that her family must come first. She had already shown her institution the value she brought to student development. Her university recognized her contributions and created part-time positions for her, because they knew she would produce more than many people might achieve working work full-time. Laura was so successful that she continued to gain new responsibilities and positions for 18 years, and only returned to a fulltime schedule when her daughters were self sufficient and able to drive.

Laura did not paint the perfect picture of balance, sharing the struggles she had working part-time. She missed out on some professional development opportunities and was often misunderstood by both co-workers and personal friends who did nto work outside of the home. However, she never hinted that she regretted the decision she made to work part-time. The benefits far outweighed the disadvantages.

The instution played a vital role in her ability to weave her identities.

Laura's story inspired me to consider the boxes that we tend to put people in and the structure and policies of organizational systems that keep people in those boxes. Laura broke out of the boxes and found an institution that would work with her to create a meaningful life where she could raise her daughters and give her gifts and talents to college students and their development.

Laura advocated for her needs and told her supervisor what she needed to be successful. She was fortunate that the path had been paved by another woman at the university and she took advantage of the opportunity that was laid before her. While Laura's work ethic probably made it easier for her supervisors to allow her to work part-time, they easily could have demanded she come back full time at any given moment.

However, they continued to work with her, offered her promotions, new responsibilities, some that she took and others that she declined. Supervisors and co-workers did not seem to mind that she was conducting business from a cellphone while in the car with her children or on vacation at Disney World.

Laura recognized the responsibility and autonomy she was given to do her job. Her supervisors gave her a directive and the freedom to get the job done. As she said, "I have been blessed to be allowed to operate in an environment that has allowed for flexibility, has allowed for continual professional and personal growth, that has offered me mentorships and continued education." Other universities might benefit from learning how a working mother can be successful, even thrive, as a part-time professional employee. I wonder how the professional landscape might change if more colleges could think "outside of the box" to create meaningful and wellrounded experiences for their employees.

<div align="center">Common Themes</div>

Once the narratives were re-told, I returned to the transcripts to determine the values that these women used to make essential decisions that impacted their success as working mothers., I discovered four connecting themes that influenced that success: human development, critical thinking, personal and professional advocacy, and intentionality. The process for developing these themes was outlined in Chapter III. As I reflected on their themes and their stories, it was often difficult to separate the themes out into four distinct categories. Each theme influenced the other themes. Critical thought influenced advocacy and human development. Intentionality influenced critical thought, advocacy, and human development. One should keep this interrelatedness in mind while

exploring the analysis of each theme. In the next sections, quotes are identified by the pseudonym of the participant and number interview from where the quote came. "FG" indicates "focus group."

Human Development

It is not surprising that maternal and student affairs professional identities have the capacity to weave together in profound ways. Both roles are focused on the development of human beings. Human development, whether self-directed, child directed, student directed, or staff directed, was an overarching theme that permeated throughout the participants' narratives. The women in this study shared how they gained essential knowledge from their intersecting identities that influenced the lives they touched as mothers and professionals. They talked about the benefits their dual roles had on their children, staff members, students, and parents. They spoke of the importance of lifelong learning, social justice, student learning, community, education, and friendships. They took to heart their responsibilities to educate new generations of students while meeting the needs of their own children and sharing their knowledge and experience at home.

For the participants in this study, personal identity was strongly connected with their children's success. When I asked the participants about their success in integrating motherhood and professional identity, each woman first talked about their children's success as adults and the influence student affairs had on that success. During the focus group, we pondered the reason that our children's success fed into our own identities as mothers, and Laura offered this perspective:

As a working mom there's always this question in the back of your head. "Am I doing this right?" "Is this the right thing to be doing?" Just having your children come out and be successful, that there were some benefits to this arrangement for them that other people didn't have. You cling to that. (Laura, FG)

The fears, questions, and sometimes guilt that these women experienced as working mothers influenced how they saw themselves, and seeing their children thrive through challenges and succeed as adults helped them resolve those fears. Much of what they learned as student affairs practitioners translated to the ways they taught, advised their own children, and suggested that this knowledge helped in their children's success.

The participants agreed that their work in student affairs had a positive impact on their children's development. From their knowledge about conduct, first year experiences, orientation, advocacy, diversity, and health, children learned from their mothers. Goldie's sons learned valuable lessons from their mother's work with student conduct and student advocacy. She talked frankly with them about her work and helped them see a perspective they may not have learned so intimately if their mother had been in a different career.

In the latter part of my career, I was doing all Title Nine and advocacy. [I asked my sons], "What did you learn from me that as a result of my job that you don't think you would have learned?" The very first thing from my youngest son was anything regarding sexual assault or sexual harassment. The idea of consent, the idea of being careful about what you're doing. How you treat a woman, making sure you're doing what you should be doing. He said that was hugely impactful when he went to college and got into situations that involved alcohol. (Goldie, I3)

Laura talked about conversations she would have with her daughters that she might not have had if she had not had the knowledge that comes from working in student affairs. She felt that because she worked, her own children were more resilient and more responsible.

> We had a lot of conversations where I would say, "I've been working with some students who've been struggling. Let's talk about what consent looks like. Let's talk about what healthy body image looks like." I think we had a lot more conversations about some of these issues, particularly when they were in middle and high school. I wouldn't have been aware had I not been working with college age students. It made my children more resilient and more responsible. (Laura, FG)

Similarly, Marnie expressed the gratitude she felt for disseminating information and knowledge to her family because of her exposure to essential conversations that are often held among student affairs professionals.

> The education I got as a student affairs professional I can share with my children and my husband too, who's working in a corporate environment. He's not learning about identity and intersectionality and all the things that are on the cusp of lifelong learning. If I was in another field those conversations might not ever happen. (Marnie, FG)

The participants' children were not the only people to benefit from these women. The expertise these women brought from their maternal life extended to students and colleagues in the workplace. The participants shared examples of the ways their maternal role supported their work with college students, parents, and staff members. For example,

Laura shared the empathy and understanding she was able to give parents because of the shared experiences.

> I became relevant because I had children in my house, I understood student culture a lot better. It's easy to dismiss families when you're working in higher education, because you're so focused on the student without understanding the package that it comes in. As a parent when you're walking through some of these struggles, you just see things a little bit differently, just widens your experience, gives you more tools in your toolbox. (Laura, I3)

Julie simply recognized her ability to connect with parents as "street cred." (Julie, I3)She was able to give practical advise to parents whose children commuted to campus or lived close to home. Her narrative is filled with stories of support for families durng orientation. She advocated for families and provided important orientation information in Spanish before other units in her university.

Marnie's understanding of her own children helped her understand the needs of her college students and approached them in developmentally appropriate ways. She saw the reciprocal benefits of being a mother and student affairs professional.

> Being a mom helps me be better with my students. I bring a lot of my motherly traits. The way I'm with my kids I often am with my students: compassion, humor, and fun, silliness. I think it's mainly compassion, like, "I want to get to know you. I want to have these conversations with you. I want to have fun with you. I want you to come to me with issues with problems."

> I think one of the things that I love about working in student affairs, it keeps it keeps us youthful. We are lifelong learners. We see the impact we have

on our students. They're like our children. The fact that we can impact a student in

a positive way and see that has kept me in this field for so long. (Marnie, I3)

A final example of the diverse ways in which these women impacted those in the

workplace involved Julie's and Marnie's support of other staff members' development. In

her narrative, Julie shared a story about supporting a male staff member who had asked

for time off to be with his family. She asserted that fathers deserved the same flexibility

as mothers.

This isn't just advice for young mothers. It's advice for young dads as well,

because as long as it's mostly just women that are talking about this and sharing it

with other women, it's only going to be women that care about these things. It's

got to be everybody that cares about these things. (Julie, FG)

From these examples, these women provided evidence of the benefits of weaving

maternal and professional identities in the field of student affairs to help people grow.

Working mothers contribute to the overall health and support, not only of their children,

but of those who work with them. Their experiences as a mother and a professional create

opportunities for the growth and development of those they impacted at home and at

work.

Critical Thought

The challenges of effectively balancing or weaving motherhood and professional

identity with often-competing forces have been discussed extensively in the literature.

The participants from this study often touched on those challenges but they also shared

the life lessons, skills, and attitudes that created advantages and opportunities for

themselves and their children. Experiences and lessons learned from their roles as a

working mom provided invaluable skills for critical thought. They shared stories of blending their cognitive and emotional intelligence to think constructively and apply their thinking to decisions that affected all aspects of their lives. Values associated with those elements of critical thinking were consistent with all four participants. Their ability to read a room, give advice, create, and innovate, problem-solve, and make decisions permeated their stories of home life and work life.

Laura credited her critical thinking skills to the field of student affairs. She could think through problems at home using the skills she learned on the job, increasing her ability to deal with family crisis situations in a logical thought-out manner. She felt she was a better parent because she recognized the importance of relating to her daughters as individuals, not relying on parenting strategy found in a book.

> I have learned from being student affairs. I was trying to figure out who they were as people, because my children are very different. I would credit that to student affairs and I would hope that they've been more successful because we were personalizing their experience, rather than just being like "This is how we parent. You guys have to figure it out."

> I also think my tolerance for crisis is much larger. Little things did not become big things in our house, and I think that was advantageous to our children. Most of the things they got involved with, instead of making a big deal and teaching them to be vindictive or harbor those things, we were like, "Okay, that sounds terrible. How can we mitigate the experience, because I'm sure that this is not just happening to you. This is also happening because of you." A lot of what I

learned in student affairs I've transferred. It's totally made me a better parent.

(Laura, I3)

When Julie's daughter experienced a crisis while in college, causing her to withdraw mid-semester, Julie had to carefully evaluate what was going on. She weighed her own emotions, her expectations for her daughter, her expectations for herself as an educator. She applied logic and reason to helping her daughter through this phase, all while trying to manage her own emotions about the situation. She admitted that it was an exceedingly challenging time to live through. Her ability to use a pragmatic approach derived from her life with her mother and her student affairs background.

> When my daughter was at the point where she decided she was going to stop out from college for a little while, my professional identity kicked in. At that point, I was like, "Okay, if this is what you want, I'm upset about this. I think you should be finishing out the semester at least. You need to go to the Counseling Center if this is what you want to do. You need to get a medical withdrawal mid semester if it's about mental health." There were definitely points I would push some of my personal thoughts out of the way to be like, "Okay, this is what we've got to do to make this happen and make it work the way it needs to. You can't just ghost college and not show up. You've got to figure this out. That's part of being an adult." I've been able to talk myself through it. "This is not the end of the world." (Julie, I3)

Marnie's experiences helped her see importance of innovation and creativity as a working mother in student affairs. She used these talents to positively impact her students and help them on their journey. For Marnie, thinking was the precursor to action. Her

ability to apply critical thought to her students' development gave her a sense of self-worth and value.

> [My professional identity] meets a lot of my values, innovation and creativity, the idea of taking something and doing something with it. I'm making an impact on students and on people. It's really important to me that I know I've been able to help someone get to the next level, or get over a hump, or feel good about themselves. because that gives me a sense of value and self. I hope I'll be able to continue to find ways to be innovative through some consulting work. (Marnie, I2)

Goldie's critical thinking ability was born from her childhood experiences and the responsibility she took on in the family when her mother died. She used those skills at home and at work. Being the single parent of two boys also offered expertise in problem solving that were easily transferred into Goldie's work environment. She used what she learned with her children to address conduct issues with her students.

> We had a lot of academic integrity concerns. I would talk to them like I talked to my sons, "Okay, you've done this. Let's talk about why you took stuff off the Internet and put it in your paper. Is this a time issue? Is this, you don't know what the hell you're doing?" "Okay here's where you are, and there has to be some kind of consequence for that, but how do we move you to the next level where we're not going to have to suspend you or expel you down the road. You get this one time to get your act together." (Goldie, I3)

Whether learned through childhood experiences, motherhood experiences, or student affairs related work, these women contributed to all aspects of their lives by their

ability the think critically through situations and problems and come up with advice, solutions, and alternatives to benefit those involved. Their stories revealed different situations that contributed to their students and their children's lives. These women's critical thinking skills were catalysts for the growth and development of signficant people in their lives and provided avenues for advocacy.

Personal and Professional Advocacy

Reflecting on personal and professional needs and setting priorities helped these working mothers understand what was truly important and needed to be able to integrate their different responsibilities.The participants advocated for themselves, their children, their students, other staff members. They recognized the importance of standing up for what they believed in holding on to their sense of truth and dignity. As a result, the participants benefitted from advocating for what they needed at home and at work. Goldie realized that there would always be other people trying to tell her what she should do and how she should conduct her life. She discussed how advocating for herself helped ground her and not to be pressured beyond her own goals.

> Someone will always tell you what you should be doing. You should be going for the next job. You should be going for the PhD. You should be doing this and maybe, but you got to do what's best for you and not be pressured by all of that. (Goldie, FG)

Flexibility was a word that came up often throughout the interviews. As the participants spoke about advocating for self, they often mentioned flexibility as a key to successfully integrating professional and maternal identity roles. Goldie and Marnie spoke to the importance of advocating for flexibility but also emphased that they did not

expect to be given less work because of their dual roles. Their strong work ethic played into their demand for flexibility. Goldie emphasized the importance of finding a boss who provided an environment for work/life balance.

> Always want a boss who's willing to be flexible with your work hours. That is not to say that you want a boss who's going to allow you to work less or put have less output, but who will provide you with work life balance. You only get one shot at being a mom with each kid and regrets are terrible. (Marnie, I3)

Laura also expressed the importance of finding people who can be supportive and helpful in the work environment. She recognized the benefit she had from a part-time schedule, but she also knew she would not have gotten the opportunity to work part-time if she had not asked. Laura was clear in her own expectations for her family and knew that she also wanted to work in a professional environment that would feed her need for intellectual discourse and problem-solving. In the example below, she described how she approached her supervisor when she was trying to determine her next steps as a working mother. By advocating for herself and her needs as a working mother, she was able to work part-time for 18 years while she raised her daughters.

> We had people who are our supervisors who mentored us, who allowed us the freedom to live our lives the way that we needed to based on our family, the way that we wanted to structure our family and our professional lives. I'd been thinking about it for a while, I met with my boss, and I was like, "You know, I think I can be a wife and a mother. I think I can be a wife and an employee. I think I could probably be a mother and employee, which was totally naive, but I could probably do those things. I don't think I can do all three, and I think the

person who's going to lose is you. Because you can replace me but, my husband

only has one wife, and my kids are only gonna have one mom, so I'm probably

going to have to do something different." (Laura, FG)

Marnie spoke of the importance of advocating for a supervisor who appreciates

the need for a flexible schedule. She experienced supportive and nonsupportive

supervisors and determined early in her career that she must stand up for what she wants,

even if that means not getting a job.

I have always valued the the flexibility, the potential for flexibility that lies in the

field of student affairs in terms of the 24 hour a day programming that sometimes

we get involved with. It's always been hugely important to me that I worked for

somebody who either was also a mom or understood that my role as a mother has

to come first and I'm not going to be an absent mother. I'll do the work. I'll work

my butt off, but if I have to leave in the middle of the day to go to a concert, I'm

going to do it. (Marnie, I2)

Marnie and Goldie shared experiences of supervisors who had not been

supportive and those who had not. Non supportive supervisors created a toxic

environment for these women. Marnie and Goldie both learned from these experiences

and clearly expressed their needs for themselves and their families. For Marnie, it was

advocating for her family time when interviewing for a new position, while Goldie chose

early retirement as she saw the environment changing and not aligning with her own

values. Neither was willing to compromise in an environment that was not supportive or

healthy.

Julie talked about pressure that can be felt by other colleagues when making important decisions about professional direction. She advised other working mothers to make those decisions from a place of individual needs and not be overly influenced by other people's opinions.

> I learned that you've got to look out for what's best for you and your family. It's not just about what's the best for the college. Sometimes other folks have mixed feelings about you leaving. If they're upset about it, you've got to be able to set that to the side and know that you're doing what's best for you. (Julie, I3)

Julie also provided a different perspective for advocating for herself by providing an example of managing her daughter's needs. She talked about how she managed the expectations of her daughter by clearly letting her know what sporting events she could and could not attend. Julie's example showed that working mothers are not just negotiating work relationships but they are also negotiating home relationships and it is crucial to communiate effectively with children.

> It was managing our daughter's expectations when she was still playing sports. "I'll come to home games, but I will not be in away games," "I'm not going to take a half a day off from work to drive for an hour and a half to watch the softball game. I support you, and this is what I want you to do but I won't come to away games." "I know other moms go to every single game home and away." "This is important, but I won't be at every single game, so let's talk about that." (Julie, I3)

The participants did not only advocate for their work/life balance needs. They also advocated for students and their needs by understanding the culture of the times and

putting their students first when at work. The participants discussed the importance of staying current on issues of intersectionality, race, gender, and other factors that can lead to oppression, anxiety, and failure. Goldie shared a model for helping students through crisis situations and providing the support they needed to ensure progression and graduation within the higher education system.

> One of the things that I prided about my people in my area and me is that the student comes in crisis, unless there's some other crisis, you drop everything and you deal with what's in front of you. I know those students and I know the needs of those students and I know the kinds of crises these students have. They are not things that can wait, or should wait. (Goldie, I2)

Marnie talked about the importance of setting priorities and sharing those priorities with those she supervised.

> I am not hesitant to stress upon them my philosophy and the importance of making family time as a supervisor. "Your family comes first, and I will be as flexible as I possibly can be, when you need me to be." I think that makes more loyal employees, quite frankly. (Marnie, I3)

> Advocacy came in many forms and benefitted the participants, students, and families. Their ability to stand up for what they needed or what they believed to be right, these women maintained a level of control over their personal and professional responsibilities. Once they had a clear understanding of their needs, advocated for those needs, they also knew to ask for help. Support and help can come from many places. Laura and Julie specfically emphasized the need for help from professional colleagues, as well as friends and family. From my own personal experience, however, I often did not

feel comfortable asking for help. I was concerned that it might be seen as a sign of weakness or incompetence. These participants can teach others like me the value of advocating and asking for assistance when blending home and work roles.

Intentionality

At the core of these women's experiences was the intentional approach they took to all aspects of their lives. These women knew what they wanted, thought comprehensively about their needs, advocated about what they needed, and pursued their goals with purpose. All the examples in the analysis of the other three themes could be used to show the intention and purpose that permeated throughout these women's roles. Each woman came by this sense of purpose from various places. For Marnie, she wanted to give her children a distinct experience that she had been given as a child. She chose a life of a working mother and admitted that at times it was difficult. However, she saw the value that those two roles had for her family and for herself.

> Having the jobs that I've had and being a mom has given me a sense of identity and has given me a sense of self-confidence and self-worth, quite frankly. It's always been a challenge to be a mother and a professional, and to make sure I'm giving both the time and making conscious decisions about not going further in my career because family was more important. (Marnie, FG)

Marnie's advice for setting priorities was direct and to the point. It was clear throughout her narrative that her family came first, and this statement exemplified the importance of understanding priorities and living by them. While her advice may seem obvious to working mothers, professional expectations can be so strong that her advice is

overlooked. She said, "Don't miss anything. Nothing at work is worth missing your children's life. Nothing." (Marnie, I3)

Goldie grew up quickly, and she set her goals for a "normal" life while still in high school. While she admitted that her life did not turn out as "normal" as she would have hoped, she approached her career and her role as a single mother with tenacity and determination. She was going to give her boys the best life possible. Goldie emphasized the importance of setting boundaries based on personal needs and priorities but also advised being open to new opportunities that meet personl and professional needs.

> Student affairs can can suck a lot out of you, and depending on who your bosses and the culture of the campus. You have to be sure you have to set those boundaries and look out for you. (Goldie, I3)

Each working mother has to find her own unique way of creating balance. Laura provided the following advice to create purpose and intention. Basically she talked about living an authentic life, not the life of someone else.

> You need to have an independent experience. Everyone's family works differently. Everyone's family is structured differently. Everyone's support systems are different. Particularly in student affairs you tend to run 24/7. There's this quest or ideal of balance. You hit this wonderful kind of personal, professional balance and that it's supposed to look like "X." My advice would be that's going to look different for every single person. Being able to do things on my own timetable and my own track was exactly what I needed. Some people need a lot more structure and a lot more boundaries. That's what makes them feel healthy and safe. (Laura, I3)

For Julie, it was living a pragmatic life. She learned reason and logic at an early age, modeled for her by her mother who had overcome a serious accident to reinvent herself. Julie took that to heart and applied a practical approach to her work and her home life. She tackled problems head one, advocated for what she wanted, and successfully completed a PhD amid several setbacks. She never gave up. In fact, the tenacity and drive all of these women have shown is to be commended.

<center>Chapter Conclusion</center>

Julie, Marnie, Goldie, and Laura demonstrated through their lived experiences lessons learned, dreams achieved, challenges faced, obstacles tackled, and joys actualized. These women were catalysts for their children's development, as well as the development of the staff members and students with whom they worked. They used their ability to think critically through situations, problem solve, share advice, and find solutions for a variety of issues at home and at work. They admitted their fears, their guilt from time lost, and relished in the triumphs of their children and their students. Ultimately, they lived with purpose and determination and used the knowledge they gained as student affairs professionals, mothers, and daughters to advocate for those around them. These narratives and resulting themes provided a glimpse into the lives of working mothers and their impact on those lives they touched.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the personal and professional experiences of working mothers in higher education student affairs to understand how they integrated motherhood and professional identity into their lives. While delving into the literature about women and working mothers in student affairs, problems and obstacles were predominant in the research (Batara et al., 2018; Carli & Eagly, 2016; Ibarra et al., 2013), but potential advantages that working women experience while raising children were not mentioned often. Heeding Madsen's (2011) suggestion to build on the literature associated with women's challenges and contributions to work environments, I created this study to explore maternal and profession identity development for working mothers in student affairs to see if there may be more to the story for women who choose to work in student affairs while raising their children.

Narrative identity theory provided the framework for the study because of the focus on a person's past, present, and anticipated future stories and how their stories impact the ways they move toward wholeness and meaning (McAdams, 2011; McAdams & Pals, 2006). As discussed in Chapter 1, narrative inquiry process was the logical qualitative method to employ to learn about the participants' understanding of who they are, what they believe, and how they live (Diaute, 2014). Through this process I explored the stories of student affairs working mothers to gain a more comprehensive perspective of their lived experiences. However, Gergen (2004) contended that narratives are not always comprehensive and often only tell part of the story, so it is not to be assumed that reading their stories answered all questions about their lives. In fact, each participant

expressed difficulty thinking of memories to share when asked different questions. To fill in as many gaps as possible, I used Seidman's (2013) interview method to create a comprehensive interview process to dive deeply into the lives of these working mothers and provide ample time for them to think through their memories. This comprehensive process included three 90-minute interviews with each participant and a focus group with all participants.

The research questions that drove the interviews and the data analysis were:

RQ1: How do working mothers in student affairs describe their maternal and professional identities as they navigate and integrate their personal and professional identities?

RQ2: How did universities of employment impact the maternal and professional identity integration of women who worked in higher education student affairs while raising a child?

The narratives of the participants are exemplars of the unique roads that each woman journeyed as a working mother in student affairs. They came from different family backgrounds and educational paths, but also shared similar experiences in student affairs, with three women beginning their careers in residence life and two receiving terminal degrees. All the women had worked in higher education student affairs for over 20 years. Goldie believed that student affairs provided an excellent environment to be a working mother and emphasized, "Everyone has their own distinct kind of journey." Within their unique stories each shared specific ways in which their maternal and professional identities wove together to blend wisdom and practice in their lives.

The joys and challenges of successful integration of maternal and professional identity was evident as the participants shared their stories and talked about the

advantages that student affairs brought to their children's development, as well as their own growth. At times they even seemed surprised at how easily they associated the knowledge and behaviors of one identity within another identity role. They shared ways in which the identity roles easily transferred into personal and professional situations. Laura talked about the reciprocal benefits that working in student affairs as a working mother offered. She stated, "I have learned so much that was relevant to my family through student affairs, and I think through having a family, it has improved my practice as a student affairs person."

This study offered the four participants an opportunity to pause and reflect on their lived experiences and the meaning they made from those experiences and relationships. Each participant shared how impactful this reflection was to understand her life journey. The interview process for this study provided them with the opportunity to examine their own lives and celebrate the success they have had professionally and personally. During the focus group, they validated each other and celebrated their successes.

This chapter begins with an interpretation of the findings in association with each research question, followed by implications for consideration and suggestions for future research.

Discussion

RQ1: How did working mothers in student affairs describe their maternal and professional identities as they navigated and integrated their personal and professional identities? The participants shared some parallel experiences as working mothers based on educational backgrounds, job responsibilities, and a unified love for the

work and for student development, but their individual approaches to motherhood and professional development were unique because of their different backgrounds, childhood experiences, relationships, and personality. Authoring the stories of the four participants of this study revealed the complexity of naming and defining identity, phenomena not surprising when considering the chaotic nature of adult identity development and the underlying factors that technology, education, relationships, and society play in identity development (Oyserman et al., 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2012). The underlying questions "Who am I as a professional?" "Who am I as a mother?" "Who am I as a working mother?" were answered not so much from direct experiences but more through the exploration of their values in conjunction with their relationships with family and colleagues, and their experiences at home and at work. Each woman interpreted the interview questions through her unique lens and shared stories that were relevant to her world view with each story steeped in her experiences and her relationships.

Families of origin and mother/daughter relationships played a significant role in how the participants approached their own maternal identity development. Their ability to apply what they learned from their mothers to their own children confirmed Rubin (1984), who suggested that often a woman's mother serves as a role model for learning how to be a mother. Marnie vulnerably shared positive and challenging aspects of her relationship with her own mother and recognized that, while she replicated a strong commitment to her children, she unintentionally brought the judgement that she had experienced as a child into her relationships with her daughters. Goldie spoke extensively about losing her mother at an early age, taking on responsibility for the household, and interacting with her extended family and the impact those family relationships had on the

development of her values and life plan. Julie remarked, with a little surprise in her voice, the influence of her mother's rational, pragmatic nature on her own personality and behavior as a mother. Laura connected the values and behavior that drove her decisions as a mother with those that she learned from her own mother. From their individual experiences, each participant provided an example of positive and negative messages they learned from their mothers and the power those messages had in their own mothering experiences, even when they did not initially recognize them. It seems that the colloquialism, "seeing my mother in my own reflection" rang true for these participants.

Their stories reminded me of a quote from Lerner (1989), "Our relationship with our mother is one of the most influential in our lives and it is never simple" (p. 183). I often hear my mother in my own voice when talking with my children and now have a deeper appreciation of why that happens. Each participant described their relationships with their mothers as complex, and they combined the values, ideals, and behaviors they learned as children to the parenting of their own children. Marnie's touching proclamation that there was no way to understand a mother's love without being a mother summarized the power of the maternal relationship.

Each participant shared their unique journey raising their children and making meaning of their role as mother. Baraistser (2006) discussed the challenges of identity formation for a new mother that entails a loss of self and re-definition as they grapple with the myriad of feelings that accompany motherhood. From this sense of loss and re-definition I considered how that re-definition may have developed and how the participants' children became part of that re-definition. The participants connected their own self-worth to their children's success. Since the participants were all the mothers of

adult children, it was not surprising to me that they talked about their own self-meaning in relation to their children's experiences. These women had experienced many years as mothers and the relationships they had with their children were foremost in their minds as they shared their stories of success as working mothers. The results may have been different in a study that was not focused primarily on maternal identity.

However, in my own experience, I have been known to attribute my own self-worth to my children's achievements first before considering my own accomplishments. I brag about my son's natural gift of parenting and my daughter's successful career as a therapist. As with the participants in this study, our children's success suggests that we have been successful mothers, thus, successful human beings. We find it difficult to separate ourselves from our children, even as they move through adulthood. Their success is our success; their failure is our failure.

The research on mothers of adult children is limited. but the participants of this study showed that their roles as mothers did not end with the child leaving home. Their roles merely changed with the needs of the children (Francis-Connolly, 2015). The participants talked more of current challenges and achievements of their adult children as opposed to childhood problems and achievements, possibly because of the time and place they were in their lives with more recent experiences being in the forefront of their minds. They all were actively engaged in their adult children's lives and shared stories of continued connections through work and play.

An interesting dichotomy emerged as two of the participants shared opposite perceptions of being the mother of an adult child. Marnie suggested that parenting adults can be more challenging than parenting younger children. She talked extensively about

the challenges she had in changing roles to provide a different type of support for her daughters. Conversely, Goldie talked about the ease of supporting her adult sons and relished the relationships she has with each one. The perspectives were different possibly based on several factors, the gender of the children, the expectations each woman put on herself as a mother, the family structure, or sibling relationships. Whatever the perspective gained or time of life, a child cannot fully be omitted from the re-defined identity of a mother. It was interesting to note that all participants started their careers before becoming mothers, supporting Spector and Cinamon's (2017) suggestion that women often begin their careers before becoming mothers. The initial challenge for these women was to fold a new maternal identity into an already developing professional identity. Their entries into motherhood and subsequent identity formation were varied and specific to their family structures, children, and confidence (or lack of) in the art of parenting. As they described their relationships with their children and the personal meaning of their maternal identity, I observed a softening of faces, smiles, reflective looks, and a lot of laughter. At times they struggled to remember older memories but remembered the countless emotions associated with those memories, such as joy, happiness, pain, sorry, fear, and guilt. With their children now ingrained in their own identities, they had to come to terms with choosing to work outside of the home. From Laura's lack of confidence and subsequent resolve to put her children first to Julie's pragmatic, rational approach to adding a child into her life, these women found their own journey as working mothers. Their determination came from their intentionality and sense of purpose. Corroborating research by Cheung and Halpern (2010), the participants evaluated and implemented a variety of strategies they would need to be successful

working mothers, from seeking support from co-workers and supervisors to using students as babysitters to carefully managing their time. They were committed to their careers and committed to their children. They figured out what would work for their families, and they pursued their goals ambitiously and without apology.

The participants' professional identities grew from a variety of influences including the type of institutions in which they worked, supervisor and colleague relationships, professional organization involvement, education, but mostly from their love for student development and growth. Their stories corroborated Skorikov and Vondracek (2011), who suggested professional relationships and experiences enhance self-meaning and purpose. For example, while talking with Marnie I attempted to sum up her experience by saying, "Your professional identity comes from deep within, and it is grounded in your values and your desire to work with and help students. It has influenced pretty much all your professional decisions." Her response was "100%."

These working mothers found their professional purpose and meaning through their relationships with students and co-workers. Corroborating earlier research that working mothers contribute to student development (Bailey, 2011; Lee, 2015), the participants talked about guiding students and younger staff members through problems, often using the skills they acquired from motherhood. Their experiences also confirmed Laney et al. (2014), who believed that women who integrate work and motherhood experience a heightened purpose and skill. The women in this study shared stories of individual students who had benefited from their dual identity roles and became animated and passionate as they talked about their relationships with students throughout their careers. Marnie surmised that students often sought her out because she was a mother.

While some of the participants talked about the influence of professional organizations and education, they all identified that the primary influences for their professional development came from the specialized areas in which they worked and their passion for student development and learning. As mothers, they were committed to their children's development and at work they were committed to their students' development. It was not surprising to learn that professional and maternal integration was not only possible, but it was also at times seamless for these women.

As the participants and I explored how they integrated their maternal and professional identities, they discussed the reciprocal advantages of these roles in student affairs. They talked about the influence of maternal identity on professional identity and the influence of professional identity on maternal identity. Marnie laughed about trying to "counsel" her child when that child least wanted to be counseled while Julie tried to impose her "wisdom" as a higher education professional when her daughter was not convinced of their expertise. Julie's daughter did not understand the advantages of having a mother in student affairs until she experienced the college environment. Goldie shared her son's understanding of important life lessons, such as sexual responsibility and how to respectfully treat a woman.

Lehman and Krebs (2018) suggested that the children of student affairs professionals experience enhanced learning and care from their associations with their parents' profession. As student affairs professionals, the participants exposed their children to their work environments and introduced them to people of diverse cultures. They taught their children about difficult life topics that were discussed regularly at work; critical thinking and problem solving, sexual assault, and alcohol education. These

mothers learned from working with college students the value of not overreacting but approaching and using essential skills learned at work to help their own children solve teenage and young adult problems. This insight can provide inspiration for student affairs professionals who are parents to apply knowledge learned at work to educate and encourage their own children.

Student affairs professionals are predicted to face a more diverse student body in the coming years (Whitt & Schuh, 2015). Practitioners must stay current and be open to new knowledge and practice to meet the needs of students (Shushok & Perillo, 2016). The participants interviewed have experienced firsthand the demographic and generational changes in college student populations and talked of the importance of staying current on national and global trends that impacted students: mental health issues, politics, implicit bias, racism, Title 9 issues, and climate change. Marnie and Julie remarked that they were not sure they would have had the same exposure to these life topics if they had worked in a different field. They all remarked on the importance of sharing their knowledge at work and at home. As a working mother in students affairs, I have taken for granted the knowledge and skills I acquired in higher education. I did not consider the advantages afforded to me by working in an environment that exposed me to a depth of knowledge that might not be so easily attained in other places. The women in this study made it clear of those advantages and I began to reflect on my own experiences because of our conversations. Working mothers in student affairs have the potential to strongly impact all with whom they interact, and they have an extraordinary opportunity to impact not only college students with home they interact, but also their children, their

partners, and their friends, who may not be exposed to the ever-changing needs of society.

The women also admitted that life and career decisions sometimes came with a sacrifice, mostly in relation to job change or growth opportunities. Their sacrifices corroborated Marquez-Santana (2016) and Hannum et al., (2015), both of whom discussed the different sacrifices women often make when trying to balance their work and home life. Marnie and Goldie were concerned that if they pursued higher levels of administration or terminal degrees, their home life would suffer. Goldie and Laura talked about staying at one college for a long time because of the potential upheaval moving might create for the family. Even with these sacrifices, the participants did not express resentment for their choices. They made those decisions with their priorities in mind, showing their intentionality and perseverance.

Women who work in student affairs reported positive experiences as mother and professional Fochtman, 2015; Lee, 2015). During the interviews I asked about challenges and successes the participants experienced as working mothers. They focused primarily on positive aspects when integrating their roles. These positive experiences seemed to outweigh the challenges, but I wondered if that might be because many of the challenges were in the past and some of the negative memories forgotten (Britzman, 2003).

The nature of the narrative inquiry process might also have impacted the way the women talked of their experiences. Riessman (2008) taught that people compose stories of themselves to project a particular image and expound on their stories based on the listener's responses. Marnie talked about the emotional challenges of being the mother of an adult but then followed those concerns with statements of pride and love for her

daughters' accomplishments. Marnie's comments suggested that she may have wanted me to have a particular impression of her life, one that I would admire. It does not negate the truth of her statements but does put into perspective her stories offered.

As I pondered their perspectives, I considered the reason I decided to interview mothers who had already raised their children. For these women whose children had moved out of their family homes and started adult lives of their own, the problems associated with raising young children while working were far in the past. Obstacles associated with those early parenting years might not have seemed as difficult now that they were in the past and no longer relevant. In contrast, my daughter, a mother of two young sons remarked in a conversation that she is so consumed by daily life, she does not have time to stop and contemplate the benefits of integrating her identities. She is in "the weeds of life" and does not have the long-term benefit of perspective. I wondered if the conversation might have gone differently if I was interviewing women who were currently raising their children. For the participants, whose children had all moved out of their family homes and started adult lives of their own, the problems associated with raising children were in the past. They remembered the larger stories, themes, and emotions associated with raising young children while working but quickly transitioned into life with teenagers and adults.

The participants of this study showed that each journey was unique and their decisions about home and work were shaped by their individual experiences, relationships, and values. Their values drove their decisions and they focused on the development of their children, families, students, and co-workers using critical thought, advocacy, and intentionality.

RQ2: How did university settings and/or policy impact the maternal and professional identity integration of women who worked in higher education student affairs while raising a child? I expected a more specific conversation about organizational policy based on the literature I had read about struggles with work/life balance and the influence of organizations (Ibarra et al., 2013; Lester, 2016; Nobbe & Manning, 1997). During the individual interviews conversations about the universities the participants worked in came up naturally within the context of their experiences, but their stories revolved more around relationships and less about policy as influencers in their lives. They discussed supervisors and co-workers and the positive and negative aspects of those relationships and less about organizational policies and their effects. When I didn't see the evidence of organizational policy influence from the individual narratives, I structured the focus group to talk more in-depth about organizational policy and anticipated a lively discussion of obstacles and traps that impede a working mother's success. The women, however, did not have much to say specifically about organizational policy in that space either.

Conversations about organizational influence on maternal/professional identity integration focused on positive and negative work relationships as primary influencers in their lives. As I contemplated their comments about problem relationships, I reviewed authors who discussed problems women face in the workplace and found evidence to support the participants' relationship experiences. Relationship problems that occur in workplace include perceptions of incompetence or assumptions women having a lesser work ethic than men (Cuddy et al., 2004; Ibarra et al., 2014). The participants talked about ways they overcame those obstacles by advocating for themselves in meetings and

problem solving with their supervisors. I thought there would be more conversation about the influence of these misconceptions within organizational policy, however, beyond one woman talking about struggles with maternity leave, there was little mention of actual policy impeding on their lives.

Regarding specific policy, Goldie remarked that the rigid maternity leave policy at her institution was the only policy that restricted her. No other participant talked about maternity leave, except in passing remarks about being called while on leave to discuss a work-related concern. Most of the policy-related examples came from times the participants needed to take their children to work. Julie laughed when she talked about her supervisor allowing her to bring her daughter to work when there was a written policy against such activity. In fact, all participants were allowed to bring their children to work even though there was a policy disallowing a child in the workplace at most of the institutions these women represented. Understandably, having children in the workplace might create risk management issues, but, the participants, as well as myself, found that involving children in our work settings helped with schedule management and provided a positive learning environment for them.

Positive relationships in the workplace were a primary factor in the participant's professional development. Women build professional identity and align with an organization through their relationships (Schultheiss, 2014). Participants' conversations about work environments often revolved around the importance of relationships in the workplace. The participants' focus on professional relationships also corroborated Wegner's (2018) belief that women build their environment of support from their work

relationships. Goldie spoke of co-workers as "family" while Laura spoke of special women mentors who helped her through her doubts and fears of being a mother.

Interestingly, the two older participants, Goldie, and Marnie, admitted that they had few women role models who were working mothers to mentor them. Marquez-Santana (2016) found that women in upper-level administrative positions in student affairs struggled with work-life balance and needed strong mentors to be successful. Goldie and Marnie experienced the evidence of Marquez-Santana's findings. They only observed women who had made the choice not to have children, or were divorced, or remained single to aspire to higher levels of administration. Goldie and Marnie determined they wanted a different life from the women they observed in the workplace.

Even with Goldie's and Marnie's lack of early mentors, they, with Laura and Julie, talked of the support and mentorship they provided to younger staff members who were working mothers. The primary organizational influence for maternal and professional identity integration seemed to be more associated with supervisor and colleague relationships rather than institutional policies or procedures. Policies and procedures were relevant, but they were often superseded by supportive and flexible supervisors. Marnie and Goldie were the only participants who shared negative experiences with supervisors for being unyielding in their flexibility concerning time. As a result, both women chose to pursue different work environments, intentionally looking for supervisors who would be more supportive.

From the participants' experiences, it can be assumed that the organizational structure within the field of student affairs influences employee retention. As I pondered these women's stories, I considered the problems with retention at my own university and

wondered how organizational structure might influence maternal and professional identity integration and retention of these women. Because of the nature of the university in which Laura worked and their unwillingness to lose such a valuable employee, Laura was given the opportunity to work part-time. They allowed her to continue this structure for 18 years and it might be assumed that was because of her proven history and contributions to the institution. Laura gave credit to the university's status as a private school for its flexibility. She wondered if she would have been allowed such freedom if she had worked for a public or state university.

Conversely, Goldie made the decision to retire early because she saw a change in organizational structure that negatively influenced the culture and mission of helping students who might not otherwise have an opportunity for such an education be successful. Many of the people in her university who worked directly with students were laid off, leaving administrators who did not, in her opinion, share a passion for student development. Goldie was not willing to compromise her standards to comply with the new structure.

It could also be assumed from the stories of these women that organizational policy had less to do with identity development and more to do with balancing the dual identities. Each of the women in this study had different professional experiences based on their education, type of college, and level of advancement, but they all identified professionally within student affairs and they each believed they contributed to the field and acted in accordance with their beliefs, and values.

A common denominator for success for the participants included strong nurturing relationships with supervisors and a passion for student development. These women were

able to articulate a sense of professional identity even with the tensions that continue to exist in the student affairs field (McGill et al., 2021). Could it be that professional identity can be established even among those tensions when focusing on what McGill et al. (2021) referred to as "attitudinal attributes" (p. 133)? The themes derived from the participants' narratives, human development, critical thought, advocacy, and intentionality brought out attitudes and values that were important for these working mothers. From human development came the passion for their children's success, their students' transformation, as well as the growth and development of staff members whom they mentored or supervised. Values associated with critical thought included problem solving, creativity, and innovation. Advocacy covered a broad scope of values, including social justice, openness, and flexibility of time. All the themes were grounded with intention which resulted from goals, focus, and sacrifice. From these values, the participants made decisions about their time, their families, and their careers, and stood firmly within those decisions to ensure that they held true to their priorities.

The participants' values aligned with the competencies that have been identified as important for student affairs professionals, but even with the advent of these established competences (ACPA/NASPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators, n.d.), the debate continues as to whether the field of student affairs has achieved professional status (Carpenter, 2003; McGill et al., 2021; Pittman & Foubert, 2016). Based on the participants' professional identification as student affairs professionals, it could be implied that professional status of a field is not as important as the individual professional experiences and relationships that define a person's

experience. How important is the alignment of person values with pre-existing values or competencies identified by professional organizations?

Student affairs is a demanding field (Collins, 2009) but as these women have shown, working mothers can contribute to the growth and development of students and should be provided the support needed from institutional supervisors, structure, and policy to help fill the gap that is occurring as people retire or leave the profession. Throughout the narratives of these working mothers, their love for their children and their work were evident. From their stories, we add to the scholarship about the contributions that working women can make to the student affairs field. The next section investigates significant meaning that can be surmised from their stories.

Implications

Through the narratives and connecting themes described in the findings of this study, I hoped that the results of this study would inspire working mothers in student affairs to embrace their dual identities as mother and professional by understanding the compatibility of work related and non-work-related identities. This study covered areas of interest including maternal and professional identity development, the lives of working mothers, and the influence of working mothers on the student affairs field. Several implications can be made from these women's experiences.

Successful Integration of Roles is Achievable

Words such as "struggling," balancing," and "juggling" are often used to describe how a working mother manages the dual responsibilities of mother and professional (Clark, 2001; Ladge & Greenberg, 2015). The success that participants in this study had integrating their dual identities supports. Women can "weave" work and motherhood

together in meaning and positive ways (Vair, 2013). As discussed earlier, participants shared multiple examples of ways each identity role positively influenced their personal and professional lives and relationships.

A comprehensive sense of self is achieved by integrating multiple identity roles (Galliher et al. 2017). Over the course of the interview process each participant contemplated the questions and reflected on their own experiences as they attempted to make meaning about their lives and identities. The women in this study struggled at times to articulate the personal meaning their experiences had in their lives, but when given time to think and ponder their experiences, to truly reflect on their lives, they were vulnerable in sharing the missteps, challenges, and successes of being a working mother. The narratives provided evidence that these four women were able to integrate their maternal and professional identities in ways that positively impacted their professional and personal lives, while navigating the challenges and obstacles brought on by societal and organizational constraints. Their stories serve as evidence and hope for other working mothers who may be struggling to find their own sense of purpose as a working mother. By approaching their roles of mother and professional and weaving each role into the other, we see a more complex and complete picture of who they are, phenomena described by Azmitia et al. (2008). Working mothers currently in student affairs can learn from these women to create their own path for successful role integration, as well as to seek the support from allies around them who either have been through the experience or who advocate for women's fulfillment and advancement. When women consciously approach their lives from a positive lens and use language to support a more positive outcome, they have a better chance of maneuvering through the daily challenges and

struggles and focus on outcomes that move them toward a productive and meaningful experience.

A way to accomplish successful identity role integration is through self-reflection, a valuable tool that can be used by student affairs working mothers in the quest for identity role integration. As a leadership educator, I encourage reflection as a tool to promote personal growth. Reflection requires more than merely thinking, writing, or talking about experiences. Deep reflection requires a person to question, contemplate, and challenge personal thoughts and actions (Brown, Desai, & Elliot, 2020). When considering the successful integration of maternal and professional identities at work and at home, young working mothers can benefit from reflective practice to be intentional in their own development as mothers and professionals. Working mothers who have lived those experiences can be a great support and mentor to other women to help them process their experiences.

Working Mothers Might Influence Professional Retention

Another implication to consider from the results of this study pertains to professional retention in student affairs. Student affairs is demanding, with long hours and often lower pay than other careers, and it is difficult to retain younger professionals because of burn out, stressful hours, and inconsistency of roles (Pittman & Foubert, 2016). However, with strong mentoring, supervision, and evidence of their contributions to student development, it might be possible to retain working mothers to have long and fulfilling careers.

The participants talked about how they used their maternal identity experiences to mentor, support, and advocate for younger professionals. Their mentoring practice not

only helped them in their professional development (Haley et al., 2015) but they also provided opportunities for younger working mothers who might have been experiencing their own problems (Cutler, 2003). They remarked that often they were sought out for advice or encouragement. Goldie was proud that she had brought people into the profession. The experiences of working mothers can use the knowledge and skills they have acquired from their lived experiences to inspire the next generation of student affairs professionals.

Sage advice can be found throughout the participants' stories. The participants in this study had a collective 100+ years of service to higher education student affairs and offered their lived experiences as testament to the joys and challenges of being a working mother in the field. During the individual interviews and the focus group they shared their wisdom and advice to other working mothers in student affairs. Their advice included the importance of clearly understanding their own needs and wants, asking for help, and advocating for themselves. From their advice, younger working mothers can find their own sense of balance or weaving to be the most successful in their lives at home and at work. Reflecting on personal and professional needs and setting priorities helps working mothers understand what truly is important and needed to integrate responsibilities. From a place of understanding, working mothers can benefit from advocating what they need at home and at work. These participants came from a societal norm that demanded perfection and self-sufficiency. They learned the importance of setting boundaries and advocating for themselves, their families, and their colleagues.

Organizational Relationships and a Working Mother's Success

 If working mothers can help in the retention of young professionals, organizations must create ways to develop and retain working mothers (Marquez-Santana, 2016; Searby et al., 2015). I understand this is not a new concept I am proposing, but it bears repeating because of its significance for creating an environment that promotes success for the work of student affairs professionals. The participants discussed extensively the importance of supervisor and co-worker relationships as key to a healthy work and home life.

Of course, positive mentoring and supervisory relationships are key for all employees. Changes in student dynamics, demographics, and technology create challenges for practitioners (Kuk et al., 2010). The continued importance of building professional standards and behavior in student affairs should continue to take precedence in professional standard conversations (McGill et al., 2021). Along with professional organizational standards, and structured educational programs, mentoring from seasoned professionals is a key factor to enhance professionalism (Murphy & Kram, 2014; Pittman & Foubert, 2016). Mentoring is especially important for women, who use relationships as a key means for building professional identity (Wegner, 2018).

From the experiences of this study's participants, it is apparent that organizations, their employees, and administrators play a strong role in a woman's health, productivity, and danger of burn out. From policy to professional development to supervisor training, organizations play a significant role in the ways a working mother successfully integrates her identity roles and lives a balanced and healthy life. Organizations can support all employees by considering carefully how their policies affect their employees. Employers

also should create a culture that supports the needs of employees and enhances productivity through strong relationship development. From the implications gleaned from the narratives, we turn to potential future research.

Suggestions for Further Research

Because this study looked at the lived experiences of working mothers in student affairs from a comprehensive perspective, a variety of topics were discussed. These topics are so rich that several could be studied individually. All the topics below were explored with one or more of the participants and it became apparent that any of these could be the focus of a research study.

Mothers of Adult Children

When reviewing the literature about maternal identity I found two primary sources of information (Green, 2010; Francis-Connolly, 2015). There is room for additional research that focus on maternal identity and adult children, including women who have worked in higher education or student affairs. Since the women in this study were all mothers of adult children, their identities as mothers had changed through the years and they were looking at their lives from a different lens than when their children were young. They continued to be involved in the children's lives but now had the opportunity to look at new ways to fill their time as they contemplated retirement, other work opportunities, and even being a grandmother. Continued research to explore the changes that women experience as their children grow is warranted from perspectives that could include stay at home mothers or working mothers, or the comparison of the two groups.

Examining Organizations That Have Incorporated Flexible Work Schedules

Examining organizations who have successfully implemented flexible work schedules is a timely research project since the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the workplace with the advent of home offices and virtual meetings. Julie and Marnie remarked on the policy changes that were occurring at their institutions to allow for more work at home options. Laura talked about the advantages of working part-time, and Julie spoke specifically about the flexibility of work hours and the positive effect the level of flexibility had on their ability to not only successfully integrate the professional and home life but also the positive effect it had on their work ethic. It would be interesting to learn if there is a correlation between flexible work hours and enhanced productivity in student affairs for all student affairs practitioners, not just working mothers.

Examining Maternal/Professional Identity across Generations

As I talked with my participants, who were all in their 50's and 60's, we discussed the difference in societal expectations and opportunities from when they were having their children to women who are now having children and choosing to have a career. The women in this study were highly influenced by expectations and social norms of the 1980's and 90's. In casually conversing with my daughter, a young working mother and other women in their 30's and 40's who are raising children while working in a professional setting, I surmised that women today have different opportunities and approach their lives and commitments from different perspectives. When I contemplated who I would interview for this study, I was not sure that younger working mothers would have the experiences necessary to comprehensively address the research purpose. An altered study that is more focused on the present moment and not the extended time could

be developed to explore the decision-making tools and influences of working mothers with younger children. It would be interesting to compare different generational groups to see differences and similarities of experiences. A study of this magnitude could continue to provide needed information for institutions who are employing people from multiple generations.

Examining Lessons Learned by Children Whose Parents Work in Student Affairs

Each woman in the study talked about the positive impact her professional knowledge and experience had on her children's development, suggesting a focus for further research. There is scarce research on the effects of the student affairs profession on children of student affairs professionals (Lehman & Krebs, 2018). The door is open to continue the exploration of children's development when exposed to parents whose primary professional responsibility is college student development.

Comparing Maternal and Paternal Experiences for Student Affairs Professionals

Julie emphasized the importance of including fathers in parenting conversations and advocated for fathers who work in student affairs, stating that she felt strongly that this was feminist issue that affected mothers and fathers. She challenged her supervisors to support fathers and provide the same opportunities for flexibility as mothers. A comparison study of maternal and paternal perceptions, expectations and experiences could provide information for institutions, supervisors, and individuals to help achieve healthy and productive lifestyles for all parents.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the narratives of the participants and connecting themes constructed from their values provided an in-depth examination of student affairs

working mothers and their successful integration of maternal and professional identity. Through a narrative inquiry process and using narrative identity as the framework, their narratives highlighted their past experiences as children, family relationships, career decisions, educational pursuits, personal and professional relationships, and offered a glimpse into their futures. This project was a labor of love and touched on distinct aspects of being a mother and professional. The participants opened their lives to the process and vulnerably shared the challenges and successes of integrating maternal and professional identity as student affairs practitioners. Their stories provided evidence that women can negotiate the obstacles and challenges and successfully weave their maternal and professional identities in a way that enhances the lives of their children, their colleagues, and themselves.

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Appendix A:

Institutional Review Board Approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 04153-2021   **Responsible Researcher(s):** Judy Craven

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Sakhavat Mammadov

Project Title: *Working Mothers in Student Affairs: A Narrative Study of Maternal and Professional Identity Development.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **Exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under Exemption **Category 2.** Your research study may begin immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *Exempt protocol guidelines **prohibit** the collection, storage, or sharing of identifiable participant information (e.g. audio recordings). However, Audio/video recordings are **permitted** under protocol guidelines provided the recordings are created for the sole purpose of creating an accurate transcript. The recordings must be deleted immediately from all recording devices.*
- Upon in an effort to prevent the accidental discovery of participants - pseudonym lists must be maintained in a separate and secure file from participant name lists, data sheets, transcripts, etc.
- Upon completion of this research study all collected data must be securely maintained (locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.

☒ *If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.*

Elizabeth Ann Olphie   *04.15.2021*   **Thank you for submitting an IRB application.**

Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator   **Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.**

Revised: 06.02.16

Appendix B

Invitation to Participate in a Study

Working Mothers in Student Affairs: A Narrative Study of Maternal and Professional

Identity

My name is Judy Craven, and I am an Ed. D candidate in Education Leadership at Valdosta State University, in Valdosta GA. My dissertation chair is Dr. Sakhavat Mammadov, Assistant Professor of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology in the Dewar College of Education and Human Services at Valdosta State University. I am conducting dissertation research on working mothers in higher education student affairs.

The purpose of this study is to examine the personal and professional experiences of working mothers in higher education student affairs to better understand how they integrated motherhood and professional identity. Using narrative inquiry as the research method, this study will explore the internal and external experiences of self and social roles from a non-deficit approach to capture comprehensive stories of multiple identity integration.

Participants must meet the following criteria:
- Worked at any level in higher education student affairs for at least 10 years while raising a child/children
- May have worked in a variety of units within Student Affairs (counseling, residence life, career planning, student activities, leadership development, etc.)
- Have at least one child who no longer lives at home

Your participation in this study includes three 90-minute semi-structured interviews spaced 1.5 weeks apart, plus a 90-minute focus group with all participants. Interviews will be conducted on Zoom.

To participate or if you have questions, please contact me at jcraven@valdosta.edu or call me at 470-578-2331 between 8:30 am – 4:30 pm and provide the following information:
- Number of years in Student Affairs while child/children were living in your home
- Number of children who no longer live at home
- Student affairs units you worked at while raising your child/children
- Contact information (email and phone number)

Qualified participants will be assigned a number and four participants will be randomly selected from the pool. Interviews will begin in May 2021.

Thank you for your consideration,

Judy G. Craven

Appendix C:

Individual Participant Interview Questions

Broad Themes	Questions	Interview	Research Question
General demographic information	Preferred pseudonym Partnered or marital history Description of family of origin Description of family while raising children Type of institution(s) worked and length of tenure Professional roles and responsibilities Number of children and current ages Cultural/racial/ethnic background	1	RQ1
Influencing relationships (mother's influence on motherhood identity)	Relationship with mother or mother figure. What did you learn from her about being a mother?	1	RQ1
Mother identity development (Evolution of mother identity)	Describe your journey into motherhood? Challenges and successes? How did your motherhood identity evolve as your child aged and developed? Describe your relationships with your children? Your spouse or partner, if applicable?	1	RQ1
Professional journey/identity (Education and socialization into profession)	Tell me the story of your professional journey? Motivation? Focus? Challenges? Success? How did your decision to be a mother and professional evolve?	2	RQ1
Professional identity as a student affairs practitioner	How do you identify as a professional in student affairs? How did that identity form? How did that	2	RQ1

	identity change through time and experience? How have other identities played into your maternal and professional identities?		
Multiple identity integration	Share stories of times when being a mother influenced a work-related situation or decision. A professional relationship. What were your expectations as a mother and professional? How did you manage the roles? What were the expectations of others as a mother and professional? Share stories of ways in which your professional identity influenced your role as a mother. Share a story of a time when one role superseded the other? How did it make you feel? What would you have done differently?	3	RQ1

Appendix D:

Focus Group Interview Questions

Broad Themes	Questions	Research Question
General information	Ask each participant to share briefly their journey in Student Affairs. Ask each participant to share their family structure.	RQ1
Organizational support	Describe situations when your identity as a mother was impacted by organizational policies (positive or negative). Do you have stories of how other people influenced you? How did they influence ways you integrated motherhood and professional identities?	RQ2
Personal Meaning	What did you learn about yourself through your life as a mother and professional? What would you to say to women who are currently mothers and professionals in Student Affairs? What advice might you offer? What would you like to say to your organizations/supervisors about your experiences? In other words, what can we all learn from your life experiences?	RQ 1 and RQ2

Appendix E:

Interview Consent Statement

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled **"Working Mothers in Student Affairs: A Narrative Study of Maternal and Professional Identity Development."** This research project is being conducted by Judy G. Craven, a doctoral student in Education Leadership at Valdosta State University. The purpose of this research is to examine the personal and professional experiences of working mothers in higher education student affairs to better understand how they integrated motherhood and professional identity. You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn about how women integrate maternal and professional identities when raising children while working in higher education student affairs. The results of this study may be beneficial to other working mothers in the field as well as provide crucial information to institutions of higher education who employ working mothers.

Participation should take approximately **6 hours (divided into three 90-minute sessions and one 9-minute focus group with all participants).** The interviews will be audio and video recorded to accurately capture your concerns, opinions, and ideas. Once the recordings have been transcribed, the recordings will be destroyed. No one will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Pseudonym lists will be kept in a separate file from the data to prevent accidental discovery of participant responses. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your participation in the interview will serve as

your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that
you are 18 years of age or older.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed
to ***Judy G. Craven, jcraven@valdosta.edu***. This study has been exempted from
Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The
IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the
rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your
rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947
or irb@valdosta.edu.