ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: "SCREAMING DOWN THE HALLWAY", BUT NO ONE IS LISTENING TO ME: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK RESIDENTIAL STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS REGARDING OCCUPATIONAL WELLNESS AT HISTORICALLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

Di-Tu Dissassa, Doctor of Philosophy, 2023

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Amid ongoing occurrences of racism in the United States, consideration of the campus climate for Staff of Color remains under explored in literature. Specifically, Black student affairs employees who both live and work on campus are an understudied population regarding how race intersects with their residential life roles and how their wellness is impacted through these intersections. Through this study's use of critical frameworks, the coresearchers and I sought to uncover their lived experiences through interviews, reflections, and focus groups. Four themes emerged from the findings of this research: (a) The Live-In Experience as Socialized and Conventional, (b) Belonging as Dualism, (c) Physical Safety as an Impediment to Occupational Wellness, and (d) Performativity as Racism.

The coresearchers articulated that they were socialized into their experiences, yet (a) felt little belonging on campus due to their race and (b) felt a misfit when living in residence halls. Although the sense of belonging findings were consistent with existing campus climate research,

articulated aspects of physical safety-related occupational health theories regarding occupational wellness suggested the coresearchers felt occupational distress surrounding their physical safety. The coresearchers also highlighted clearly that they experienced high levels of performative antiracism efforts from their departments and institutions, leading to feelings of isolation. Despite these challenges, the coresearchers described finding solace in community with other Black people and People of Color to provide aspects of wellness their institutions could not provide. Further research is needed to truly understand the implications of departmental and institutional leadership around performativity and lack of belonging for Staff of Color.

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by

Di-Tu Dissassa

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Dedication

Lord Jesus, you have and always will be my solid rock and foundation. I pray my work always brings you glory. I pray that my work always bring justice to the those in need. I pray that I will always exercise your spirit of love, joy peace, patience, faith, patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control (Galatians 5:23). Thank you heavenly Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for bringing me to completion of this project. Indeed, "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:5)

Isaiah 1:17 (NLT)

"Learn to do good.

Seek justice.

Help the oppressed.

Defend the cause of orphans.

Fight for the rights of widows."

Psalm 121 (KJV)

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.

The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NLT)

Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 8:1b-3 (ESV)

We know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. 2 If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. 3 But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

Next, to my parents, **Zerihune Kenaa Dissasa** and **Doris Marie Dissassa (Levingston),** what a journey this has been for us. Thank you for drenching me in love and teaching me to seek knowledge and wisdom by guiding me to the marvelous light. I am forever grateful for God placing me with the two of you. I dedicate this work to you.

Kabajamaa Abbaa kiyya Obbo **Kennaa Disaasaatiifi** Kabajamtuu haadha tiyya Aadde **Daayyituu Dibaabaa,** Jireenya koo Keessatti yeroo sadi qofa kan wal-argine tahus, isiniin walarguun jireenya kiyya guututti jijjjiiree jira. Hojiin koo kuni isiniifii akaakileewwan koo dhiigni isaanii dhiiga kiyya keessa jiruuf naa taa tahu jedha. yeroo waliin dabarsine keessatti jaalala naa kennitaniif baay'iseen isin galatoomfadha.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the United States population witnessed an outcry from the Black Lives Matter movement. George Floyd, a Black man, was murdered at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department, when one police officer held his knee on the neck of Floyd until he suffocated (Hill et al., 2020). Awareness of Floyd's story traveled globally and sparked protests in over 60 countries (Weine et al., 2020); however, the subsequent Black Lives Matter movement did not emerge because of this one tragedy; rather, it arose from a culmination of anti-Black narratives; actions; policies; and practices over time, including but not limited to police brutality and racial violence (Wu et al., 2021). Amid the outcry of Black people and fellow allies was a demand for the equitable treatment of Black citizens in the United States.

Racism occurs daily and is a familiar occurrence to those living in the United States (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1988; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Acts of violence against Black people are commonplace across the nation. Black people experience microaggressions and higher levels of discrimination daily than non-Black people, and the murder of unarmed Black people by law enforcement officers has continually exhibited a lack of allegiance to Black citizens belonging in the United States (Edwards et al., 2019; Mouzon et al., 2017; Sue, 2010). More recently, Black people in the United States have also had to endure racialized rhetoric by former president, Donald J. Trump, who encouraged overt racism (Saul, 2017). These instances have exacerbated anti-Blackness sentiments and reminded Black people of the daily dangers they face, the repetition of trauma, and undeserved death due to their racial identity. The U.S. government, which should protect Black people of the country, has continued to work against them.

I found myself discouraged by the anti-Black racism that occurred in 2020 after the murder of George Floyd. Watching my stoic mother, a native-born Black American, cry watching news recaps of the protest and expressions of frustrations by other Black people in the United States made me continue to question the value of Black life and humanity in this country and our role in the societal system into which we have been forced since slavery. Despite advancements of People of Color, Black people in the United States cannot live in peace. As Black Americans, we cannot peacefully be human in the United States. We cannot be Supreme Court justices peacefully (i.e., Supreme Court Justice, Ketanji Brown Jackson); we cannot be fictional Disney characters (i.e., Halle Bailey); we are harshly reprimanded for opposing colonialism (i.e., Dr. Uju Anaya); we cannot birdwatch and ask others to be courteous to the rules (i.e., Christian Cooper); we cannot run (i.e., Ahmaud Arbery); we cannot rest in our homes (i.e., Breonna Taylor); we cannot breathe (i.e., Eric Garner); and we cannot live without the knee of the oppressor on our neck (i.e., George Floyd; Adeniran, 2022; Baker et al., 2015; Cook, 2022; Elmore & Wright, 2022; Hackett & Schwarzenbach, 2020; Hill et al., 2020; Sackl, 2022; Vila et al., 2021). Although these instances serve as only a few reminders of the dehumanization of Black Americans in the United States, I also recognize that anti-Black racism does not stop at the individual harms, but is also embedded into U.S. systems and organizations.

In July 2021, the Black Education Research Collective released a report on *Black Education in the Wake of COVID-19 & Systemic Racism: Toward a Theory of Change & Action* (Horsford et al., 2021). The authors highlighted data collected from six metropolitan cities in the United States from Black Americans on the impacts of COVID-19 and systemic racism; they also acknowledge the toll that both the pandemic and systemic racism have on the mental health of Black Americans . The report emphasizes the impact that systemic racism and trauma from

the historic events from 2020 such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the murders Breonna Taylor and George Floyd would "…reflect yet another wave in the wake of mass trauma events shaping and informing the Black experience in the U.S. and more specifically, Black education in a racially divided and politically polarized society (Horsford et al., 2021, p. 12)." Additionally the report's findings showed that Black Americans have lost trust in schools and public institutions due to the police brutality, capital insurrection and the failure to respond to Black communities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When viewing colleges and universities as microcosms of the larger society, I considered nature of racism—specifically anti-Blackness in the United States—it was vital to consider the experiences of Black campus community members and staff. Any attrition of a Professional of Color from the field is a disadvantage for the vitality and advancement of higher education. Although many reasons exist for attrition from the higher education sector, entry-level staff often leave the field due to a lack of professional development, poor supervision, insufficient mentoring, and the difficulty of navigating the bureaucracy and political climate of the field (Buchanan & Shupp, 2015).

Higher education has a problem of anti-Blackness racism on campus, especially in residence halls and housing, which impacts Professionals of Color (Anderson, 2019; Sherry et al., 2017; University of Michigan [U-M] Public Affairs, n.d.). Kretovics (2002) surveyed 291 entry-level student affairs professionals, and housing and residence life entry-level positions made up 54.7% of the sample. Kretovics's (2002) have found the housing and residence life functional area includes almost half of professionals entering the higher education field. In particular, many residence hall director roles are heavily staffed in the field by entry-level professionals and graduate students. As such, researching residence life directors provides

significant benefit to residence life and housing units through increased understanding of the lived experiences of residence life professionals, specifically Black professionals in this population.

A narrowed topic for consideration involved those professionals affected by structural and systemic anti-Blackness at historically white institutions (HWIs). Anti-Blackness sentiments on college campuses is also not a new phenomenon; however, campus diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts have fallen short in cultivating a pro-Black environment within U.S. higher education systems (Briscoe, 2023; Leath et al., 2022; Mustaffa, 2017). In the past 20 years, many U.S. institutions have developed diversity and inclusion statements, whereas some colleges and universities have even hired cabinet-level diversity officers and created strategic plans to move forward a DEI agenda at their institutions (Worthington et al., 2020). DEI is essential for the campus environment; yet, those at HWIs do not always address anti-Black racism, and there is little consideration of occupational wellness and race intersections. Although campus-wide strategies exist for DEI implementation, much equity work is performed by those who hold racially marginalized identities, and even with these values in place, sentiments of racism remain embedded in institutions (Garcia et al., 2021). Such emphasis may more broadly cater to inclusion and belonging sentiments than equitable practices, and the labor of DEI work is not equally distributed among campus communities.

Some of the oldest forms of oppression in the higher education sector occurred during slavery when higher education institutions (all HWIs) considered (and in some cases, owned) Black people as property instead of as participants on U.S. college campuses (Beckert & Stevens, 2011; Rothman, 2017; Wilder, 2013). From the inception of slavery to the current state of anti-Blackness as of 2023—replete with microaggressions, tokenism, Black labor in college

athletics, and increased faculty labor (e.g., increased mentoring, dismissiveness of culturally relevant scholarship)—anti-Blackness has played a prominent role in the belonging of Black people on HWI campuses (Dancy & Edwards, 2021; Dancy et al., 2018; Stewart, 2019). Though admitted to these campuses, Black people still struggle with an equitable place in higher education institutions; for instance, Black students have heightened awareness of the campus racial climate due to frequently facing racism on college campuses. Among all racial groups, Black students are most likely to experience racial hostility on campus (Carter, 2007; Mwangi et al., 2018).

Although studying the experiences of Black students are essential, anti-Blackness impacts all Black constituents on campus, including Black staff. Black staff may similarly experience negative impacts of anti-Blackness on their mental health; yet, universities often operate with the expectation that Black professionals at the institution communicate with and support the Black student population (Poussaint, 1974). Black students must receive support from institutions, Black staff included; however, mitigating the impact of anti-Blackness on a campus community requires higher education institutions to support Black staff in addition to students.

The growing number of Black students are not comparable to the number of Black Staff on campus. Although there are no numbers for Black staff percentages available through the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), there can be some comparisons made between Black faculty and student patterns. NCES (2021, 2023) noted total Black student enrollment for Fall 2022 was 13.1%, whereas only 5.8% of faculty and instructional staff were Black. Though not represented in these data, administrative staff members also must work additional hours to assist students while experiencing anti-Blackness on

campus or nationally. Additionally, Black on-campus professionals and their other Colleagues of Color[1] may not have the resources or power to address every situation and support students at HWIs (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Further, many staff experience tokenism through expectations to be a spokesperson for on-campus DEI efforts due to white administrators' unwillingness to learn about matters of race (Feagin, 1992). Research on the experiences of Black on-campus professionals at HWIs allows for higher education scholars and practitioners to gain a better understanding of their racialized work environment, availability of support resources, and the implications of additional labor given to support students.

Rarely has higher education and student affairs (HESA) literature discussed the experiences of Black residential life professionals on campus. HESA scholars have instead more broadly addressed Professionals of Color and their stress levels resulting from work obligations, such as the notion that workplace stress can result in burnout, racial battle fatigue (RBF), and powerlessness to assist Students of Color (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Husband, 2016; Smith, 2008; Steele, 2018). Although researchers have addressed the stresses facing Professionals of Color, none addressed the specific context of permanently living in residence on campus as a Black person serving as a residence life professional in U.S. higher education.

Additionally, literature from the last decade has largely focused on the stress from being a Person of Color working in a white space (e.g., RBF, race-related service) and not the holistic, occupational wellness of Black professionals (Baez, 2000; Smith et al., 2011). As such, it was essential to focus on occupational wellness in this study because the concept addresses additional wellness dimensions for professionals outside of their personal attempts to manage their stress and wellness. By cultivating a thriving work environment that highlights occupational wellness

[1] I use "of Color" when referring to individuals who are racial minorities but include other races besides Black.

with a focus on antiracism, shifting environments on campus would pose beneficial Black residential student affairs professionals (BRSAPs) and later present implications for Black communities at HWIs as a whole. Further discussion on holistic, stress-related differences and the dimensions of occupational wellness occurs in Chapter Two.

As for the nature of their work, existing research has steered toward minoritized faculty and their experiences instead of the experiences of Black staff and administrators (Padilla, 1994; Patton & Catching, 2009; Smith et al., 2007; Stanley, 2006). This body of literature, however, has not examined the residential lifestyle component of BRSAPs work; rather, existing scholarship has centered on a standard set of work hours by other staff positions. BRSAPs on HWI campuses work and live in anti-Black campus environments that do not allow for spaces to an escape and/or have a distinct work-life integration, as with other live off-student affairs positions (Hirschy & Staten, 2021). Lastly, student affairs literature has often discussed the experiences of upper level administration and career pathways to higher ranking positions, leaving a gap to center research on Black entry-level professionals in the field (Phelps-Ward & Kenney, 2019). Such a gap is critical to student affairs, particularly when considering the job performance, supervision, and retention of Black professionals through their service in the student affairs functional area of residence life.

Aiding the field of student affairs, this research on BRSAPs filled the aforementioned gap in existing literature and associated practice on what Black professionals experience in entry-level residence life positions. This study centered their experiences and contributed to the opportunity for non-Black professionals and supervisors to recognize the experiences of this distinct group on HWI campuses. At the core of this work was an acknowledgement of anti-Blackness experienced in the United States, in higher education systems, and in workplaces. In

this study, I also questioned the role of residential professionals and their occupational wellness, defined later in this chapter (Chari et al., 2018). Occupational wellness is vital for residential professionals because their position works closely with students and supports many constituents on campus. Finally, the study explored implications for practice and opportunities for further research to advance knowledge on BRASPs working at HWIs. With this knowledge of the topic and a brief overview of the work of Black student affairs professionals, I move into framing the study.

Framing the Study

Black people face racial discrimination in the workplace nationally in the United States, where they often face difficulties in hiring or promotion processes (Whitaker, 2019). Everyday discrimination causes stress for Black people, and "some are susceptible to health-related challenges while in the workplace due to a discriminatory climate (Deitch et al., 2003; Whitaker, 2019). Such a lack of wellness due to organizational climate is not surprising, given racial incidents are traumatic experiences; researchers have found racialized trauma has similar effects to persons harmed through domestic violence (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2015). In this example, the perpetrator is motivated by power, and the victim may experience posttraumatic stress, denial, and self-blame for the incidents; some victims may also inadvertently inflict secondhand trauma on others who witnessed the victim's abuse (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2015). In this study, I considered the role of racial discrimination in the work environment for Black residential life professionals on HWI campuses.

Although literature on Black student affairs professionals remains scant, research examining the Black student experience is relevant for studying Black residential professionals' anti-Blackness experience on campus due to their shared racial identities in higher education

environments. In the following sections, I frame the study around the student experience with anti-Blackness in the campus environment, then explain the experiences of staff and provide a subsection on the experiences of Black faculty in the literature review.

Anti-Blackness and the Campus Environment

The campus environment impacts student affairs professionals because they are members of the campus community; thus, when racialized incidents occur, they are also affected. When universities have an adverse racial campus climate, the staff may also perceive a hostile work environment. As an example, when the institution has significant DEI issues, staff may not perceive a favorable climate for diversity (Mayhew et al., 2006). Staff perceptions reflect the campus climate's impact on their relationship with the institution. Moreover, considering that residence halls physically exist under campus jurisdictions, the effects of DEI issues on live-in staff are unique to their profession and job responsibilities, much like the work environment for student workers (e.g., resident assistants).

Although existing literature remains limited on these professionals, some accounts for student affairs Professionals of Color have addressed race and racial trauma in their workplaces (Briscoe, 2022). Racialized trauma and stress for student affairs professionals come from many places, including their relationships with supervisors and coworkers (Clay & Ellington, 2019). Professionals of Color must also balance their racial trauma with their responsibilities assisting students (Steele, 2018). Due to the nature of the residential role, BRSAPs can also experience secondhand trauma in residence halls. The position requires these professionals to handle multiple crisis response events and work with students outside regular business hours. Because of their racial identities, Professionals of Color may have to spend more time assisting Students of Color, thereby adding to their workload, which imparts additional taxation and labor. When

student affairs Professionals of Color work in residential environments, they may find it challenging to maintain healthy well-being (McDaniel, 2021).

In this study, I discussed the notion of physical spaces at HWIs as a source of belonging for BRSAPs because functional units like residence life and campus housing focus on facilitating student living and learning in physical spaces on campus. The overwhelming nature of communal areas on HWI campuses dominated by white people have created hostile conditions for non-white students, leading Black students to often invest in alternative housing outside of campus; such a pattern indicates Black students do not always feel supported while living on campus (Haynes, 2019). Black male resident assistants have also reported they often face stereotypes, microaggressions, and experiences of isolation while navigating scrutiny by their white supervisors at HWIs (Harper et al., 2011). I posit the student experience may hold parallels to the BRSAP experience because BRSAPs experience the same campus physical space. In Chapter 2, I provide additional details about the Black student residential life experience. Research regarding the role of Black faculty on campus has also addressed certain aspects related to the experiences of BRSAPs, such as cultural taxation, Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF), and race-related service (Baez, 2000; Padilla, 1994; Smith, 2008).

Literature and research from Black students' experiences—particularly students working in residence life units—was an important addition to the research the understudied phenomenon of Black residence hall directors on campus. When Black students are affected by societal anti-Blackness while on campus, their experience heightens awareness of anti-Blackness at the institution. For example, Black students have long faced race-based stress that inhibits their academic motivation and experienced a campus climate mirrored by a significant societal racial climate (Mwangi et al., 2018; Reynolds et al., 2010). On a national level, Black students

protested racial injustice and race issues through Black campus movements at historically Black and white colleges during the 1960s and 1970s (Kendi, 2012). Black student activists have since continued to protest campus anti-Blackness through social media campaigns such as "I, Too, Am Harvard" and "Being Black at Michigan (#BBUM)" (Lee, 2014; Mazyck, 2014). Black student activists have also advocated for campus change and racial justice through traditional methods (e.g., hunger strikes) and operational strikes, such as the football team's strike at the University of Missouri–Columbia (Fries-Britt et al., 2020). Black students' continual protests have illustrated strained relationships with HWIs from the student lens; yet, U.S. higher education's HWI relationship with anti-Blackness can similarly affect Black nonstudent constituents experiencing the same campus environment.

Reviewing literature on Black students' experiences is beneficial because their experiences in residence life (e.g., amenities, campus location, and work environments) provide the closest narrative to those who work as live-in housing personnel. Due to sharing physical space (e.g., residence halls, dining halls, laundry) and organizational structures (e.g., similar departments and upper level administration), the student experience helped contextualized the living environments for Black professionals.

Later in this study, I connect BRSAPs' experiences to existing literature on Black faculty members. Doing so was not without challenges, because faculty do not usually live on campus nor reside with their students; however, their experiences with cultural taxation were helpful to understand the existing experiences of Black professionals on campus. Due to scant literature on Black student affairs professionals, combining research on both Black faculty and students' experiences provided insight to explain the campus racial climate and environments for those who work as administrators on campus.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to explore how the live-in and racialized experiences of Black residential student affairs professionals BRSAPs intersected to influence their wellness at historically white institutions HWIs. This study addressed participants' experiences with Blackness on campus and sought to further higher education literature and practice a better understanding of occupational wellness for residential professionals. I used critical phenomenological research to complicate knowledge on Blackness and occupational wellness and identify converging intersections through the lived experiences of BRSAPs (Given, 2008).

Although my research centered on HWI campuses in the United States, the study also serves as a reflection of broader society, highlighting how the shared experiences of race and racial trauma affect the daily lives of Black Americans and their well-being—particularly those working in whitewashed spaces like higher education. The motivation behind this work came from my relation to the study through my observations of Blackness within the campus climate and my lived experience while working in a housing unit in a large research-intensive (R1) institution. Later in this chapter, my relationality offers my experiences on campus and national incidents that impacted my identity as a Black residential professional at an HWI.

To address the wellness of Black residential professionals working and living in predominantly white campus housing units, I used a qualitative methodological tradition rooted in critical phenomenology, undergirded by the framework of critical consciousness (Freire, 1973; Guenther, 2020). Through my methodology and research design, the research question for this study grounded the essence of the participants' lived experiences and examined the structural implications of the intersections of race and wellness. My research centered on the following question:

- How does the live-in experience of Black residential student affairs professionals (BRSAPs) intersect with Blackness to shape their wellness at historically white institutions (HWIs)?

I considered this question while applying a critical phenomenological approach undergirded by the conceptual framework informed by critical consciousness and occupational wellness. Providing the purpose of my study, I now explain how this research holds significance to the field of U.S. higher education and student affairs practice.

Significance of Study

BRSAPs are among a group of student affairs personnel who work with students in residence life. I aimed to examine how BRSAPs live and work in the campus environment and explore their occupational wellness during their employment period. This study is significant because I addressed a holistic approach to well-being for Black professionals in the employment setting. In this section, I discuss the importance of occupational wellness at universities, the state of the campus environment for Black professionals, and the benefits of expanding the canon of literature on Black professionals working at HWIs.

My research on BRSAPs offered the opportunity for Black professionals to express their experiences in a white system that often dilutes or diminishes their opinions or experiences. The study may assist BRSAPs' departments by offering their narratives for peers and supervisors to consider when examining policies or processes. Additionally, the occupational wellness aspect of this study may also inform the work of all residential student affairs professionals, given crisis response and live-in characteristics occur regardless of social identity.

Lastly, this study addressed the opportunity for further exploration in the literature that discusses BRSAPs, especially those working and living-in on campus at HWIs. Although some

literature exists on Black faculty's experiences in a predominantly white profession, literature on Black administrators and staff remains scant. I sought to center the experiences of BRSAPs and their wellness at work beyond stress and fatigue. This study subsequently centered the holistic existence of a Black person as a human being working with student affairs and explored occupational wellness through a racial lens.

Defining Occupational Wellness in the Study

Occupational wellness connected to the purpose of my research because the concept centers on the well-being of the employee at an organizational level (Chari et al., 2018). Higher education institutions are incredibly complex organizations with shared governance and multiple constituents (Gayle et al., 2003). Due to the complexity of navigating the organization, I used Chari et al.'s (2018) definition of occupational wellness to address multiple aspects of wellness in one's occupation.

Wellness is considered a personal responsibility of maintaining healthy habits and self-regulation, but this research presented wellness as departmental or collective responsibility for the higher education sector (Stoewen, 2017).The occupational wellness framework includes five domains that frame worker well-being: (a) workplace physical environment and safety climate; (b) workplace policies and culture; (c) health status; (d) work evaluation and experience; and (e) home, community, and society (Chari et al., 2018).

Although there have been significant changes to workplace environments, modern work conditions provide an opportunity for collaboration and engagement that improves workplace performance and workplace being (Adams, 2019; Fletcher Williams et al., 2019). Wellness programs are provided by 4 out 5 employers in the United States to provide preventative measures for chronic diseases, for example screenings, health education, coaching, and health

assessments (Abraham, 2019). Organizational leaders have largely begun providing these programs because healthy workers are a benefit to the employer by having less absences to work, lower insurance premiums, more engagement at work, and less turnover for the company (Abraham, 2019). Occupational wellness practice has historically focused on workplace hazards, but expanded efforts have resulted in the consideration of employee well-being by addressing stress, productivity, and achieving the worker's best potential (Adams, 2019). Chari et al. (2018) defined *worker well-being* as:

> An integrative concept that characterizes quality of life with respect to an individual's health and work-related environmental, organizational, and psychosocial factors. Well-being is the experience of positive perceptions and the presence of constructive conditions at work and beyond that enables workers to thrive and achieve their full potential. (p. 590)

Worker well-being includes multiple aspects of the worker's health, such as environmental, organizational, and psychosocial health (Chari et al., 2018). In this next section, I address the paradigms of occupational wellness and how I applied these components to understanding the lived experiences of BRSAPs working at HWIs in the United States.

The first domain of workplace, physical environment and safety climate, considers the workplace safety conditions, design, and conflict and civility, such as how a worker experiences discrimination and harassment (Chari et al., 2018). The next domain (i.e., workplace, policy and culture) considers subdomains of salary, benefits, organizational culture, health culture, and work–life integration; one example of this domain is the organization's commitment to employee health by providing resources and programs (Chari et al., 2018). Health status is one domain that centers the personal health of the worker, as the subdomains include physical health, mental

health, lifestyle choices, ability and disability, and injuries; an example of this domain is when a worker's health status concerns diet, sleep, stress, and anxiety (Chari et al., 2018). Work evaluation and experience considers the subdomains of satisfaction, meaning and organization of work, and affect; examples of this domain include supervision, autonomy, and positive or negative emotions at work (Chari et al., 2018). Lastly, home, community, and society subdomains include life satisfaction, financial health, social relationships, community engagement, and lifestyle of the worker; an example of this domain involves the activities in which workers engage or their financial security (Chari et al., 2018). These domains of the worker's well-being can be applied to positions in student affairs to consider all aspects of occupational wellness.

Occupational wellness is often used to center worker well-being in journals for medicine, preventative medicine, and public health, and was commissioned by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH; Adams, 2019; Parkinson, 2018; Sorensen et al., 2021). Occupational wellness is a framework that emphasizes both the impacts of the individual's wellness and the influences of the organization. Wellness in the workplace is vital to the well-being of student affairs professionals working in higher education, as it directly links to the organization as "outcomes of occupational stress begin at the organizational level" (King-white & Rogers, 2018, p. 5). Using an occupational wellness framework assisted me in evaluating institutional and departmental involvement in BRSAPs' well-being. Having explained the model, I now discuss how the components of Chari et al.'s (2018) occupational wellness framework aligned with this work on BRSAPs.

Perhaps the more studied aspects of occupational wellness are the policies, programs, practices, and cultures in the workplace conducive to creating an organizational culture that

influences worker well-being (Abraham, 2019; Chari et al., 2018; Holly Buttner et al., 2010; Passey et al., 2018; Whitaker, 2019; Fletcher Williams et al., 2019). Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) professionals in the United States tend to be more cynical, have lower levels of organizational commitment, and have higher intentions to turnover in their organization than non-BIPOC individuals when there is a breach in promises of diversity fulfillment from organizations (Holly Buttner et al., 2010). Due to their awareness around social injustices, Black people are acutely attuned to diversity issues within the organizational climate (Holly Buttner et al., 2010).

Within the occupational wellness framework, health status reflects both physical and mental health or welfare (Chari et al., 2018). Historically, Black professionals found ways to remain committed to their self-care as a form of resistance, especially given the knowledge that racial discrimination may not cease and causes RBF (Quaye et al., 2019). Being in community with others has assisted Black professionals in navigating RBF and racial discrimination (Quaye et al., 2019; Sambile, 2018). Other forms of resistance include disconnecting from work, finding peers and other Black educators with whom they can connect, caring for their bodies, finding safe spaces, and using counseling (Quaye et al., 2019). The use of therapy as self-care is also important due to stigmas surrounding counseling or mental health therapy in the Black community (Quaye et al., 2019). Even with self-care as resistance, the worker's well-being requires accountability to the workplace evaluation processes and experiences.

When considering occupational wellness, a worker's evaluation and experience relates to the quality of their work life (Chari et al., 2018). Generally, an individual's job satisfaction is maintained through holistic wellness and mattering; although physical wellness is usually emphasized in the workplace, there needs to be continued research on holistic research (Connolly

& Myers, 2003). To promote a positive workplace experience, the supervision strategies used to support BRSAPs must extend beyond the evaluation of the employee and foster a sense of belonging in the workplace.

Discussions on wellness often focus on personal choices (Swarbrick, 2006). The occupational wellness frame that I chose for this work focused on the responsibility of the institution through workplace physical environment and safety climate, work evaluation and experience, organizational policy and culture, and individual health status, while also not neglecting that a worker's well-being also connects to their home community and society (Chari et al., 2018). For residential professionals, home and community both fall under the institution's jurisdiction. Although the psychological definition of wellness focuses on personal choices, organizations must still accept responsibility for occupational wellness in their operations (Chari et al., 2018). When studying those in a live-in role, I also had to consider the environment for the professionals and the nature of their work.

Occupational wellness applies to aspects of what employees need for well-being in their employment, and holistically balances the importance of well-being between employees and employers. Occupational wellness is especially beneficial for residential live-in personnel whose housing ties to their employment; however, the occupational wellness framework is not specific to race or other social identities (Chari et al., 2018). The racialized impacts of occupational wellness remain missing from conversations on a worker's well-being in an anti-Black society. In this next section, I introduce campus racial climate as the theoretical framework in this study and frame the importance in centering this theoretical framework within a discussion of BRSAP at HWIs.

Introduction to the Theoretical Framework

Black residential professionals face many barriers of institutional and systemic racism that occur on campus. Furthermore, BRSAPs work at institutions that initially excluded them and forced their ancestors to provide unpaid labor to build many HWIs (Wilder, 2013). Historical accounts provide a narrative of racism's embeddedness in the higher education sector's institutional culture and the experiences of Black people attending HWIs. Professionals of Color, namely Black professionals, find in their roles on campus that they must assist marginalized students through the complexities of institutional racism at HWIs, which can burden them in their positions (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Conversely, some BRSAPs may also delight in the work in which they share alongside students and find joy working with them as they develop (Hirt et al., 2008). This section provides a brief overview of my theoretical framework that I explain in more detail in Chapter 2.

Campus Racial Climate

To understand the Black professional living in a HWI residence hall, it was important to frame the multilayered effects from the campus community. I focused on campus racial climate to contextualize the experiences of BRSAPs. Campus racial climate frames how the campus interacts with race within the campus, along with influences from sociohistorical and governmental sectors (Hurtado et al., 1999). The five dimensions of campus racial climate are the (a) historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion, (b) compositional diversity, (c) psychological dimension, (d) behavioral dimension, and (e) organizational and structural dimension (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem et al., 2005).

Understanding the Black residential professional's role on campus and wellness was relevant because entry-level professionals usually occupy live-in campus housing positions (Blimling, 2015). Many aspects of the role include responding to crisis response incidents,

experiencing first and secondary trauma, supervising and managing the employees with which they live, living with students, and duty rotations. Student affairs as a profession should explore these considerations to create equitable work environments and retain these professionals who are so valuable to work and interactions in the campus life experience. Moreover, BRSAPs also provide the opportunity to support the growing diversity of the campus community (Jayamukar, 2008). Third, improving the work environment and retaining these professionals could lead to a shift in campus climate experiences for Students of Color.

Introduction to Methodological Framework

I used a qualitative approach rooted in critical phenomenology and undergirded my study in critical consciousness to address the wellness of BRSAPs. Phenomenology is a methodological approach that uses people's lived experiences to explain a phenomenon—more specifically, to learn how humans experience circumstances or situations (Smith, 2006). My discussion of BRSAPs' experiences could not have occurred unless my framework addressed the elements of how power and politics operate in the U.S. context and educational systems, both historically and presently.

Critical phenomenology focuses on philosophy, politics, and liberation from these political and power structures (Guenther, 2020). Critical phenomenology functions to see the perception and knowledge of marginalized people in society. Using this methodology helped me explore the lived experiences of BRSAPs and center the reality that Black people suffer from structural and systematic oppression through social and political constructs as designed by whiteness in U.S. society. Critical phenomenology allowed me to focus on a sociopolitical view of BRSAPs' lived experiences; however, this view did not move the discussion toward liberation, healing, nor wellness for my coresearchers.

With critical phenomenology, I discussed what my coresearchers had lived through as they embodied their experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1965; Simonsen & Koefoed, 2020). Still, combining critical consciousness to my methodological approach was only a prerequisite to my coresearchers' journeys toward liberation (Freire, 1973). Additionally, critical consciousness supported my epistemological lens for this study. This lens allowed me to focus on my coresearchers' experiences and center on the structural influences of their occupational wellness in HWIs. Having discussed my theoretical assumptions and methodological framework, I proceed to contextualize the boundaries of my study.

Boundaries of the Study

This study on BRSAPs highlighted the significance of race as I focused on anti-Blackness in the U.S. higher education campus environment. Because the study was bound to BRSAPs, I did not address the experiences of other racial groups nor marginalized identities in its conceptualization. However, through data collection, the intersections of identity did arise in the coresearchers' lives as they bring the whole person into the study, not only their race (Hordge-Freeman, 2018). I expanded the use campus environments into the coresearchers' occupation by using a framework that considered the campus racial climate on U.S. higher education institutions. Coresearchers contributed additional layers to the framework, especially regarding the intersections of racial identity and the organizational environment (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002). Addressing the multiple layers of the experiences of Black professionals living in and on campus created further significance for research on the live-in experience from a diverse sociohistorical context.

Relationality Statement

This section demonstrates how I framed my relationship with the study and coresearchers. Anticolonial relationality centers a researcher's relationship to developing knowledge and conducting research that challenges colonial structures in research (Patel, 2016). I offer my relationality with the phenomenon of working and living on campus as a BRSAP.

Relation to the Study Through Anti-Blackness

From 2014–2018, I was a hall director in a residential live-in professional position at large R1 HWI in the midwestern United States. I witnessed labor-intensive trauma to Black professionals, as my colleagues and I were culturally taxed to assist Black students in performing additional tasks. For example, department personnel asked us to have breakout groups with student staff when racially biased incidents occurred. My peers and I also managed the line of student activism and employee expectations for Students of Color. This balancing act caused much stress for us, leading to burnout for many. In fact, I needed a break from working in student affairs, as I was in a constant state of anxiety and experiencing heavy emotional labor and RBF (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Smith, 2008).

During my time as a hall director at this R1 HWI, I experienced national and campus acts of anti-Blackness. On my drive from Missouri, my home state, to Michigan, my new state of employment, the 2014 murder of Michael Brown had just occurred, and there was unrest in Ferguson, Missouri (Carr, 2014). While my parents and I drove to my new institution, we kept up with the news. Though I was not from Ferguson, my family understood the magnitude of what was happening. Having spent my life in Missouri until attending college at the undergraduate level, there are unwritten rules and things that, as a Midwesterner, are just known. For example, when traveling alone, there are unwritten yet intuitive rules for the Black community, such as (a) always traveling in the daytime; (b) only stopping at gas stations in

towns that are off the highway and have fast food restaurants; and, (c) if possible, to avoiding solo travel to avoid racial intimidation or harm.

As an individual from Missouri, I also understood the racial climate and hope for change. I knew very few cities in the state are considered safe for Black people, such as Kansas City; St. Louis; and possibly other smaller cities, such as Joplin, Springfield, and Branson. In 2015, a college protest happened at the University of Missouri–Columbia (Mizzou) due to multiple racist incidents on campus (Anderson & Span, 2016). I remember constantly explaining to my peers that I attended the University of Missouri–Kansas City for graduate school and emphasized *Kansas City* so they would not think I attended the flagship institution (i.e., Mizzou). I made sure to separate my affiliation with Mizzou because I did not want to be associated with the stereotypical racism of southern-adjacent states. In residence life, this protest was the talk of student affairs in my department as it continued to receive more national coverage (Ford, 2015; Hugulet & Victor, 2015; Pearce, 2015). I did not want to associate with the hatred of Missouri and the acts of racism occurring at the Mizzou campus. Besides trying to disassociate with the state and the university, I kept up with the institution's news in secret to avoid having to engage with other conversations. Unfortunately, this situation was not the end of my experiences with national anti-Blackness that influenced my campus experience as a professional—it was only the beginning.

Despite hope for a change and a break in my professional setting, the bias, microaggressions, and racist acts continued. There seemed to be a continuous war of racial violence in the United States during my time as an entry-level student affairs professional. In 2015, going into the 2nd year of my residential professional role, the Charleston church shooting left nine churchgoers murdered by a white man while simply attending a Bible study (Eversley,

2015). As a person of faith, I too often spent time at Bible studies on Wednesday nights, and after this event, I often said to myself, “This could be me.”

In the 2016 presidential election year, U.S. campuses were also hit by an uprising of white supremacy groups, causing Black students to organize impassioned student protests at my university. White supremacy group leaders began to speak on college campuses during that same year, and Richard Spencer, an educated white separatist, planned to speak at our university (Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC], n.d.). Spencer, the president of the National Policy Institute—a group that protects the civil rights of white people and raises white consciousness—was a controversial speaker on many college campuses during 2017 (Calvert, 2018; SPLC, n.d.). Many liberal student groups did not want speakers on campus to spread white nationalist messages; however, many public institutions had faced much scrutiny, and even lawsuits, for censoring free speech on campus (Calvert, 2018). The institution at which I worked was politically polarized due to free speech laws and Spencer’s presence on campus during this time.

Liberal students on this specific campus organized against Spencer. Black students were the main leaders of the campus protest. One of the most challenging conversations during my time as a hall director was telling a Black female student she had to ensure she could be relatable to her residents. This Black woman resident assistant who served in our housing department was encouraged to be relatable to her residents because of departmental culture. Relatability in this department included presenting herself “inclusively” and not showing up as an activist while engaging with residents. During our supervisor–supervisee meetings, we discussed how she had to learn to balance her social interests with work if she wanted to remain on the residential student staff. The supervisory experience was problematic because I knew the necessities the resident assistant position held for many student workers, such as access to food and housing. I

did not want her to lose access to these resources, but also knew that the activist work she was doing on campus was invaluable. To have a difficult conversation with a student activist passionate for equitable treatment in a department that held claims for social justice seemed like a contradiction.

As a Black woman who attended a small liberal arts HWI in the midwestern United States, I understood the resident assistant's sentiments for equity and inclusion on her campus; however, tensions between loyalty to a campus leadership position and loyalty to antiracist working and learning environments are far too common for Black people in the workplace. A Black person in the United States must often choose between their professionalism or their Black identity, as seen in micro levels of white supremacy through issues such as using code-switching to cope (Hall et al., 2012). Similarly to this student, I suppressed my identity in complicated racial situations except when convenient for the unit.

Often, when racially charged incidents (e.g., microaggressions, hate crimes, and ethno-violence) occur on campus, institutional leaders call upon People of Color to address these issues among staff (Davis & Harris, 2016). In my case, many requests came during racially charged incidents on campus, including the request to assist our student staff in a processing space. I felt overworked and taxed during these times, as my white colleagues often claimed they were not comfortable speaking in the room. These incidents taught me that the work of the Black professional is valuable to the institution but not adequately compensated; for example, performance reviews do not account for the additional cultural taxation placed upon them by working at an HWI with few non-Black peers who address anti-Blackness. The absence of including cultural related work on performance evaluations is similar to faculty who are

overburdened with diversity related service which does not assist them in advancing in promotion and tenure (Joseph & Hirschfield, 2011).

As I reflect on my past experiences, I recall that in 2016, I sought professional help for my anxiety. Through therapy, I found the live-in experience offered me very little time away from my stressors and work. I dealt with three critical crisis response situations in my tenure as a residence life hall director. Some crises were work-related due to performativity and other were personal issues that I did not recognize. I call my reflection on some the defining moments of my time as a BRSAP the three springs of occupational distress.

Three Springs of Occupational Distress

For my first spring of occupational distress and during my 1st year, I lost both of my coworkers when they exited the institution due to situations I will omit from this narrative for their privacy. I thought such loss would be one of the hardest challenges I would deal with in my professional role due to the overwhelming amount of responsibility, my limited full-time professional experience, and my lack of institutional and departmental knowledge; I was wrong. I was left alone in a residence hall of 1,300 students and 42 staff from February to May of that year. Though the assistant director (i.e., my supervisor) attempted to help, her plate was already full. As the only residence education personnel in the residence hall, I was left to create a community for my staff who had increasing questions about why other supervisors resigned from their positions while dealing with crisis response and completing the move-out process for students.

The second spring emerged during my 2nd year, when my co-hall director called me to tell me one of the students had died through suicide. Although it was a traumatic event in general, I can fully remember the night of the student suicide. There were multiple first

responders in the building, including the university's department of public safety; my co-hall director had to manage multiple calls; and there were many concerned staff and students. Interestingly, this crisis was the first and only time I ever met the dean of students at the HWI where I was working at the time. I still remember my conversation with the student's roommate as campus police asked him if he knew anything different about his roommate during the preceding weeks, and he had to pause to ensure his safety.

The weeks after this crisis seemed to drag on...I was grateful for actually having a co-hall director and community center manager during my 2nd year on staff. My community of peers was also supportive of my personal well-being, which I appreciated. As an overseer of a large residence hall, the number of calls and the influx of emails from concerned residents, parents, and administrators were considerable. The students even demanded a vigil for a student whom they did not know. I never thought I would talk to the directors of my department with such frequency; there were check-ins every day, and I still had to perform my daily job functions while also dealing with this crisis.

Fortunately, my third spring was less traumatic than the previous two springs. The department's administration moved me to a new residence hall as a single hall director, where I found operations to be more manageable. I made it through the academic year until the move-out period, and I thought I had cleared the year without a significant event until I had a fire in one of the on-campus residential small houses. Though the fire did not harm anyone, this event left so much water damage that I had to work with the residence life directors again to ensure the university logged all of the student property in the building.

As the conduct officer for my building, I adjudicated the conduct case of the student who perpetrated the fire. The student claimed responsibility but was unbothered by the aftermath of

the fire. I was frustrated through the conduct process because he did not care to understand the magnitude of his decision. Fatigued from activities following the fire, I did not have the motivation to challenge the student further. I often think back to that time and wonder if there was anything I could do as a housing professional to encourage the student in accountability. It was truly a move-out experience to remember.

Through my three springs of occupational distress as a BRASP working at a HWI, I learned the importance of worker well-being, and I knew that my 4th year would be my final year in residence life. I appreciated my job as a residence life professional because it allowed me the pay and benefit of enrolling in insurance that provided continuous therapy sessions with a limited copay. I had a rent-free living space and one of the highest salaries a hall director could make in the nation, but it still was not enough to provide me with well-being in the department. My narrative exhibits one reason why I sought to understand whether the occupational wellness of other Black residential professionals is challenged by anti-Blackness, especially for those serving as live-in professionals working on HWI campuses in the United States. In the next section, I explain the scope and focus of this study.

Scope of the Study

This study addressed the experiences of BRSAPs, their experiences with occupational wellness in their on-campus lives and work environments, and their awareness of anti-Blackness in aspects of their daily lives. Because the occupational wellness description from Chari et al. (2018) involves home, community, and society, this unique campus position intertwines the campus environment and racially charged incidents that occur in BRSAPs' role.

Racial Intersections

This study was bound to the experiences of Black professionals; however, the Black race includes various nationalities and ethnicities. Due to multiple African diasporic streams, many people who racially identify as Black in the United States may also identify with other nationalities, tribes, and ethnicities (Palmer, 2000). Contextualizing Blackness in this study was also multifaceted because coresearchers identified as African, Caribbean, Latinx, and Black American.

Due to the spectrum of Blackness and the broad geographic locations of this story, the coresearchers were not limited nor bound to one geographic area. Although I address my coresearcher criteria in Chapter 3, it was essential to know that the coresearchers' employment locations may vary, coresearchers worked in regions across the United States. Coresearchers were employed at various institutional types, institutional sizes, and campus missions under which they work. Lastly, they held different experience levels, as some may held positions in housing or residence life units during graduate school and continued as entry-level professionals, some even held mid-level management live-in positions.

Assumptions

Previous pilot studies informed this particular study, including one from 2019, when I interviewed student affairs Professionals of Color on their experiences with racially charged incidents on campus. After finding my first topic was too broad, I conducted another study during the 2020–2021 academic year for a case study course. This second iteration related to BRSAPs' experiences with racially charged incidents on campus and nationally. From this study, I focused on the implications of anti-Blackness and their perceptions of their occupational wellness in higher education, with an emphasis on the lived experiences of those working at HWIs as live-in professionals.

I also explored BRSAPs and their personal experiences with hate crimes in my previous research. From this experience, I discovered many underlying assumptions, including initial conclusions that emerged from the data. One theme from the data, for example, was the participants articulating their central issue was with the campus housing departments—not because of racially charged incidents primarily, but more typically the root of the stress associated with issues of race in the housing department occurring from the systemic anti-Blackness they experienced in the department and on campus. I learned the professionals accumulated more pressure from their work environments and work relationships in general as a regular occurrence under the campus climate than when dealing with any particular racially charged incidents. Participants also discussed a general lack of wellness regarding the live-in role and dealing with a range of stressful crisis response events.

This study reflects an extension of my previous work. The difference in this study is in the methodological framework. In the 2020 pilot study, I used case study methodology to address the work of BRSAPs; however, for this study, I centered the lived experiences of BRSAPs who live and work on campus. Because I sought to address the issue and critically focus on the experiences of BRSAPs, I decided to pursue this study using critical phenomenology as my methodological framework. To highlight and build upon the experiences of my coresearchers, I used the findings from my pilot research that disclosed information toward occupational wellness in the participants' residential and professional roles to more accurately inform my research protocol for this study.

I also brought my assumptions from my prior tenure as a BRSAP at a historically white, doctoral-degree-granting institution. My experiences include 4 years of living and working on campus and partially serving professionally during the Trump presidential administration (2016–

2020) in the United States. My intent was not to diminish my experiences, as qualitative research centers the researcher as the instrument, but instead to unearth my experiences in the research process using my lived experiences as another source of support toward a cohesive critical phenomenological study.

Definitions of Terms

As I moved through my study, certain aspects required further definition and clarity for the reader to understand the population and environment of my population. In this section, I define my usage of terms, including: Black, Blackness, anti-Blackness, historically white institutions, residential student affairs professional, live-in versus live-on residence life professionals, and occupational wellness. It is crucial to have these definitions, as I reference them heavily throughout my study, especially during data collection and analysis portions for this study.

Anti-Blackness

Due to sociohistorical context, Blackness is situated in a white global capitalist society when considering longstanding oppression through colonialism, slavery, and other forms of dehumanization (Dei, 2017). Anti-Blackness is a type of racism where historical, structural, and societal norms rid Black people of their humanness through control, oppression, silence, and abuse (Dancy et al., 2018; Desmond, 2019; Dumas, 2016; Finkelman, 2012; Wilder, 2013). This dehumanization of Black people occurs both domestically in the United States and globally (Beaman, 2020; Fanon, 1952).

Black

The U.S. Census Bureau (2020) classified Black people as persons from racial groups in Africa; however, although the government classification may seem straightforward, Black people

are not similarly socialized. Black people, native to the United States and foreign born, experience Blackness from various lenses, which causes varied racial climate perspectives in higher education (Griffin et al., 2016). The racial categorization of Black people often presents this group as having one experience.

In this study, I used the term Black to describe people from the African diaspora, noting their multiple ethnicities and nationalities but keeping consistent with those in the U.S. government classification system (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Some scholars have considered the African diaspora to be across "Black Atlantic" cultures that are within African, Britain, the Caribbean, and the United States (Gilroy, 1993; Hua, 2013). In this study, I did not view Black people as a monolith; rather, I acknowledged our differences in national origin, ethnicity, and tribal affiliations (Dei et al., 2020; Waters, 1991). Of note, distinctions of tribes or ethnicities reflects dissonance with the use of the U.S. racial classification system; however, to address global anti-Blackness, I embraced all lived experiences of Blackness from the African diaspora, regardless of a person's ethnicity or nationality.

Blackness

I defined Blackness as a shared culture and identity of Black people living in the United States; however, I also applied this term to the Blackness that binds people of African descent due to the "relation and distance to whiteness" (Okello, 2022, p. 3), meaning whiteness is the standard and dominant norm and Blackness is distant from these global societal standards. Workplace discrimination occurs from a disassociation of whiteness; for example, how industries enact standards of professionals can be viewed through hair discrimination (Hamilton, 2021; McCluney et al., 2021). When standards of professionalism reflect a proximity to whiteness, an individual with a more common and natural state of white hair (i.e., straight) may appear more

professional; conversely, proximity to Blackness (e.g., curly, locked, kinky) may suggest the individual is more distanced from dominant professional standards.

Coresearchers

I defined coresearchers as my partners in generating knowledge for this study because of their unique position as knowledge holders regarding their own lived experiences as BRSAPs; they partnered with me throughout the study in decision making, data analysis, and study dissemination for this research (Genius et al., 2015; Tanner, 2019). I used the word coresearcher instead of participant for this study for this reason.

HWI

For this study, I used the term historically white institution (HWI) versus predominantly white institution to communicate the impacts of segregation regarding U.S. colleges and universities that were exclusionary prior to 1964 (Brown & Dancy, 2009; Cooper & Jackson, 2019). The use of HWI also differentiated between minority-serving institutions (e.g., historically Black colleges and universities [HBCUs], Hispanic-serving institutions [HSIs], tribal colleges and universities [TCUs]). Likewise, institutions that were historically white serving are still predominantly white in the student population that they serve as of 2023 (Brown & Dancy, 2009).

Live-In Residential Student Affairs Professional

A live-in residential student affairs professional is a campus professional who works and lives directly in the residence hall on a U.S. higher education campus (Thomas, 2018).

Live-On Residential Student Affairs Professional

A live-on residential student affairs professional is a campus professional who works and lives on campus but does not directly reside in the residence hall on campus (Thomas, 2018).

Occupational Wellness

To define occupational wellness and well-being, Chari et al. (2018) developed a paradigm that includes five domains: (a) workplace physical environment and safety climate; (b) workplace policies and culture; (c) health status; (d) work evaluation and experience; and (e) home, community, and society. These domains are essential to professional well-being (Chari et al., 2018). I used these theories and paradigms to exhibit these professionals' experiences with racism on their campus, as discussed later in the analysis. Because these professionals live on campus, these conceptual frameworks' paradigms occurred under institutional jurisdiction.

Residential Student Affairs Professional

A residential student affairs professional is an employee who works, lives in, and oversees a campus building. This type of employee is responsible for the student staff and operations of the facility; graduate students or entry-level professionals hold these positions on campus (Belch & Mueller, 2003). These professionals specialize in crisis response and act as liaisons among students, administration, parents, and other campus constituents. Their titles usually consist of hall director, residence director, or residence life director. These professionals are heavily involved in face-to-face engagement with parents, students, and other campus partners. Residential professionals often manage rigorous activity while being confined to the campus space.

The nature of the work in residence life is layered and complex. Additionally, the social constructions of Blackness added to the complexity and care of this study. To understand the phenomena of BRSAPs, these terms gave context to better ground and operationalize occupational wellness throughout the study. Through understanding a more organizational stance of wellness, readers can better understand the lived experiences of BRSAPs.

Outline of the Dissertation

I report this dissertation through five chapters, appendices, and references. In the current chapter, Chapter 1, I highlighted the overall framing and context of the study by setting the scope, defining terms, and providing the rationale for my project. In Chapter 2, I address existing literature surrounding the topic of study. Themes from the literature included Black labor in higher education, the job function of residence life professionals, and further exploration of occupational wellness. In Chapter 3, I address the research design and methodology, where I explain my decision to use critical phenomenology and critical consciousness as a methodological approach. Additionally, I highlight my research paradigm and how it influenced my research design for this study.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I explain the findings learned from the data analysis and offer some summative directions for the higher education and student affairs profession. Specifically, in Chapter 4, I present results from my data collection and the themes that emerged from the pre-interviews, group interviews, and journal entries. In Chapter 5, I summarize my study by providing findings from interacting with the theoretical framework and the lived experiences of my coresearchers. I then conclude my exploration by offering implications for future research and addressing the boundaries for the study, rather than leaning on the notion of study limitations. I list the references along with appendices containing information on the data collection, including but not limited to interview protocol, demographic summaries from the study, and any other relevant content necessary to understand the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this research was to explore how the live-in and racialized experiences of Black residential student affairs professionals (BRSAPs) intersect to influence their wellness at historically white institutions (HWIs). This study offered an opportunity to expand on existing literature on residence life professionals and address residual gaps in literature, specifically for BRSAPs working and living on campus. By employing a racial lens to center the holistic being of the Black person working with student affairs and occupational wellness, I sought to center BRSAPs' campus climate experiences and wellness intersections.

Through experiences on campus and the national racial climate, anti-Blackness is layered in the life of a residential professional and can pose additional difficulties in promoting positive occupational wellness due to historical legacies of exploited labor, cultural taxation, and experiences of anti-Blackness (Dancy et al., 2018; Padilla, 1994). Some Black higher education professionals have compared their work at HWIs to that of working on a slave plantation through microaggressions, hostile environments, isolation, and limited power in institutional decision making (Kuykendoll, 2023). Jackson and Flowers (2003) noted Black student affairs professionals need fair campus environments that provide them with resources to support mentoring, salaries that represent their contributions to their positions, and the opportunity for job and career decisions that foster their success.

Live-in professionals are not exempt from these experiences; rather, these experiences impact them on a deeper level because their work and life closely integrated (Hirschy & Staten, 2021). In this chapter, I give an overview of the live-in residence director role and the experiences of Black people in the residence halls at HWIs. Next, I discuss my theoretical framework of campus racial climate and apply it to the Black experience on campus.

History of Live-In Staff: Positions, Roles, and Responsibilities

Student affairs has a vast amount of responsibility in higher education institutions where professionals serve diverse student populations, assist with student success, guide students to their life's purpose, support student well-being mental health, and assist institutions in advancing their goals around equity (Dunkle & Zhang, 2023; Fernandez & Butcher, 2023; Hartley et al., 2023; Museus & Yi, 2023; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2023). The field of student affairs has significantly evolved since the inception of U.S. higher education. When the profession was being founded during 1890-1939, workers at colleges monitored students using a policy known as *in loco parentis* (in place of parents), which gave workers at the college permission to guide students inside and outside the classroom (Hevel & Dolan, 2023; Hirt, 2006). To treat students as autonomous individuals, institutional officials in U.S. higher education created a role for professionals who worked with students beyond the traditional faculty–student relationship (Williamson et al., 1949). In *The Student Personnel Point of View*, American Council on Education's foundational document from 1937, early student affairs professionals referred to themselves as student personnel administrators; these roles included counselors; student loan administrators; and student health workers, among other positions. This occupational role on campus created a shift in the campus environment that has informed research on administrators and professionals who work to serve students outside the classroom (American Council on Education, 1937).

My research centered on student affairs professionals at doctoral degree-granting or research institutions. To understand the environment of doctoral degree-granting institutions, I considered how BRSAPs contextualized their wellness experiences within the campus racial climate. At research institutions, many professionals face work environments that are

decentralized, political, and bureaucratic (Hirt, 2006). Daily and rapid changes occur in work environments at research institutions, but organizational change happens slowly (Hirt, 2006). Because of the nature of rigorous research, teaching, and service that is required of faculty, administrators, and staff at these institutions, there is often a culture of competition, and professionals at research institutions are often left with shoddy work–life balance and low levels of relationships with peers outside of their department or unit, which can render them feeling isolated and siloed (Hirt, 2006).

For student affairs, job satisfaction often stems from relationships with supervisors and communication. Staff turnover rates are higher when there is poor supervision, whereas when supervisors are synergistic, rates are lower (Tull, 2006). *Synergistic supervision* is when supervisors set long-term goals; share informal appraisal; enact discussions regarding personal attitudes; and hold discussions of professional performance, both adequate and inadequate (Tull, 2006; Winston & Creamer, 1997). Supervision in this manner means supervisors can maintain open communication with their supervisees. Additionally, synergistic supervision significantly correlates with job satisfaction, leading to less burnout, overload, and ambiguity (Tull, 2006).

As with other fields, effective communication is vital for student affairs (Howard, 2021). In addition to synergistic supervision, student affairs supervisees, specifically those in housing, benefit from mindful supervision that employs restorative practices (Howard, 2021). Restorative practices assist student affairs supervisors with developing a common language and communication for their supervisees, leading to accountability and better communication (Howard, 2021). Though these practices seem simple, the rigor of residence life does not always allow for this type of supervision. Usually, supervisors of new professionals in the field of

student affairs hold mid- or entry-level positions in their supervisory experience, causing new professionals to have intentions to turnover (Tull, 2006).

Residential student affairs professionals, usually called hall directors, residence directors (RDs), or residence life directors, play a significant role in student life and/or student affairs divisions in higher education (Blimling, 2015; Porter, 2014). As I uncovered literature related to BRSAPs, I sought to further explain the relevance of residential entry-level positions, their responsibility to crisis and trauma response on campus, and the experiences of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) professionals in residence life live-in positions (Henning et al., 2011; Lynch, 2019). Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I refer to the role of residential life professionals as RDs due to the multiple positional roles and titles given to professionals at this position across universities.

Entry-Level Positions

Graduate students entering the field of student affairs fill residence life roles more than any other professional roles in most student affairs divisions across the United States (Kretovics, 2002). The compensation package for new professionals is beneficial, as live-in positions include all student amenities plus salary and benefits. Other professional roles on campus do not offer similar packages. Still, these benefits of the job may not be enough to continue to obtain qualified RDs, as many are leaving their positions in residence life due to pay, work-life balance, and wellness (McDaniel & Dean, 2023;Weaver-Douglas, 2022)

Though the RD role typically consists of the most significant number of entry-level professionals in student affairs, however, around 2003the number of qualified applicants in the candidate pool has declined, and the field is still experiences an attrition of campus housing professionals (Belch & Mueller, 2003; Weaver-Douglas, 2022). In addition to declines in RD

applicants, attrition and turnover rates have increased within residence life during this same time frame (Belch & Mueller, 2003). These shifts in the RD candidate pool have mainly emerged due to recent graduates in the field of higher education, and student affairs in particular, having a lack of interest or not wanting to sacrifice their quality of life for the position (Belch & Mueller, 2003). For an entry-level professional, quality of life is important, even though salary packages can include decent pay and benefits for the employee's first postgraduate position.

In the early 2000s, more than half of RDs nationally received a salary (ranging from approximately $24,000–$42,000), health and retirement benefits, a furnished paid living space, an entire meal plan, tuition support, professional development funds, the ability to have fish as pets, and other benefits as a part of their compensation packages from residence life (St. Onge et al., 2008). In 2020, Campus Housing Entry-level and Advancing Positions Compensation Report showed the annual salary for a full-time residence life position that supervises resident assistants and lives in a residence hall made an average salary of $44,015 if working at an institution that had more than 7,500 beds. Regarding employee benefits, the report also mentioned that 36% of the employees received more than 15 meals per week and had an average professional development allowance of $1,200. During the time of the report, entry-level residence life professionals in this range spent about 2 years in their positions at the studied institutions.

Though these forms of compensation are helpful to a professional starting in an entry-level position, they do not compensate fully for the around-the-clock work that RDs typically endure in their roles (Blimling, 2015; McDaniel & Dean 2023; Thomas, 2018). In 2016, the Fair Labor Standards Act published new exemptions for overtime workers, which facilitated a raise in pay for most RDs to a minimum salary of $47,479 and the need for the directors to voluntarily accept their lodging (i.e., they were given the choice to reside in on-campus housing or to live off

campus; Pokorny, 2016). Still, high levels of burnout in these roles may attribute to some professionals leaving residence life or the higher education field altogether.

As entry-level professionals, departments seek to retain RDs through support and education as they transition from academics to their careers. Training and work–life balance are essential for student affairs professionals when acclimating employees because of turnover and attrition levels in student affairs (Marshall et al., 2016; Mullen et al., 2018). In addition to the support in their transitions, Davidson (2012) found institutions retain RDs when they have supervisors who clearly communicate their role responsibilities and positional opportunities in the department. This role is also heavily socialized; often, graduate students also support residence life departments in roles as at the graduate level, sometimes named assistant resident or hall directors (Seager, 2023).The job function of the RD varies by institution, but there are critical components found in most positions. The next section provides an insight into the job function and responsibilities of an RD at a research institution.

Job Function and Responsibilities

I describe the unique role of the RD because their job function and responsibilities may be unknown to readers. The RD role is a nonstandard workstyle that can be strenuous and emotionally exhaustive, leading to burnout and lowered job performance (Blimling, 2015; McDaniel & Dean, 2023; Wittmer & Martin, 2010). Researchers have often studied the RD in the context of their recruitment, supervision, and competency within their role (Belch & Mueller, 2003; Davidson, 2012; Schmid & Wagstaff, 2019); however, the complex layers of responsibility and liability in the RD role have often not been mentioned in relation to the uniqueness of the position. Someone without experience in residence life may find it challenging

to understand the weight of the RD position at an institution, but their role is heavily involved in the daily life of students (Blimling, 2015).

RDs manage much of the operations of their assigned residence halls; as a part of their job responsibilities, institutions require RDs to be accessible outside of regular working hours to attend to the needs of the campus community (McDaniel & Dean, 2023). Their jobs may include responsibilities that call for extended hours and intensified focus on milestone events for students, such as student move-in and move-out days, many of which responsibilities may have been intensified by the coronavirus pandemic (Seager, 2023). Events such as student move-in require a set of interpersonal responsibilities, and departments usually request for RDs to be the primary point of contact to deal with parental concerns, roommate conflicts, and student staff schedule management. RDs are also collaborators who work with traditional housing building maintenance staff, engage with parents, plan staff meetings, supervise meetings, and plan special committee work for their departments.

Departmental leaders may also require RDs to meet with student groups in advising roles, such as residence hall associations, supervisee community-building events, and regular staff meetings. Conduct resolution and adjudication is also a primary element of an RD's job responsibilities where entry level staff usually met with students for lower level conduct cases and determine educational sanctions to students (Glassman, 2023). Due to the main function of their job overseeing the residence halls, the RD will have to meet with students who break the code of conduct for the building. These meetings are usually not meant to punish the students, but rather to have them reflect and consider how their actions impact the hall community. Lastly, RDs are tasked with dealing with crisis or trauma response through their campus community or

emergency on-call rotations (Lynch, 2019). In the next section, I go in depth about impacts from managing situations of crisis response events.

Responsibility of Crisis and Trauma Response

Understanding the role of crisis response provides an additional layer of stress-inducing responsibilities in the work of the RD. Although RDs do not maintain the volume of traumatic incidents to that of traditional first responders, they still routinely respond to emergencies on campus and handle trauma (Doyle et al., 2021). Doyle et al. (2021) defined *traditional first responders* as those who "experience substantial stress as a result of their occupation" (p. 471); this type of work can include police officers, firefighters, and dispatch officers. One aspect of the RD role is the responsibility of being on call or on duty (Lynch, 2019). Being on duty means that departmental leaders expect RDs to respond to after-hours requests for residence halls or campus housing buildings for a selected time frame, typically Mondays–Fridays from 5 p.m. (i.e., when the main office closes for the day) to 8 a.m. (i.e., the next morning then the main office opens). Additionally, RDs have the added expectations of covering weekends, starting on Friday evenings through Monday mornings (Lynch, 2019). Forms of crisis response that RDs experience vary; some calls to the RD consist of fire alarms, student death, domestic violence incidents, roommate conflicts, suicide ideation or colleagues being unresponsive to their scheduled duty times (Blimling, 2015; Flory, 2017; Trentacoste & Nguyen, 2023). The RD is on call for an allotted time that may span 1 day or 1 week, depending on the number of students on campus.

Traditional research on first-responder environments has found first responders have higher levels of occupational stress and anger when coworkers or subordinates do not perform at their expected levels of work (Doyle et al., 2021). During duty, residence life professionals must

be available to student staff members, as they report to large areas or sections of the campus residential communities when on call. The RD receives calls and works with their entry-level colleagues or mid- and upper-level supervisors to manage the crisis; at many institutions, this role can become strenuous for residence life professionals. Much like traditional responders, there is an obligation to rely on colleagues and subordinates to respond to trauma situations. Though often not responding to the same volume of calls and traumatic situations as traditional first responders (e.g., police, EMS), research around health can assist in understanding what health effects occur when BRSAPs respond to traumatic events.

In terms of wellness, health research on first responders has found those who work irregular schedules have misaligned physiological and hormone levels, affecting their health and well-being (Boivin et al., 2007). Irregular schedules, extended work hours, and shift work—similar to on-call duty rotations—pose health, safety, and performance threats for first responders (Vila, 2006). While conducting this study, I did not only research BRSAPs' contributions to their health status; rather, I also sought to understand the unique nature of their professional roles that can prevent balance and well-being in their health status.

Many RDs experience detrimental factors to their personal health; for example, RDs may experience fatigue, burnout, and compassion fatigue from secondhand trauma when supporting students through crisis, such as sexual violence or bias (Lynch, 2019). Lynch (2019) suggested to support RDs, department staff should implement internal *(I am, I can*) and external (*I have*) factors. The external factors center on *I have*, which stems from supportive supervision. By using the concept of *I am, I can, I have*, residence life professionals and departments can support RDs to build resilience and decrease the negative effects of trauma (Lynch, 2019). Developing resilience and having supportive supervision is one way to address trauma in the RD role, yet an

increase in organizational accountability could influence the departmental and divisional culture regarding occupational wellness. With the primary functions of the RD role explained, I subsequently furthered this background with an overview of the experiences of being Black as a residence life professional staff member.

BRSAPs' Experiences

Although there are many moving pieces to the RD role, I found it necessary to consider the socialization of these professionals into the field. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, RDs often hold positions in residence life prior to becoming full-time professionals in the field. Often are full time professionals to support student life and the residence life experience, undergraduate and graduate students will also live and work on campus in paraprofessional or graduate level roles (Blimling, 2015).

Graduate and Postgraduate Socialization Experiences

Graduate and postgraduate school experiences play a significant role in the professional identity development of new professionals (Hirschy et al., 2015). Graduate student socialization into higher education and student affairs is essential to understanding the expectations of new professional roles. Dorn (1992) suggested that career and personal identities influence the worker's occupational wellness and how the professional views wellness within their role. One fundamental theory surrounding school socialization is the graduate student socialization model (Weidman et al., 2001). This model discusses the socialization of students' university experiences (i.e., institutional culture and socialization process) and adjacent areas of socialization, such as prospective students, professional communities, novice professional practitioners, and personal communities. Weidman et al. (2001) also discussed graduate students' knowledge acquisition, investment, and involvement during their socialization process.

In a reconceptualization of the original graduate student socialization model, Twale et al. (2016) discussed the socialization of graduate Students of Color. This model added significant items specific to Students of Color, such as faculty climate, engagement, preparation, knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Twale et al., 2016). Their model also expanded the previously published Weidman-Twale-Stein (2001) model to acknowledge race in the development of graduate Students of Color and moved from a psychosocial to a sociocultural understanding of race (Twale et al., 2016).

While also assisting in their personal development, professional socialization often creates norms and expectations of what students should expect in their entry-level roles. Graduate students' socialization experiences are influential in informing an understanding of what is deemed acceptable or standard for the field when they begin working in their entry-level positions; for example, in Liddell et al.'s (2014) study, graduate students in student affairs reported working above their allotted hours. When traced back, graduate socialization regarding work hours could explain some of the normalization of burnout in higher education and student affairs. Still, students may spend more time working during their graduate assistantship because they believe the work experiences are more meaningful than their classroom experiences (Liddell et al., 2014). Working overtime in their graduate assistantships can also contribute to burnout if the students engage in their work past enjoyment of their roles. Mitigating burnout requires strong supervisory support to ensure the new professionals do not overwork themselves and find balance in their entry-level roles.

Work–life balance begins with the graduate socialization process. Graduate students who have graduate assistantships spend approximately 2 years under the direction of their assistantship supervisor and, if socialized into the profession well, are influenced by purposeful

relationships built with their supervisor (Liddell et al., 2014). Like supervision, mentoring relationships foster professional identity development for graduate students (Hirschy et al., 2015). In addition to work-life balance for graduate students, current events like the coronavirus pandemic should be considered in the assessment of their wellness. Seager (2023) found that during the pandemic, the stress of the assistant resident director jobs where similar to full-time hall directors yet they had the additional task of a graduate degree can lead to mental health struggles. One aspect that can assist BRSAP in their wellness and health is mentorship. Mentorship into the profession is beneficial for Black graduate students and is an important concept to explore to help build the case for this study.

BRSAPs and Mentorship

As professionals transition into their roles, support and connection become key for their success. One way in which institutions support entry-level professionals is through mentoring or establishing a buddy system where new professionals can receive support from a seasoned colleague (Crisler & Collier-Green, 2021). Due to the lack of literature on Black student affairs administrators' socialization into the field, I reviewed studies on mentoring relationships for Black graduate students entering the academy (Apugo, 2017; Grant, 2012; Williams et al., 2005). As Black graduate students transition into professional roles at HWIs, they often find that mentorship is key, regardless of if they are in student or academic affairs. Acosta et al. (2015) found, across all disciplines, Black doctoral students' persistence in their programs came from them (a) valuing authenticity in their student–faculty relationships, (b) integrating into their departments as a form of institutional support, and (c) holding the belief that education is necessary for the emancipation of Black people in the United States. The Black doctoral student experience relates to BRSAPs' experiences at HWIs because the outcomes of mentoring assist

with persistence and retention of Black students in graduate preparation programs and, ultimately, their transitions into intended higher education careers.

Researchers have also noted the importance of relationships and forms of nontraditional mentoring, namely how these relationships have assisted Black women as they transitioned into the professoriate (Grant, 2012). Specifically for Black women graduate students, opportunities for early career development, especially formal processes, promote the potential for sustainable mentoring relationships (Bertrand Jones et al., 2015). Black women graduate students use peer relationships to mentor, support, and sustain themselves. Emotional support sustains from negative race-related behaviors, and psychosocial support assists Black women in navigating their graduate work (Apugo, 2017; Williams et al., 2015). For Black women, advisee–advisor mentoring can even persist after students have completed their programs and assist in retaining their advisee–advisor relationship in the field of higher education and student affairs (Fries-Britt & Kelly, 2005). Mentoring and building relationships assist in the socialization and sense of belonging for staff at HWIs, especially for those in turbulent campus climates.

Racial Climate for Black Live-In Students and Student Staff

Residential life student affairs professionals may find maintaining positive occupational wellness is acutely demanding due to irregular schedules, trauma response, and poor supervision (Lynch, 2019; McDaniel & Dean, 2023); however, working in these roles as a Black person exacerbates a residential professional's occupational wellness (Chari et al., 2018). Residence life professionals who live in their work environments must respond to any requests received from a position of first responders and support for students (Lynch, 2019).

Race-Based Trauma

Race-based trauma in residence life is not uncommon. Davis and Harris (2016) defined *racially charged incidents* as experiences of racial microaggressions, hate crimes, and ethno-violence. Racially charged incidents sometimes occur in residence halls, such as vandalized door tags, racial slurs, and racial epithets against BIPOC students (Anderson, 2019; Sherry et al., 2017; University of Michigan [U-M] Public Affairs, n.d.). Though RDs report and respond to these traumatic incidents, they also experience them personally, which may lower their overall health compared to peers who live off campus. BRSAPs also face the same levels of race-based trauma as students living in the residence halls. Black students have been found to have lower overall health when living on campus than their peers who live off campus (Henry et al., 2018); however, experiences of Black residential staff remain understudied in higher education. Although BRSAPs choose to work on campus in close relation with students, they also deserve to live in environments that support their wellness and well-being. As such, there was important value in exploring how BRSAPs experience the physical environment and safety climate at their institutions.

In this section, I illustrated how mentoring is crucial for BRSAPs through examples of Black graduate student mentoring and mentorship, specifically for Black student affairs professionals. I now discuss the unique experience of working and living in the campus residence as a Black person and the need for further study on the wellness of BRSAP in the campus environment.

The Unique Live-In Experience of BRSAPs

For Black professionals working and living on campus is a highly complex and understudied area. However, much attention should be given to this subject as there has been what is called a “Black Exodus” from campus housing and residence life (Weaver-Douglas,

2022, p.77). Reasons why BRSAP chose to depart from their housing positions was due to the lack of career advancement, the lack of diversity across the their roles, and not feeling supported within their department or by their supervisor (Weaver-Douglass, 2022). As attrition from the field, and especially campus housing and residence life is on the rise in higher education wellness is an important aspect of the experience of professionals.

Campus Racial Climate: A History of Oppression

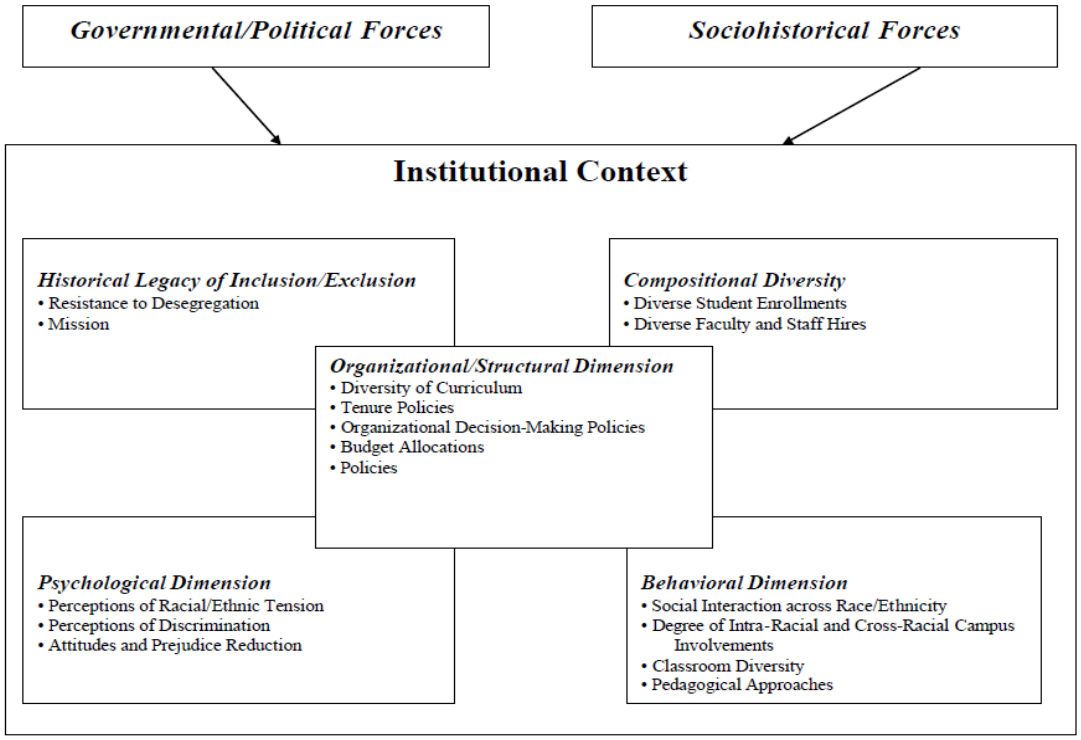
Campus racial climate is the seminal theoretical frame for discussing how campus race interactions, conflicts, and tensions impact the campus environment (Hurtado, 1992). The framework explains how the overarching forces of U.S. society's governmental, policy, and sociohistorical contexts influence higher education institutions and the campus racial climate dimensions (Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado et al., 1998; Milem et al., 2005).

Hurtado's (1992) article, "Campus Racial Climates: Contexts of Conflict," theorized and discussed tensions at the intersection of race and college campus climate. Hurtado wrote of the institutional environment and included students' perspectives on racial climate, selectivity of the institutions, historical barriers to racial integration, and racial tensions on campus. Hurtado's publication has since been furthered by many scholars and used in the work of addressing racism on college campuses spanning from undergraduate to graduate student experiences (Griffin et al., 2015; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado et al., 1999; Locks et al., 2008; Milem et al., 2005). Still, scant literature exists on the experiences of faculty and staff within the campus racial climate (Briscoe, 2022). In this study, I add to the canon of literature, specifically regarding the anti-Blackness of administrators in the context of living within the campus climate and the impacts on wellness. To understand the context of Black RDs, I give a brief overview of campus racial climate as my theoretical frame shifted through the historical legacy of

inclusion/exclusion, compositional diversity, psychological, behavioral and organizational dimensions (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Campus Racial Climate



Reprinted from Milem et al., 2005.

Initially, Hurtado (1992) established the four dimensions of campus racial climate: (a) historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion, (b) structural diversity, (c) psychological climate, and (d) behavioral dimension; however, Milem et al. (2005) later added the organizational/structural dimension. The first dimension (i.e., historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion) regards an institution's historical resistance to desegregation policies and the promotion of historically privileged populations on their campus (Hurtado et al., 1998). Secondly, compositional diversity (originally structural diversity) refers to the number of Students, Staff, or Faculty of Color on

campus (Hurtado et al., 1998). Third, psychological climate stems from the perceptions of belongingness or discrimination from People of Color on campus (Hurtado et al., 1998). Fourth, the behavioral dimension explains the interactions of campus practices such as cross-cultural engagement, classroom behavior, and campus involvement (Hurtado et al., 1998). Milem et al. 2005) extended campus racial climate to include the organizational/structural dimension as a fifth tenet. The organizational/structural dimension highlights essential aspects of campus racial climate by considering how racial climate intersects with upper administrative decision making, campus and university budgets, hiring, promotion and tenure, pedagogy and curriculum, and daily business interactions within the campus system (Milem et al., 2005).

The campus racial climate and the experiences of BRSAPs at HWIs are significant due to the amounts of racialized trauma, stress, and burnout that occurs from Black professionals on campus (Baez, 2000; Briscoe, 2022; Clay & Ellington, 2019; Padilla, 2004; Smith, 2008; Steele, 2018). Discussing the impacts on Black professionals from the campus environment perspective focuses on the personal impacts and how the organization as a racialized system affects BRSAPs (Hurtado et al., 1999; Ray, 2019; Smith, 2008). At the macro level, campus racial climate at HWIs and BRSAP experiences mirror the negative experiences of Black Americans in the more extensive system of the United States (Horsford et al., 2021). Utilizing the framework of Campus Racial Climate assist in addressing the sociohistorical dynamics for BRSAP and connects the political and personal experiences for Black professionals on campus.

Campus racial climate as a theoretical framework allowed me to ground this study in situating BRSAPs as recipients of racism from institutional structures and policy. This framework addressed multiple aspects of the study by (a) incorporating sociohistorical and government contexts and (b) demonstrating that policies, procedures, and practices can oppress

or support Professionals of Color experiences on campus. Campus racial climate also aligned with my epistemological and methodological framing by addressing social aspects of the phenomenon and the power within higher education systems. In Chapter 3, I further discuss the sociopolitical nature of critical phenomenology and the need to address power within my critical epistemology.

Due to the lack of research on Black professionals specifically, I used sources that discussed the experiences of racially marginalized people as a group and not always as an individual racial category. In the next section, I frame the campus racial climate framework around the experiences of Black professionals, the nature of the underpinnings of their labor at HWIs, and the intersections with the dimensions of campus racial climate.

Black on Campus: The Embodiment of Traumatic Labor and Resistance at HWIs

> Racism is so extreme
>
> and so pervasive in our American society that
>
> no black individual lives in an atmosphere of freedom.
>
> —Margaret Walker, *On Being Female, Black, and Free*

Racism is permanent, meaning people within structures, institutions, and systems normalize racism in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Walker (1980) stated, "No Black individual lies in an atmosphere of freedom. The world of physical phenomena is dominated by fear and greed." (p. 99). When analyzing the employment experiences of a Black professional within higher education institutions, I considered the environment, atmosphere, or the campus climate in which Black employees operate daily. The campus racial climate of an institution includes multiple dimensions, one being the historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion on matters of race (Hurtado et al., 1999). As I explored the intersections of Blackness

and wellness for BRSAPs, I accounted for the historical legacy of Black labor on U.S. higher education campuses. I also addressed the current climate of Black labor through other forms of racism, such as microaggressions and discriminatory campus climates.

Historical Legacy of Segregation and Desegregation

Absent of an atmosphere of freedom, Black people must consider the atmospheres, environments, and climates that operate in oppression (Mustaffa, 2017). College and university personnel have long sustained roles in institutionalized benefits through exploited Black labor in the United States (Dancy et al., 2018). The following sections discuss the historical-to-contemporary climates of labor and work for Black people working on campus at HWIs.

From Slavery to Desegregation: The Labor of the Land

Black people on a HWI campus are not just employees or students; they are the active dreams and hopes of their ancestors. Since the inception of higher education institutions in the United States, the dehumanization of Black people in the structures, policies, curriculum, systems, and educational philosophies of the academy have resulted in the maintenance of barriers to educational opportunities for Black people and the perpetuation of anti-Blackness within higher education (Dancy et al., 2018). Black people at HWIs continually triumph over oppression and injustices to pursue opportunities for educational advancement. To begin to tell the current stories of Black people on white college campuses, I must start with their positioning as enslaved individuals who were builders of many HWIs in the United States. Many founding U.S. colleges and universities used enslaved African people to clean; make meals; and conduct other acts of extensive, unpaid, forced labor at the threat of violence or death (Wilder, 2013). More specifically, Black enslaved people constructed many Ivy League schools (Mustaffa, 2017;

Wilder, 2013). During this time, enslaved Black people were the builders of institutions they were forbidden to attend.

For the first 230 years of U.S. higher education, until after the Civil War, HWIs denied educational access to Black people (Anderson, 2002). Before the Emancipation Proclamation, the Morrill Act of 1862 provided federal funding for the founding of land-grant institutions; notably, however, these institutions were built in areas where Black people resided, but they were denied access to study at these institutions (Bracey, 2017; Stefkovich & Leas, 1994). The Morill Act of 1862 stated:

> And be it further enacted, That all moneys derived from the sale of the lands aforesaid by the States to which the lands are apportioned, and from the sales of land scrip hereinbefore provided for, shall be invested in stocks of the United States, or of the States, or some other safe stocks, yielding not less than five per centum upon the par value of said stocks; and that the moneys so invested shall constitute a perpetual fund, the capital of which shall remain forever undiminished, (except so far as may be provided in section fifth of this act,) and the interest of which shall be inviolably appropriated, by each State which may take and claim the benefit of this act, to the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life. (Section 4)

The Morrill Act of 1862 is significant not only because of the erection of colleges and universities, but because the land the U.S. government used was taken from Native Americans through treaties and agreements that were not upheld, or also by seizing the land (National Archives and Records Administration, 2022). In addition to the stolen land of Native Americans, Black people just freed from slavery did not have access to formal education until Black land-grant colleges were built specifically for teaching subjects like agriculture and home economics (McGee & McAfee, 1977). This new freedom for Black people in the United States also came at pivotal times in the country's laws granting further land, specifically in confederate states.

The U.S. education system remained segregated and denied Black people access to HWIs even after slavery ended. Laws that followed the Morrill Act of 1862 assisted in advancing de jure segregation in the United States and prohibited People of Color from white educational spaces. The Morrill Act of 1890 legally allowed segregation while also privileging white institutions, giving white institutions access to the best resources and preventing Black students from accessing particular vocations, such as agriculture (Harper et al., 2009). The Hatch Act of 1887 had emphasized the connection to agriculture through the founding of agricultural experiments; however, Black land-grant colleges did not receive funds under the Hatch Act until 1972 (McGhee & McAfee, 1977; Stefkovich & Leas, 1994). Though Black land-grant institutions offered Black people access to education, many of these schools began as teaching colleges or agricultural and mechanical schools.

The Morrill Act of 1890 limited school funding to those Black land-grant institutions teaching agriculture, mechanics, science, and economics (Craig, 1992; Wennersten, 1991). During the 1890s, Black land-grant institutions were understaffed and faced limited resources, resulting in these schools functioning as teaching or normal schools (Craig, 1992). One example of Black land-grant enrollment is from 1890–1915, the 16 Black land-grant institutions only had 12 students across all of their college departments (Wennersten, 1991). Though this number was limited, Black people began the journey to college access via their own institutions; however, the lack of access to admissions at HWIs still lingered.

Both the Morrill Act of 1862 and 1890 created significant shifts in higher education; the intended benefit was to provide training and education to develop the country (Museus et al, 2015; Thelin, 2011). Additionally, not all Black Americans agreed at that time about the benefits of agriculture and mechanical schools for Black citizens. Whereas Booker T. Washington

supported vocational training to increase Black individuals' socioeconomic status and education systems, other leaders such as W.E.B DuBois wanted to move Black Americans toward a Black intellectualism and elitism (Craig, 1992). Although both schools of thought benefited the plight of Black Americans, legal segregation was still in place in the U.S. education system, further preventing Black people from receiving an education at any institution.

Segregation and the *separate but equal* doctrine, affirmed through landmark legal cases of the 19th century, caused much of the divide between BIPOC groups and white people to continue the institutionalized racism in the U.S. legal system and broader society (*Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896;*; *Roberts v. City of Boston*, 1849). Much like other U.S. organizations and industries of the time, segregation in colleges and universities operated similarly to institutions such as the church, sports, restaurants, and secondary school, prohibiting Black people from legally designed white spaces. Segregation and institutional racism perpetuated multiple inequities for Black people, including inadequate access to formal, colonial education (Kenn, 2001). Black people were educated at segregated colleges and universities until the U.S. government granted People of Color access to admissions to HWIs during the 1950s; even then, racial integration did not provide equitable access to Black students in particular. The applications and tenuous admissions processes to HWIs were often met with harsh and costly legal battles in the U.S. court system for People of Color.

The historical legacy of Black people being integrated into HWIs has informed the racial climates of contemporary HWIs. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was pivotal in the desegregation of the U.S. education system; however, despite mandated desegregation, evidence of anti-Blackness from slavery and the separate but equal sentiments of the prior era remained embedded in U.S. institutions and industries. These remnants directly impacted the daily lives of

Black people, with a particular emphasis on the implications of racism on the U.S. education system. As more Black people matriculated to HWIs as students, faculty, and staff, they faced many systemic and cultural injustices that have extended into present-day higher education. These systemic, cultural, and institutional challenges have perpetuated inequities in the compositional, psychological, behavioral, and organizational challenges in the current iteration of the U.S. higher education system.

Psychological Dimensions of Campus Racial Climate

The psychological dimension within the campus racial climate framework describes the campuses response to diversity, views of group relations, how groups perceive of discrimination or racial conflict, and attitudes among racial groups that differ from their own (Hurtado et al., 1998). The historical legacy of segregation and desegregation on college and university campuses connects to the Black experience regarding access, attitudes, and activism against campus racial injustices. It is critical to note that HWIs did not support this population of people by design and still do not as of 2023; most of the intentions directed for Black people (e.g., multicultural offices, ethnic student organizations [ESOs], Black Greek letter organizations) and oftentimes attention in general, is not given to the Black population until racist incidents occur on campus (Tichavakunda, 2021; Tichavakunda, 2022). West (2015), in their study on Black women student affairs professionals, noted when their participants experienced being underrepresented in the institution, they felt a psychological stress to perform at a level of perfection in their workplace and they felt depreciated in spaces where they were less represented. These women in West's study also noted they did not have power of decision making in their groups. In the next section, I describe how Black people gained a sense of

belonging on campus through their activism and labor. Additionally, I discuss that through their activism, they created a psychological environment of belonging.

Black People Access HWIs: Labor Through Activism

Black people gained access to education at HWIs at the cost of a detrimental environment of anti-Black racism through intimidation, bullying, harassment, humiliation, brutality, and murder. In the 1960s, Black enrollment increased at HWIs, but this increase did not come without dehumanizing and hostile campus environments for Black students (Mustaffa, 2017). Considering the climate in the 1970s, the Black staff-to-student ratio was small and inadequate to support the population of Black college students at HWIs (Gibbs, 1973). This challenge prompted Black people to mirror the predominantly white society and create spaces that were welcoming for them.

Black Placemaking. Black people have often taken on the role of Black placemaking (Hunter et al., 2016). Originally a framework in sociology, Hunter et al. (2016) researched Chicago urban environments and used Black placemaking to challenge myths about the community, the stereotypes of inferiority, and acknowledge celebration and play in the Black community. Tichavakunda (2020) conceptualized Black placemaking in the higher education environment and argued the framework is useful to the Black student experience because it considers place, space, and agency; moreover, these spaces can meet Black students' needs, highlight the diversity within Blackness, and investigate Black spaces on campus. Although residential professionals at HWIs live in predominantly white spaces as a requirement of their position, they can also create other spaces for celebration and community among Black peers while continuing their role. Counterspaces allow for Black people to discuss their student affairs experiences, regardless of residential ties with their job. Additionally, Black spaces can account

for healing from the racialized harm Black professionals experience in their role (Warren & Coles, 2020; West, 2017).

Black people rarely have dedicated spaces for themselves and their well-being to be themselves openly on campus. One alternative to the lack of safe spaces is the concept of Black placemaking, which allows for student agency and the creation of places where Black students create spaces of agency in themselves (Tichavakunda, 2020). To understand Black placemaking, Hunter et al. (2016) studied how Black people create spaces through their interactions with each other through celebration and pleasurable experiences. Black residential professionals who live in residence halls would benefit from spaces of Black placemaking both created by the university (e.g., racial affinity spaces) and from their leisure gatherings with other Black people in their profession. These places of Black placemaking for BRSAP may or may not be healing and restorative depending on the racial identities and perspectives of the Black people attending, unless they find a sense of belonging within the community.

Labor of Black Students: Activism and Emotional Labor

Because I centered BRSAPs in this study, I also had to highlight the environments in which they live and the students they serve. It was vital to understand the context in which BRSAPs engage with students and the students' experiences of campus racial climate. In this section, I discuss how Black students' campus environments and racial tension impact the Black staff experience at HWIs and their experiences with labor through activism, taxation, and emotional labor.

BIPOC students often experience trauma and stress from a discriminatory campus environment (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Historically, in residence halls and through campus living communities, BIPOC students have experienced racial jokes, racial slurs, and the practice

of placement in segregated spaces on campus (Harwood et al., 2012). Compared with other racial groups, Black and Asian American students living in residence halls have harmful interactions with residence hall staff and when it comes to resident assistant roles, they are hired at lower rates than other ethnic groups (Healea & Hale, 2016; Johnson, 2003). Events 2018-2023 have exhibited the covert and overt behaviors that occur in residence life and the environments in which BRSAPS operate.

Activism. The historical legacy of Black people on college campuses has a direct link to the status of Black people on campus as of 2023 and their experiences with campus racial climates at HWIs. Champions of their own educational experiences, Black students have constantly been proponents of fighting injustices on campus (Anderson & Span, 2016; Biondi, 2012; Kendi, 2012; Kezar et al., 2018; Lee, 2014). Black students at the University of Missouri–Columbia, for instance, protested, held hunger strikes, and set forth demands to see racial equity occur on their campus in 2015 (Anderson & Span, 2016). The labor of Black students from history to 2023 is a result of anti-Black systems in higher education.

Historically, Black student activism created national attention by pursuing racial reform through groups like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). SNCC coordinated many events protesting segregation in the United States (Kendi, 2012). SNCC began when Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. saw the spread of student activism during sit-ins influenced by the Greensboro Four (O'Connor, 2007). On February 1, 1960, a group of four Black students at North Carolina A & T, later known as the Greensboro Four, coordinated with women from Bennett College to stage a sit-in at a lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina in a nonviolent protest of racial segregation in the United States (Brown, 2018; Hohenstein, 2005; O'Connor, 2007). Though this example exhibits student activism at historically Black

colleges and universities (HBCUs), the intersecting identities as activists and Black students reflected acts of labor to seek racial justice. Black students in the 1960s and 1970s also advocated for developing Black Studies departments at HWIs and services for Black populations at these institutions (Biondi, 2012; Kendi, 2012). Even in the 21st century, Black students still carry the burden of racial justice and experience anti-Blackness—they often advocate for themselves and other marginalized communities on HWI campuses through protests, community organizing, and advocacy.

Emotional Labor. Student activism and protest are not the only considerations attributed to labor by Black students. When attending HWIs, internal and external labor efforts to fit within white systems can leave students surrounded by anti-Black sentiments. For instance, Givens (2016) accounted for his personal experience and other Black students' experiences at HWIs. Givens stated there is an invisible tax on Black college students and noted their ongoing experiences with anti-Blackness at HWIs. Black students and student groups engage in labor for their universities by engaging with prospective and current Black students to assist in their admission and retention strategies (Givens, 2016). Other forms of labor also cause Black students to face discrimination and oppression.

Emotional labor is equally detrimental to the experience of wellness for Black people at HWIs. In Kelly et al.'s (2021) study, Black female students discussed the emotional labor associated with struggles with hypervisibility on their campuses and suppression of their voices. Black women have struggled to manage the many expectations of the institution, their faculty, and their peers, leading to outcomes that inhibit wellness and increase stress (Kelly et al., 2021). In a study where researchers analyzed over 10 years of discussion notes from an institution's African American Student Network weekly group meetings, they found four domains of anti-

Blackness on campus: racial trauma, racial microaggressions, racial rejection, and systemic racism leading to depression and low self-esteem for Students of Color (Grier-Reed et al., 2021). Though not students, BRSAPs may also experience these exact expectations from the institution as professionals who perform emotional labor and who may also be called upon to assist in recruitment and retention strategies for students.

Behavioral Dimensions of Campus Racial Climate

The behavioral dimension of campus racial climate encapsulates aspects of campus that focus on the quality of intergroup dynamics and relationships. The behavioral dimensions consist of interactions between different racial and ethnic groups (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem et al., 2005). Behavioral dimensions of the climate advanced to include informal interactions, occurring in and out of the classroom, and campus-facilitated interactions, like diversity coursework programming, and events (Hurtado et al., 2008). Peer interaction has been a principal theme of the behavioral dimension of campus racial climate and scholars have written on aspects this dimension, especially in arguing against standard narratives that racial groups isolate themselves and cause segregation (Griffin et al., 2016; Tatum, 1997). To support the notion further that Students of Color are connected outside their racial group in higher education, is research on their interactions across different racial and ethnic groups (Hurtado et al., 2008; Milem et al., 2005).

When considering residence halls as very diverse spaces, I also considered the experiences that RDs have in these halls and in their respective departments. The following section provides examples of how BIPOC people experience live-in environments on campus. Due to limited research on Black residence life professionals, I included the experiences of Black residence life student staff, which has some correlation to the experiences of Black professionals.

Racial Climate for Live-In Students and Student Staff

Campus racial climate situations in residence halls are one reason why Black students find it challenging to disengage from racism on campus when living in the residence halls; thus, they often find shared spaces with those who share their racial affinity (e.g., Black Student Union; Harwood et al., 2012; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2017). One example from 2017 was the vandalism of property in the residence halls at the University of Michigan, where someone wrote a racial slur on the door tags of two Black male residents (Sherry et al., 2017; U-M Public Affairs, n.d.). This situation occurred in a social justice-themed community at the university, exhibiting that creating socially just spaces does not protect People of Color from racial injustice.

Two years later at Syracuse University, racial slurs were written in community spaces, such as student bathrooms (Anderson, 2019). The racial vandalism of property and other racial injustice (e.g., racial slurs and epithets) occurred for 2 consecutive weeks on the campus and targeted BIPOC students (Anderson, 2019). These examples demonstrate the climate for BIPOC students and professionals at HWIs, but are only small examples of the racially charged incidents that occur within residence life and housing units in U.S. higher education institutions.

During times of campus racial tensions, BRSAP are invaluable to the institution to support students through navigating difficult and triggering circumstances. The RD role is essential, especially in supporting BIPOC students, because many racial and ethnic minoritized students face campus climate challenges, culturally exclusive environments, and overwhelming whiteness throughout their time at HWIs (Hawkins & Larabee, 2008). RDs live in the residence halls, so they are a part of the residential community and experience similar events as students; however, institutions expect RDs to provide leadership in times of crisis which can often

overextend the residence life professionals and cause difficulties for their well-being and secondary hand trauma (McDaniel & Dean, 2023; Lynch, 2022; Trentacoste & Nguyen, 2023).

RDs are often responsible for handling conduct and training student staff members and resident assistants on their roles. Many of the student staff, primarily white resident assistants, are not interculturally competent and may have difficulty engaging in critical conversations (Martin & Blechschmidt, 2014). The lack of cultural competence from their staff could impact BIPOC RDs in multiple ways, as their role as supervisors includes responsibility for the actions of resident assistants who are often ineffective and inexperienced with cultural competence—leaving them to do more work to support Students of Color by educating the white or inexperienced staff.

Even BIPOC student staff experience the obligation of speaking for their race when onboarding with their peers for resident assistant training (Bliekamp et al., 2015). BIPOC resident assistants often feel tokenized, isolated, and marginalized (Bliekamp et al., 2015). This feeling could be due to recruitment and retention strategies for residence life departments, as departments recruit Black and Asian American students for resident assistant positions at lower rates than their peers (Healea & Hale, 2016). In reviewing the literature, I noted a link between those in positions of power and those who are targets of discrimination in residence halls.

The stressful job environment of BRSAPs intersects their race and job functions. Even within resident assistant roles, Black student staff are stereotyped by peers, overextended, and receive little support from their supervisors (Harper et al., 2011; Roland & Agosto, 2017). Negative experiences due to race extend to BIPOC residence life professional staff as they experience microaggressions and tokenization (Clay & Ellington, 2019). BIPOC professionals

often receive a request to handle diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues solely due to their racial affinity with student groups (Clay & Ellington, 2019).

Compositional Dimensions of Campus Racial Climate

Compositional diversity Compositional diversity, originally labeled as "structural" diversity, is the dimension of campus racial climate that discusses the numerical representation of racial, ethnic, and gender groups on campus (Hurtado et al., 1999). Compositional diversity often includes People of Color in all positions on campus (i.e., faculty, staff, and students) and is the area that is often most visible on campus. Therefore, compositional diversity motivates institutions to recruit Students of Color to appear on brochures, billboards, and other marketing to showcase their institution (Pippert et al., 2013). Numerical representations of People of Color can present some tensions because it is easy to assume an institution is diverse and inclusive based on appearance, whereas the root of the institution may still be rooted in a discriminatory climate with little change (Harper, 2012; Leath et al., 2022); yet, having a critical mass of People of Color creates pressure for institutions to consider campus transformation and change (Hurtado et al., 1999).

While compositional diversity is a positive aspect of campus racial climate, institutions without compositional diversity can promote tokenism and enhanced cultural taxation (Milem et al., 2005; Padilla, 1994). One public example of this occurred in 2000 when a Black student, Diallo Shabazz, was photoshopped into the University of Wisconsin's application booklet to appear that they had a more diverse student body in the university (Prichep, 2013). The marketing of Black students is still a problem, where students are asked to represent the school in photos to market a more diverse-looking institution, resulting in interest convergence for the university (Lewis & Shah, 2021). The diverse marketing is beneficial for the institution but often

not for the students as they may feel the school is marketing a misrepresentation of the truth of campus racial climate (Lewis & Shah, 2021; Prichep, 2013). While the marketing of People of Color is one aspect of compositional diversity, there are also strong ties to hiring and retaining professionals in higher education.

A similar form of interest convergence can be seen through the hiring and retention processes of Black professionals at HWI's (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Interest convergence, in this case, considers that Black people are provided opportunities to advance within the field of higher education and student affairs; yet there are converging interests and expectations for the HWI to advance these professionals in an effort to showcase institutional commitment to DEI strategies, retain Students of Color, or serve institutional ranking goals (Bell, 1980; Milner, 2008). Whereas interest convergence can benefit the institution, the labor of BRSAPs does not benefit the professional.

Institutions of higher education committed to establishing compositional diversity and developing a sustainable community of People of Color on campus can create a positive campus racial climate. This is because compositional diversity on college and university campuses often leads to stronger forms of community through positive experiences with sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2014). Campus staff members, especially those with higher degree attainment, are aware of the discriminatory climates in which they work and can recognize the institution's lack of commitment to diversity regardless of its critical mass of racially diverse personnel (Mayhew et al., 2006). Diversifying faculty and staff with similar representation of students allows professionals to support their racial and ethnic groups, serve as a representation of the institution's commitment to diversity, create a more comfortable environment for students, and bring diverse voices and perspectives (Hurtado et al., 1999).

Unfortunately, even after hiring People of Color, HWIs still have issues with maintaining People of Color in professional roles on campus (Hubbard-Jackson, 2023; Kelly et al., 2017). Having a critical mass of racially diverse professionals can alleviate negative external perceptions of campus climates for some Professionals of Color (Garcia, 2016); however, Professionals of Color understand the complexities in their work context and experience both lived and systemic racism. Institutions may try to rectify these issues by providing changes in their compositional diversity with the intention of improving its campus racial climate, but numbers alone cannot address the issues that Black professionals and other Professionals of Color face at HWIs.

BRSAPs experience the racial climate of HWIs as the physical space and structures on campus, often noticing when they are underrepresented and isolated, especially in their department, units, and divisions (West, 2015). Though using Professionals of Color understanding and context around race is beneficial to universities and enrolled students, race also can be a way that institutions tax BIPOC professionals in the workplace primarily based on their race, ethnicity, or culture (Padilla, 1994). Understanding the labor of BIPOC professionals regarding service, taxation, and fatigue assisted in acknowledging current theories and concepts tied to BRSAPs workplaces.

Organizational and Structural Dimension of Campus Racial Climate

The fifth dimension introduced into the campus racial climate framework is the organizational and structural dimensions of campus racial climate (Milem et al., 2005). Milem et al. (2005) presented a reiteration of campus climate that introduced the organizational and structural dimensions, which inform that the campus has discriminatory structures embedded in the organization through policy and practice (e.g., how climate influences hiring and tenure

decisions from homogenous committees in departments and units; Milem et al., 2005). Many campus policies impact the daily lives of those on colleges and university campuses. This dimension of campus racial climate appropriately applies to the context of HWIs because U.S. colleges and universities face many structural, interpersonal, and cultural challenges, all of which further complicate the organizational culture and environment where the employee works (Bess & Dee, 2008). More specifically, the interpersonal aspects of higher education institutions connect with the framework regarding the employee's community.

Societal impacts of campus climate connect to HWIs' legacy of being racialized organizations, and often discriminatory within that legacy (Hurtado et al., 1999; Ray, 2019). U.S. higher education institutions also function as racialized organizations when considering how they shape agency for workers, uphold notions of white dominance and racial hierarchy, prioritize credentialing, and break policy and rules that protect minoritized workers from racial discrimination (Ray, 2019). The racialized structure of HWIs has impacted Black employees through a long history of anti-Black racism that centers race and labor when considering their wellness from sociohistorical and sociopolitical context.

Higher education systems, created through white supremacy and settler colonialism, affect the belonging and success of all Black people on campus. Although researchers have often studied Black students in the context of belonging and success experiences, these same issues also affect Black professionals on campus (Fries-Britt & Kelly, 2005; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Strayhorn, 2014; Williamson, 1999). BIPOC student affairs professionals at HWIs can recognize how powerlessness affects BIPOC students and increase or support their sense of belonging (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado et al., 2015; Luedke, 2017). BIPOC professionals can create environments that make students feel comfortable being vulnerable and sharing their internal

struggles with racism on campus or abroad. BIPOC professionals' racialized experiences, mirrored to those of students, make their work essential, as they have a personal understanding regarding the impact of a hostile campus climate.

Racial discrimination is also an issue for BIPOC professionals at HWIs. Faculty face microaggressions on campus as they receive questions from their peers regarding their qualifications for the role, experience racially charged comments about their hair, or are asked to explain their racial identities (Griffin et al., 2013; Joseph & Hirschfield, 2011). As a result of racial discrimination, BIPOC professionals experience prevention of promotion, psychological or institutional departure, and even social withdrawal or health complications that may lead to a shorter life span (Baez, 2000; Griffin et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2011). It is essential to consider how those in professional and nonfaculty positions experience anti-Blackness on campus within the campus racial climate.

Service

Detrimental effects occur when BIPOC professionals extend themselves in race-related service to those in their racial community (Baez, 2000). Race-related service highlights how faculty often miss opportunities to advance toward promotion due to an imbalance of emphasis on research and teaching rather than service (Baez, 2000). Often, faculty feel the expectation of teaching race-related courses and serving on diversity committees (Joseph & Hirchsfield, 2011). Additional responsibility of service is not the only issue for BIPOC professionals in higher education; they also experience other forms of racism.

Taxation

In researching BRSAPs, I recognized that taxation at HWIs occurs for Black students, Black faculty, Black staff, and Black student affairs professionals alike. Cultural taxation occurs

when organizations ask People of Color to address organizational diversity issues (Padilla, 1994). For example, organizations may ask BIPOC to (a) educate majority groups on racial issues, (b) repeatedly serve on committees around racial issues without experiencing change, (c) act as liaisons between the organization and the ethnic community, (d) take time from personal work to negotiate sociocultural disagreements, or (e) be called to an employer to translate or interpret to non-English speakers (Padilla, 1994). Although there are other ways to experience cultural taxation, some literature has accounted for specific considerations with the Black experience (Griffin et al., 2011; Riddick et al., 2020).

For higher education institutions, having professionals who can assist BIPOC students and understand their experiences can promote a sense of belonging that aids in student retention on campus and improves diversity in number (Guiffrida, 2005; McCloud, 2019). Much of this connection can be seen through connections like *othermothering*, which develops through the relationships that students curate with faculty or staff (Griffin, 2013; Guiffrida, 2005; Hirt et al., 2008; McCloud, 2019). Relationships and service related roles carry additional labor for BIPOC professionals and can negatively affect their personal wellness and lifestyle. One example of adverse effects is racial battle fatigue (RBF).

Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF)

Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF) focuses on stressors, because marginalized groups spend an extended amount of energy combating racism (Smith, 2008). For example, when a Professional of Color experiences a microaggressions, the experience can lead to long-term effects. Additionally, constantly combating racism leads to stress on marginalized groups (Smith, 2008; Sue & Constantine, 2007). Micro or macro levels of racism produce psychological, physiological, and behavioral stress responses to BIPOC people in predominantly white spaces

(Smith, 2008). RBF and cultural taxation affect the production and retention of Professionals of Color (Cleveland et al., 2018); for example, Smith et al. (2011) found Faculty of Color try to remain persistent, but the racial tensions they experience can lead to accumulated psychophysiological stress causing health complications, withdrawals, and sometimes a shorter life span.

The racial identities of BIPOC professionals can be detrimental to their health and overall well-being, particularly considering the impacts of cultural taxation, RBF, and race-related service. In conjunction, a BIPOC professional's daily work demands are essential to comprehend the full picture of their occupation within the higher education and student affairs environment. Regardless of race, campus student affairs professionals experience heavy workloads and extended hours, which can lead to stress and burnout (Marshall et al., 2016). Amid this heavy workload, BIPOC professionals still face racism, which affects their mental and physical health. Due to burnout being considered normal in the field, BIPOC student affairs professionals must take caution to liberate themselves from the capitalist nature of higher education and protect their personal space to meet their basic needs (Williams, 2020). As an example, the number of extended hours a BIPOC professional spends meeting and advising students may benefit the university by retaining students, but does not provide compensation for the use of BIPOC professional's energy and time. Understanding the racial climate for BIPOC professionals at HWIs became even more important as this literature review progressed into an overview of the live-in roles of BRSAPs.

Student Affairs

Although all racially minoritized groups in the U.S. face discrimination, Black individuals experience multiple forms of workplace discrimination, such as racial discrimination

and discrimination in the workplace based on factors such as credit scores, appearance, criminal records, and employment status. Gatekeeping and discriminatory factors negatively affect Black employees' hiring and career mobility (Whitaker, 2019). Although these sentiments derive from general workplace experiences, they also translate into the field of student affairs. Opie and Roberts (2017) found restorative measures can assist Black professionals and strengthen trust in the organization, such as giving updates on how the organization seeks to eliminate racism in the workplace.

Generally in student affairs, professionals are often overworked and employed in environments that do not appreciate their unique experiences. Many underrepresented groups within higher education work in environments where peers and employers need to increase their levels of multicultural competence and commitment within the workplace (Cuyjet & Duncan, 2013). Cultural competencies are essential for entry-level staff as they navigate new positions. For entry-level student affairs professionals navigating social justice, the workplace can be challenging; however, through critical consciousness training and student development theory, student affairs professionals can gain a sense of cultural competency (Boss et al., 2018). When assisting with cultural competency, much of the work comes from the professional's supervisor (Boss et al., 2018). The workplace for BRSAPs needs to include building cultural competency and DEI for all in the department where the environment is challenged to function in pro-Blackness and antiracism.

One example of this effort has occurred at Michigan State University (MSU), which has endeavored to develop a more inclusive workspace for the residence life department (Cheskis-Gold & Shuchman., 2021). MSU has taken multiple angles in addressing DEI in the department. A few of the steps have included (a) developing a mission statement and pledge; (b) hiring an

associate director for DEI initiatives; (c) providing training on topics such as implicit bias training; and (d) creating a book series for DEI, among other initiatives (Cheskis-Gold & Shuchman., 2021). Other institutions, such as the University of Minnesota, have attempted to address implicit bias through their hiring process by creating training and increasing awareness for employees (Pearlman, 2021). Still, institutions have largely geared DEI efforts toward student initiatives, rather than professionals.

Workplace policies and culture affect BRSAPs who need just and equitable policies to work in an environment that promotes occupational wellness. The workplace for a Black person is often rooted in racism and an exploitation of their labor (Opie & Roberts, 2017). Organizational personnel, especially in predominantly white workplaces, must consider the historical context when viewing Black professionals' wellness. Black people experience tokenization in the workplace, which harms their wellness and can potentially lead to higher levels of depression and anxiety (Jackson et al., 1995). From previous studied literature on workplace policies (e.g., race-related service and cultural taxation) BRSAPs may perform additional duties due to their racial and ethnic backgrounds (Baez, 2000; Padilla, 1994). This additional labor can also determine BRSAPs' health levels, which affect their occupational wellness. Workplaces that enact holistic wellness and mattering promote positive employee job satisfaction (Connolly & Meyers, 2003).

Complicating the Study by Centering Both Personal and Professional Wellness

Literature on campus racial climate was important in the context of this study, but campus racial climate leads BRSAP to talk about their wellness in a racial climate. One can note that the role of BRSAP is multifaceted and complex. When an individual lives in their workspace, there is a lack of separation from the multiple personal identities they hold, and

adding to that complexity is the microscopic experience of being a Black person in a predominantly white space.

In the original design of this study, occupational wellness was centered as the conceptual frame in which I envisioned this discussion. After council from my committee, the underlying theme of race and racism surfaced as the primary target of research question and purpose statement; however, one element that campus racial climate does not address is the insertion of individuality. A person does have some level of their personal health and well-being that they manage. Notably, personal aspects of wellness and well-being did impact stress to a certain extent for the coresearchers in this study. Although many of their experiences reflected a part of the larger body of campus racial climate, all coresearchers still had personal experiences that specifically impacted them. Although the psychological climate is mentioned in campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem et al., 2005), a worker who does not take a hold of their mental health and avoid burnout may be vulnerable to extremely high damaging effects on their occupational wellness. The live-in experience elevates and exasperates the meaning of a first responder. Even first responders have a space to retreat; for residential professionals, they are always present for the entirety of their role.

Conclusion

In this section, I wove campus racial climate within the literature on BRSAPs, the conditions of which they work, and the state of their positionality as professionals who work and live in racialized environments on campus. Residential student affairs professionals need personal and organizational support to combat tensions and demands from on-campus living and working experiences. Institutional support is necessary to retain student affairs professionals, and many find support from their supervisors and institutional recognition (Marshall et al., 2016).

Institutional support can take many forms for student affairs professionals, including mentoring, proper compensation, and raising awareness of critical consciousness within employees (Boss et al., 2018; Gardner et al., 2014; Stanley, 2006). In Chapter 3, I detail how I used my methods to explore the phenomenon of BRSAPs who work and live on campus and how I aligned my methodological choices with a critical paradigm.

Chapter 3: Methodological Framework

Extant literature revealed scant information about Black residential student affairs professionals (BRSAPs) and their occupational wellness while working and living in the residence halls. As such, it was essential to examine the wellness of Black student affairs professionals who live-in and work in an on-campus residences at historically white institutions (HWIs). This study offered an additional narrative to timely research on residence life units and professionals working in the student affairs field (DeLucia, 2019; Duncan, 2018; McDaniel, 2021; Ross, 2021; Thomas, 2018). My research design enabled me to collect data from a perspective that decentered my power as researcher, but also propelled me toward advocacy and awareness of the Black professionals in my study who worked in residence life. I collaborated with the Black professionals in my study to uncover and explain their experiences living on campus by examining their occupational wellness.

Research Methods Introduction

In this chapter, I explain my research design by defining the research paradigm, methodological approach, data collection, and data analysis. First, I justify how a critical paradigm fit my research design by explaining my personal, epistemological, ontological, and axiological beliefs in this study. Next, I explore my methodological approach with critical phenomenology, which provided guidance in answering my research question. I also introduce my reasoning for pairing critical phenomenology with critical consciousness in my methodological framework. Lastly, I explain my more practical research design steps, including data collection, data analysis, validation strategies, and ethical considerations that guided my research. Throughout this study, I refer to the participants as "coresearchers;" it was important

for me to refer to the participants as working with me on this topic because they brought the expertise and experiences needed to research BRSAPs.

Research Paradigm

A research paradigm explains the researcher's beliefs and perspectives about how they approach their study (Guido et al., 2010). My paradigm included epistemological, ontological, axiological, and methodological assumptions, which described my beliefs and informed my decisions (Guido et al., 2010; Tracy, 2019). More specifically, my epistemology explained my approach to knowledge; my ontology referred to my views about the nature of realities; and my axiology addressed my values and ethics in the research. My methodology allowed me to address the research design and underlying processes for my study. The viewpoint I used to inform my study was a critical paradigm.

Critical Paradigm

For this study, I selected a critical paradigm because I desired to explore my coresearchers' experiences and move my study toward action (Asghar, 2013). In this section, I frame my critical paradigm and explain why other paradigms were not the correct fit for my research. A critical paradigm at the foundational level in critical theory seeks to emancipate and liberate humans from conditions that enslave them. (Horkheimer, 1982). Tracy (2019) also noted that critical research includes considering power relations; in the critical paradigm, oppression is strongest when "subordinates do not understand their domination" (p. 53). As a critical researcher, I had to ensure I informed those participating in my study of the parameters of the study, the opportunities of co-constructed knowledge that can occur, and their freedom to participate or drop their participation at any time. Additionally, my use of a critical paradigm allowed me to critique the organization and institution of residence life in U.S. higher education

and all underlying power structures (Guido et al., 2010). Though I was not clear on whether or not my coresearchers needed liberation or emancipation from the systems and structures in which they worked, I held that simply discussing the experiences of Blackness at an HWI led to mindfulness and awareness on elements of oppression and power in the organizational context.

Researching residence life and the intersections of Blackness through a critical lens aimed to: (a) understand the consciousness of BRSAPs working at HWIs, (b) explore a new narrative of residence directors (RDs), (c) discover the occupational wellness systems of HWIs, and (d) collaborate with BRSAPs on presenting the findings from this study to the field of higher education and contribute to the body of literature on BRSAPs working at HWIs. The following research question guided my study to gain insight into the lived experiences of BRSAPs:

- How does the live-in experience of Black residential student affairs professionals (BRSAPs) intersect with Blackness to shape their wellness at historically white institutions (HWIs)?

Researching BRSAPs in the racial climate at HWIs presented historical, compositional, psychological, behavioral, and organizational considerations (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem et al., 2005). The critical research paradigm addressed social and political themes that emerged from my research, such as oppression, conflict, and power (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). To explore racial issues at HWIs, I also had to address systemic power and privilege due to longstanding discrimination against Black people in the United States, such as the historic exclusion of Black bodies from educational access to HWIs (Dancy et al., 2018; Thelin, 2011). Additionally, my research design addressed how power affects the landscape of higher education in the United States.

Many institutions used enslaved labor to erect HWIs; even generations after exploiting enslaved labor, there are still remnants of racial discrimination and anti-Black sentiments on campuses, perpetuating the power dynamic of who is privileged at U.S. educational institutions versus those who are not (Wilder, 2013). Some examples of these anti-Black remnants include monuments and buildings named on campus to honor white supremacists (Chan, 2016; Griffin, 2020; Hudson, 2020). Enslaved labor is only one example of how privilege intersects with the role of Blackness at HWIs. By acknowledging this reality, I had to consider how to approach my research paradigm to both address systemic oppression and power while avoiding centering those principles in my study. For me, distributing power entailed (a) working together with those who agree to participate in the study; (b) ensuring the accuracy of their words, thoughts, and experiences; and (c) offering them the opportunity to assist in the dissemination of study results.

Critical paradigms liberate and emancipate marginalized groups by addressing power dynamics, societal constructs, and justice issues (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Tracy, 2019). I aimed to employ a research approach that explored structural and systemic dimensions of occupational wellness and the lived experiences of Black people in residence life on HWI campuses in the United States. Subsequently, a critical research paradigm enabled me to address power and structures against systemically oppressed people, critique current narratives, and offer new narratives (Glesne, 2016). Research in the United States has historically served those with historical, compositional, psychological, behavioral, and organizational power. Often, those who have power studied participants who were powerless in society (Foster, 2014). While presenting the coresearchers' narratives, I had to remain cautious of my power and, as researcher, my interpretation of the world. Critical research methodologies are meant to emancipate and empower (Denzin et al., 2008). I engaged in my research as one who was of the power I held to

conduct and disseminate research, and I recognized the need to address my power to work with and empower my participants with whom I interacted as coresearchers in this study.

Participants as Coresearchers

Before I established my epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions, one aspect central to this study was the use of my participants as coresearchers. Phenomenologists have often used the words coresearcher and participant interchangeably (Knaack, 1984; Osborne, 1990). The term coresearcher is used in phenomenology, as the participant or coresearcher is involved in a phenomenological process that is "cooperative" and "voluntary" (Osborne, 1990). I defined *coresearchers* as my partners in generating knowledge because of their unique privileges of holding knowledge regarding their lived experiences with the studied topic; the coresearchers partnered with me in meaning making and some have agreed to collaboratively disseminate the findings from their experiences in this study (Genius et al., 2015; Tanner, 2019). The decision to include participants as coresearchers was important to address before delving into my research paradigm, as many of my decisions were informed by this aspect of the study.

I modeled this study after Freire's (1973) critical consciousness work, where he was known for working "*with* people and not *on* them" (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p. 20). I engaged with my coresearchers, rather than just performing research on them. As a critical researcher, I acknowledged my coresearchers had knowledge and lived experiences about occupational wellness as BRSAPs working at HWIs. As the primary researcher, I also acknowledged the possibilities of oppression and power abuses that could arise as I explored this topic with my coresearchers. Finally, I acknowledged that as a former BRSAP who worked at an HWI, I shared similar lived experiences to those of my coresearchers; therefore, my situatedness was in relation to or in community with my coresearchers. Although it was more extensive

process to include coresearchers in the research design, data protocol, credibility efforts and dissemination, I strove to make the process congenial and raise consciousness for all involved in unearthing the lived experiences of occupational wellness for BRSAPs working at HWIs.

A critical paradigm assisted me in reimagining new ideas on wellness that focused on BRSAPs, but these ideas also have the capacity to benefit all live-in staff regardless of their racial identities. Critical paradigms often use theories surrounding critical theory, social justice theory, and empowerment theory (Kim, 2018). Because I sought to engage in this research with my coresearchers, empowerment theory guided my collaboration with the coresearchers. In empowerment theory, collaboration requires partners to engage in the exchange of information, along with shared resources and works to enhance the work; this study aimed to benefit all who shared a common purpose (Himmelman, 2001). To complete this study using empowerment theory, the coresearchers and I had to (a) develop high levels of trust, (b) share a substantial amount of time together, and (c) connect our spheres of influence to leverage our work (Himmelman, 2001). I applied levels of empowerment theory to the focus group settings where we networked and coordinated over the phenomenon being researched (Himmelman, 2001). Moreover, the coresearchers and I made future plans to cooperate and collaborate on disseminating elements of this research after data analysis. One participant, Sunny, agreed to collaborate on a presentation or op-ed with me. Sharing in the research process with my coresearchers allowed them to be active in knowledge acquisition and development so our work can benefit all involved.

When researching marginalized groups, qualitative researchers have often stated as critical researchers, they give marginalized groups a voice that implies ownership over their participants' or coresearchers' experiences and knowledge (Potts & Brown, 2005). On the

contrary, anti-oppressive research explores the idea of the knower and the known (Potts & Brown, 2005). I remained reflective of the power dynamics in the research while also respecting and maintaining a strong relationship with my coresearchers. This balance required acknowledging coresearchers as the owners of their own knowledge (Berryman et al., 2013). I also made sure to understand my own constructions of knowledge as I worked together with my coresearchers.

To gain a sense of my own understanding regarding the studied phenomenon, I engaged in reflective journaling that I stored in Google Drive and my university's Zoom Cloud. For this study, I relied heavily on the role of the coresearchers' lived experiences; as such, I kept up with the task of journaling—whether video, audio, or written, the point was to journal regularly. I knew that I would further my sense of understanding through daily reflective journaling, but I did not initially realize that using varied methods as I reflected through journaling and used different media (e.g., video, audio) allowed me the flexibility to capture my thoughts throughout the process.

In developing this study, I wanted my coresearchers to become co-constructors of knowledge. The coresearchers and I worked together to implement the research design. Biermann (2011) and Patel (2016) discussed the colonial nature of research and noted participants do not own the knowledge they give to researchers in their work. I sought to acknowledge the boundaries of colonialism in the research process and, as my methodology allowed, empower my coresearchers beyond these boundaries.

My coresearchers were the knowers and holders of knowledge regarding the topic. As coresearchers, they shared knowledge, increased collective consciousness toward the subject, and provided a call to action in the field of student affairs. Referring back to my relationality

statement in Chapter 1 and my role as the primary researcher, I shared in the knowledge of the coresearchers' lived experiences as a former Black live-in professional working at a doctoral degree-granting or research HWI; yet, having multiple knowers in my study strengthened my work and addressed new knowledge surrounding the phenomena.

My research design connects back to my relationality with the subject and a desire to center Black people from a communal vantage point. The decision to work with participants as coresearchers lies in collaboration. Feeling isolated and siloed in the residence life position as a BRSAP, I sought to create a space that immersed our unique lived experiences in a way that distributed power and invited coresearchers to become a part of a community. In many ways, this succeeded during the data collection process but became more challenging in disseminating the study due to the multiple obligations of these already busy professionals. In the next section, I discuss my epistemological assumptions, followed by an explanation of my ontological and axiological assumptions to relate them to the research paradigm informing my methods and research design.

Epistemology

As a student affairs researcher, I valued experiential knowledge regarding this research topic (Espino, 2012). I maintained the belief that the experiences of People of Color are valid and strength would come from their knowledge and narratives that would allow me to answer my research question (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). By valuing the narratives of Black people in my research, I expanded my study to personal, familial, or cultural spaces and acknowledged Black people as knowers, which has often been dismissed by Eurocentric viewpoints in U.S. scholarship (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Still, circling back to the relationality I mentioned in

Chapter 1, I had to recognize my personal experiences while also keeping my focus on the information provided by those participating in my study.

In critical and transgressive research, the researcher must include participant experiences and knowledge into the work as the inquirer. In the spirit of Potts and Brown (2005), there are various interpretations of knowledge and the relationship of the knower; the information that is known will make a difference based on people's social constructions and experience. As mentioned earlier, I valued the lived experiences and knowledge of my coresearchers to align with my research paradigm.

The coresearchers are important to me to have regarding campus racial climate and occupational wellness because they inform a unique population. The position of living in where you work as a first-responder coupled with their racial identity it creates a story that is often untold in higher education. Additionally, at the entry-level position there is a sense of powerlessness, I wanted the coresearchers to be empowered to share their full story and lived experiences with me. Having discussed my epistemological stance, I now move to explaining my ontological position in this study.

Ontology

Ontology is the nature of reality (Jones & Abes, 2011). In my research, reality was shaped by history and how humanity operates through social, political, cultural, ethnic and racial constructs and ideologies held by a society (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). In my research, I acknowledged the world as a real place, with real people, where unseen elements of life are also a reality. As an example, a person's level of wellness (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression, exhaustion) is often not visible by others, but has an impact in natural aspects of life and death. The world is a real place that is constructed through systems on which members of society place

value and experience. As I constructed this study, my ontological assumptions informed my data collection protocols and analysis because the role of a BRSAP centers on their work in systems informed by whiteness, such as higher education institutions in the United States.

Human environments frequently narrow perspectives, including worldview and culture, which can distort reality. Environments socialize individuals around what is considered normal, acceptable, or known in the respective community; however, when people expand their realities to include other worldviews and multiple ways of knowing, such growth shifts reality and causes them to ask themselves, "What is real?," "What is true?," and "What is correct?" When individuals live in a globalized society and open themselves to other worldviews, this environment challenges humankind in their realities.

Acknowledging reality based on socially informed constructions and lived experiences eliminated the appropriateness of conducting my study from a positivist methodological approach, where essentialism dictates there is one reality (Tracy, 2019). Although a constructivist paradigm would have attended to ideas of social construction, in reality the approach does not acknowledge the power dynamics that exist in Black people's experiences in the United States (Tracy, 2019). As a historically oppressed group in the United States, the realities steeped in whiteness in which Black people exist are much different than the reality of those with power—in this case, white individuals in the United States. Further, the realities Black people hold are diverse and based on their ethnic makeup, among their other intersecting social identities. Some realities come with a lens socialized in the U.S. context, whereas others have a more global lens. As such, in this qualitative study, I explored the multiple realities of Black people working at HWIs.

Reality reflects an individual's cognition and experiences. In my ontology, there were multiple realities, multiple ways of knowing, and multiple truths; these realities allow individuals to learn more about the topic (Guba, 1981). Studying BRSAPs who work at HWIs inherently and ontologically presented a world with multiple realities. Even while studying members of one racial category, I could not assume a monolithic reality existed; thus, I further studied the experiences of BRSAPs to uncover the phenomenon.

Axiology

Axiology defined beliefs about my values and ethics as a researcher (Terrell, 2016). Although there was limited literature on axiology as informed by a critical paradigm, the transformative paradigm translated to the critical approach in this study. The critical paradigm was similar to the transformative paradigm, which allows researchers to address discrimination and oppression (Mertens, 2012). Mertens (2012) discussed beneficence, respect, and justice through the transformative paradigm; namely, to drive for the maximum good from the research outcome, it is critical to treat participants well based on their (dis)abilities and cultural backgrounds and ensure the research benefits those participating in the data collection. In the following paragraphs, I explain how I used Mertens's (2012) transformative paradigm in the axiology of my study.

First, I acted with beneficence, which referred to how I treated participants in my study by respecting their decisions and ensuring they were protected from harm (Terrell, 2016). One way to act with beneficence is through the consent and proper explanation of my study to my coresearchers. I sought to create better occupational outcomes for BRSAPs working in residence life by gaining consent and making them aware of the risks of the study (Terrell, 2016). As I mentioned earlier, by asking for consent, I removed power and respected the coresearchers'

decisions about participation. Explaining thoroughly the steps of the data collection process assisted me in giving my coresearchers a clear understanding of desired participation and the opportunity for them to decide in which areas they would like to opt out of the study, if needed.

Second, concerning respect for those participating in my study, I had to protect and allow the coresearchers to make their own decisions (Terrell, 2016). In addition to the informed consent form and explanation of the study, those participating in my study assisted me in co-constructing knowledge. I fostered the co-construction of knowledge in my methodology by creating with my coresearchers to shift the role of power in my study. The coresearchers helped decide the data collection period, offered questions for the focus group, and participated in disseminating knowledge to the broader student affairs community.

Last, on justice, I sought to make sure my participants received all to which they were entitled in the study (Terrell, 2016). I desired to go beyond the data collection process with my hopes for justice and seek justice even in the data analysis. I worked to ensure, as primary researcher, that I illuminated the narratives and stories of the BRSAPs participating in my study using their voices. I attended to this goal primarily through the process of member checking the data with my coresearchers. It was vital to acknowledge seeking justice as part of my role in using a critical paradigm.

When considering ethics in the study, power was a substantial factor in using a critical or transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2012). Axiology in terms of cultural responsiveness and social justice is crucial in researcher ethics issues because researchers must consider the dynamics of power (Mertens, 2012). I redistributed power and authority in my study by allowing my coresearchers to take part in the decision making of the research methodology for the study. I acknowledge the knowledge gained through my study was co-constructed with those

participating and, as primary researcher, I often considered my positional power. Consideration of the existing power dynamics was especially true when interpreting and presenting the data, as I endeavored to disseminate research that remained true to the nature and spirit of the coresearchers' stories and experiences. Now that I have explained my research paradigm, I next explain my methodological approach for my study.

Research Methodology

The following section explains the selection of my research methodology for exploring the lived experiences of BRSAPs working at doctoral degree-granting and research-based HWIs. I begin with an overview of qualitative research, followed by a brief history of phenomenology. Later, I explain my selection of critical phenomenology and why I used critical consciousness to undergird my research methodology.

Qualitative Research

I conducted my study through a qualitative approach to allow for a rich understanding of the phenomena, address the complexities of race, and intentionally redistribute power in the study. Qualitative research aims to explore and find meaning in a theme, topic, or subject matter (Shank et al., 2014). To understand the lived experience of the BRSAP population, I used qualitative research to deeply explore the occupational wellness these residence life employees share and understand the meaning of their experiences beyond any of my assumptions (Shank et al., 2014). Due to the size of the population, qualitative research better served my research question and catered to a small qualitative study. Additionally, qualitative research allowed me to address Blackness as a social construct and the complexities of racial identity in my research (Saldaña, 2011). Black people are not a monolith; there must be a consideration to their unique experiences through the intersections of their identities.

A qualitative approach also allowed me the opportunity of "working closely with the participants in the study to discover meaning" (Terrell, 2016, p. 69). As mentioned earlier, in a critical paradigm, exploring the implications of power is instrumental in the effectiveness of the study—working with the coresearchers in a community gave me the opportunity to shift power between myself and the participants in the study by not solely relying on my role as primary researcher. Critical qualitative inquiry allowed those participating in the study to collaborate with me throughout the process; and qualitative research enabled me to remain open to possibilities for questions and reflection in the research. In this case, I developed healthy relationships with my coresearchers to explore and complicate the research together.

Phenomenology: Schools of Thought

Phenomenology is a methodological approach that uses lived experiences to explain a phenomenon—for example, how humans experience circumstances or situations (Smith, 2006). Husserl (1922) began the work of phenomenology in 1900 with his logical investigations*,* or in German, *logische untersuchungen,* to provide an alternative to the natural science methods in the field and a study in consciousness (Detmer, 2013). His approach, highly rooted in the researcher removing themselves from what they studied, characterized the Husserlian (1922) style of phenomenology. This process is called bracketing, which shifts the attention to the phenomena by suspending prior knowledge and assumptions to look at the phenomena with clear understandings (LeVasseur, 2003). Husserl's (1922) work expanded from his ideas of phenomenology to other philosophers of his time.

Heidegger (1927), a student of Husserl's, expounded on the phenomenological ideas in his work, *Being and Time*, meaning one's being is temporal and is time, unlike other philosophers of his day who viewed being as eternal (Guignon, 2016). Heidegger also differed in

approach from Husserl in that his philosophy held the researcher is a part of the experience and their previous knowledge informs their research and data analysis processes (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). Although both Husserl (1922) and Heidegger (1927) created foundations of phenomenological study, Merleau-Ponty's (1965) work formed the basis for this critical phenomenological study.

Husserl's (1922) other student, French philosopher Merleau-Ponty (1965), pointed out that what humans experience in reality or believe as truth derives from their perceptions and transcendence (Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956). *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty's (1965) main text, allowed for phenomenology to advance in a critical approach to include the social construction of identities (e.g., race) that affect marginalized groups' perceived worlds. Contemporary phenomenologists have since extended Merleau-Ponty's approach to critical phenomenology (Kinkaid, 2020). My approach to phenomenology centered the coresearchers' social identities as I drew from examples of critical phenomenologists who employed Merleau-Ponty's work and sought to insert identity development and structural influence impacting their social differences (Kinkaid, 2020).

Notably, the founding of phenomenological thought is credited with European men, including Husserl (1922), Heidegger (1927), and Merleau-Ponty (1965). These seminal theorists did not include ideas on social identities into their descriptions of phenomenology, which has contributed to the ongoing exclusion of marginalized voices in contemporary phenomenological literature (Gines, 2011). Scholars have since advanced phenomenological approaches to include critical phenomenology, queer phenomenology, Africana phenomenology, and other phenomenological types focusing on identities and systemic power (Ahmed, 2006; Henry, 2005;

Salamon, 2018). By researching the lived experiences of BRSAPs as coresearchers in my study with a critical lens, I addressed multiple dimensions of understanding in a complex world.

Critical phenomenology does not only explore the lived experiences of people in a society, but also allows the phenomenologist to "attend to the power that is always conditioning that truth" (Salamon, 2018, p. 15). I sought to understand the truths of BRSAPs, but in doing so, I acknowledged the power dynamics in their work environments, which are structurally and institutionally racist. It was vital I ask about their lived experiences and the influences of Blackness, but also uncover the essence of any racialized experiences they had during their time at HWIs.

Similarly, Al-Saji (2014) used a critical phenomenological frame to analyze racial structures in works of art and critiqued racial representation in these pieces instead of viewing it through a historical lens. Al-Saji challenged what society perceives and envisions through themes of hesitation and transformation of a racialized vision. By offering these themes, Al-Saji revealed the misrepresentation and oppression of the groups through art and exhibited how critical phenomenological studies can address historical and political issues in society.

Using critical phenomenology opened the discussion to include a better understanding of how the lived experiences of BRSAPs influence historical and sociopolitical structures constructed in the United States. My discussion of BRSAPs' experiences could not have occurred unless my framework addressed elements of how power and politics operate in the U.S. context and educational systems, both historically and presently. Furthermore, critical phenomenology acknowledges the lived experiences of BRSAPs, enabling me to gain a better understanding their wellness during times of increased racially charged incidents in the United States (Furber & Wright, 2021; McCoy, 2020; Senter et al., 2022).

Critical phenomenology focuses on both philosophy and politics. Guenther (2020) explained this focus in detail by positing, philosophically, critical phenomenology describes the reality and structures that make the phenomena possible, analyzes functionality, and allows the researcher to imagine new ways outside of what is familiar. Politically, critical phenomenology "is a struggle for liberation from the structures that privilege, naturalize, and normalize certain experiences of the world while marginalizing, pathologizing, and discrediting others" (Guenther, 2020, p. 15). Critical phenomenology functions to see the perception and knowledge of those who are marginalized in society.

Critical phenomenology informed my study because the approach aligned with my research question by centering on the experiences of BRSAPs on their occupational wellness while working at HWIs. Using this methodology helped me explore the lived experiences of BRSAPs and centered the reality that Black people suffer from structural and systematic oppression through social and political constructs as designed by whiteness in U.S. society. I sought to holistically address my coresearchers' experiences with my methodology; although critical phenomenology is not widely used, it offered the grounds to adequately answer my research question.

Critical phenomenology also allowed me to focus on a sociopolitical view of BRSAPs' lived experiences, although it did not move the discussion toward liberation, healing, nor wellness for my coresearchers. With critical phenomenology, I discussed what my coresearchers lived through, as those individuals were the embodiment of their experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1965; Simonsen & Koefoed, 2020). Still, combining critical consciousness with my methodological approach was solely a prerequisite to my coresearchers' personal journeys toward liberation of living in occupational wellness (Watts et al., 1999). Additionally, critical

consciousness supported my epistemological lens for this study because it offered me the opportunity to connect with the coresearchers as knowers of the topic (Potts & Brown, 2005). I focused on my coresearchers' experiences and centered the structural influences of their occupational wellness.

Merging Critical Phenomenology and Critical Consciousness to Propel the Study

My study used critical phenomenology undergirded by critical consciousness as a methodological framework. One previous higher education study used critical phenomenology from an interpretivist paradigm (Briscoe et al., 2020). Expanding an interpretivist critical phenomenological approach to the critical paradigm allowed me to concentrate on structural and systemic nuances of what it means to live and work on a postsecondary campus. Although critical phenomenology allows researchers the ability to epistemologically recognize political and social influences on the lived experiences of their coresearchers, such an approach did not allow me to remain critical throughout the data collection and analysis phases.

To address the aforementioned challenge, I used critical consciousness to inform my research paradigm for the study to not only understand, but also transform policy and practices through understanding (Cohen et al., 2011). Brazilian educator and author, Freire (1973), described conscientization, or *conscientizacäo*, as "the development of the awakening of critical awareness" (p. 19). Freire used dialogue as a tool to educate and liberate Brazilian farmers politically. Through this process, he also supported building the critical consciousness of farmers in Brazil during a time of political shifts, and he used education through dialogue to build critical consciousness among the group (Freire, 1973). Freire's development of consciousness included recognizing political, social, and historical constructs that a society uses to oppress the lives of individuals. Critical consciousness influenced my study design in a number of ways, including

(a) the use of focus groups and dialogue to explore my research question, and (b) the use of reflective journals during data analysis to learn more about my coresearchers' journeys when developing consciousness about their perceptions of occupational wellness on campus.

I explored critical consciousness due to social inequities that may surround occupational wellness as a Black live-in professional working at an HWI in the United States. Freire's (1973) work for education as a practice of freedom assisted illiterate people in to Brazil learn through culture circles; one activity entailed using visuals to assist readers in testing their progress and reading information that was familiar to them, such as bus lines and public buildings. In other culture circles, Freire (1973) used visual images of different situations—for example, drawings of a "man in the world and with the word, nature and culture" (p. 63). Those drawings allowed Freire's participants to ask questions and dialogue with other participants about the subject matter in the drawings.

In this study, I promoted opportunities to develop critical consciousness for myself and my coresearchers through dialogue, co-learning, reflective questioning, and group process (Jemal, 2017). Using advertisements that were a bit deceptive, Freire (1973) assisted those in literacy programs by challenging them to "disassociate ideas" (p. 58). For example, Freire (1973) used a scantily dressed woman to advertise cigarettes to help participants understand indoctrination and "political propaganda" (p. 57). Using dialogue and visuals propelled the coresearchers and me to move beyond a naive consciousness to a critical consciousness, thereby supporting my decision to use dialogue through group interviews. Moreover, dialogue increased the opportunity for critical reflection, motivation, and action (Diemer et al., 2016; Freire, 1973; Zúñiga & Nagda, 2001). The elements of dialogue, group learning, and movement toward critical action were beneficial to my study and the meaning making of my work.

Critical reflection refers to giving thought and considering social systems via a person reflecting on their beliefs, identity, and positioning in that system (Diemer et al., 2016; Smith, 2011). Critical motivation considers the capability to attend to injustices, whereas critical action moves the individual or group to address injustices found upon reflection (Diemer et al., 2016). Critical action was essential, as the approach moved my project forward and invited my coresearchers to share in co-constructing new knowledge around my dissertation topic. Engaging my coresearchers in the dissemination of our work also provided an opportunity for shared ownership of the co-constructed knowledge created during the study. Again, working with the coresearchers allowed me to collaborate with individuals who desired to stay connected to the study and contribute to the field of higher education. Having discussed the importance of my research methodology, I now turn to describe the research design for my study.

Research Design

The purpose of this research was to better understand the lived experiences of BRSAPs working at HWIs in the United States and how Blackness influenced their unique living and working conditions in campus housing units. To accomplish my purpose, I offered a clear and organized, yet adaptable, research design plan that provided me with the bandwidth to intentionally collaborate with my coresearchers while also supplying them with support needed for a productive study. Essentially, I remained flexible in the execution of the research design and ensured I worked in collaboration with my coresearchers. In this section, I give an overview of the recruitment process of finding coresearchers, describe the pre-data collection objectives, detail my data collection methods, and cover how I executed my data analysis. In Appendix A, I provide an even clearer description and organization of my research design. This appendix item assists in guiding the reader through my research design.

Coresearcher Sampling and Recruitment

In this section, I state the criteria for my study for the reader to better understand the parameters selected for the coresearchers. My data collection process included a pre-study questionnaire, individual interview, coresearcher reflective video, and focus group interview. Much of my purposeful sampling criteria stemmed from the need to compose a well-rounded focus group interview with my coresearchers, who had enough experience to discuss my research topic without encouraging groupthink (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Later in the chapter, I explain the reasoning for selecting these criteria in the focus group section.

Coresearcher Selection Criteria

I recruited five coresearchers. My initial goal was to recruit a minimum of four and a maximum 12 BRSAPs for my study. I recruited coresearchers who (a) had lived on campus at an HWI for at least 2 full semesters in their role (b) worked full time as a residential professional at a doctoral degree-granting HWIs in the United States at the time of the study, (c) self-identified as a member of the African diaspora, and (d) were 18 years or older. The five coresearchers came from various regions of the United States.

I only recruited coresearchers working full time in their professional roles, and I did not include graduate resident assistants due to the additional level of being a student on the campus where they work. I also requested coresearchers to disclose their ethnicity, as I sought to engage with BRSAPs across the African diaspora. Some professionals began working full time in the summer and were in their 2nd semester at the time of the study in 2023, but had other single-building assistant RD experiences.

Coresearcher Recruitment and Selection Process

My goal was to recruit coresearchers to dialogue about their lived experiences as BRSAPs working in residence life at HWIs. I employed purposeful sampling, using a set of specific criteria for identifying potential coresearchers, to recruit optimal candidates for the study (Terrell, 2016). By engaging in a purposeful sampling of BRSAPs, I gained insight from those who had firsthand knowledge and personal experience as BRSAPs (Tracy, 2013). In total, I recruited four entry-level professionals and one midlevel professional as coresearchers who were considered experienced professionals to comprise my research sample for this study.

I actively recruited participants through social media, email, and by soliciting other professionals through snowball sampling (Tracy, 2019; i.e., asking professionals if they know eligible candidates for the study). Social media was the best means to recruit my participants, as they were a specific, yet hard-to-reach, population. Additionally, my social media networks facilitated connections to these specific social media communities due to my own professional experiences as a BRSAP, and benefitted me in reaching higher educational professionals (King et al., 2014). To further my point, Sibona and Walczak (2012) found Twitter recruitment assists in the recruitment process to find a diverse group of participants in a timely manner.

One downfall to recruiting through Twitter and social media was the number of spam accounts that reached out to participate in the study. In the beginning of my recruitment process, my survey was open to everyone to complete, but I realized the email address was not indicated on the form, leading to an Institutional Review Board (IRB) amendment. Additionally, I received a few spam accounts that attempted to complete the survey. After placing only my email address on the recruitment flyer, I received over 25 emails from spam accounts that attempted to participate. These spam accounts often sent emails with no subject and the email text stated

"interested" or "Hi/Hello – I am willing/interested to participate in the study." I highlight this experience for other researchers who may consider using social media to recruit participants.

Because my coresearchers had to identify as BRSAPs, I also used criterion sampling using a pre-study questionnaire (see Appendix B). Criterion sampling is a strategy in purposeful sampling where researchers use criteria to select the participants, or coresearchers in my case (Emmel, 2013), for their studies. Because my study was grounded in critical phenomenology and critical consciousness, I used criterion sampling to recruit a group of coresearchers whose experiences helped cultivate the goals of my study (Freire, 1973; Schensul, 2012). It was vital that I selected the most fitting criteria and coresearchers to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied: the intersection of Blackness, wellness, and residence life at an HWI.

Before selecting my coresearchers, I distributed a pre-study questionnaire to the coresearchers of interest through Qualtrics to collect their demographic information, work history, and responses to a set of brief open-ended questions about their intentions to complete expectations associated with the study (see Appendix B). More specifically, when potential coresearchers indicated their interest in participating in my study, I reached out via email to send them the prestudy questionnaire, begin building rapport with them, and follow up for scheduling purposes as needed.

Coresearcher Incentive

In this study, the I sought coresearchers to participate collaboratively in the data collection process. To incentivize their time properly as it aligned with my research, I offered each coresearcher a $45 gift card incentive. This study included an individual interview, a coresearcher reflective video, and a focus group interview for each coresearcher. I gave the coresearchers $15 for each data collection activity in which they participated.

Coresearchers Throughout the Research Design Process

In her article, "Whiteness as Property," Harris (1993) identified the ways in which whiteness functions as property, such as rights of disposition, right to use and enjoyment, reputation and status property, and the absolute right to exclude. Using legal measures, witnesses were used to prevent Black people from equitable educational opportunities. Patel (2016) denoted knowledge as property and argued due to settler colonialism and slavery, knowledge has been restricted to certain groups. As I interacted with research that engaged my participants as coresearchers, I continually questioned how labor was involved in their contributions to the research and who had ownership over the research (Patel, 2016).

As an educational researcher and the primary benefactor of this research for my dissertation, I acknowledged the opportunity to hold power with the process and dissemination of this project. The concept of ownership was of concern due to how Black people have been historically subject to unpaid labor and silencing (Wilder, 2013). Tension about involvement with the coresearchers, their labor, and my ownership of my dissertation process evolved during the process of writing the dissertation proposal; yet, my goal in having coresearchers was to involve them in as much decision making as possible without creating additional labor outside of their incentive. Coresearchers were only requested to collaborate within the confines of this project unless they indicated a desire to continue conducting research, presenting at conferences, and disseminating research in a collaborative manner.

The coresearchers in this study participated in decision making on elements of the data collection process. I asked coresearchers to propose a timeline that worked best for them for interviews and focus group data collection; for example, the coresearchers chose the most flexible timeline to conduct the focus groups based on when they had time to complete other

aspects of the study. I used the prestudy questionnaire and optional meeting to gauge the time and availability for the coresearchers to give them the best option, as their jobs can often be constant and demanding (McDaniel, 2021). Still, due to some grant restrictions and deadlines needed to complete data collection, I had to ensure all data were collected by April 19, 2023. This timeframe caused me to conduct the focus group with only the participants who were responsive and available. One coresearcher, Rico, was not able to attend the focus group due to multiple obligations in his work schedule and the end of the semester being a busier season for him. To find the best time, I asked each coresearcher to provide their availability within the questionnaire and scheduled focus groups based on their collective availability.

Lastly, in regard to working collaboratively with coresearchers, I invited all coresearchers to join me in my presentation of the study at an academic or professional conference or submit manuscripts from our work for publication or presentation. Sunny and Simon both expressed interest in furthering the dissemination of the research in partnership with me; we want to continue to raise awareness of BRSAPs in the field. In the following sections, I detail the data collection process at the forefront of this project and how data were collected to form a community with the coresearchers.

Pre-data Collection and Instructions

To create an environment for co-constructing knowledge with the coresearchers, I provided them with information about the study using a site powered by the University of Maryland – College Park's Enterprise Learning Management System (ELMS). Having a central repository increased communication, informational clarity, and access to the process. Additionally, I created an informational video for coresearchers to explain the process of the data collection for this study, including the pre-study questionnaire, individual interview,

coresearcher reflective interview, and focus group interview. I had this video available so the coresearchers could watch at their convenience before the focus group interview. To attend the focus group, coresearchers had to watch the informational video and complete the informed consent form attached to the Qualtrics questionnaire.

The ELMS site provided me the option to set up a sections or subfolders for the data collection process that contained the information needed for the study. The ELMS site contained (a) the informational video, (b) a link to the informed consent form, (c) examples of visual data, (d) Zoom links for the focus groups and joint content analysis, (e) subfolders for the coresearchers to upload their coresearcher reflective videos, and (f) my contact information so they could connect with me during the research process. Because the study had multiple data collection sources, having the ELMS site provided my coresearchers and me with an organized and interactive platform from which to collect data and maintain clear lines of communication. To clarify any points of concern and provide more information, coresearchers had the option to meet with me to clarify any issues from the recruitment period.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, there are four general types of data collection procedures: observations, interviews, documents (both private and public), and audiovisual and digital materials (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). For this study, I used qualitative interviews and reflective videos as data points from the coresearchers. The coresearchers participated in a pre-study questionnaire, an individual interview, recorded a reflexive journal video entry, and attended a focus group. I chose these methods because I wanted to obtain data from the group collectively and explore their individual narratives and understandings of the phenomenon of wellness for BRSAPs at HWIs. Additionally, I increased credibility and trustworthiness of the data by

triangulating the phenomenon from multiple data points. Collecting multiple data sources allowed for data triangulation and ensured the sources aligned with the findings from the study (Shank et al., 2018). Additionally, multiple data sources helped me develop a phenomenological understanding of the BRASPs' experiences in this study and provided the coresearchers and me with more opportunities to better articulate emergent themes from the data analysis.

Some traditions in the framework of phenomenology offer support for employing multiple data sources in the data analysis process and the value those sources offer the researcher in gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon. For example, in refractive phenomenology—which is more interpretive—researchers use multiple data sources to understand the essence of the lived experiences that may be inferred in a culture or context (Abawi, 2012). Moreover, though I did not use the traditions of hermeneutic phenomenology, I still incorporated the use of multiple data points in data collection to assist me in understanding the deeper cultural implications of my data.

Phenomenological researchers "aim for fresh, complex, rich descriptions of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived" (Finlay, 2012, p. 17). Having multiple data sources allowed me to understand better the essence of the holistic lived experiences of BRSAPs' occupational wellness and well-being. My research design facilitated a discourse for educational research and an invitation to move scholarship into action by engaging the coresearchers in conference presentations with me or a shared story submitted as an op-ed or journal article. Diemer et al. (2016) discussed critical action as a way for individuals or collective groups to get involved in changing injustices through the mode of critical reflection; one example entailed marginalized youth using critical action to improve their school facilities. Working from a critical paradigm with my coresearchers and engaging with critical actions when providing the

outcomes of this study were necessary approaches to supporting the credibility and trustworthiness of my scholarship.

My data collection protocol emerged from a culmination of two pilot studies and a mock focus group interview of the initial protocol (see Chapter 1 for more details on the pilot studies). The previous pilots of my protocol challenged me to reflect on questions that would assist in building relationships with the coresearchers while researching their lived experiences. The following sections provide specific details on the three data collection methods—inclusive of individual interviews, the coresearcher reflective video, and focus group interview—and how I used these methods to gain a better understanding of my research question.

Building Rapport With the Coresearchers

In this section, I discuss my intentions to build relationships with the coresearchers who chose to participate in this study. I outline the importance of mindfulness while conducting interviews in virtual spaces during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Additionally, this section covers how I organized my study within these virtual spaces to keep the coresearchers informed and to hold myself accountable.

Conducting Interviews During the COVID-19 Global Pandemic. To create an environment capable of dialogue and reflection, I held all focus group interviews and joint content analysis through video conferencing, which gave me the opportunity to talk with my coresearchers located across the United States (Leavy, 2017). I recruited only coresearchers working at doctoral degree-granting historically white institutions, yet the coresearchers' residence life organizational structures and departmental values varied. For example, some BRSAPs supervised living–learning communities, where they worked with their department and academic units. Some came from larger organizational structures that had multiple people in

their positions, whereas others were one of few resident directors (RDs) on their campuses. Additionally, I had coresearchers from private and public institutions; later in the findings and discussion chapters, I explain the impact of different institutional statuses on my research. Having the coresearchers share their stories during the focus group interview in a synchronous online environment allowed for the co-construction of knowledge in a space created for an authentic conversation.

The COVID-19 global pandemic restricted many aspects of life, including transitions from face-to-face to remote learning, the wearing of masks, and the limitation of in-person contact to prevent the spread of COVID-19 or remain in regulation of mandates in the U.S. government (Goldberg et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2022; Serhan, 2020). Many of these mandates prompted researchers to shift their methods of data collection (Sah et al., 2020). Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, caution was necessary; because the pandemic remained ongoing in 2022 during data collection, I had the coresearchers participate in the study through remote interactions, such as video conferencing and written forms of data collection.

Video conferencing is a reliable, effective, and safe way to reach coresearchers. Adom et al. (2020) noted qualitative data video conferencing is a fast and reliable modality, similar to face-to-face interviews. Video conferencing allowed me to have synchronous communication with more flexibility for coresearchers to be present from various locations (Adom et al., 2020; Torrentira, 2020).

Although there were some benefits to conducting my data collection online, there were also some limitations to using this method. One limitation of an online environment involved challenges to the confidentiality of the coresearchers (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Additionally, the confidentiality of recording online was a limitation because it inhibited some control of the

environment in which coresearchers participated during the focus group interviews. To address this challenge, I logged participants into the Zoom room one person at a time once they changed their name to their pseudonym. I also ensured that my coresearchers received the maximum amount of confidentiality even with modified data collection methods due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. The use of pseudonym was especially important because the coresearchers were required to use their video unless they had connectivity issues.

Although technology is reliable and effective, connectivity issues or complications may occur. Coresearchers did have connectivity issues, and while I provided them with the dial-in number for the meeting to call in, many were able to log back in without much interruption. At the session's beginning, I asked if someone could volunteer to be the host if I was removed from the Zoom room. This did not happen, but is was a good precaution to take in case of an emergency.

Navigating the Virtual Space With Coresearchers. Another aspect of confidentiality was privacy of the coresearchers. Having the coresearchers join in a virtual space limited full anonymity to their livelihood; for example, by not having a controlled physical space in which we met, the coresearchers invited each other into their homes or other personal space with their cameras on. Some participants did blur their Zoom background to add a level of privacy, but this measure was not required nor mentioned in the focus group introduction. Still, coresearchers may have faced other difficulties with the virtual space, such as distractions of cellphone notifications or loved ones who required attention.

I established norms in my dialogue with the coresearchers before we began each session. Each focus group decided on group norms regarding how we would navigate interruptions, such as if someone had to step away from the conversation. We also decided on norms if people

wanted to use the raise hand function, or if some would prefer a more free-flowing environment for the dialogue. To assist in getting coresearchers accustomed to these norms, I shared some suggestions (e.g., using "I" statements) to describe their experiences. I also emphasized that what we learned in the Zoom could extend beyond the session, but what was specifically said must remain to the session. I also reminded the coresearchers that they could ask each other questions to understand better the lived experience of BRSAPs.

I wanted coresearchers to have time to ask any questions about the process as we moved through the data collection phase, because allowing them greater understanding gave them more power to participate in co-constructing knowledge. In the individual interview and focus group interviews, I did let each coresearcher know that I was available for questions. The coresearchers were also able to send in questions for the focus group between the individual interview and group meeting. I also had a ELMS page where the coresearchers could communicate with me. I touched base personally through email to send out incentives and sent a final thank you to let participants know of my appreciation. The next section explains my data collection steps in chronological order: (a) pre-study questionnaire, (b) individual interview, (c) coresearcher reflective video, and (d) focus groups.

Individual Interview

Each coresearcher participated in a 90-minute, semi structured individual interview conducted virtually via Zoom. During these interviews, I asked coresearchers questions from the data collection protocol. The individual interviews were the first data collection point where I engaged coresearchers in the study. The individual interview gathered coresearchers' individual perspectives of occupational wellness. As a critical researcher, it was essential to keep the interviews centered on the coresearchers as they countered dominant narratives of the student

affairs field. During these interviews, I employed different techniques to center the coresearcher in the qualitative interview: (a) contracting by reminding participants of the study's purpose and confidentiality; (b) attending and listening by engaging in active listening; and (c) using reflective skills of restating, paraphrasing, or summarizing their responses during the interviews (McCrory & O'Donnell, 2016). Ensuring coresearchers were informed and knowledgeable about the research process assisted in carrying out the principles of a critical paradigm.

Phenomenology often focuses on having multiple in-depth interviews with individuals who share in the lived experiences of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Because I also conducted focus groups, the individual interviews allowed me to understand the more personal aspects of the coresearchers' experiences with occupational wellness as BRSAP at HWIs. I did not want to overburden the BRSAPs; thus, I created the individual interview protocol as an extension of the focus group (see Appendix C). I did not ask the coresearchers to draft questions, but allowed time for them to mention any comments that were not addressed in the focus group and video reflections.

The individual interviews consisted of questions that targeted the coresearchers' more intimate lived experiences. I focused on their sense of community at their HWIs, their feelings toward their livings spaces, relationships with their supervisors, and their evaluation and performance appraisal processes. The individual interviews helped transition the coresearchers to reflecting on their experiences in the data collection process.

Coresearcher Reflective Video

Reflective journals allowed participants to find purpose and meaning in their thoughts on a subject matter (Lindroth, 2015). Often, reflective journals can help to facilitate a better understanding of the whole picture and enable researchers to gain knowledge around

participants' experiences (Bashan & Holsblat, 2017; Phelps, 2005). Reflective video journaling was vital to this study because the process allowed my coresearchers an opportunity to reflect on the phenomenon being studied and cognitively obtain a deep level of thinking through journaling (Watson, 2010). Although the coresearchers did not all video journal at the same point in the data collection process, 4 out of the 5 coresearchers did participate in the reflective video journaling.

I offered space for my coresearchers to create a brief 5-minute video about their reflections following the individual interviews. I provided some reflection video prompts that included the following questions: (a) What do you think was a salient moment for you in the interview, and how it relates to your racialized work experiences in residence life? (Suggest approximately 3 minutes). (b) Through our individual interview, what structures in residence life do you question or affirm that produce wellness for Black residential student affairs professionals? (Suggest approximately 2 minutes). (c) Please share a question with me.

This element of the data collection process was open to coresearchers to consider the salience of their racialized work experiences and to open the opportunity for collaboration on our focus group dialogue and healing space. Reflective journals are usually used in the classroom or teacher education programs, as they allow teachers to reflect on their lived experiences and uncover assumptions of their profession (Knapp, 2012); I used reflective journals in a similar manner but allowed the coresearchers to reflect on elements of the study and explore if any coresearchers experienced a raised consciousness or understanding about wellness throughout the study.

Collecting data on coresearchers' reflections of their own understanding was beneficial to my data collection process and ultimately answered my research question, because such a process allowed the coresearchers to respond to the research and examine their perceived

experiences as live-in professionals. The coresearchers submitted this aspect of the study through ELMS, where there was an "assignment" section for the reflective journal.

Focus Groups

The focus group marked the final data collection point in the study. Focus groups, or group interviews, is an umbrella term used to describe qualitative data collection that involves a group of two or more people. Researchers use focus groups to increase interaction among study participants who exchange ideas during their time together (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Qualitative interviews promote the shared discovery and explanation for the study participants, which can be "organic, adaptive, and oftentimes energizing" (Tracy, 2013, p. 132). Group interviews can unite participants who may have varied opinions and represent different groups (Cohen et al., 2011).

There are four levels of focus groups: dyads (i.e., groups of two people), triads (i.e., groups of three people), mini groups (i.e., groups of 4–6 people), and full focus groups (i.e., usually groups of 7–10, sometimes 12 people; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). For my study, I used a mini group, as I wanted to have more time for the participants to share their experiences without interruption (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). I offered focus group times based on the coresearchers collective availabilities. I designed a semi structured interview protocol for the focus group interview, where I cultivated a list of questions to ask as the dialogue progressed (see Appendix C). Coresearchers also asked each other questions to develop a deeper understanding of their collective perspectives on how Blackness intersects with the live-in position.

Creating space for the BRSAPs in this study to share their lived experiences of their work environment enabled my coresearchers to share the essence of how the residence life live-in role impacted their perceptions of occupational wellness. When used pedagogically, focus groups can

be transformative experiences (Kamberelis & Dimitraiadis, 2013). Pedagogical focus groups are similar to the work of Freire (1973) and aim to increase the collective critical literacy to address the sociopolitical stance at that time (Kamberlis & Dimitraiadis, 2013). My focus was on occupational wellness, which included each coresearcher's home, community, and society. Additionally, I introduced concepts of work–life balance in the focus group interview protocol surrounding the coresearchers' relationships with their coworkers, supervisors, campuses, and local communities (see Appendix C). Together, the coresearchers and I learned about the phenomenon through the societal constructions in their lived experiences.

The focus group interviews also allowed me to understand better the core commonalities of the BRSAPs participating in my study. By collecting such data, I encouraged the coresearchers to tell their stories through their own personal words and language (van Manen, 2006). Making space for the coresearchers to dialogue raised critical reflection levels (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). The focus group interviews for this study also mirrored the culture circles used in Freire's (1973) work, where group dialogue moved his participants from a naive consciousness toward critical consciousness.

It was vital to my study to have the coresearchers learn together and understand the studied phenomenon through dialogue and reflection. Although I explored this study with my participants as coresearchers, I did not request for them to co-lead or take notes; instead, I allowed them the opportunity to engage in healthy dialogue with each other around the topic.

Focus Groups as Healing Through Pro-Black Practices. Though basic focus group elements were used in the data collection phase, the coresearchers were able to submit questions and discuss different elements of Blackness aside from their trauma. The coresearchers were also invited to share in the dissemination of the study to move the conversation and data collection

toward critical action. During the focus group time, I sought to create some form of healing, restoration, and joy with my coresearchers to foster a shared space of co-constructing knowledge. French et al. (2020) described a framework of radical healing for Communities of Color; their work encompassed a psychological framework that included (a) collectivism, (b) critical consciousness, (c) radical hope, (d) strength and resistance, and (e) cultural authenticity and self-knowledge to promote healing and transformation in these communities. Although I was unable to include all of these components, the coresearchers and I engaged in critical consciousness, radical hope, and collectivism.

First, we coresearchers engaged in radical hope by envisioning possibilities of the future and visions for the residence life field (French et al., 2020). According to French et al. (2020), radical hope is the belief that one's agency can fight for justice and cultivate change for the greater good. In the individual interview, I asked coresearchers the following: "If you could reimagine your workplace as an antiracist environment, share with me the ways you would like to experience this reimagined workplace." One coresearcher found this question especially challenging, stating, "It's not realistic," whereas others were able to envision hope and what they would like to see in their work environments regarding race and wellness as a Black employee. Asking the coresearchers this type of question put the power of the workplace in their realm, but also allowed me to understand what they considered an antiracist environment that would be healthy for them. As the primary researcher, presenting the findings from the study specifically to housing professionals and administrators allowed me to practice radical healing through radical hope by telling the coresearchers' stories while also highlighting the implications for the field with which they entrusted me.

Second, the coresearchers and I engaged in critical consciousness raising and will continue to engage in critical action even beyond this study. Diemer et al. (2006) defined critical consciousness as "an individual's capacity to critically reflect and act upon their sociopolitical environment" (p. 445). Through each data collection point, the coresearchers reflected on their organizational environment. The focus group presented the opportunity for the coresearchers to share their experiences, and as primary researcher, I engaged in considering the influence of a sociopolitical environment through bracketing and reflexivity within the study. Later in this chapter and in Chapter 4, I provide more detail about the bracketing and reflexivity process and how I considered meaning making.

Lastly, the process of data collection involved a collectivist approach where coresearchers and I engaged in a community as persons within the same ethnic group (French et al., 2020). The focus group space was created with healing in mind for the group. Healing circles are common in African indigenous philosophies and literature on healing circles and African indigenous practices connect to Black liberation, such as Sawubona healing circles and Sista circles (Auguste et al., 2022; Barnett et al., 2010; Richardson, 2018). All coresearchers identified as Black racially, though two ethnically had direct ties to the continent of Africa and the Caribbean as first- and second-generation immigrants. Through our time together, we were able to build solidarity; some coresearchers even offered to keep in touch, and others wanted to work together in the future. In Chapter 4, I detail more about the connections made and the advice given within the focus group space. We created a place that was made for a healing and shared space among us all as coresearchers.

Data Analysis

Researching how Blackness influences occupational wellness and investigating the lived experiences of BRSAPs at HWIs comprised the primary purpose of this research. During data analysis, it was vital for me to center Blackness and limit power dynamics, especially power in the context of the co-constructed knowledge shared in the data collection sections. In this section, I explain my processes for transcription, thematic analysis, and bracketing.

Transcription Process

Because I had multiple sources of data, I began analyzing my data immediately. Although it is beneficial to transcribe interviews by hand to increase the accuracy of the transcript, this method can also be time consuming, costing about 5–6 hours per transcript (Cohen et al., 2011). My relationship with the coresearchers was vital in this critical research; thus, to spend more time focused on the relationship with my coresearchers, I used a third-party service for transcription.

I also made the decision to hire a transcription service because I was still able to listen to the interviews and find the "sense of the whole" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 556) even without self-transcribing. By listening to the recording and reading the transcript simultaneously, I gained context and also discovered themes that furthered my analysis (Cohen et al., 2011). Although transcription is key to coding data, my goal in this study was to understand the phenomenon, not focus on the narratives of coresearchers.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

This exploratory study sought to understand the lived experiences of BRSAPs at HWIs; thus, a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning was appropriate for data analysis (Terrell, 2016; Vogt et al., 2014). For this study, I used multiple data collection points from my

coresearchers, including their individual interview, reflective video journal, and focus group interview. While I offered for coresearchers to work with me during the dissemination stage of this study, I decided to analyze the data alone for this project. Because my timeline was strict in some sense, I wanted to provide flexible timing with coresearchers who already had full loads on them as live-in professionals. I decided to open up the dissemination process to coresearchers because they would still be able to contribute to the work of this study with less labor to analyze the data.

To analyze the data, I chose to use reflexive thematic analysis, which at its core is a way to identify, analyze, and report the themes or patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is helpful to study a range of epistemologies and research questions, especially those pertaining to self-perceptions and lived experiences (Squires, 2023). Braun and Clarke (2006) offered that "the 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question" (p. 82). I chose to use thematic analysis to explore the lived experiences of the coresearchers without having to consider quantities. Because the residential life live-in experience is so vast, I wanted an analysis method that allowed me to look at the position of the BRSAPs' work and explore how race intersected with that position regarding occupational wellness.

In their prevalent work, Braun and Clarke (2006) offered a six-phase, step-by-step guide to thematic analysis: (a) familiarizing oneself with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the report. Although I did not follow these steps in sequence, I engaged in the six-phase process overall. I also highlight that further emphasis within the thematic analysis is centering myself

and my positionality through reflexivity (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I rigorously wanted to immerse myself in the data multiple times and also dig into the essence of the experiences of my co-researchers. The familiarization process benefited me as I could listen to and watch their interviews numerous times. With this process and how Black people usually express themselves, I could feel the dialect and gestures to understand their lived experiences better.

To begin categorizing my data, I began with theming the data from the individual interviews and focus group phenomenologically. Phenomenology gains an understanding of the nature of individuals' daily experiences (van Manen, 1990; Saldaña, 2021). There are two levels of phenomenological themes, manifest and latent.. The manifest level is the direct observation (Boyatzis, 1998; Saldaña, 2021). The latent level is the underlying level of the phenomenon (Saldaña, 2021). In my initial thematic analysis, I went through Phase 1 of theming smaller portions of each transcript for "Black live-in experience is" (i.e., manifest) and "Black live-in experience means" (i.e., latent; Boyatzis, 1998; Saldaña, 2021).

I combined all data from interviews and focus group together to create one general sense of the phenomenon that I was study regarding the intersections of live-in positions and wellness for Black people who work and live on campus. After completing that first round of coding, I further familiarized myself with the data and interacted by rewatching the interviews alongside the transcript and taking any further memos about each coresearcher's interview, adding to any initial themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After reviewing these notes, I then moved into theoretical mapping to form larger themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Due to the large number of initial themes, I printed and cut each theme out and placed them in similar piles to create larger themes before generating my themes into theoretical constructs. It should be noted that researchers often use theoretical mapping to generate their themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006;

Byrne, 2022); however, because I wanted to emphasize the Black live-in experience, I chose to generate larger themes into theoretical constructs.

Creating theoretical constructs came naturally from the familiarization process. After having conducted interviews, coding data, and rewatching and listening to the interviews with transcript in hand I began to understand what overall themes were emerging from the data and what naturally answered my research question. From that initial set of themes, I then placed the themes into theoretical constructs. I clustered the supporting themes from the initial phenomenological themes to develop the theoretical constructs in the findings (Saldaña, 2021). For example, smaller themes of confiscating illegal items from residents, incidents involving police, and physical assault all because a theme of physical safety for the finding.

To review my potential themes, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2012) questions for potential themes, such as:

- Is it a theme or should it just be a code?
- What are the qualities of this theme—does it tell me something about the data set?
- What are the boundaries—what does the theme include or exclude?
- Is there enough meaningful data to support my theme?
- Is the data too diverse, and does it lack coherence? (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 65; Byrne, 2022, p.1404).

Because I developed the constructs, I reviewed the names and definitions of the theoretical constructs (i.e., themes used; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Byrne, 2022). Lastly, after reflexivity and bracketing, I produced the findings later described in Chapter 4. Next, I highlight briefly the reflexive practices I used and discuss further in Chapter 4.

Bracketing and Epoché

The phenomenological analysis remained ongoing due to the nature of phenomenological reduction. Reduction in phenomenology, according to Husserl (1922, as cited by Davis, 2020), allows the research to "suspend our everyday assumptions about phenomena and our theoretical predispositions" (p. 5). However, Merleau-Ponty (1956) believed there was no possible way for a complete reduction. Phenomenology that acknowledges *epoché*—when the researcher suspends their judgment—begins data analysis at the point of data collection to recognize one's mindset and preconceived notions (Patton, 2002; Terrell, 2016). Epoché can be defined as a check, pause, or a time marking distinctive events (Bednall, 2006). The epoché can be used throughout the entire study but it "allows for empathy and connection, not elimination, replacement or substitution of perceived researcher bias" (Bednall, 2006, p. 3). For my study, I considered my relationality statement and use of bracketing during the analysis process to mark my epoché in the research. Although I agreed with Merleau-Ponty (1956) that I would not be able to engage in a complete phenomenological reduction, bracketing and reflexivity were useful in my data analysis process because I had firsthand lived experience as an RD for 4 years.

As primary researcher, I used bracketing to remain reflective throughout my study; transcendental reflection is a concept in critical phenomenology where the researcher employs intense reflection to condition possibilities in the phenomena under study (Davis, 2020). Again, the coresearchers were not involved in the data analysis due to timeline and the focus of this study being more collaborative in nature than participatory. I did involve coresearchers to collaborate in many facets of the study but left the analysis process closed. Therefore, Bracketing allowed me to focus on the essence of occupational wellness of BRSAPs at HWIs.

My data analysis process began after the data collection process. I engaged in reflexivity—or, in this case, bracketing—and encouraged the coresearchers to engage in this

practice through the reflective video journal. For a phenomenological approach, bracketing can be used anywhere in the research process; however, some scholars have argued bracketing should focus directly on the data analysis section of the research process (Tufford & Newman, 2010). By engaging in ongoing analysis, I continually connected with understanding the phenomena. Still, such analysis required intentionality and bracketing to understand the essence of BRSAPs' lived experience of occupational wellness (Davis, 2020). By using intentionality and a phenomenological and eidetic reduction, I interacted with my validation strategies while analyzing the data.

Trustworthiness

Reliability strategies are instrumental in the qualitative research process because the researcher is the data collector and instrument (Terrell, 2016). Reliability in qualitative research is completed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; though all four reliability factors are not needed, each type increases the trustworthiness of the study (Terrell, 2016). Trustworthiness must go beyond ethical reviews (e.g., IRB) and must be a source of independent accountability (Johnsson et al., 2014). Based on Johnsson et al.'s (2014) suggestions as independent accountability, I also included the decolonizing construct of answerability in the reliability of my study, which influenced me to be "responsible, accountable, and being a part of an exchange" (Patel, 2016, p. 85). Later in this chapter, I explain more about answerability, which served me effectively as a critical researcher. In summary, my trustworthiness strategies included credibility, transferability, confirmability, and answerability.

Credibility

Credibility has multiple aspects, but the main purpose of this reliability strategy required confirming that my results were credible to the coresearchers (Terrell, 2016). Credibility is

accomplished through triangulation, peer debriefers, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and member checking (Terrell, 2016). For the purpose of this study, I used triangulation and member checking, which I explain in further detail to exhibit how these methods of reliability increased credibility of my study.

Triangulation

I ensured credibility of this study through triangulation. Triangulation increases credibility when a researcher uses multiple data sources, methods, theories, or investigators to create a more extensive study (Carter et al., 2014; Patton, 1999). By employing three methods of data source triangulation, I increased the trustworthiness of my study: individual interviews, reflective video journals, and focus groups (Carter et al., 2014). Multiple data sources allowed me to gain multiple perspectives of the research question and interact with the data to form a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Additionally, coresearchers had the opportunity to participate in triangulation by member checking of their transcripts and quotations used specifically for this dissertation.

Member Checking

According to Terrell (2016), using member checking to increase credibility goes beyond sending a transcript to participants; rather, member checking requires showing the participants the final product and allowing them to determine if the research accurately represented their part in the study. I employed member checking in this study, and specifically used investigator triangulation by sending my coresearchers copies of their transcripts and the focus group transcript to ensure my interpretations of their words were correct and provide time for them to ask questions (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). When member checking, I also sought to ensure my coresearchers had as much authority over their experiences as possible as I interpreted the data.

Transferability

I used transferability to guide the way I established my study as "applicable in other contexts" (Terrell, 2016, p. 174). One way I increased transferability in this study occurred through using thick, rich descriptions in the results (Terrell, 2016). I used great detail in my results section so my study is transferable to other cases and context (Terrell, 2016). I also sought to ensure my study illustrated what the coresearchers desired to convey.

Transferability added to the other validation strategies and strengthened the results of this inquiry; for example, much of this research focused on the live-in residential experience. The data and findings regarding coresearchers' experiences in the residence hall can translate to multiple aspects of other live-in residence life positions. I also envision that the contexts of this phenomenon can contribute to other work environments where Black people are employees in historically white workplaces. My study also adds to existing literature on entry-level student affairs practitioners and their needs when transitioning into the field from graduate school, as majority of my participants worked in residence life as students before transitioning to their professional roles.

Confirmability

Confirmability differs from transferability and credibility, as it is achieved from the researcher and their reflections (Terrell, 2016). Confirmability is established with three factors: audits, audit trails, and reflexivity (Terrell, 2016). I used the process of reflexivity in my work to assist with my reflections during the study, specifically during the data analysis section. I made a video log after each data analysis session. Having this trail of videos from which to refer also allowed me to review my own thoughts and form an inner dialogue about the study.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a helpful process for new researchers (Watt, 2007). Because I served as the instrument in this qualitative study, there was a need for me to exercise reflexivity during the research process (Mertens, 2012; Watt, 2007). Because I had previous personal experience working in the field of student affairs as an RD, I needed to ensure that I remained aware of my own perceptions and the perceptions of my coresearchers. I ensured that I did not ascribe any assumptions on the knowledge given by my coresearchers.

Engaging in reflexivity allowed me to bracket my ideas, an approach based on phenomenology that also served to increase the credibility of my findings (Darawsheh, 2014). Because data collection and analysis took place synchronously, I engaged in a reflexive process throughout the data collection and data analysis phases by creating a weekly video reflection via Zoom; I also maintained a reflexive personal journal entry after each data collection session, whether the focus group, individual interview, or reflexive journals videos of the coresearchers.

Answerability

When coming from a critical paradigm and seeking to decolonize and disrupt systems of oppression, answerability held me accountable to my stewardship in the process of seeking knowledge and learning (Patel, 2016). I remained accountable to my coresearchers by completing my research plan, but also by ensuring I acted ethically at all steps of the research process. I also measured my ethics from a perspective that decentered power from the study.

Ethical Considerations

In this section, I explain my ethical considerations as I conducted this explorative study. Because I operated in a critical paradigm and methodology, it was vital that I addressed the confidentiality of my coresearchers, along with the impacts of power and control in the study.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality often addresses privacy and keeps information private to everyone but the researcher or research team (Baez, 2002; Saunders et al., 2015). My decision to use focus group interviews as a data collection method required me to further consider how I attended to my coresearchers' confidentiality. Because I used focus groups, the study was not completely confidential; however, I did my best to conceal coresearchers' identities and verbally request that information shared among coresearchers in the focus group interview remain confidential (Gibbs, 1997). My coresearchers did not know each other before the study, but they shared personal accounts of events that had happened to them, complicating traditional notions of confidentiality (Kamanzi & Romania, 2019). Having a communal space was beneficial to account for coresearchers' experiences together. Collaborating with the coresearchers in a group setting also allowed for them to develop relationships for networks of support in their very challenging and taxing work.

Baez (2002) took a different stance toward confidentiality, noting it should be transformative and resist any types of oppression. When I considered critical agency, which gives coresearchers "control over how he or she will to be seen by others" (Baez, 2002, p. 51), I moved beyond keeping their information private; yet, in terms of confidentiality, agency gave the coresearchers their own power in the decisions they made. Although the coresearchers had power and agency, I remained vigilant in my own work; I considered them a vulnerable population as People of Color who work in a small field (Baez, 2002). One way I maintained vigilance was by taking specific actions that increased their confidentiality.

My aim was to understand the perceptions of the BRSAPs in my study; however, I anticipated that some coresearchers would not feel comfortable participating in a focus group interview and sharing their personal stories with strangers. To increase confidentiality, I asked all

participants to create a pseudonym and allowed additional time in the Zoom waiting room for them to rename themselves before the group interview started. Additionally, I hid the attendance list on the ELMS site to increase anonymity among coresearchers. Lastly, to protect the data, audio recordings, and transcripts, I locked all data in a password-protected Dropbox account.

Power and Control

Critical research is helpful in allowing researchers to distribute the power to the individuals participating. When engaging in critical research and addressing power, it was vital that I had joint agency but also considered throughout the study how power would be distributed (Wray-Bliss, 2002). One way for me to be distribute power occurred through the aforementioned steps of developing relationships with coresearchers and also allowing them to collaborate with me on decisions throughout the study. Griffiths (1998) discussed the relationship of collaboration in research, specifically for social justice, which reflects a shared space and joint action. Ethically, I shared control and agency to my coresearchers and their participation in a critical paradigm, as doing so aligned with my epistemological and methodological goals of creating a space that was open to collaboration and co-construction of knowledge.

Boundaries for the Study

There were a lot of issues that could have arisen with this research design. I remained aware that research is messy and even more complicated when adding coresearchers to the study. The use of coresearchers in this work served as a boundary for the study, along with the time of completion due to having fluid timelines, obtaining all data collection points from the coresearchers, and retaining coresearchers in the process of completing this study.

I could have conducted this study without using coresearchers, but by acknowledging the power in western research standards and how Black Americans have been historically harmed by

research and experimentation, I was much more interested in co-constructing knowledge (King et al., 2022; Scharff et al., 2010; Washington, 2006). Shifting my work to include coresearchers fit my paradigm and methodological choices. Power is not negative; rather, realizing and working to share the power in the process with others was critical to my study.

Moving Forward

Resident Directors (RDs) are often given multiple tasks and asked to balance myriad obligations in their role. Based on the responses in this study, people in the RD position are ready to discuss their experiences, their wellness, and their role. Still, due to demands and the emergency-driven nature of the role, coresearchers were called into a meetings and needed for a first-responder task during their process in the study. Allowing for flexibility and organization was key in keeping the group on task. My research design provided insight not only to my research topic, but also to phenomenology and the use of participants as coresearchers in the study. In this next chapter, I highlight my reflexive process and the theoretical constructs from the analyzed data to further tell the story of the BRSAP live-in experience at HWIs.

Chapter 4: Findings

The findings from this study illuminated the lived experiences of Black residential student affairs professionals (BRSAPs), but this exploration was only a small portion of the vast and rich data collected for this study. The coresearchers provided significant insight into their live-in roles, but four themes emerged as a result of the following research question: How does the live-in experience of Black residential student affairs professionals intersect with Blackness to shape their wellness at HWIs?

Reflexivity

Bracketing and epoche are aspects often mentioned in the phenomenological process (Bednall, 2006; Davis, 2020; LeVasseur, 2003; Tuff & Newman 2010). I used bracketing to address a few main areas of my work: (a) my assumptions, (b) what I believed I would find, (c) what I found in my data, and (d) what I felt about the thematic analysis process. Using this method allowed me to follow my thought process and interact with the data in a way in which I was more aware of my thoughts versus the thoughts of my coresearchers. I participated in bracketing before and after each data analysis session. Because I decided to bracket, I was able to insert myself fully into the data collection process, talking with coresearchers openly and freely about the live-in experience, sharing my own experiences, and even inserting my voice as a coresearcher into the findings.

Through my reflexive process, I acknowledged the coresearchers had more vast residence life experiences than me. Whereas my experiences were limited to a resident assistant and one resident director (RD) role, the coresearchers discussed many institution types, positions, and supervisory levels across residence life. The socialization process for me was that I was a

resident assistant and then had worked full time in housing as an entry-level professional, which allowed me to have an insider perspective of co-researcher lived experiences..

Overview of Findings

Since my research is centered around the lived experiences of coresearchers I do not go into a detailed overview of each coresearchers, in a profile sense; however, I will give an brief background of coresearchers. My study consist of five coresearchers Henry, Ivanna, Rico, Simon, and Sunny. Each coresearcher has a unique experience in higher education, student affairs, and residence life; but, coresearchers were all a part of the larger lived experiences of BRSAPs. All coresearchers have earned master's degrees but the brief coresearcher profiles assist in creating a better understanding about the coresearchers, their backgrounds and demographics.

Table 1

Coresearcher Demographics

	Race	Gender	Residence	Region	Years of Experience in HESA	Degree Completion
Henry	Black	Male	Undergraduate	South	7-10 years	Masters
Ivanna	Black	Female	Graduate	West	4-7 years	Masters
Rico	Black	Male	Undergraduate	South	4-7 years	Masters
Simon	Multiracial - Black and Latinx	Male	Undergraduate	Northeast	4-7 years	Masters
Sunny	Black	Woman	Undergraduate	Midwest	4-7 years	Masters

Note. This table contains the information given from the demographic information collected. Additional ethnicity and sexual orientation data mentioned during the interviews or focus groups.

Henry. Henry is a Black male, live-in professional with 7-10 years of experience in higher education and student affairs (HESA). Henry has various experiences working in

residence life but also has student affairs experience on and off campus. When discussing with Henry, I noticed his senior perspective regarding his views of his department and his responsibilities as a mid-level manager. After getting out of the entry-level position, Henry's experience as a BRSAP promoted their well-being more after they moved out of the role.

As Henry has moved up, there is also a development of political capital for him. It is interesting to hear that he has found more well-being with supervising professional staff, but it is also unsurprising as students have many demands. I appreciate Henry's perspective in terms of belonging when he discussed his experiences with students and reconciling his own belonging with theirs. Henry states:

> But I think one of the challenging pieces was for me was having those conversations with some of the Black students and so there weren't that many or RAs, for example….And having those difficult conversations and just being honest with them and saying I found that to help with reconciling my belonging, but also helping students with their belonging as well. Because sometimes they're like, "I made the wrong choice." And so helping them navigate, "Okay, well what does that look like going forward? …..And so for me, I think it was more challenging in the beginning, but I think now I'm able to maybe compartmentalize it or put it to the side and just do what I need to do basically.

Henry disclosed in the data collection process that he is a mid-level manager and also identifies as gay. It was interesting to see the differences between his intersecting identities within his residence life department and how the department handled situations differently regarding race versus sexual orientation. Henry currently works in the Southern region of the U.S. within undergraduate residence life.

Ivanna. Ivanna has been working in HESA for 4-7 years, and Ivanna disclosed in her interview that she identifies as a Black person of African descent. Ivanna is a Black female who works in the Western region of the United States and is currently working with Graduate Residence Life. While coresearchers often had various experiences, Ivanna has worked in residence life in paraprofessional roles, many of which left her with severe trauma.

Like any other coresearcher, Ivanna discussed how her roles as an assistant residence director were demanding for her during graduate school. She mentioned in her interview that she specifically stayed because she "needed the place to stay because our stipend was not enough for any rent in the area." She lacked support from her supervisory and administrative superiors, including denying her funding request for professional development, requesting that she assist with marketing during the Black Lives Matter protest, strategically placing her in a troublesome residence hall and other distressing themes from her time as a paraprofessional.

While it may seem like she is a graduate assistant in her data as an entry-level residence director, these instances were a part of her graduate school socialization. Ivanna is talking about the fact that her credentials have given her a new form of capital in her workplace because she is feeling valued by her previous staff members more since she has come back with a master's degree.

Rico. Rico identifies as a Black male living in an undergraduate residence at a university in the Southern region of the United States.. Working in multiple professional roles, Rico understands his work in residence life and the stress and mental health burdens from BRSAP's work. Rico mentions that the position is strenuous, and departmental expectations often do not appear in the paycheck. He specifically said that "stress" and "mental health" aspects are" not accounted for."

In addition to the stress, Rico has had a lot of poor racialized experiences in residence life, and since it does not seem he has a student dependence, he enjoys residence life. Though he left one position, he wanted to stay within the housing and residence life because of his connection with the students. He stated. "Just because one situation happen[ed]...that doesn't neglect the impact we still make in housing and the connections. I still talk to some of my former

students. I still do. I still have those relationships. Do it doesn't take away from the work and the impact that we make." Rico has worked for 4-7 years and still carries his desire for impacting the life of students even though he often feels the mental and racial implications of his work. He even mentions that he wants to see what change he can make in the future as an area director (e.g., mid-level manager).

Simon. Simon identifies as a male and demographically identified his race as Black and Latinx. Simon is the only participant to identify himself as multiracial. Out of all of the BRSAP, he has the most complex racial identification. He identifies as Black, Hispanic, and a U.S. citizen who is a second-generation immigrant but who spent most of their childhood abroad. Simon represents the complexities of racial identification for many Black Americans. Simon's racial and ethnic make-up exemplifies why higher education needs diverse staffing to support diverse students. Students have complex racial make-ups and global understandings, so it is fascinating to consider the complexity of what Simon faces and the future students in higher education.

Simon has worked in HESA for 4-7 years and lives in an undergraduate residence in the Northeast region of the United States. Simon believes that not being at a PWI would fix the "daily barriers." Simon states, "I need a school that will have some of the barriers and boundaries that I have. The barriers that I've faced here, I would like for those barriers to be non-existent or less likely. I'd be very shocked if I went to an HBCU and was racially profiled...But I know that happens." Simon, who has a keen understanding of the departments that he works in, sees his presence at an HWI as a barrier and would like for those barriers to rectify racial barriers within his work through hiring, decision-making, and preventing tokenization.

Sunny. Sunny identifies as a Black woman with 4-7 years of experience in HESA who currently lives in undergraduate residence life. Sunny works in the Midwest in her current

position and contextualizes her role as isolating. Sunny is one of two people of color in her department; the other is her supervisor. Sunny talked about her supervisor and their relationship to relate and grow with one another.

Sunny's trust in a supervisor who shares her gendered and racial identity allows her to be honest and transparent as much as possible. "But everyone in my office is white except for my supervisor. And all the hall directors are men except for one and me. So there's two of us. And so I really like my supervisor. I feel just because she's very honest and very open about the reality of the situation... If I have a complaint, I can go to her, and I know she won't be holding it against me..."As a newer entry-level staff member, Sunny mentioned that she has to negotiate parts of her safety and well-being due to the norms of her White colleagues, but having a Black woman supervisor aids in her security and well-being on campus.

The coresearchers all participated in the individual interviews, however Rico was unable to participate in the coresearcher video reflection and focus group interview. By including participants as coresearchers in my study shifted the findings as they were able to add to the focus group protocol through their reflexive video. The coresearcher questions led to discussions about belonging and racialized experiences on campus. From the data collection and analysis, four themes reflected the residence life journeys of BRSAPs: (a) Physical Safety as an Impediment to Occupational Wellness, (b) Performativity as Racism (c) Belonging as Dualism, and (d) Live-In Experience as Socialized and Conventional. For this chapter, I chose to place a countertheme or a theme of radical healing after the themes to discuss how the coresearchers upheld healing in crisis.

Theme 1: Physical Safety as an Impediment to Occupational Wellness

The coresearchers talked about their safety in the workplace but more precisely discussed how they faced physical distress within their workplace, considering their proximity to residents and their tasks during duty calls. The coresearchers mentioned being physically assaulted, being touched without consent, being requested to handle weapons, and needing to confiscate illegal substances.

In the focus group, Sunny talked about her well-being and office practices around the expectations of duty. Though she did credit her office as being good at balancing tasks such as weekend duty by noting, "If you're on duty for the weekend, you get the Monday morning off," she noted other expectations were uncomfortable. Sunny mentioned that there is a difference between her comfortability in handling certain aspects of the position and her physical safety, especially regarding taking weapons. In discussing her dissonance with her office's expectations, Sunny stated:

> …there's been multiple times where how directors have been asked to search for weapons. I'm like, you people are crazy. But at the same time, it's hard for me to say anything because I'm the only Person of Color hall director. I'm one of two women and no one else is complaining…. There's so many times where my colleagues will just be like, "Oh, yeah, I'm comfortable doing that," or whatever. And I'll be like, "No, I'm not comfortable with that."…They just are like, "Do this and I don't care about your safety," basically. And I'll point out, I'll be like, "Well, that doesn't feel safe to me." And they'll be like, "Oh, well the PD [police department] will be with you, the police." And I'm like, "That doesn't help me in any way, shape or form." So that's one thing that's kind of unique, I guess to me, is that is the one area where I've just been, "I don't feel like y'all take my well-being into account."

Sunny discussed feeling alone and mentioned concerns for her safety during duty expectations because her other colleagues were on board with the process. She noted that she did not want to be perceived as a troublemaker when dissenting from one of the office's policies. Sunny also named the differences in life experiences that potentially contributed to how she and her colleagues conceptualized the decision to search for weapons. Uniquely, she also highlighted

that she feels unsafe even with the police. While confiscating weapons could be attached to her job as an authority figure in the residence halls, the narrative of Black citizens and law enforcement has its limits with making Black people feel secure and safe in a dangerous environment. Additionally, handling weapons does not take the best interest of Sunny as an employee and her physical safety in her role.

Other coresearchers mentioned their lack of safety; for instance, Ivanna mentioned she had to do a wellness check and the student "possibly had a gun. She recalled:

> I remember last month actually they had me do a wellness check for a student and they said that his, sorry about this, but they said that he possibly had a gun and they wanted me to go and check on him and see if he was there and everything. And so I stopped my supervisor and I said, "Well, what do you mean he has a gun? So you want me to go there to the door, knock on the door with somebody who may or may not have a gun? Is that correct?" "Yes." I was like, "Well, I don't feel comfortable. I don't know if I feel comfortable doing that.

In this recounting of her experiences, Ivanna discussed how she handled the wellness check and her discomfort with taking on the situation alone. She specifically mentioned the person who might have been handling the weapon was not in their best mental state, which alarmed her even more regarding her physical safety. She challenged her supervisors' directives to advocate for her safety in a situation that could potentially put her in harm's way, suggesting someone with more experiences in navigating a student resident with a gun to complete the task.

Ivanna questioned the decision of her superiors much like Sunny, regarding their thought process of why they should approach the student. Ivanna and Sunny both considered the situation and the impacts on all parties involved when handling weapons as Black women. Ivanna talked further about how she experienced even more harm when a student assaulted her. She discussed a "tradition that the seniors will go back to their old residence halls and drink large amounts."

Ivanna's department directives were to "work all these hours, you need to stay by the doors, don't let people in." Ivanna explained further:

> And so it's a situation where this girl did not want to take no for an answer. Long story short, she ended up hitting me a couple of times because she wouldn't leave the door after I told her many times that she needed to leave. I didn't want to call the police or anything like that, but I just needed her to work with me to leave the door. And she was very much inebriated and I tried to get her to leave, but she ended up hitting me a couple times. Police ended up coming and ended up taking her away. But the thing is, even after that, to this day, anytime I hear any kind of loud noises or just anything like that, it just triggers me. And because I don't really know, okay, if I go and deal with this situation, am I putting myself in harm's way again? And I think I'm still dealing with that in therapy.

In Ivanna's example, the scenario above marked itself on her mental health, and she noted she still deals with the experience of being physically assaulted by a resident in therapy. Ivanna also pointed out that she did not want to risk getting the student in trouble when they physically assaulted her but has questioned ever putting herself in harm's way. Ivanna explicitly mentions more than other coresearchers the mental impacts that living in the residence hall put her in, and many of those situations were when she was a paraprofessional working in graduate school. Ivanna sharing space so closely with the residents and being an authority in the hals caused her both physical and mental trauma that she is still dealing with even after leaving her position..

Simon described talking with a departmental colleague about unwanted touching and a lack of concern for his physical safety. His story detailed the impact of the assault, stating:

> I've had a 60-plus year old woman come up to me and play with my curls and tell me, "It's beautiful." I've had somebody walk up to me and say, "Oh, you look so young," and like, go like this [gestured] and physically touch me. I've had someone come from behind me without like saying that they were here and just like touch the side of my face and my beard and say, "Wow, it's so soft and it smells so good."

Simon described these experiences that happened to him over the course of his time working in his department. He noted the strangers that would touch him without consent and make unwanted comments about his appearance. Simon gestured that his older colleague rubbed his

cheeks and beard up and down. Simon also mentioned that women at his workplace would make varied comments about his physical appearance and noted his level of discomfort he had with the experiences that happened frequently while at work. Simon went even further to discuss how these experiences specifically impacted him as a "Black male who has tattoos, because [his] beautiful tattoos are so threatening [if he] walked up to [someone] as a female-identifying individual and touched [her] cheeks, said how good [their] skin felt," such an interaction would not be treated with the same amount of care and pause for due diligence. Simon compared that hypothetical situation to what he had experienced to emphasize the inappropriate nature and his initial response, noting:

> When the woman first did this to me, by the way, I turned around and was like, "Back the F up." So I lost myself. Yes, I was at work. I did say back the F up and I said the actual F word. But that was totally a defense mechanism. And then I went like this. I'm from [home city redacted]. I'm from the hood, I'm sorry. I got guarded. Like, like no, was gonna hit her, but you won't come behind me and touch me in a way that I did not consent to or whatnot. And then 2 days later, the executive director of the office pulled me into a meeting and have this woman cry and say how I threatened her.

Simon recounted this story by telling his response to the unwanted touching. Simon revealed that he used profanity as his impulse reaction as he was caught off guard. He further shared that the social norms of his environment at home precluded interactions where people touched other people without consent. Simon discussed the immediate impact of how the situation was turned against him. He discussed his actions after the assault, stating, "I went to HR [human resources]. I went to Title IX. I blew things up. I made it stink for all of us. It was an investigation." The investigation meant many people were interviewed, and later, the colleague decided not to continue working at the institution. Yet, even during the investigation, Simon said he faced hurdles due to his colleague's tenure.

Simon mentioned his stance in the investigation process, noting:

> I kept saying if I did this to her, it would be a different conversation, [a] Black man with tattoos touching a white woman without consent. I could see that in a *New York Times*. But a white woman who uses her privilege and her white tears, now it's different.

Simon's investigation came down to a meeting with his executive director, who Simon stated was "a white male" who fashioned the meeting in a "restorative justice" approach; however, according to Simon, the executive director "forgot the justice part." When asked what Simon wanted his colleague to do, he recalled stating, "I would like for her to resign from the position." Afterward, Simon talked about how his colleague, who unwantedly touched him, cried and said he threatened her space. Simon further discussed the impact of the situation, noting:

> She was like, "I have bills to pay." . . . And I was like, well you should have thought about that before you called a meeting with the boss and tried to cry and tried to make it seem like I threatened your space. You've been working here 20-plus years and I'm the first person to tell you that it's inappropriate to touch somebody this way.

Simon said he wanted his colleague to resign from her role, and identified her fault from both touching him and then reporting that he threatened her after she touched him. Through this narrative and example, Simon described having unwelcome touching happen to him, only to be gaslighted around his experience and for his upper administration to say one thing in private and do another publicly. Simon's situation not only tied to occupational distress for the physical assault that occurred on his campus but also for the drawn out reprimand for his more tenured colleague. As a Black male victim of physical assault, Simon noticed the discrepancies in the system when the institution gave preferential treatment to a colleague who was older, a woman and, white. Although these spaces were turbulent and heavy for the BRSAPs regarding their physical safety, they also mentioned experiencing radical healing by uplifting themselves.

Theme 2: Performativity as Racism

One central theme all BRSAPs experienced was performativity by the institution when it came to addressing incidents of racial injustice. All coresearchers specifically referenced "Black

Lives Matter," "2020," and "George Floyd" as points of performativity around the racial protests occurring after the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. The coresearchers discussed how their institutions and departments exhibited performativity by creating monuments of objects in memoriam of the protests, communicating statements, and centering discussions around racial injustice in meetings.

First, Rico discussed how he was "called into a virtual meeting" by his director, whom he specifically noted was "a white woman." Rico talked about the meeting and noted how his experience with this meeting was challenging for him as a Black man. According to Rico:

> So all the Black people just sitting there as we are seeing our white counterparts just cry and talk about what we should do and all this other, I'm just like, "Have anybody thought to ask the Black people how they're doing with the situation? Did anybody give us space to cry, to voice our concerns, to voice our opinions? Did anyone think to ask actually the Black people how Black people would actually feel with what was going on?" So I told my supervisor, who was also a Black woman AD [assistant director] . . . "Y'all need to really have a conversation with your director on when it's appropriate to have a whole residence life team meeting to discuss a very sensitive, diverse topic because it was very . . . insensitive to not actually check in with the Black staff who shared the same identity with the person who was just killed

Rico discusses being in an staff meeting after the murder of George Floyd and seeing his white colleagues expressing grief and wanting to debrief about the event while no one considered what the Black colleagues were feeling. He describes it as insensitive as he recalls the images and sentiments he felt that day watching the news reports of George Floyd. He further equated the scenario that day to the multicultural competence of his department. Rico related the multicultural competence of the department to the performativity and prioritization of concerns around the murder of George Floyd.

Rico noted that no one asked the Black people working in the department how the racial trauma affected them. Rico described his experience during the meeting as a setting where his white colleagues absorbed the processing space and prioritized their needs and feelings. While

his colleagues may have felt grief, he found the entire meeting to exhibit a lower level of understanding for his department and even told higher-ups that they needed to address that behavior. While not distinctly performative the insensitivity and the thoughtlessness led to what could tie into performativity and absent-mindedness toward the group closest identified to George Floyd.

Similar to Rico, Henry discussed the impact of the 2020 racial injustice surrounding George Floyd. Henry also mentioned a more recent case of police brutality, Tyre Nichols's murder, and how it impacted his relationship with white people, and especially campus police. He noted:

> … when I did have to call the police, get more clarification on the incident. I found myself very aggressive and very much, "You're not going to talk, you're going to respect me, because we are colleagues and we're partners in this." So just being very firm, and probably not friendly, but just very direct, "and this is what I need," and very matter of fact, and even with the dispatchers, as being firm and direct. So I would say, well, I could probably say, aggressive.

Henry discussed the shift in his demeanor more as being "defensive" and discussing the impacts from police brutality on the Black male community. As a live-in staff member working on campus, he described the "absence of communication" with his department with national incidents of police brutality against Black males comparison to others who national incidents intertwined with his identity. According to Henry:

> … just the sheer absence of communication, even from the department. We live where we work. We live on a campus that has police, who has a whole police force. There's been notably, I mean, maybe one email that says, "Hey, this happened. Or there was this event, and this listening event." But then, I see that there's emails . . . I identify as gay, but about a gay whatever, that happened, . . . there's just been a gap missing. You have a majority of Black people who live on. You've said nothing about. . . . As a department, you've said nothing . . . I think when we talk about DEIJ [diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice]. . . . "Let me just get away, because you all are just performing."

In this instance, Henry discussed that his department sent out emails in response to a Colorado Springs night club shooting, Club Q, but also noted a lack of outreach and communication regarding issues of anti-Black racism and trauma; yet, the majority of live-in staff at his job are Black. Henry later discussed his workplace can be performative regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) work and said he does not notice any accountability, explaining:

> It's been, minimum, from the lens of specificity, but I think it's been very performative in the lens of, "Oh, we're going to do this DEI work, or this DEIJ work to, so I guess, in attempts to combat it," . . . I don't know that it's having the impact that I think we want it to have. Because there's just been a lack of accountability, on all levels. So I would say, from the top down, of what are expectations around that work, centering that work, and how are units holding their people accountable?

Accountability and social justice work were not an essential part of the dynamics of Henry's department; he went on to talk about the lack of accountability, from the top administrators to those at the lowest level. The theme of lack of accountability also emerged among other coresearchers. Ivanna discussed how residence life departments in which she worked also lacked upper administrative accountability regarding antiracism and social justice.

Ivanna discussed her issues with administrators above her, specifically regarding their responses to racial injustice. Ivanna stated:

> [With] Black Lives Matter and everything that was happening to Black folks in the community. I would say that kind of being not singled out, but having the spotlight on me of, okay, what are you going to do for us?

Ivanna described a sense of feeling singled out to handle the issues of Black people in the community. Ivanna further expressed the department's expectations of her, noting:

> [They said], "All right, we need you in here." And I think the same thing is happening a little bit now, too, of before, we had about 10 to 12 Black professionals here with us in residence life. Now we only have three. . . . And so it's tough because they want us to be in these spaces. They want us to be here, they want us to be there. And I'm like, I can't be in all these spaces. I want to, but I cannot. I'm in those spaces listening, but I'm not at the level to do anything.

Like Henry, Ivanna recognized her zone of impact within the department and the burden of what she was being asked to do within her position. She continued:

> Y'all are at the level that you can do something. So you should be in these spaces listening to these students because they're sharing things that I am very familiar with. . . . We have [a] Black student forum. So my 2nd day in the role, they asked me to go there. I was already going to go anyway. So it was fine to represent housing. I didn't know the whole conversation was going to be about housing. So I was there, oh, y'all have things to say, but the people that need to hear these things are not here. . . . But it's the same thing of when this particular Black issue is going on, all right, where are the Black folks at? All right, what are y'all going to do? All right, what ideas do you have? Let's bring you in. Let's sit you down. Let's figure out what we're going to do.

Ivanna noticed that within her department, when anti-Black racism occurs, departmental officials request she and her Black colleagues to respond to the harm because her department looks at these issues as "Black issues." She later mentioned sometimes, the "acknowledge" anti-Blackness occurs, and she believes such acknowledgement entails "creating some presentations and things [they] would do training for over the summer." Still, she went on to state all of the work comes from RDs, not the management. According to Ivanna:

> So the committee is called the Call to Action committee . . . And it literally came out of all of the things that was going on in the world with Black Lives Matter.. . . And there was some specific clauses about kind of addressing anti-Blackness, understanding that and how we can step away from that or do things. . . . And I just think that they're trying to do that work, but again, that work is not coming from the management, it's coming from us, it's coming from the RDs. . . .. They're [management] involved in the finished product, but they're not involved in the process. And so I think they are very open to making sure that they are knowing what's going on about the work and green lighting, the work. And they do thank you for the work, but they're not involved in the process of creating that work and really making themselves knowledgeable.

Ivanna went on to question what the upper administration is doing to get themselves involved in the work of antiracism. She stated:

> What training are you doing for you? You have it for us, but you don't know the stuff. You don't feel comfortable talking about these things, but you want us to talk about them. Like, no, I want you to feel comfortable too, at first, all I want you to feel uncomfortable, then I want you to get comfortable and talk about it. And that's okay. So I

> would say, we have had conversations about anti-Blackness. We do have trainings around that, but management is just not really immersed and involved in that work. It's really us creating that work and then training our own colleagues on it.

For Ivanna, the impact she and her colleagues were making in their entry level position needs to also be taking place in the upper administration of her department where there can be more organizational and policy related changes to occur. She mentioned there was a committee of which she was not a part that formed in May 2020 and had action items, but she noted within the department, "all of that work is coming from the folks like [her]. None of it is coming from any of the management." Ivanna further explained the disconnect she feels when doing social justice work in her department, noting:

> And they always invite management to come. They invite them to really be immersed in the work and then the management will go when they're talking in their interviews and doing things, oh yeah, I'm behind all this, great work that we're doing. I'm doing this. I'm like, I've never seen you at any of the meetings. . . .

Although Ivanna appreciated the initiatives coming out of her department's acknowledgment, she noted these initiatives still needed to match the level of commitment from upper management and those with more influence at the top of the organizational structure. Many of these initiatives began in 2020, and although Ivanna's institution had made some progress at the grassroots level, other institutions were moving toward more symbolism than transformational change.

Sunny also described the response of her institution as having initiatives "established in 2020 and haven't been updated since then, or in the past couple of years." In her interview, Sunny talked about how she was on certain committees to encourage diversity and antiracism. Still, some initiatives did not always land as they intended, causing Sunny to view them as performative. Sunny stated:

> I know we have a [object redacted]. . . . It's called Black Lives Lost [object redacted], but I think I'm also kind of over [it]. I'm like, "Okay, yes, but I'm over that." I'm like, "Why is it called the Black Lives Lost [object redacted]?" It would be one thing if like, "Okay,

> we had someone die due to police brutality or whatever." But I'm like, "What is this random [object redacted]?". . . Sometimes it just feels very performative and it also just feels like, it's like, nobody's really engaging with this outside of the People of Color on campus. But, I mean, at the same time, part of that is just because everyone is burnt out. This university's student affairs division is very overextended, especially in housing. We're very overextended. . . . It doesn't always translate.

Sunny described the Black Live Lost initiative at her institution by the racial injustices that happened in 2020. Though Sunny appreciated the efforts of her institution to observe the Black Lives Lost initiative, she did not view this effort as transformative and engaging. She likened this feeling to the burnout facing student affairs in general. Other coresearchers also related to institutional performativity, especially amid the 2020 racial protests. In Sunny's experiences, she illuminated how her institution practices were performative as it related the racial injustices of 2020

Ivanna's lived experiences aligned with what Sunny mentioned in terms of performativity, but also she mentioned being asked to do additional labor for her institution around Black Lives Matter statements. Ivanna mentioned she did not see the experience as "negative" because the person who requested her assistance had "actions behind her words," and Ivanna felt qualified based on her undergraduate major in Black studies. She noted:

> So I would say in 2020, when folks' ears are on the ground asking what could happen, especially in the live-in role, you know, residence life, they got to figure out what they're going to say, what they're going to do. . . And so they were looking on what type of knowledge that I could provide. . . . So she [an upper administrator] asked me if I wanted to take over the department's Instagram and just post things that would be beneficial to them.

Ivanna felt her Black studies background prepared her to lead some of the work in residence life. She also recognized the need to scaffold her learning for colleagues and other stakeholders who did not hold the knowledge she held. Ivanna described using her knowledge and viewing this role as an opportunity to help the department. She also understood other departmental staff did

not have the “top tier knowledge” she had from her work as a Black studies major; however, while posting for the department's Instagram, Ivanna wrote a statement that the department wanted her to tailor. Ivanna recalled:

> They wanted a statement. So I wrote one, but I know based on what the school has written, cause the school already wrote one, but they wanted one to be on their website. “We stand in support of the Black students. We [don’t] condone,” you know, all the words. And so I wrote a basic one because based on the school, they weren't taking any kind of stand on anything. So I wrote it and she was like, “Wait, where's the rest?” I said, “What do you mean?” She said, “We stand in support of Black Lives Matter. I want that to be on there.” I said, “Are you sure? Cause I have another draft, a more direct draft, but this is a one for ya’ll, right? Because it’s supposed to come from you, not from me.” They said, “No, we want that one.” . . . And so what they wanted . . . two Instagram posts a week. . . . And so all of a sudden, I went from an assistant resident director to the social media manager.

Ivanna stated she found and created a post the department could use, but her supervisors wanted to specifically market “Black Lives Matter” and present a similar stance to the matter at that time. Ivanna mentioned her role shifted on top of her regular responsibilities. She compared this shift to the marketing range of companies, stating, “It’s the same thing with all these companies the same way all during that same time; all of a sudden the ads changed, the marketing changed, and they want all this stuff.”

Simon also discussed Black Lives Matter and other acts of performativity he experienced in higher education. He articulated some thoughts about antiracist work, noting:

> When I think about antiracist work, I think about recognizing the work that people are doing. Not rewarding good work with more labor. . . . Recognizing the Black Lives Matter movement. Having a BLM statement, actually taking apart, actually putting in your diversity statements and living them out. Not just having them just to have them. Same thing with like land acknowledgements. Y’all can say [ancestral land redacted], which you don’t know what that means.

Simon noted he wanted to see his department go beyond the performative and beyond having “statements” and “land acknowledgments” by instead getting involved in the meaning and the significance of the movements via institutional communication.

Many coresearchers spoke of their experiences as tokens. Not only did their departments tokenize them, but as institutions participated in performative activism, the coresearchers noted their institutional colleagues also expected People of Color to perform similarly. Ivanna discussed how performativity took place for her via outreach to students who look like her. She explained:

> But other things for me, especially when it comes in the workplace, when we're in the offices, is especially when our department is trying to connect with students in the Black community or students in other POC communities, they always turn to the folks that look like them. "Oh, you can connect with them better." . . . They always have the words that they use. Like, "Oh, you have a better lens on this. Maybe the students may relate to you a little bit more." It's like, "Okay, well if you keep leaning on us, what work are you doing as a manager? You need to do that work because yes, they're always going to see me, but I'm not always going to be here. Whereas this is your lifelong career. You're always going to be here and if you don't keep doing this work, yeah, we're doing it, but what are y'all doing?" . . . folks, especially upper management, need to step into those spaces and really be uncomfortable in those spaces instead of putting all the work on all the Black individuals in the department. You know, only have two or three, so why are you putting all the work on them?". . . It's like, "No, you could also be in that space, too, and you can learn from them." And it shows that, okay, it's not just this one person I can connect to., folks in the management I can connect with them, too. I think that's also changes I would like to see just so that especially for my own well-being, I don't have to carry all these other things on top of the things that I already have to carry in my own community with my own students.

Ivanna talked about the tokenization she faced and the performance the department wanted from her interactions with Black students. Ivanna mentioned her well-being in that she felt she had to "carry all these things," meaning the racialized interactions with Students of Color.

Furthermore, performative activism occurred when departments in which Ivanna worked did not allow her to attend conferences promoting race and her work with other Students of Color. When asked about barriers preventing her work environment from supporting her through anti-Black incidents, Ivanna discussed a specific incident that happened on campus, followed by a denial of her request to go to a "Black counseling network event" because the department wanted her professional development to be devoted "to all students."

Ivanna also described an experience when she was a graduate RD where 2 weeks before the request to attend the conference, she was supporting a Black woman student who was called the N-word. Ivanna stated, “2 weeks before this, a Black student was walking into my building, and some white students passed by in a car and called her the N-word. It was to the point where she had to move out of the building.” After this event, Ivanna reached out to her supervisor to find out how she could support the student and recalled, “Their idea of support was not reaching out to her. Third day of support was contacting the multicultural center to see who could reach out.”

Ivanna described wanting to know if there was more she could do to support the student. According to Ivanna, her upper management replied, “Ivanna, we expect you to be supporting her.” In response, Ivanna said, “Why me? I am supporting her already. I spoke to her that night. I check on her every day. I see how she’s doing. I’m taking her to events where she can be more involved in the community.” Ivanna said she reminded her department that she was “doing her best;” however, she thought due to the seriousness of the racialized incident, the student should hear from her supervisors. According to Ivanna, her department responded, “No, I think we're just going to contact the vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) over at the multicultural center, and maybe they could reach out to her.” This event was one situation in which Ivanna expressed her desire to go to the Black counseling event as a part of her professional development and so she could bring back resources to help her department and the community.

Ivanna recalled responding to their denial by stating:

> Imagine if I went to this thing and I brought back resources that could help Black students in crisis, resources that we could use. . . . Because I wish I had more tools to help her rather than just being there with her. I wish I had more tools, more conversations that

> I could have with her to keep her at ease. Things to think about when something like that happens.

Ivanna said she finally let things go with her department; however, she mentioned she "didn't us[e] it [professional development funds] for anything, but it was just a sad experience that I couldn't go there." She further discussed not understanding the reason for her denial, whether it was "strictly a Black thing" or if her supervisors simply wanted her to attend one of the other larger student affairs conferences such as National Association of Student Personnel (NASPA) or the American Counseling Professionals Association (ACPA).

Ivanna recalled many experiences during that year when she was at the graduate level as an RD and she wanted to learn more about handling racialized trauma. She noted:

> I just thought, with all these experiences that I'm having, I want to make sure that I am a positive professional in these spaces for Black students, that I'm able to show up and have all the resources if they need something from me, whether that be in crisis, whether that be academic resources, whether that be funds, things like I want to make sure I am listening and I'm involved with what's going on. And so again, they will say that they wanted it to be something for a range of all students and that's why I couldn't go. Yeah, so I would say that was a barrier was access to knowledge.

Ivanna described her experience as "sad" but still did not understand why her departments denied her involvement in a Black conference. For all of her traumatic experiences that year, she also described wanting to find a space to learn and grow around issues of anti-Blackness and bring back resources for her department and her community.

Adjacent to how Ivanna experienced tokenization, Simon also presented his experience working with his institution when they asked him to do a presentation on voodoo. He said:

> Don't tokenize your people.. . . They're doing a religious series right now. . . . I was asked to present on voodoo and Santeria. First of all, when did I ever tell y'all that I was a voodoo practitioner? And are you asking me that because I'm [ethnicity redacted; laughed]. You cannot make this up. I was like, first of all, I'm Roman Catholic, my parents don't practice voodoo. But even if we did, what makes you think that that would be an appropriate form of religion?

Simon went on to discuss the differences between voodoo and other religions, but beyond that, the implications of requesting someone to present on this topic when other crises need attention on campus and how he "pushed back" to this request. He recalled:

> When you ask those questions, they have to sit down with their, with themselves and think about it, right? . . . I was like, "Oh, so you thought all [ethnicity redacted] practice voodoo or you wanted a presentation on what? Like, what did you expect me to bring my white cloths and my little dolls and bring some pins and give you demonstration? What did you expect me to do? What stereotype did you want me to perpetuate or to destigmatize for you?" And how many people on this campus are actually[ethnicity redacted] and practice voodoo? Who would openly admit that? Cuz it's not something that this society fully accepts with the media. How many people are voodoo practitioners and need support from us?

Simon emphasized how he felt about being asked to present on a controversial practice due to his ethnicity and the insensitive request of his department when there were other matters that his department needed to consider. Simon noted his experience was stereotypical and tokenizing; however, he also mentioned other forms of tokenization that arose from his department's requests. For instance, Simon described how he had been tokenized in the department in which he worked by using his racial and ethnic makeup and nationality to guilt him into positions. Simon stated further how he experienced "being the token Black guy in the office." He noted a specific instance where his department said "Oh, if you can't do this, we're gonna have to put a white person to do it, and that do[es]n't look right." To this statement, Simon said, "Maybe you need to hire somebody who's Latinx to take care of this building. I don't understand." Simon continually expressed and explained his institution used his race, ethnicity, and nationality to their benefit, while also witnessing their lack of urgency in areas of antiracism and social justice development. This contributed to how Simon saw the performativity on racial justice.

Simon noted his department purchased books for a professional development book club; however, the initiative did not stay on track. Simon mentioned:

> So we all got *How to Be an Anti-Racist*. *White Fragility* . . . *Oh the Alice of the Heart*. *Dare to Lead*. We got all this professional development-like books, and we're supposed to start these book clubs. That was in January. Those books are collecting dust on my bookshelves.

Simon continued explaining how those book clubs and professional development efforts never happened, noting, "We never have time to do professional development, cause there's always a crisis happening here. . . . We always have time to do everything but invest in the people here. And then you wonder why they can't stay." Simon mentioned the desire for professional development and the hope that his department would invest in those who work at the institution; however, due to the nature of the crisis, Simon said there is no time to go beyond day-to-day tasks and handle the problems at hand.

Theme 3: Belonging as Dualism

The initial construction of higher education institutions and the campus environment was not meant for people of color in a similar way the construction of residence halls are not meant for adult professionals. The coresearchers mentioned experiencing belonging in ways of both needing more belonging from the live-in aspects of their roles and additionally from the personnel with whom they worked in their departments. Belonging as Dualism represents the researchers feeling both the lack of belonging as a professional living in and as a Black person at a HWI. For coresearchers is a dualistic lack of belonging for BRSAP who work and live on campus both in how they feel and exist in the physical space of both personal and professional. The data from this finding exhibits how coresearchers perceive the campus racial climate it covers their belonging as a professional and as a Black person at an HWI.

Coresearchers discussed their experiences with their live-in communities as "very loud," "noisy," "close to others," and "not a space for them." Additionally, four of the five participants mentioned in some ways the need for comfort in having a private entrance to their space.

Henry, Rico, Simon, and Sunny mentioned the private entrance positively. Henry discussed the nuances of having and not having an external entry, stating:

> [The door is] very helpful. . . . If I wanted to come in late . . . if I might have had a few more drinks . . . I can go to that back side, my external door . . . and not have to go through the desk, or . . . figure out how to have the RAs or the students stay out of my business.

Henry described privacy in conjunction with the fact that, as a midlevel practitioner, he no longer had the convenience of the external entrance, which he had previously appreciated.

Rico's situation was similar to Henry's; while his space was being updated, he was placed in a guest apartment which was pretty "noisy" from a lobby piano near his temporary apartment space. Though Rico stated he did not miss the noise, what he did miss was the exterior entrance. He noted:

> [I] quickly moved over to my space once the work that needed to be done got completed, and it's much better. I don't have the same issues as I did before, but with this one, I don't have the privacy as I did at the guest apartment. I don't have my own private entrance. With this one, it's on the floor with my residents. So I'm very mindful of that, but it's my space. It is what it is. I'm grateful to have a bed.

Rico expressed gratefulness for his space, but said he limits his expectations to being "grateful to have a bed." Regarding belonging, Rico also mentioned how the live-in position was not a space that fully supported his wellness, especially when dealing with noise and his long hours. Having a space where he cannot control the daily nuances of his living space which creates a lack of personal belonging for Rico. The experience with moving to a guest apartment while his permanent apartment is being updates also creates a lack of sense of belonging because he is not able to make his house into a home. Rico's further response exhibits that he does not have high expectations from residence life to create an environment that he can call home on campus when he says 'it is what it is" Rico noted:

> Also, living on, you have to deal with noise all the time. Yeah. That can sometimes be a pain, especially working long hours, stressful job. Sleep is important, and sometimes that could be affected if you have a population of students who can really care less about sleep.

Rico described a lack of belonging in ways similar to Sunny. Sunny stated she often felt, especially when working as a live-in fraternity RD, that the environment was not a space designed for her, and also noted that she needed to be backed by leadership. According to Sunny:

> It was a fun experience. Everyone was very nice. I think it just again goes back to knowing the space isn't built for you. . . . It had to do with what I learned about how student affairs approaches managing these organizations. That's what I had a problem with. Because it was a lot of basically let them manage themselves and then if something goes awry, we'll step in.

Sunny mentioned she never felt entirely that the space was meant for her, and noted having the exterior entrance was a "simple thing" that helped her create a boundary. She felt grateful that her institution has supported those boundaries and also mentioned that her job gave "comp days" for working over the weekend and special days such as move-in. As with other participants, Sunny expressed difficulty working and living in the same place.

Simon similarly discussed his time living in and the importance of having a secret or exterior entrance. He said adulting can be very difficult when living and working in the same place, which Henry also mentioned. Henry discussed going out, but he also explained how having an exterior entrance allowed him to divide his personal and professional space, saying:

> And so there are things that you want to do as an adult . . . but then you have to come back home. And you can't really do that in a way that isn't announcing to the entire community that like, "Oh, I just went out and I'm lit right now, respectfully." So I'm thankful that I have a little secret entrance and the back door that I can go through if I need to. But also just taking out trash or as a little professional where I go in my office and I dress a certain way to have my students see me in my PJs sitting on my trash at 5 o'clock in the morning because I do it really early so people don't see me. There's a little bit of unprofessional professionalism. That barrier is also being challenged in my opinion. So the barriers a challenge of trying to be a professional, but also being human.

Simon described his external entrance as something that has allowed him to keep pieces of his life private and maintain social gatherings with others. Though mentioned by most coresearchers as a helpful tool, the availability of exterior entrances was different across all campuses. While initially, exterior entrances may not seem like a pathway to belonging, when considering the nature of where they are working and living with students, the exterior entrance gives them a sense of peace and a space where they can feel that the campus is their home and they can invite friends and others over and feel as if they belong in their physical space on campus, especially since they experience so much dissonance as a professional working and living in.

Although Ivanna did not discuss the need for an external entrance, she was one of the coresearchers who discussed vandalization and mistreatment of her living space as a graduate hall director. Ivanna began by discussing the multiple living arrangements in which she had worked, ranging "from a very small studio to a small one bedroom, to a larger one bedroom" and to her current space of a "two kind of bedroom thing." Ivanna explained, "I would say the one thing that always stuck with me with the living space is the proximity, because it won't take long for people to know where you live." For Ivanna, residents knowing her living space jeopardized her experience as a live-in employee and caused her "a lot of anxiety, a lot of stress, to the point that [she] had to go to therapy." Ivanna then stated some of the main reasons for her occupational distress, noting:

> I live next to the elevator, so everyone would see me go in and out. So my favorite comment is, people think that it's your office, so they'll come and knock at any time of the day and night looking for you, asking for a pan, asking for the basketball, asking for this, this, and that. I've had people walk into my apartment mistakenly. And of course, it's the few times I forget to lock the door that somebody has walked in or they'll come knocking asking me for something, I'll ask them to stay outside and I'll shut the door. Sometimes they'll walk in, they'll come in, see the space. . . . people wouldn't appreciate the things that we would do for them, especially [during] COVID. People were very upset at the policies. So people would frequently throw things at my front door as well. So I've

> had a Chick-fil-A like soda cup thrown at my door. Someone threw pee at my door one time in a cup, or people would as a joke, they would like to bang on the door, knock on it, kick it, all that kind of stuff when they pass by. And so it just got to a point, I think I ended up keeping an extra lock thing underneath the door just to make sure that even if somebody tried to push it, that it wouldn't open. But I hated the experience. . . . I hated everything.

Although Ivanna did not talk about an exterior entrance, she did talk about the fact that she experienced vandalism and other harm that made her want to leave her job. Ivanna and I discussed that she had people knock and bang on her door to jiggle the handles and abuse her space. Ivanna even addressed that she experienced having urine thrown at her door. When sharing the physical space of the residence hall, Ivanna knew that the residence hall space was not meant for her as a working paraprofessional. It had come to the point that she was now experiencing physical danger, a theme I will discuss next in the findings

I also noted that although Ivanna's experience did not mention racialized aspects, she recalled later discovering that in her building with "one of the highest conduct in the entire school," there was a precedent for Black women RDs. Ivanna stated:

> I found out that the last six women that were in that building, because it was nothing but women were all Black women . . . someone that was 4 years ahead of me [said] I was in that building. It was a mess. My friend was in that building the next year, and she was Black. Her friend was in that building and she was Black. I think they broke it the year after me. And it was a white woman, and then now it's somebody Black again, a Black woman . . . when I would ask them [the department] for help they would tell me, "Well, it seems like you got it."

Ivanna described her time in that building by naming the harm that occurred to her in a RD role during graduate school, but she also mentioned a long structural history that placed Black women in particularly troublesome buildings. These instances clearly did not add to Ivanna's feeling of belonging on campus or the sacredness of her space.

Belonging as Dualism describes the nature of the BRSAP as they contextualize their experiences with belonging through their race and position. Several participants discussed the

need for more belonging in the space as a working professional versus a student, and some also discussed the lack of belonging due to lower compositional diversity. In the next section, I delve further into how race hinders the sense of belonging for coresearchers and illuminate how a counter theme of communities of color can assist in creating healing and belonging for BRSAP.

Race as a Hindrance to Fulfilling Belonging

Because coresearchers described their racialized experience of belonging multiple times I offer this subtheme as a way to provide further context into the coresearchers experiences their belonging concerning how race impacted their perceptions and understanding of belonging on campus. Many, due to their race, felt they did not belong. In recognizing their race as a hindrance, the coresearchers noted experiences related to hiring and retention of other BRSAP or Professionals of color, tokenization, isolation, and a desire to exit the field. Each of these racialized experiences impacted how the coresearchers connected to their institutions and the impact the racialized experiences had on their status as Black live-on employees. The theme Race as a Hindrance to Fulfilling Belonging was present in Simon, Sunny, and Henry's narratives.

In an individual interview, Simon recounted how he and his colleagues who left their positions at his institution and were not retained. Simon often referred to this group of colleagues as "the 13." As the 13 were the original colleagues that he started his position with at his institution. He remembered specifically he and other colleagues being brought into his director's office to discuss the attrition of those originally a part of his department to discuss why they left and why so many could not be retained, noting:

> And I was like, "You want the honest truth or you want what everyone is probably thinking about right now?" And she was like, "Tell me the honest truth." And I took my phone and I went to my notes app and I have a document called Grievances from Work, and I read one at a time and she was like, "What? I can't believe this happened." And I

> was like, "This ain't new. We've talked about half these things already and so I don't understand why you're acting like this is new. But here's my formal way of letting you know that these are the reasons why Folks of Color aren't staying in this apartment." We had 13 people leave in 1 year, not even a year; within my first 6 months, 13 people left. What does that tell you? You're all People of Color. And they were all replaced by white folk. These are all people who had master's degrees, who all got replaced with folks who have bachelor's.

Simon mentioned he had kept track of why People of Color did not stay in his department. Later, they were all replaced by white colleagues, many of whom were less credentialed than the People of Color who previously occupied their positions. Throughout the data collection process, Simon mentioned the attrition of "the 13" often and discussed the Saturday brunches they had together, noting "once people left, it kind of died." Simon also mentioned the lack of "community" between People of Color and said even those of mixed race often would "hang out with the white folks." Simon vividly remembered one of his colleagues who moved across the country and felt within 7 months from their start date, and recalled:

> We came back from break . . . then this colleague who I just started to start mentoring and everything, A Black male, was like, "Hey I don't know how to tell y'all this. Today's my last day." I was like, what? I was like, we agreed to give each other 2 weeks' notice! Because, we need 2 weeks to try to find new friends. We can't be doing this day notice thing. He was like, "Yeah. I know, he was like, why should I give them 2 weeks when they can fire me tomorrow?"

Not only did Simon understand the moment to mean that he was losing a colleague, he was also losing a friend. Simon also mentioned the lack of belonging and colleague loss in the focus group setting when I asked about the coresearchers' sense of belonging as live-in professionals at historically white institutions (HWIs). Simon stated:

> I think it's incredibly difficult to try to explain to folk that spaces might be safe or that you could belong in a space where you might not feel such safety and such belonging. When I interviewed for my position, I joined a Zoom screen where there was 12 People of Color and one individual of European descent . . . And when I joined the staff, those 12 individuals did not last more than a month . . . And they were all replaced by folks who were of European descent. . . .. I know they did what they needed to do to survive,

> but now I'm in a space where I almost don't feel like I belong because I don't have that community that I thought I was getting myself into.

Simon told the focus group even now, as one of the only People of Color, he was involved with the professional staff search and selection process and was often called on to answer for the experience of People of Color in the department. He noted:

> Sometimes folks will outright ask me, "Oh, what's it like being a Person of Color there?" And I have to really think about am I going to give them the answer that the leadership wants me to give, or am I going to give them the answer that I truly feel? . . . And so if they ask me in a space where your supervisor is in, or other leadership, I will be very political with my answer while still being very honest . . . it's just very difficult and I feel like I have had to have to navigate the political climate and also just barriers to be honest with folk.

Simon discussed the dualism of wanting to answer candidates' questions honestly, but also having to be careful navigating the barriers of his department's political climate. This sentiment was also shared by other participants in the focus group.

Sunny echoed Simon regarding the sense of belonging with her department being all white men and a white woman; the only other Black person Sunny mentioned was her supervisor, a Black woman. Sunny described her feelings as belonging in her department as torn in representing the institution and being true to her feelings about the lack of inclusion and belonging she experiences in a white space. According to Sunny:

> It's definitely a struggle because I am kind of, like when students say they have trouble feeling like they belong on campus or whatever, I'm kind of always like, "Yeah, I mean, I probably would too on this campus environment.". . . . We talk so much about retention. That's a big thing for our president right now. And it's hard for me to even be to want to help with that effort . . . the initiatives they're putting on, I'm like, that doesn't even address why people are leaving. And we have issues with staff retention as well. . . . it makes it hard for me to even be invested in the school and in the success of the school and the success of helping students because sometimes when they're like, "I just feel like I don't belong. I want to leave." I'm like, "Maybe that's the best option," in my head. But obviously I'm not going to say that because I can't just comprehend telling people to leave the school I work at. So yeah, I think it's definitely really hard for me to reconcile. .

> . .a lot of folks are leaving, so I'm just really hoping that with the hiring, they will really be cognizant of DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion] so that we don't end up with another situation where it's all white men and two Black people.

Sunny noted her lack of belonging further validated the feelings her students shared regarding their belonging on campus. Although Sunny did not want to discourage any student from leaving the school, she understood the conditions and climate the students experience. Sunny even mentioned that attrition of her colleagues may provide a moment for her department to gain more People of Color to where they have a more racially diverse staff. Sunny's desire for more diverse colleagues ties back to the theme of belonging as Sunny wants students to stay and find comfortability in their belonging and that she enjoys her institution but that the lack of belonging can become burdensome in the grand scheme of the position.

Henry also shared in the focus group that in his earlier years as a live-in professional, he had difficulty "reconciling the belonging piece." Henry was the only Black man in his department at a private HWI, and he found it challenging to find community and belonging. Henry mentioned finding some sense of belonging from midlevel managers in the department who were Black women. Henry's experiences from his earlier years as a professional ran parallel to Sunny's individual interview, where she also discussed finding solace in her relationship with her direct supervisor, a Black woman and the only other Person of Color in her department. Henry described his relationship with belonging further, stating:

> I had to find other folks, whether it was Black women in my department who were mid-managers or other folks to really increase that sense of belonging. But I knew within 6 months that I was like, this is not for me. I need to leave by the end of the year. But I think one of the challenging pieces was for me was having those conversations with some of the Black students and. . . . And having those difficult conversations and just being honest with them and saying, "I can understand why you feel this way because me as a professional, I feel the same way. And we've both kind of made this choice. You've made the choice to come here because of the name. And I made the choice here to come because it was a job straight out of grad school." And so having some of those nuanced, difficult conversations. . . . So I've always said my sense of belonging is important, and

> so a part of that is being involved on campus and doing other things outside of my day-to-day and outside of my role because that gets me connected more to the campus and then I'm able to meet other people who may look like me, but are also just people who share the same ideals. And so I found that to help with reconciling my belonging, but also helping students with their belonging as well.

Henry recognized, similarly to Sunny, that his belonging was tied to his students' experiences and he used difficult conversations to empathize with their experiences while also assisting the students in persisting in the environment. Henry also discussed the fact that he knew that he would only stay in his position for a short time due to the lack of belonging professionally and personally at his institution. Henry challenged himself to find a community beyond his department. For Henry belonging was more crucial to his job satisfaction and his institution lost him a s a staff member because they did not to have a culture and climate at his institution that cultivated belonging for him as a Black employee.

Ivanna followed up on the focus group discussion on belonging, stating she too wanted to exit a graduate hall director position at a historically white school due to there "only being three other Black students and [herself] in a residence hall of about 250 people." Ivanna mentioned knowing she only stayed for "financial reasons," stating:

> I knew I was doing the role that I was doing at that time for financial reasons. I didn't want to work in the residence hall at the time, but because we're in the grad program, as y'all know, stipends are next to none. And so you got to do what you got to do for that time. But again, I would just sit with students when they would come and tell me that they were having trouble making friends or finding the spaces where folks look like them. And they were grateful that I was there, but it was more so they still felt really alone and I felt the same way, too. And so I would just, just sit and listen with them. And if I was going to any of those events, I would take them with me. But it was tough being truly honest with them. And so it was just more so kind of holding space for them. . . . in our department, there was about what 32 people and only two or three of us were Black. And that came because we were grad students. The full-time folks, everybody else was white. And so of course when they're sitting in those spaces, when they're trying to hire people, it's tough because folks would come, they would stay for 6 months, maybe they would stay the whole year and then after that they would leave. And I don't blame them for leaving because, again, if I was in their shoes, I don't think I would stay very long, either.

Ivanna and most coresearchers discussed some semblance of dualism regarding their roles in belonging on campus. In Ivanna's experience above, she highlighted the lack of diversity for her as a staff member and student. She connected with students by holding space for them while also grappling with her experiences as both staff member and graduate student at a historically white institution. Ivanna also named the financial benefits as the primary reason for her accepting and continuing in a live-in role. She noted the dissonance she had with her department and institution overall.

The coresearchers discussed the relationship between the students and themselves and the lack of community and belonging they found in their entry-level or graduate-level work in residence life. Even with some coresearchers such as Simon, working with colleagues became even more impactful when they had to see their colleagues exit the role. Being Black was a clear social identity marker that hindered the coresearchers' sense of belonging in their student affairs professional roles at HWIs.

Theme 4: Live-In Experience as Socialized and Conventional

The last theme of the live-in experience as socialized and conventional connects to the essence that the live-in position does not often begin with the employee's entry level position but that residence life directors begin their employment in the field as students in paraprofessional roles (Sutton et al., 2023). The coresearchers discussed their live-in experiences as a socialized convention of residence life. I consider the socialized convention of residence life as an aspect of socialization in the residence life process for residence directors. As mentioned in the literature review, graduate students are often socialized in to the role of residence directors and also time in paraprofessional positions (Seager, 2023). Co-researchers discussed their socialization into the

role but also represented that being in the live-in space was a standard procedure of their role in residence life.

The conversation on belonging led me to findings about their socialization and what is deemed normal and abnormal to BRSAP working and living in the residence halls, either by their experience or understanding of residence life through graduate school. During many of the interviews, the coresearchers began by providing some context, after which they often told me about their live-in experiences and journeys into their role. Sunny, Simon, and Ivanna discussed how they started as resident assistants, became live-in graduate RDs, and finally moved into RD roles. Rico and Henry highlighted more about their professional journeys, but across multiple institutions. All coresearchers had worked at more than one institution and in more than one position on their residence life journey. The maximum amount of institutions at which a coresearcher had worked was four.

Sunny, who lived both in the residence hall as a resident assistant and in Greek Life Housing as a fraternity director, discussed how she now felt "weird" as professional live-in staff. Sunny implied feeling weird relating to her living in the residence halls not that she was a professional. Sunny described her time in residence life as living "on different campuses and in many different capacities." Sunny is describing the multi-institutional experience that residence directors often experience in their paraprofessional work as resident assistants and graduate level resident directors that begins their socialization in to higher education and student affairs as employees. She continued, noting:

> I've been an RA [resident assistant] at a large public . . . I've lived in a fraternity house. I've lived on my campus now, which is much smaller. And I guess . . . I feel like it feels just kind of weird . . . especially now that I am a professional.

At the time of the interview, Sunny was in her first professional position outside of undergraduate and graduate positions.

Other professionals, such as Simon, discussed many different journeys into higher education; often, coresearchers were fully immersed in the residential life experience as live-in professionals. Simon discussed how he had not lived off campus since his undergraduate years, and called his time on campus as "a home away from home," explaining:

> And so I think it might be important to provide some context because context is always important and appreciated. . . . I've never really left. I became an RA my 2nd year, interviewed my 1st year . . . I always lived on campus. It was always a safe space for me, but also I'm an international student and so I'm from [country redacted]. My family at the time still lived in [country redacted] and it wasn't really cost efficient for me to try to travel back and forth. It also just wasn't safe to travel back and forth with some of the political turmoil that's happening with the state of the country. And so it has been a safety net because I couldn't really go home and made living on campus my home away from home. I felt safe and comfortable with that. I miss my family a lot, but it provided that. I went to grad school after for student affairs and was a graduate hall director. And so again, lived on campus for that. And then my first job out of grad school was the residence hall director. . . . Now, I work and live here. And so I really never left living on campus.

Simon discussed the live-in role and his unique status as an U.S.-born international student. Though he was born in the United States, Simon noted he spent most of his time in his parents' country of origin, so residence life provided him a place to live when he could not go home due to the political state of his country of origin.

Simon and Ivanna both shared their journeys at their multiple institutions, but Ivanna talked about returning for her first full professional role at the institution where she had originally been a resident assistant. Ivanna described her positionality in the department, but explained, through credentialing, she received much more respect when she left as an assistant RD and returned to her current RD role with a master's degree. She noted:

> So starting in this institution, I was an RA for maybe 6 months, and then once I graduated, they have two different full-time professional roles in residence life. . . . And

> so the assistant resident directors only for 2 years, and then the resident director here is only for 4 years. So after the 2 years were done, I went back to [Institution 2 redacted] to school for my master's degree. There, I was a graduate resident director for both [Institution 3 redacted] for a little bit, and then [Institution 4 redacted]. And then I came back here to [Institution 1 redacted] for a resident director position, which I'm in right now. . . .

Although Ivanna described having experiences from multiple institutions, she also mentioned returning to her original residence life department and gaining understanding from working there as a RD. Ivanna spoke of her multiple situations of occupational distress as a paraprofessional and graduate residence director, she discussed the negativity with the role and after returning to her current institution where she once was a student, and upon her return she realized that have credentials assisted her in being heard and seen in the residence life department

Henry discussed his live-in experience as a professional, noting he spent many years in multiple live-in roles in an entry-level position and then moved up to a middle manager role who lives in a campus residence. Henry stated out of the almost 8 years of his roles as a professional, 4.5 of those years were live-in experiences. Henry described both his enjoyment in the role and experiencing burnout from the parameters of the position, stating:

> When I first started out as a professional, I really enjoyed living on campus. A lot of folks were, "Oh, I hate it, or it's just such a hassle, it's just such a burden." But I actually enjoyed it, being in community with the residents. Towards my last semester, I was like, "You know what? I'm kind of getting a little stir crazy. I've been doing this on campus thing for a while. I just need that separation." I was unable to separate work and personal life, so a lot of personal relationships were compromised, because I just was always working. I was always being out in the lobby area, chatting with folks, working late, just because it was easier to work.. . . moving back here, I'm okay with it, but I also am like, "I do miss living off." Now, my pockets don't miss it, but I think my overall mental well-being kind of misses it.

Henry realized the advantages and disadvantages of living off campus, far from students. He also acknowledged the financial implications of living off campus after being used to a live-in

position. Henry further elaborated on his journey of living in and off and how the mental health struggles he experienced were not severe, but acute to his situation:

> It has definitely been a journey, and I think moving in the current role, it was for a reason. Having to keep that reason, and in the frame of mind, "There's a means to an end, as far as this whole situation, as far as coming here, moving back on campus, from off campus." Yeah, and I think when I was compromising my mental health, as well, and not to the point where it was, "Oh my gosh, I'm having suicidal thoughts or depression," it was just more so, I could just feel a different kind of feel of mental space, and just whether it was burnout, or whether it was, overall, just exhaustion, and, "I'm just burning myself out." I just felt that lifted. When I moved off campus, I just felt a change, and I really can't articulate what it was, but it definitely was a change. I don't think I'm getting to that point now, in my current role, but I definitely felt that when I was at [Institution 2 redacted]. So maybe it is also the positionality of things, and the position that I was in.

Henry mentioned the mental capacity of burnout, exhaustion, and being in a "different" mental space in the live-in role. However, he also discusses how his positionality changed and his role shifted over time in the department. Henry's quote mentioned that he had a different experience than the other coresearchers living off as a student affairs professional and that he learned the balance outside of the campus housing in his work and life integration.

Lastly, Rico discussed multiple live-in positions but highlighted that he left one professional position after 3 months because his co-RD "was very clearly racist and didn't have no multicultural or background or any training in D&I [diversity and inclusion]." Rico explained although the negative live-in experience mostly centered around his colleague, he still chose to stay in residence life, stating:

> Just because one situation happen[s] . . . that doesn't neglect the impact that we still make in housing and the connections. I still talk to some of my former students. I still do. I still have those relationships. So it doesn't take away from the work and the impact that we make.

Rico positively connected his time in residence life with his connection to the students and his impact on them. He later discussed the three RD roles in which he worked as a professional and his desire to explore midlevel management in residence life, though hesitant. When asked if he

wanted to continue in residence life, Rico responded, “That’s a question I ask myself on a daily basis . . . I want to see how it is on a leadership type of level, on the AD [assistant director] type of level.” The assistant director (AD) level was a step up from Rico’s entry-level role at the time of this study. Although, Rico spent many years working residence life he still has some occupational aspirations in the field of student affairs that resonate with him and his socialization into residence life. Knowing that there is opportunity for promotion gives him some determination to stay in the field to see what his tenure could be like at the mid-level.

Countertheme: Radical Healing for BRSAP

The four themes presented in this work have spoken of the Black experience on campus, exhibiting how BRSAPs lack occupational wellness. However, using a countertheme of Radical Healing for this study will assist me as the researcher in finding ways that Black people find their hope and joy in White majority spaces (French et al., 2020). In this section, I discuss the importance of Communities of Color being a space for Radical Healing within the world of BRSAP.

Because they dealt with such a lack of belonging, the coresearchers described finding Communities of Color as a space for Radical Healing. With this counter theme, I desired to create an opportunity within this study where coresearchers and I could focus on non-negative things in their lives and work. The focus on a space of healing comes from radical healing’s emphasis on hope and critical consciousness (French et al., 2020; Freire, 1973). Within this study, the coresearchers and I talked about what brings us joy and hope as Black people at HWIs, and much of that centered on community.

Through the lack of belonging, occupational distress, and discriminatory racial climate, one specific overlap remained with coresearchers, and that was the ability to hold spaces where

they could be together with others who understood their lived experiences and permitted them to be their authentic selves. Radical Healing discusses cultural authenticity, emotional and social support, strength and resistance, and collectivism that weaved throughout the final question of our focus group time together (French et al., 2020). Throughout the data collection process, the coresearchers discussed the importance of having a community of Staff of Color, specifically Black staff, with whom to interact. The coresearchers discussed that it was helpful to "do things outside of work," such as "having dinner" and "encouraging Black [resident assistants] RAs" as a necessary and significant part of a community with other Staff members of Color.

Henry specifically discussed being in a large department where operations could get "siloed" and said connecting with people with similar interests is crucial. Henry talked fondly about his time with his Black colleagues, stating:

> And even for me, I think doing things outside of work gives me joy with my colleagues who are Black and really, I mean, most of my level, we are now all People of Color, majority Black. . . . And so I think that has given me the joy and the hope, but also that I know that they have my back and that I have theirs. And so I think all that for me plays a part in that. Even when things get tough, I know that I can go back to my colleagues and have that support whether it's at happy hour, whether it's at lunch, whether it's at a random dinner after work because it's just been a crazy week or a crazy day, I can go back to that.

Having a community to which to return was necessary for Henry when dealing with the stressors of the job, but Henry noted it also gave him joy to know his colleagues also had his best interests at heart. Henry mentioned simple things like sharing meals and going to his colleagues when the environment of the HWI became overwhelming for him. It is important to note that at Henry's previous institution, as stated earlier, he exited the institution due to a lack of belonging, but being in an environment with Black colleagues gave him resilience when the job became challenging.

Similarly, Simon discussed the importance of having colleagues to lean on and expressed the importance of holding on to those relationships in residence life. According to French et al. (2020) "Collectivist communities allow POCI to create a counter-space for radical healing where authenticity and comradery can flourish and offer refuge in the context of ongoing racism (p.28)." This further exhibits how collectivism was critical for coresearchers to survive much of the occupational distress that was coming from within their departments. Simon stated:

> And so whatever other Folks of Color you have in your office, if you're all not BFFs [best friends forever], become BFFs with them. And if they are doing some craziness that you can't be BFFs with them, distance yourself. That's the biggest advice I've been able to give some of the newer folks that's coming in, because you need that community. I hold on to my two other people for dear life because they're the only ones that truly understand and I feel like anytime my director says some outrageous new policy or whatnot, we're like the only ones that's looking around like, hmm, we can tell whose facial reactions are explicit and what aren't.

Simon described his community as a way of having best friends in his department who could both understand him and assist him in navigating the politics of his institution. Like Henry, the Communities of Color in his department helped him manage and navigate the policy and practice of his department. Simon also used his Colleagues of Color as a group to process with and not have to explain to people who do not understand

Unlike other coresearchers, Sunny did not have other colleagues to befriend, she discussed Communities of Color through the connection to her school's Black undergraduate residence life staff. She noted that in her space with Black resident assistants (RAs), she could have conversations with them and encourage them in their work and programming. Sunny noted:

> Because I don't really have a lot of direct colleagues, something I really try to do is just hype up my Black RAs. We have a pretty small RA staff, so I try really hard to make sure I'm getting to know them, providing that support. And if they want to be, I'll be pretty candid with them. Not all of them want to engage in that way, and that's fine. But for the folks who do want to have more candid conversations about their experiences and stuff, I just work to provide that space. And when I was an undergrad, I really appreciated that

> for my leadership. So being able to provide that is something I really enjoy now. And also just hype up the things that they're doing, making sure their programs are getting shout outs and stuff like that, is something that definitely brings me a lot of happiness and satisfaction.

Sunny said her way of building a community of color came from finding happiness in the success of undergraduate Black students and working to foster that space with them. Though Sunny did not have a community of Black colleagues available to her, like other coresearchers, she still found a way to engage in the Black community. Sunny found this aspect a collective and a form of radical healing for her as she created the community and was a model of radical hope in her residence life department for other students.

Ivanna explained that she has found joy in being back at the institution as a full-time RD, and has still found a way to connect with her Black colleagues. She stated:

> It's definitely really important to just connect with your folks, kind of hold them tight. And now we try to do that anywhere that I'm at. Where I am right now, we have a monthly lunch that we do. And so we go to Chili's every month at the first Friday of every month. We call it Black Girl Lunch at Chili's. And that's what we do. We just sit there, we just talk about different things that whatever it's we want to talk about.

In this quote, Ivanna highlighted how she and a group of Black women cultivated community with one another. Ivanna and her community patronized a nearby restaurant where they discussed topics related to work and other personal matters that they felt comfortable sharing with the other women. While most of the women started as colleagues, they developed relationships that extended far beyond their employment. The community was a space for unfiltered conversations for healing and joy.

The coresearchers described their communities as places of joy and hope. Having Black colleagues specifically gave them built-in associates who could connect outside the department and process their positions or just take time to be free and not discuss work. Notably, however,

even with a community of Black colleagues, all coresearchers still described experiencing some occupational distress due to their race.

In the focus group, Simon discussed what makes him feel moments of joy and hope as a Black person; he talked about the phrase "unity makes strength," and how he has bonded with his team over the statement and the relation to his country of origin. Simon specifically discussed the need to celebrate, noting:

> I think in order to be strong, you have to have unity. This goes to just not the community I've been able to make within my team, but also my colleagues. And so celebrating the accomplishments, celebrating the small things, never ridiculing or calling somebody out in public. . . . we already face so much disrespect that I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to add to the pile. But I also don't call people out. I call people in. . . . So I think that's one way to re-instill that sense of hope and joy because we don't get celebrated enough. This is a thankless job, a thankless profession. And so when someone tells me, "Oh, look at this cool thing I did," I'm like, "Yo, let's go celebrate. That was a really cool program. You really did your thing. Your students obviously care. You went above and beyond to do this." Hype each other up, because if not us, then who's going to?

Simon sees a camaraderie with his Black peers, and he understands that they and the community that they have is what continues to sustain him in his role. While radical healing literature focuses on resistance as coming together to resist barriers to social justice (French et al., 2020), Simon's resistance is more geared toward the resistance of the psychological climate and celebrating and encouraging his Black colleagues to continue in their work and uplifting what others overlook.

Simon describes how even with knowing his work is for the public service and good of the institution when he is able to celebrate and recognize greatness in his peers he is also acknowledging himself in the community. Simon expressed that even with a problematic relationship with his colleagues, he has found ways to unite with his Black colleagues because he

realizes the anti-Blackness they face. He believed in celebrating the experiences of his peers and their work as higher education and student affairs professionals.

Ivanna stated multiple examples of how she had found joy and hope in her community, specifically in her assistant hall director role. Ivanna ended by countering performativity as racism and talking about solidarity, whether these efforts came from wearing the same colors, noticing and defying the limits of small numbers at the institution, or simply checking in. Ivanna discussed the solidarity and unity needed to help BRSAPs survive at an HWI, noting:

> I think something unique about me is when I first graduated my undergrad, I started working at my undergrad in residence life. And so at the time we had a lot of Black residents and hall directors. We had a lot. And so at that time we were very loud about that and in different ways. So if we ever had our big unit meetings that we'd have, we all would be, "Okay, we're going to wear this color for the meeting." And so we'd all just come through wearing this certain color for the meeting. It was great. We had this group chat where we called ourselves the 1%, and it was a funny little thing that we had going on. But through that, we were able to just find community within our department because the same things, I'm back at the same institution now and the same things that were happening a couple years ago are still happening now. . . . But for all the places that I've been at, just trying to find those little moments to bring me joy, whether it's playing my music in meetings or just connecting with people or even just texting folks and just saying, "Hey, how are you doing? Haven't seen you in a while. You doing okay?" And so it's just those small things that I do to kind of implement some of that.

Ivanna describes her time as a paraprofessional in residence life and how her unit meetings and other residence life spaces where time for her and her black colleagues to show their solidarity by wearing matching colors. She and her Black residence life staff members also used humor by leaning into the disadvantages of being minorities in the institution and tried to find joy by being together in community. She also described a system of care where they would check in and ensure each other was in a good space at their HWI. Amid all of the performativity of her institution, Ivanna said she and her colleagues found ways to be in solidarity with each other; although these practices were not grand gestures, they used small things to find joy

Lastly, The BRSAPs also discussed how they bring Black joy and hope into their roles through cultural authenticity (French et al., 2020). Ivanna noted she fostered this hope by finding little moments of joy when championing her Blackness through music. She stated:

> I know one thing that I did for myself was, because I am [ethnicity redacted], so anytime I would lead a meeting, I like to put on music before we started leading this meeting with everybody. So I always put on Afrobeats because I wanted people to know what I was about. And that just brought me joy and people asking, just teaching people about other things and just bringing those little moments that made me happy in my day.

Although the experience she described occurred during her role as a graduate RD, Ivanna detailed transforming her role and using Afrobeats, a genre of west-African inspired rhythm and sounds, to bring her joy in the workplace and create space for joy and wellness in her day. Ivanna also considered herself in her space and created moments to find belonging. This connects to the theme of using indirect methods of Black joy and celebration to heal and cope with the occupational distress that comes from a discriminatory campus climate and also builds the sense of home and familiarity for BRSAP.

In the focus group, the coresearchers and I discussed the ways in which Black joy and hope could emerge. As a former RD and coresearcher, I entered this space to discuss how I wanted to use storytelling as a space to go beyond the performative in telling our stories. I stated:

> At this stage of where I am… for me, publication, because that's an important part of what I want to do as a researcher. So I think telling our stories, knowing that our stories are important . . . I think a couple of you, we've even said that I want them to know what I'm about and I think it's because we don't see it reflected at PWIs [predominantly white institutions] for me that it is bothersome sometimes and you don't have that range . . . we don't get to share our experiences.. . . . There's so many things that when we're especially by ourself, that we have to be for everybody. So I think that it's important to tell our stories.

I wanted to remember what the participants said and their journeys to continue growing beyond the monolith of Blackness in the United States. In this study, I needed to let the coresearchers show up and share their stories, given there are so few of us.

Chapter Summary

The findings from this chapter exhibit the lived experiences of the coresearchers. Their powerful stories and experiences yielded insight into the experiences of BRSAPs. The data collected elicited themes from coresearchers' socialization into the role, dualism with belonging, hazards of their physical safety, and performativity and the performative activism in their department/units affecting their daily work. Centering their voices allowed me to explore how the live-in and racialized experiences of BRSAPs intersect to influence their wellness at HWIs, address coresearchers' experiences with Blackness on campus, and seek to offer those in higher education research and practice a better understanding of occupational wellness for residential professionals. The counter themes were central to the identification and understanding about how the coresearchers chose to interact with campus racial climate and how they found healing in white spaces. Chapter 5 will provide a more in depth discussion on the findings from this study and give scholarly and practical implications for the field of higher education and student affairs.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

The findings and results of this study considered the lived experiences of five Black residential student affairs professionals (BRSAPs) at historically white institutions (HWIs). This chapter answers the research question posed at the beginning of this study: How does the live-in experience of Black residential student affairs professionals intersect with Blackness to shape their wellness at HWIs?

Within my theoretical framework, I found exploring campus racial climate addresses the historical, compositional, behavioral, psychological, and organizational aspects of the on-campus engagement of a Person of Color; however, this lens must consider the imperative nature of physical violence and safety toward individual wellness.

Through this critical phenomenological study, an embodiment of racialized lived experiences occurred for BRSAPs and impacted their wellness. The methodological approach of critical phenomenology coupled with critical consciousness through radical healing informed my work in the focus groups and the continued focus on sociohistorical and sociopolitical influences. To critically explore the research question and disperse power within the study, I worked alongside coresearchers to prepare our focus group conversations and open the opportunity to disseminate the research with me.

Through radical healing and critical consciousness, I discuss how the community of coresearchers defined and experienced Black hope and joy in this study. Additionally, I explain how the coresearchers and I have formed a community to disseminate the findings of this study beyond this dissertation. In this chapter, I go into further detail about my results, discuss the limitations of my research, give recommendations for higher education and student affairs personnel, consider future directions for further research, and conclude the discussion with the

implications of this study.

Boundaries of the Study

I designed this study to explore how the live-in and racialized experiences of BRSAPs intersected to influence their wellness at HWIs. I anchored this study in a critical paradigm using critical phenomenology as a methodology and critical consciousness to undergird this study (Freire, 1973; Guenther, 2020). With research, design and implementation, time, resources, and knowledge are always limited; enacting this study with my coresearchers was a journey of hope, but I also realized how my broad scope limited myself by not collecting more demographic data about their social identities.

I begin with the limitations of my demographic pre-study questionnaire. When I began this study, I only wanted to focus on the "Blackness," race, and ethnicity of the coresearchers, but the community's intersecting identities emerged. I did not restrict the coresearchers from speaking about their intersecting identities, but when framing the study, I placed limits in certain some ways of collecting information about their other salient identities; for instance, during interviews with Sunny and Ivanna, both Black women, they often cited intersectionality. Although I did ask for gender identification, I believe a question about the coresearchers' other salient identities would have been helpful to the study. Additionally, identifying participants by their sexual orientation was not a part of the demographics in my questionnaire, but one coresearcher, Henry, brought up their sexual orientation in conversation. The methodological choices in this study were constrained by not requesting the coresearchers to consider if their other salient identities intersected with their Blackness in ways that impacted them within campus climate and occupational wellness.

Discussion

In this section, I consider (a) the socialization of BRSAPs concerning their wellness expectations, (b) the impacts of campus racial climate on BRSAPs' wellness, (c) the physical safety of BRSAPs, (d) racist incidents, (e) performative activism, (f) racial place and space, and (g) radical healing for Black people who work and live on campus. This discussion mirrors the findings from Chapter 4, but further connects the themes with the literature review in Chapter 2.

Socialization of BRSAPs in Regard to Wellness Expectations

Socialization in residence life was critical to this study. Although my participant eligibility criteria were specific to residence directors (RDs) working full time and having spent at least 2 semesters in their professional role, the coresearchers talked in detail about their holistic experiences in residence life—from their time as resident assistants, to graduate-level RDs, to their full-time positions. The coresearchers' experiences related to their graduate-level employment confirmed what existing researchers have found on the development of entry-level professionals and the investment in their field (Hirschy et al., 2015; Weidman et al., 2001). The coresearchers' socialization efforts and lived experiences reflected Black professionals in a gamut of residence life roles, from their graduate experiences to their current roles.

The coresearchers' socialization processes in residence life and living often paralleled their time spent in higher education and student affairs in various professionals capacities, as many began their tenure in residence life as early as undergraduate school. Sunny, Ivanna, and Simon discussed their tenure starting from their resident assistant roles, whereas Henry and Rico started their narratives by centering their RD identities. Some BRSAP, as with Simon, viewed residence life as their home; they had worked on campus since becoming residence life staff during their undergraduate years.

The coresearchers gave specific examples of their residence life socialization from each institution at which they worked, and all viewed their residence life involvement as one overarching experience within the residence life field, whether they were resident assistants or RDs. For the coresearchers, the live-in experience seemed compatible regardless of role or position. Henry, a midlevel manager, was the only coresearcher who discussed moving off campus at some point while still working in higher education. Henry was also the only participant with midlevel management work experience while living in the residence halls; however, he often talked about his experiences prior this midlevel position, similar to other coresearchers. I did not equate Henry's tenure in residence life with having more substantial knowledge about the field than other coresearchers. All coresearchers held a distinct breadth of knowledge about residence life and student affairs from their various institutions and levels of employment.

Discussing the coresearchers' socialization into the field and the conventional aspects of their residence life roles was crucial to understanding their lived experiences. The BRSAPs in this study had spent significant time doing various iterations of their residence life roles; therefore, when discussing their live-in experiences or feeling "burnout" from their jobs, they often recalled their live-in roles prior to their present experiences. The BRSAP socialization ties into the aspects of occupational wellness around workplace policy and culture because of the BRSAP socialization into the field how they understand the organizational culture leans toward decreased occupational wellness (Chari et al., 2018). Again, understanding that occupational stress begins with the organization assist in better understanding how burnout and other aspects of occupational distress can be normalized (King-white & Rogers, 2018).

Sunny exhibited this pattern because she had prior experience as a fraternity director in a

live-in role, which influenced her views on subsequent residential roles. Perceived levels of burnout also affirmed the work of Liddell et al. (2014), who found graduate students in student affairs often work over their allotted hours. Though I did not ask coresearchers for the specific fields of their master's degrees, their positions in residence halls reflected the widespread nature of student affairs work. In unison with Sunny, all other coresearchers mentioned experiences before their current roles. Because of the continuous employment of coresearchers live-in experience in residence life, I viewed this phenomenon within their full-time professional roles and through all of their campus and residential live-in experiences by citing multiple scenarios and experiences from their time as graduate hall directors, entry-level, and for some midlevel positions.

Impacts on Campus Racial Climate With BRSAPs

The dimensions of campus racial climate are (a) historical legacy of inclusion and exclusion; (b) compositional diversity; and (c) psychological, behavioral, and organizational/structural dimensions (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem et al., 2005). All dimensions were influential in the lives of the coresearchers as they recalled working and living on campus; however, the coresearchers mentioned the compositional diversity dimension most frequently.

Compositional diversity matters; Griffin et al. (2016) noted compositional diversity, listed in this article as structural diversity, is influential to the behavioral and psychological dimensions of campus racial climate, and the data in this study suggested the coresearchers affirmed this finding. The coresearchers described sometimes feeling as if they did not belong, and felt alone and isolated without compositional diversity. Specifically, within the overarching theme of belonging, the coresearchers discussed needing a community.

A lack of belonging leads to the resignation of Black employees. Due to a lack of

compositional diversity, the BRSAPs in this study perceived their campus climate as a negatively charged environment that did not support their wellness. The coresearchers mentioned the influence that community and belonging had on them to remain or exit their positions; for instance, Henry immediately knew he would not be at an institution long due to a lack of compositional diversity. Sunny also discussed how it was difficult for her to support student retention amid a lack of belonging and mentioned she "wanted to leave." Although the coresearchers did not directly use the term "wellness," the concept of wellness was evident from their experiences in residential life organizations and the intersection between their experiences with (or lack thereof) compositional diversity and their desire to exit the institution.

One aspect discussed pertaining to the coresearchers' lived experiences involved having other Black colleagues and coworkers. Simon and Ivanna specifically addressed the resignation of Black people in their department. In Simon's interview, there was an overtone of sadness about not having those colleagues around anymore; he emphasized, "We agreed to give each other a 2 weeks' notice" when discussing how one of his colleagues decided to leave the institution on short notice. Throughout the interview process, Simon also discussed the uncomfortable situations to which he was subjected due to his experiences with People of Color, especially the small number of Black people on staff. He mentioned even during interviews with other candidates, he has been torn about how he should respond when discussing his experiences in the organization.

The BRSAPs' live-in experiences also intersected with the behavioral and organizational dimensions of campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem et al., 2005). The coresearchers noted within their organizations, certain policies around duty protocols disrupted their wellness, aligning with research that live-in staff often face fatigue, burnout, and

compassion fatigue due to secondhand trauma (Lynch, 2019). The findings from this study added further context to the impacts of secondhand trauma when considering the physical safety of RDs. As an example, Sunny mentioned she felt she had to advocate for herself around the policy of weapons, and other BRSAPs mentioned in the focus group that they also had to advocate during duty and first responder situations. The BRSAPs noted their non-Black colleagues and supervisors often did not understand the pressure of handling these situations; still, they were impacted and described often advocating for more caution when handling traumatic incidents, especially those involving drugs and weapons. Although these sentiments also reflected the organizational dimension, the behavioral dimension of campus racial climate emerged when the coresearchers discussed working with colleagues whose actions did not align with their safety values and who did not advocate in the same ways BRSAPs did.

The coresearchers' experiences of living-in intersected with their Blackness in ways where the other aspects of their experiences with campus racial climate where impacted by compositional diversity (Griffin et al., 2016); they described needing camaraderie, community, and people to advocate for them in critical administrative roles. Coresearchers mentioned the lack of belonging and how their sense of belonging or not belonging often pushed them away from the field of higher education and student affairs. When pertaining specifically to the RD role, the BRSAPs expressed disillusionment and the significant need to find jobs that aligned with their values.

With limited personal time from working and living on campus, belonging emerged as a meaningful aspect of BRSAPs' interactions with campus racial climate. However, belonging was not the sole intersection of their Blackness and their live-in positions. The BRSAPs' lives also centered around the physical functions in their workspaces. When considering the coresearchers'

physio–racial intersections within the theoretical framework, certain limitations emerged. The tension with the campus racial climate theoretical frame did not treat discussion of individual physical safety and the interactions with campus climate. Coresearchers vividly discuss these elements regarding racism and the embodiment of their live-in experience.

Physical Safety of BRSAPs

The coresearchers detailed their various experiences around physical safety; race was not always the direct factor in these experiences, but some of their narratives suggested ways in which race was a link. The coresearchers' interviews often mentioned microaggressions, repeated acts that could be veiled as nonracist acts, and aggressive and overt racism that usually occurred in their living areas. In this study, I considered BRSAP safety as central to the occupational wellness definition regarding the safety conditions, as well as if they experience harassment and conflict in their workplace. (Chari et al., 2018).

When considering safety and security, RDs have more personal contact with students in their living spaces and after working hours than other higher education employees due to their proximity to students. As a coresearcher, Ivanna's narrative reflected this experience when describing how a student physically assaulted her in the residence hall; she mentioned she was "still dealing with this [experience] in therapy." Proximity to students and a lack of protection on her end left Ivanna with trauma. It is difficult to categorize this live-in incident as racialized, but Ivanna noted this type of experience is an aspect of her role.

Whereas Ivanna did not mention racial trauma nor aspects of her Blackness playing into her assault, Simon specifically pointed out the backward nature of unwanted touching in his department, recalling when an older colleague touched his face and hair and made remarks about his physical appearance. Simon pointed out the irony that if someone reversed the roles, and if

he, as a Black man, unwarrantedly touched a white woman and spoke in the same way that his colleague did, the reaction would be completely different. Because of the nature of her comments on his skin and hair, this experience was categorically racist. The physical assault also affected Simon's safety in the organization because he faced the backlash of defending himself, going through the Title IX process, and feeling like the Black "sheep" among his colleagues.

As mentioned in previous chapters about the national incidents and violence between the police and Black citizens of the United States (Baker et al., 2015; Carr, 2014; Furber & Wright, 2021; Wu et al., 2021), the BRSAPs in this study also described having different expectations of handling weapons and being involved with police. Sunny, Ivanna, and Henry all noted how they do not feel a sense of safety within their overall occupational wellness, even with campus police; conversely, their non-Black colleagues feel safe and handle situations with weapons without reluctance. Sunny mentioned feeling isolated when considering how to navigate a related situation in her work environment, especially as the only Black RD in her department.

Physical safety is a gap not yet fully addressed in the campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem et al., 2005); yet, physical safety was comparable to occupational distress for Black professionals who work and live on campus. The intersection of safety and Blackness was evident in the coresearchers' live-in experiences, where they described their work as first responders who are often asked to work outside regular business hours. Specifically, the coresearchers described dealing with intoxicated students; responding to mental health concerns; and checking for weapons, among other first responses. Their jobs included living in the residence halls to build community and ensure the residents' safety and security; however, the coresearchers perceived a lack of feeling secure themselves. All coresearchers felt asking any unarmed employee to go into a situation unarmed and untrained shows negligence from the

institution. The data suggested the pressures of the residence life job are real and exist, and the coresearchers noted no amount of compensation could account for what they had experienced.

When considering the wellness aspects of the coresearchers' roles, and those of their peers, it was also fascinating that residence life departments could view any resistance as opposing the department organizationally—for the BRSAPs, any resistance to operations was more about self-protection. Black people are cautious about interactions with law enforcement, so their response to police will often be to protect themselves from danger, especially considering national incidents and how often Black people are unprotected and harmed when being suspected of with crime-related activity (Anderson et al., 2022; Harris & Amutah-Onukagha, 2019).

Racial Incidents

Say his name: George Floyd. My coresearchers each did. Every coresearcher mentioned Summer 2020 as an impactful event in U.S. history. Notably, they discussed these issues concerning campus climate and the organizational structures of higher education rather than considering their identities during racialized incidents. Still, national incidents such as George Floyd's murder impacted the live-in experiences of BRSAPs. The coresearchers shed light on nationwide racial incidents in their interviews, specifically those involving police brutality. Many coresearchers discussed the 2020 uprisings when explaining their feelings of isolation on campus. Again, such a finding reflected the compositional diversity of campus racial climate and how it affects individuals' psychological, behavioral, and organizational dimensions.

Connecting this back to my experience in 2014 when the national incidents of both Michael Brown and the protest at University of Missouri were occurring it can become an internalized experience of race for Black professionals. When national incidents happen, Black

people who work and live on campus feel siloed and a need to be defensive; for instance, Henry mentioned in his individual interview that after Tyre Nichols's death, he felt a defensiveness with campus police.

The coresearchers mentioned campus police in various interviews. As first responders, they described often working with campus safety and security, while also noting although anti-Blackness and police brutality is often considered a white or Black paradigm, Black people can also be perpetrators of racism and prejudices against Black people. Still, Henry's point about Tyre Nichols evidenced a tension in this sentiment—Henry said he knew police officers in his family but the impacts of national events still created a hostile environment for him on campus, and this specific instance occurred when he was working with the officers in a first responder situation.

Residence life and student affairs practitioners must consider campus relationships for professionals and students in the context of race. As a Black woman, Ivanna described putting herself in harm's way to help a student avoid getting in trouble or have something on her record; however, due to the student's intoxication, she assaulted Ivanna, who, after the assault, had to involve campus police. Dealing with student conflict and harassment also deteriorates ones occupational wellness as it puts at stake the physical safety of the employee (Chari et al., 2018). Additionally, based on Ivanna's racial and gendered identity, there is a sense that national incidents involving the police also have more salience to a Black persons individual social identities, for Ivanna that is her intersectional identity of being a Black woman. During the interviews, even though most coresearchers brought up George Floyd, Ivanna was one of the only coresearchers to mention the murder of Breonna Taylor and to say her name first in the list of those who had died from police brutality.

This study also adds to the canon of existing literature about Black people being more than a monolith (Dei et al., 2020; Waters, 1991). As a U.S. citizen with deeply rooted international ties, Simon discussed multiple international events that impacted him during his tenure, such as natural disasters, the Black Lives Matter protest, and even injustices occurring in Europe and Asia. Simon noted international events influence him because believes in staying current, and many incidents affect his home community. Moreover, the coresearchers made clear that the U.S. climate of the United States impacts Black people.

Conversely, not one participant mentioned a racialized event on their campus; rather, they emphasized campus response to national and international crises. Nobody cited an event that had occurred on their campus, but they did discuss how their campuses responded to external incidents, along with authenticity and actionable commitment to social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Performative Activism

During the 2020 racial uprisings, the United States saw a significant increase in marketing, programming, and solidarity with Black people (Bonaparte, 2020). After witnessing the murder of George Floyd and other Black people at the hands of the police, many organizations began their interest in championing antiracism, higher education included (Casellas Connors & McCoy, 2022; Brownhill, 2020). The new interest in Black lives also initiated a wave of performative activism, defined as "a critical label that is applied to instances of shallow or self-serving support for social justice causes. The accusation rests on a distinction between what is said by supposed supporters and what they actually do" (Thimsen, 2022, p. 83). However, there is a juxtaposition between performativity and creating performers.

In the Roman circus games, there were performers called desultors (Rawson, 1981). These desultors often entertained others by jumping from horse to horse without stopping. Desultors were known for their ability to continue their skill while traveling from one horse to another. I compare this act to the idea that universities often make Black people and other racially marginalized people serve as desultors for diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and antiracist efforts on campus.

In doing so, universities perform, while wanting a performance from People of Color to make the department reflect the illusion of being socially conscious. As the coresearchers noted, institutions expect Black people, and other racially minoritized people, to jump from one situation to the next and address issues that align with racial identity. I also mention examples of this in my relationality to the study in Chapter one that I often was asked to navigate these experiences with Students of Color, especially during racial incidents occurred nationally or on campus. Instead of equipping and training themselves, the coresearchers noted institutional personnel often tokenized and misused their BRSAP identity to the advantage of the department.

The methods that social structures and stratification play into BRSAPs' lives create intersections, but they are familiar; the performativity under which these professionals described having to work while volunteering additional time to diversity issues was unnerving. The BRSAPs expressed that their workplaces were often performative, often engaging in action such as making objects commemorating "Black lives lost" but not fixing institutional or structural issues at the root of the cause.

As an example, Simon's department requested him to present on voodoo because of his country of origin. Simon never mentioned expressing to his department that he practiced voodoo in any form. Additionally, Ivanna recalled that her supervisor asked her to create Black Lives

Matter social media posts for her department due to her knowledge of Black studies and racial identity. In contrast, the way her department requested her to rewrite specific phrases of "We stand with Black Lives Matter" showcased a desire to recycle current narratives instead of increasing their level of cultural competence.

Ivanna noted because she and her colleagues at the entry level did the work of racial justice, their decision-making authority was limited. Ivanna mentioned how she wants to see her upper management participate in more training and become increasingly involved with antiracism work. Ivanna said she has grown tired of seeing herself and her colleagues at the entry level pulling the weight around racial justice work, and "carrying all these things." As noted in existing literature, Black women in student affairs have often identified the spaces in which they feel depreciated and where they do not have the power of decision making (West, 2015). Such a challenge makes it critical for Black women to have the emotional support to sustain their work in places where there are negative race-related behaviors, which can also assist Black women who navigate work at the graduate level (Apugo, 2017; Williams et al., 2005). Ivanna discussed wanting her leadership to train those in upper management, noting that effort would assist with her persistence in the department.

Sunny discussed the performativity of her institution and noted they erected a monument dedicated to Black Lives but had yet to commit to the actual institutional change that needs to occur. Sunny mentioned multiple times through the interview and focus group that she had not found belonging in her role; in particular, she felt if the university focused on institutional reform, such action would yield more transformational change than an object dedicated to the Black Lives Lost. Sunny also discussed her institution promoting initiatives in 2020 that were not updated or carried out. Such a lack of accountability had further exacerbated the

organizational dimension of campus racial climate, where organizational challenges and policies impact the employee (Bess & Dee, 2008; Milem et al., 2005). For Sunny, disappointment with her organization occurred explicitly through observing the performativity of institutional policy. Although the lack of following through on reform efforts was not discriminatory, institutional indifference about the matter exhibited the core of the organization's values and mission.

Not all of the coresearchers' experiences functioned in institutional performativity. Rico recalled having Black people in multiple levels within the residence life department and division of student affairs. Rico felt empowered to talk with Black upper level administrators with whom he worked about the performativity he experienced; however, he noted these conversations reflected his practice regardless of placement, as he often called out performativity and lack of cultural competence to his supervisors.

Rico's perceived ability to correct performativism in his various roles, though a part of his personality, was uncommon among all coresearchers. Many coresearchers did not feel that they had trustworthy and authentic outlets. Similarly from existing literature, Black graduate students value mentorship and persist better in departments with authentic relationships with higher level colleagues (Acosta et al., 2015; Grant, 2012; Williams et al., 2005). Many coresearchers described feeling powerless and felt because they were entry level, they did not possess the power to change race-based ignorance and anti-Blackness. It is essential to highlight in Rico's interview, he mentioned having Black administrators throughout his organizations allowed him to communicate openly about anti-Black incidents that bothered him.

The coresearchers expressed a desire for more than power; they also advocated for higher ranking positions and for upper administration to understand their experience. In most cases, the coresearchers felt performativity emerged from departments having good statements, but lacking

action. Moreover, many people exit the residence life field because they are burned out and participate in additional labor, yet without recognition for their work or access to upward mobility. I allude to the labor imbalance in my relationality section as I discuss that after my fourth year I was determined to leave residence life from burnout and the ongoing labor from first responding incidents and acting as an desultor for racialized incidents.

Black people, as disruptors in residential life department, make a difference beyond their hire; they are often disruptors. From Simon, Ivanna, and Henry's examples and the literature we can see that this happens when higher education as a field does not retain these professionals, when we do not provide them wellness, or give them power in the department when we do not hire up—we lose them (Weaver-Douglass, 2022). Subsequently, this great resignation sends a message to those in the department that antiracism is not truly a priority, but rather, is a facade.

Racial Place and Space

Critical phenomenology builds upon Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2012) phenomenology of perception. As a philosopher, Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012) stated, "The body is the vehicle of being in the world and, for a living being, having a body means being united with a definite milieu, merging with certain projects, and being perpetually engaged therein." (p.84). From exploring the coresearchers' lived-in experiences and perceived safety, merge with and cause them to engage with anti-Blackness as their physical body is completely merged with the racial-spatial aspects of living in residence. Additionally, they further must engage within their physical body the interactions with national incidents that further project racism onto the employee.

Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012) stated the body is the vehicle in the living world engaging with the outside world, and in this study, I explored how bodies intersected with the campus climate. The physicality of the coresearchers' Black bodies within their campus spaces and their

inability to separate their race from historically white spaces reflected a critical need to further explore how the external world ties to Black individuals' embodiment of residence life. I use the term "embodiment of residence life" because the coresearchers were not connected to their positions, but to the overarching higher education system. The racial embodiment of residence life became evident through the themes of socialization and expectations of the physicality of the Black body and wellness; to Merleau-Ponty's point, an individual cannot be separate from their body. How an individual perceives their world is tied into this embodiment of living, of physically being in a place, and of taking up physical space in the world.

In some ways, embodiment due to race ties back to the strain of a Black person who lives and works on campus. According to the coresearchers' narratives, the past historical legacy of ownership of the Black body tied to their present professional roles. To many of them, such a historical legacy gripped the system and was impenetrable with acts of performative activism; yet, actual transformative change could get at the root causes of racial injustice. Because of the coresearchers' embodiment of residence life, space and place were critical to their identities as Black employees of their institutions. I found the embodiment of Blackness at an HWI created a harmful space and place that often led to the BRSAPs experiencing occupational distress from handling weapons, experiencing assault, having colleagues believe they could physically violate a BRSAP, and weaponizing their reactions against any transgressions. When personnel at institutions, especially HWIs, do not consider the marginalization of Black people beyond the performative, it creates a harmful environment for the worker, especially the residential life employee who resides on campus.

When I considered the sociopolitical climate of the coresearchers' experiences, the Black counterspaces and radical healing emerged in many ways. A few coresearchers mentioned the

political environment when talking about their institutions, often noting a dissonance had come from navigating the political climate where they felt one way, but were departmental representatives and subsequently felt pressured to act in another way. The BRSAPs' organizational involvement was often a convoluted process.

The coresearchers discussed wanting to do or say many things, but felt as representatives of the institution, they were representative of that department. Many expressed a feeling of being trapped by the department's expectations. The coresearchers knew they must delicately discuss their genuine emotions; however, they also wanted to warn others about these experiences, such as telling them not to come or empowering them to leave the institution. One example of feeling trapped in the institution was evident from Simon's reservations about telling a job candidate the truth on a Zoom screen, and also reflected his isolation from seeing all the Black RDs from his interview exit the institution. Although Simon wanted other Coworkers of Color, he noted that he does not want anyone to endure the racial injustices he had faced in his tenure.

Regarding the coresearchers' perception of wellness, there was no fear of racism. Most BRSAP were aware of the place of race in higher education; for example, the Supreme Court's ruling to overturn affirmative action in the United States in 2023 showed how general concern for racial justice is dim at the highest levels of the U.S. government (Lyerly, 2023). The BRSAPs in this study, who all held positions at HWIs, understood that racism is endemic to the system and occurs regularly. It is not that the BRSAPs were surprised that racism occurs; rather, they felt that institutions continuing to dehumanize Black individuals will perpetuate racism and unchecked anti-Blackness. As such, many coresearchers kept returning to the idea that BRSAPs need advocacy and advocates on their teams.

Still, the coresearchers felt such an ongoing cycle is tiring, and indicative of what is

happening in the United States. Moreover, U.S. systems and powers still need to see the importance of racial reconciliation and antiracism. When the news looks terrible, People of Color are pressured to step up to the task of racial justice work in higher education departments. The coresearchers, such as Ivanna and Simon, noted more departments should take certain basics of racial justice work, such as training and hiring, seriously. It is unfair and laborious for Personnel of Color, more specifically Black personnel in the workplace to take on all aspects of race when other professionals should be equipped with the tools to respond to the racial climate of the institution.

The coresearchers' stories made clear that the sociopolitical climate is a turbulent one, with many bureaucratic forces for People of Color left unacknowledged. I found this climate is something that must be considered when recognizing that Black RDs exist in environments that are hostile for them, but still work to support these students because they love their jobs and students. Sunny and Ivanna made this dichotomy clear through their examples of assisting other Black students and recognizing the importance of caring for the community.

Radical Healing

The coresearchers' emphasis on radical healing was all about community. Almost every aspect of hope and joy discussed in the focus group involved sharing joy with others like them and paralleled their feelings of belonging, an aspect many felt they most lacked. Notably, the coresearchers did not mention finding joy or hope through their broader campuses or departments. Belonging for Black campus members is a familiar theme in existing literature; the coresearchers' narratives reflected decades of research around belonging (Garvey et al., 2018; Mwangi, 2016; Strayhorn, 2018); however, many coresearchers gave a fresh perspective regarding the connections BRSAPs make in relation to how their communities assist them in

functioning in this space and place. The BRSAPs in this study exhibited belonging through their community, but not always in grandiose ways. Ivanna discussed how solidarity in wearing the same color or having a group chat of the "1%" was enough to create a meaningful connection in community.

Having and being in community are separate entities, and BRSAPs need both. The coresearchers emphasized that they need communities of other Black people to assist them in feeling less isolated and lessen their experiences as desultors or tokens on campus. I emphasize the BRSAPs work as desultors over tokenism due to the nature of BRSAP work and the need to jump from space to space and perform showmanship. For example, Simon who identified as Black, Caribbean, and Latinx was used by the university to fill the gap of multiple areas. The university which operates in performativity then also wanted Simon to perform his job duties solely based on his racial connections to the group.

These types of behaviors greatly impact the *health status* and the *work evaluation and experience* domains of occupational wellness (Chari et al., 2018). A first responders the employees already have a difficult task of handling multiple situation but now as Black employee's the administration or supervisor is additional layer of responsibility for which the employee is taxed (Baez, 2000; Padilla, 1994). Hiring other groups of People of Color may assist in the effort lift the burden on Black employees; although Black people hold many identities, they cannot be the sole representative from an employment standpoint of their identity. Black employees have the ability, but often not the capacity, to be all.

Being in community is vastly different from having community; past literature emphasized this point, where outsiders often wonder why Black people need these spaces when grouped in community (Griffin et al., 2016; Tatum, 1997). The coresearchers felt that narratives

of nationwide racial incidents and incidents against racial advancement have allowed Black people to unite compositionally to navigate and understand national issues. These narratives have also provided BRSAPs with camaraderie and the secure outlet so many desperately seek.

As an example, Rico noted much of his upper administration were People of Color. Rico's narrative did not support the mindset that all People of Color supported him but he noted Black hope and joy probably decrescendos at the entry and middle levels if there is no through line throughout the upper administration. Organizationally, this trajectory connects back to hiring and retaining Black people in the department, a pinnacle of the campus racial climate (Milem et al., 2005). A throughline of compositional diversity was evident in both Sunny's and Simon's responses, as they each described using their power and authority in residence life to strategically connect and celebrate with Black people by being present and encouraging colleagues and students.

With robust compositional diversity, BRSAPs are given the space and place to be their authentic selves. The coresearchers felt they could have a space and place to build hope and joy through a more robust network of Black people. These findings about connecting and valuing community also aligned with the role of counterspaces and Black placemaking in higher education to create space and agency (Tichavakunda, 2020; Warren & Coles, 2020; West, 2017). Black people create these spaces; in this case, departmental support in encouraging them to work in these spaces is critical. Conversely, Ivanna noted her department did not allow her to go to professional development that would enable her to create networks and bring back essential resources for Black employees, which reflected a form of blocking opportunity for more aspects of Black placemaking.

Ivanna and other coresearchers often discussed the simple ways in which they found joy

and hope to promote practices of Black placemaking. The coresearchers discussed supporting one another, eating meals together, and playing music that reflected their racial identity. These actions brought hope and joy to the coresearchers. Additionally, their counter spaces were not just spaces of community, but rather were counter spaces designed explicitly by communities of Black people, where the coresearchers did not have to feel inauthentic and could exchange ideas and resources to cope with the anti-Blackness they faced on campus.

Implications & Recommendations

This research study provides a new lens on the intersection race and campus live-in workers particularly concerning their physical safety, relationship with campus police, Black mental health, and secondary trauma. While research in other disciplines has addressed many of these issues, higher education and student affairs literature rarely cover this specific context of campus workers.

When considering the physical safety and intersections of wellness, the occupational wellness framework contextualizes what Black people are experiencing living and working on campus (Chari et al., 2018); while campus racial climate addresses many aspects of the campus environment, the physical body, or embodiment, of a Black person on campus significantly impacts their existence within that environment. For example, we see this when considering how working on campus as a Black man affected Simon when he faced physical assault from a White woman at an HWI. His harassment incident created a dissonance with his department, as he had to continually advocate for his physical safety, which in turn impacted his well-being.

New implications to higher education also come from the coresearcher's discussion on the relationship with campus police, which is often discussed in literature from the standpoint of victimization and not one of a colleague working on campus (Edwards et al., 2019; Harris & Amutah-Onukagh, 2019). Again, for Black people, the history of policing and police brutality,

from all of the sociohistorical impacts that exist in our nation, creates a barrier to wellness for Black Americans damaging their communities (Waldron, 2021). This study further highlights the implications of race and policing in the U.S. but in a context that places Black people in a collegial level of power on within their roles.

This study's implication on Black mental health further magnifies issues around anxiety, burnout, isolation, and lack of belonging, among other aspects of Black worker's mental health in higher education (Jackson Preston et al., 2023). Coresearchers discussed many issues that impacted their mental health working in historically White residence life departments, specifically how their isolation and lack of community created mental health anxiety, as well as poor interactions with students, colleagues, and supervisors.

One implication regarding secondary trauma connects to the relationship of BRSAPs and Students of Color, which is common in higher education when workign closely with students (Jackson Preston et al,., 2023; Lynch, 2019). BRSAPs often advocate for their students and peers, wanting them to feel empowered in their Blackness and have a community to work within. Studies like Harper & Hurtado (2007) discuss the powerlessness Staff of Color feel when working with students of color, and the current study confirms their findings, particularly for Black people and the close ties they carry with students. With all that BRSAP experience working on campus I offer a frame that center their experiences and healing on campus.

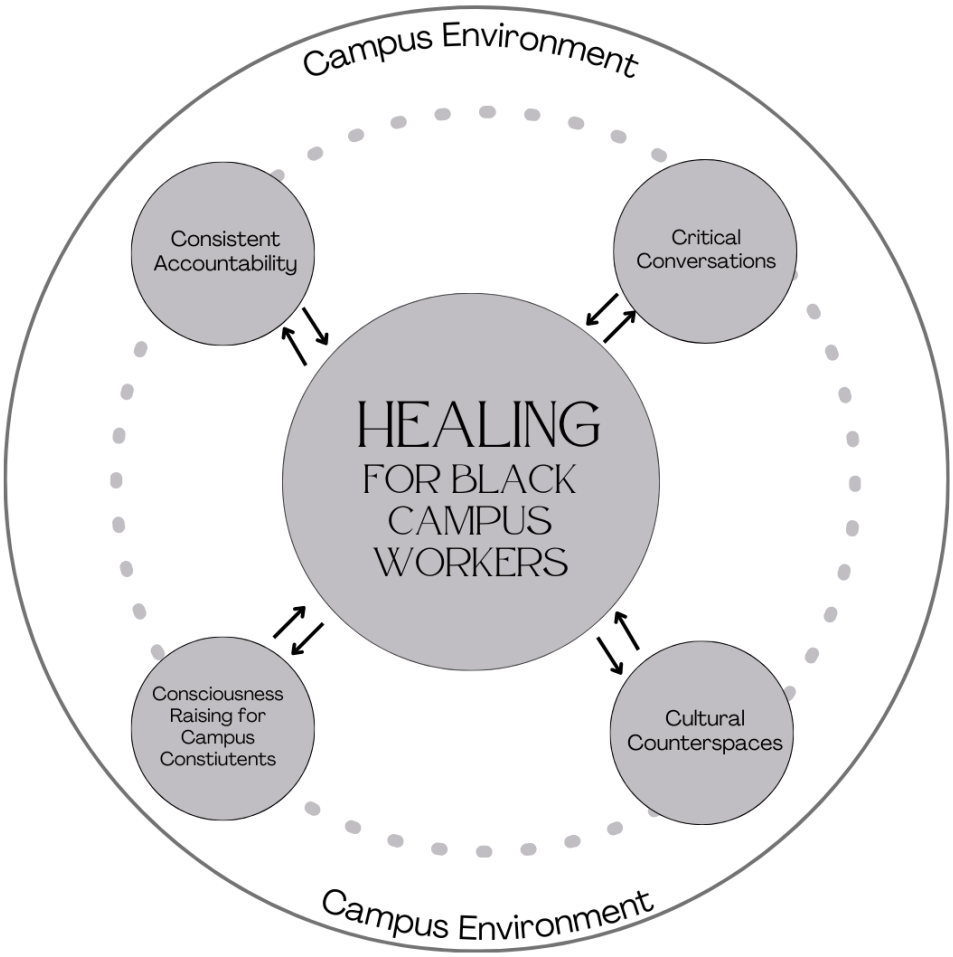
Toward a Black Campus Worker Healing Framework

Higher education literature cites that there is a hostile campus climate for both students workers it is filled with occupational distress (Briscoe, 2022; Griffin et al., 2011; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Santa-Ramirez, 2018). I offer that elements of radical healing and Black placemaking can create a healing framework for campus workers when considering their unique

positioning as supporters to students and the campus community (French et al., 2020; Hunter et al, 2016; Tichavakunda, 2020). This framework is a evolving work *toward* a Black Campus Healing Framework for Campus Workers. This framework involves action and community oriented steps towards healing from through (a) consistent accountability, (b) critical conversations, (c) consciousness raising for campus constituents, and (d) cultural counterpaces. I provide this framework as my practical recommendations to this study thought these examples I position BRSAP as Black Campus Workers in an effort to show not only my recommendations but how this framework can add to higher education and student affairs literature.

Figure 2

Black Campus Worker Healing Framework



Toward Consistent Accountability. Institutions are accountable to BRSAP and other from an organizational aspect of the campus climate but often they fail to create an environment that sustains and retains Black campus workers (Steele, 2018; Weaver-Douglass, 2022). Institutions often use terminology and language such as diversity, equity, and inclusion and some have created strategic plans, yet many, especially, historically white and ivy league neglect more transformational approaches that lead to critical action in response to racism against anti-Blackness (Cole & Harper, 2017; Meikle & Morris, 2022; Mustaffa, 2017). The organizational dimension of campus racial climate surrounding policies, hiring, and training will be most beneficial in assisting departments and institutions in enacting change (Milem et al., 2005). In addition, to this creating sustainable policies that encourage BRSAP will create a stronger worker well-being by enforcing policies that create civility and pleasantness of worker's physical surroundings, including policies on discrimination and harrassment (Chari et al., 2018).

BRSAP are connected to campus from policies, like hiring policies and due to the entry-level nature of the resident director (RD) position, RDs are often in less powerful positions than other residential life professionals. This study's findings suggest a prevalence of anti-Black racism occurring at HWIs and in the United States more broadly, and BRSAP are often not distributed the most power in their entry level positions. The sociopolitical climate within residence life does not always create barriers based on race, but can be racially adjacent. Because the BRSAPs' structurally have limited power and control, improving awareness of power dynamics and being open to equity in the professional related processes, such as but not limited to hiring professional development, and retention, will be helpful in increasing belonging and retention for BRSAP. For example, if Ivanna's department allowed her to attend a professional development opportunity that supported Black people, this understanding and redistribution of

power would have empowered and motivated her in the field. Allowing BRSAPs to explore racial justice resources could lessen them from leaning to escapism, affecting BRSAPs to the point of attrition.

Toward Critical Conversations. The coresearchers discussed performative activism thoroughly. Action must go beyond simply training employees once or twice on racial justice, if at all, and instead incorporate these trainings into mission- and values-centered approaches (Worthington et al., 2020). Performative activism is a growing concern in society and impacts morale and transparency within institutions (Beatty et al., 2020; Ezell, 2023). The practice of sending a Black person as a desultor into their community or other marginalized communities shows the entire department needs to be better equipped to handle situations of racial injustice. These actions are performative and facilitate burnout; conversely, working with communities could change departmental values and provide possibilities to support and uplift professionals as in-group members, especially surrounding racial justice for Black professionals.

Critical consciousness that is both a part of this study's methodological framework and radical healing is dialogical and collectivist in bringing people together to consider multiple perspectives and to produce healing (Freire, 1973; French et al., 2020; Zúñiga & Nagda, 2001). While institutions usually lead with the performative it is up to the leadership of the institutions to recognize and dismantle power from within the organization to create lasting change. By creating critical conversations with their employees, higher education organizations can create an environment that opens dialogue and difference for its employees (Zúñiga & Nagda, 2001).

Toward Consciousness Raising for Campus Constituents. From the BRSAPs experiences with their physical safety much of the occupational distress occurred due to the lack of consciousness of colleagues, students, and administrators. For example, Rico who was sitting

through a meeting where other white colleagues cried regarding the murder of George Floyd but did not ask him, a Black man how the news was impacting him. For Black Campus Workers being existing in a campus racial climate that over looks or harms them is mundane (Ray, 2019) However, by raising the consiousness of campus constitutents through training, raising awareness, and upholding the previous element of advancing consistent accountability when harm occurs to Black people it creates an environment that invites healing for Black campus workers.

Holding supervisors and colleagues accountable will assist in raising their consciousness. Evaluation and Experience are a part of the occupational wellness frame and distinctly mention the affects of positive and negative emotions at work (Chari et al., 2018). Not only through having difficult conversations but also having strong relationships with peers and supervisors will BRSAPs have a healthier working climate.

Toward Cultural Counterspaces. As the coresearchers noted, it is difficult to thrive at an HWI as a BRSAP. Two of their most prolific complaints about higher education involved slow-moving processes and institutional bureaucracy. Nevertheless, residence life departments can create space for Black placemaking (Hunter et al, 2019; Tichavakunda, 2020). BRSAPs work and perform duties for their institutions, but all work is not equitable. BRSAPs need spaces to escape the demands they face as they perform emotional labor and cultural taxation within the institution.

As mentioned in the discussion section, these spaces are needed for Black placemaking to strengthen belonging among BRSAPs and serve as counter spaces that promote occupational distress. Radical healing also calls for collectivism and strengh and resistance for racially marginalized groups when working together to promote social injustice (French et al., 2020). In

order to move towards cultural counter spaces, administrators and department leads should consider how areas of Black placemaking could aid in the behavioral and psychological aspects of campus climate for Black professionals (Hunter et al., 2016; Hurtado et al, 1999; Milem et al, 2005; Tichavakunda, 2020). Having more time in community could yield more opportunities for to a higher sense of belonging for Black workers and retain these professionals to the institution.

Scholarly Recommendations: Future Directions for Research

As evidenced from this study, BRSAPs' experiences have considerable depth. First, much of the coresearchers' trauma and harm experienced came from the graduate level and early entry-level years as professionals. Future directions for research include studies on graduate-level RDs, especially their experiences with power dynamics in organizations. The other recommendations are as follows.

- **Future research on organizations and leadership.** The data in this study present an opportunity to delve further into detail about the organizational structures and accountability measures around wellness in higher education. The coresearchers mentioned their supervisors and colleagues contributing to their occupational wellness and distress. Additionally, campus partners were mentioned explicitly in the data. Conducting future research on the organizational structures and power distribution of residence life for BRSAPs could yield dynamic results regarding leadership in these departments and their relation to entry-level employee wellness in the field. Additionally consider the aspect of the racialized organization in higher education (Ray, 2019), and how residence life departments are racially structured and operate in racism.
- **Consider the role of the graduate-level RDs in the live-in role, and further**

research on all campus housing professionals. Further research is needed to establish a more direct relationship between graduate students, power dynamics, and their positionality within the unique role of living and working on campus. Some accounts presented in this research and the data set discussed poorly executed protections of graduate BRSAP wellness. Although I focused on full-time professionals, several tragic incidents occurred while coresearchers were students, warranting further focus on paraprofessionals in residence life. Researchers should further study all live-in staff positions as the role they are employed to is demanding and highly student-facing (Blimling, 2015). It is critical that though these positions are entry-level student-led, they are considered, especially as frontline workers and crisis responders.

Conclusions

This study explored the intersections of the live-in experience and BRSAPs at HWIs. I also focused on how the intersection of Blackness and living-in shaped the occupational wellness of these professionals. Although the focus and framing of this study included campus racial climate its associated dimensions, this study also highlighted some ways in which coresearchers' health, mental health, and physical safety impacted their wellness as RDs. Using critical phenomenology and critical consciousness methods, primarily through the lens of radical healing, I further addressed sociopolitical themes within higher education and the lived experiences of BRSAPs.

The findings and discussion of this study explored socialization aspects of BRSAPs; campus racial climate influences over wellness, physical safety, and performative activism; and the place and space of racialized experiences. The discussion of this study also addressed how

radical healing has occurred for BRSAPs at HWIs.

Significant advances have been made in racial justice awareness and race relations around the United States; however, performativity has continued to prevent higher education institution departments from creating transformative change around antiracism. More accountability and less performance from departments and leaders is needed. Giving Black people who work and live-in the campus residence the opportunity to create more space to celebrate, practice solidarity, and uplift their community is vital to the sense of belonging for BRSAPs.

I want to end with a wish from one of the coresearchers regarding this work. Simon captivated with his sentiments on resident assistants (Ras) what I hope will happen with this research and the impact I want to have on residence life for Residence Directors. Simon stated:

> I hope this goes somewhere. I don't know what this will look like. . . .. I don't know what the end result will look like or what correlations or things that will pop up from the study. But whatever it is, like if you have the ability to spread it everywhere, please do. Because I feel like it's always like the small people who experience things that have to continue be a champion for others, and like people are so ready to read all these ACPA publications, but never really put it to work.
>
> I hope that people read it and I hope people like learn from it because I'm tired of being the one to question people or to tell people to do their homework. And I'm sure you might see that in other spaces, too, especially in residential life. I don't know what it is or people love to say, "oh, you get so much out of this job", so much experience, so much transitional work. But we end up being diversity officers, career advisors, housing, orientation, like, counselors. We do like literally everything on campus, yet we're one of the least paid, least appreciated.
>
> And so I hope you send this out to every director, every board of directors. I hope people who like don't realize that . . . or people who think that they're like performing in a way that is acceptable check themselves. I . . . I hope this goes somewhere and it's useful and is a start of changing things because that's one of the things . . . what are the Black RAs saying that people aren't listening? What void are they screaming? What hallways are they screaming out the hall? [Or] down the hallway to that no one's listening to them.

Appendix A

Research Design Chart

Research Question					
.How do the live-in experiences of Black residential student affairs professionals (BRSAPs) shape their perceptions of their occupational wellness in campus housing units at historically white institutions (HWIs) in U.S. higher education?					
	Timeline	**Design Stage**	**Description**	**Desired Outcome**	**Assignee**
PRE-DATA COLLECTION					
1	**Recruitment**	*Recruitment* See pages 97 - 99	Using purposeful sampling, the Primary researcher began research recruitment. To recruit coresearchers an incentive of $45 was offered ($15 for each data collection point)	I recruited 5 coresearchers to my study. *Please see qualifications below.*	***Primary Researcher***
Desired Co-researcher Qualifications					
(a) lived on campus at an HWI for at least two full semesters in their role, (b) presently work full-time as a residential professional at a doctoral degree-granting institution in the United States, (c) self-identify as a member of the African diaspora, and (d) be 18 years or older.					
2	**Pre-Data Collection**	*Sign Consent Form* (see pages 101- 102)	Primary researcher will provide Consent form for co-researchers to sign to be included in the study	Co-researchers will sign the consent form on Qualtrics.	***Primary Researcher and co-researchers***
3	**Pre-Data Collection**	*ELMS Site* (see pages	The ELMS site will contain (a) the		

		101- 102)	informational video, (b) a link to the informed consent form, (c) examples of visual data, (d) zoom links for the focus groups and joint content analysis, (e) subfolders for the co-researchers to upload their participatory diagram and reflective journals, and (f) contact information for me so they may connect with me during the research process.		
	Timeline	**Design Stage**	**Description**	**Desired Outcome**	**Assignee**
4	**Pre-Data Collection**	*Optional Meeting for question and answer*	Primary researcher will provide a space for co-researchers to meet with her 1:1 to discuss any questions or concerns about the study.	Build rapport and answer any hesitations with study	***Primary Researcher***
DATA COLLECTION					
5	**Data Collection Point #1**	*Individual Interview* (See pages 107-108)	90-minute semi-structured individual interviews consisting of questions that target the co-researcher's more intimate lived experiences.	Gain an understanding of the personal lived experiences of co-researchers.	***Primary Researcher and Co-researchers***
6	**Data Collection Point #2**	*Co-Researcher Reflective Video* (See	Co-researchers create a brief 3-5-minute video about their journey in the data collection phase and	Encourage co-researchers an opportunity to reflect on the	***Co-researchers***

		page 108-110)	submit a question for the focus group.	phenomenon being studied and cognitively obtain a deeper level of thinking through journaling (Watson, 2010).	
7	**Data Collection Point #3**	*Focus Group Interview* (See pages 110-113)	Co-researchers will be split into 3-4 groups to discuss occupational wellness and their job function.	Creating an environment among the co-researchers for co-creating knowledge, shared understanding, and healing.	***Primary Researcher and Co-researchers***
	Timeline	**Design Stage**	**Description**	**Desired Outcome**	**Assignee**
			DATA ANALYSIS		
8	**Transcription Process**		I hired a transcription service to transcribe the interviews and focus group.	By listening to the interviews and find the "sense of the whole" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 556) even without self-transcribing.	
9	**Reflexive Thematic Analysis**	*Data Analysis* See pages (114-117)	(a) Data Categorization through phenomenological theming (b) Data familiarization by re-watching interviews and	I chose to use thematic analysis to explore the lived experiences of the co-researchers without having	

			memo taking (c) Theoretical mapping (d) Reviewed Potential themes	to consider quantities seeking the "keyness" of the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82).	
10	**Reflexivity**	*Bracketing* (See page 117-119)	I will use bracketing to be reflective throughout my study to focus on the lived experiences of my co-researchers. I will do this through creating a weekly video log.	Transcendental reflection is a concept in critical phenomenology, where I use intense reflection to condition my possibilities in the phenomena I am studying (Davis, 2020)	***Primary Researcher***

Appendix B

Pre-Study Questionnaire

Black Residential Student Affairs Professionals Study - Dissassa

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Start of Block: Informed Consent

QA
Consent to participate in
Exploring The Lived Experiences of Black Residential Student Affairs Professionals regarding Occupational Wellness At Historically White Institutions

IRB Approval: 1933230
Purpose of the Study
This research is being conducted by Di-Tu Dissassa at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you currently identify as a Black staff member who works and lives in residence on campus at a historically white institution (HWI). The purpose of this research is to explore the lived experiences of Black Residential Student Affairs Professionals (BRSAPs) at HWIs and how Blackness influences their unique living and working conditions in campus housing units.

Components of the Study/Procedures
In this study, I will ask you to complete a brief questionnaire, an individual interview, a reflective video, and a focus group interview. Please see below for more information on each data collection point. All data collection procedures will occur virtually.

Pre-interview (approx. 5-10 minutes): You will complete the consent form through Qualtrics. After agreeing to consent, Qualtrics will display a pre-study questionnaire form regarding your demographics and brief information to assist in organizing the study. You will be asked to complete a pre-survey questionnaire with a pseudonym name, years of experience in higher education/student affairs, to identify your race and gender, and the context of your live-in experience. The consent form must be signed electronically through Qualtrics before you participate in data collection..

Individual Interview: (1) 90-minute semi-structured individual interview. During these interviews, I will ask you questions found in the data protocol. The interviews are the first data collection point to engage you in the study. These interviews will be conducted virtually.

Reflective Video: I will request you to share a 5-minute video/audio reflection about a significant moment that occurred for you in the individual interview and how it relates to your racialized work experiences. After your reflection, I will have you submit a question for the focus group. Then I will send the questions from the collective participants to you to select questions you would like to prioritize for the focus group.

Focus Groups: (1) 90-minute focus group. As mentioned earlier, you will state your availability on the questionnaire and I will offer one focus group based on the collective availabilities. We will discuss our collective questions together. These focus groups will be conducted virtually.

Here are examples of the questions:
1. Think about your experiences as a professional living on campus and describe that in as much detail as possible.
2. Please share an experience on campus that affects your perceptions of well-being at work?

The interviews and focus groups will be audiorecorded and videorecorded and transcribed. During the interview and focus group, handwritten notes will be taken by the investigator. Please let me know if this is comfortable for you; if not, I can take handwritten notes only.

Potential Risks and Discomforts
There are no known risks besides trauma surrounding racially charged incidents and well-being from personal experiences. If you feel any instances of trauma surrounding the discussion of racially charged incidents. You have the right to deny to answer and move to the next question. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer or may discontinue your participation at any time.

To mitigate the risk of breach of confidentiality pseudonyms will be used for each participant and will allow me to maintain your confidentiality. To increase confidentiality, I will ask you to create a pseudonym and allow additional time in the Zoom waiting room for you to rename yourself before the focus group interview starts, if this is an option you desire. Your information will be protected to the maximum extent and information stored on password protected UMD account.

Potential Benefits
The benefits to you include: (a) the opportunity to contribute your experience as important information to dismantling anti-Blackness at HWIs; (b) a sense of positive emotions to being in community throughout your participation in this study.

Other benefits include advancing research on Black professionals at historically white institutions. In the future, other people might benefit from this study by highlighting areas of strength and areas for improvement around the areas of interest.

Confidentiality
Any potential loss of confidentiality by using pseudonyms and password-protected file storage. The transcripts will be stored and password-protected using UMDbox. The investigator will only have access to identifiable information. If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. After 1 year, I will delete any identifiable information from the password-protected UMDbox account.

Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland - College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

During the focus group, you are encouraged to use pseudonyms. In addition, I request that you not share anything said during the focus group after the session ends to maintain confidentiality for fellow participants

Compensation
You will receive an incentive of a $45 gift card. My study includes an individual interview, a reflective video, and a focus group interview for each coresearcher. You will receive a $15 towards your gift card for each data collection activity in which you participate. For example, if you participate in all activities, you will receive a $45 gift card.

Right to Withdraw and Questions
Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

Your decision to participate or not participate in this study will have no positive or negative effect on your standing or employability at your institution.

If you are an employee or student at the University of Maryland, your academic standing as a student or employability at UMD will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study.

If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:

Di-Tu Dissassa
xxxxx@umd.edu
XXX-XXX-XXXX

Participant Rights
If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:
University of Maryland College Park
Institutional Review Board Office
1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, Maryland, 20742
E-mail:irb@umd.edu
Telephone: 301-405-0678
For more information regarding participant rights, please visit: https://research.umd.edu/irb-research-participants.

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. Please print/save a copy of this form for your records If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge the following: Your participation in the study is voluntary. You are 18 years of age. You are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation at any time for any reason.

- ○ I consent to participate in the study (1)
- ○ I do not consent to participate in the study (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Consent to participate in Exploring The Lived Experiences of Black Residential Student Affairs Pro... = I do not consent to participate in the study

QB Audio and video recording is optional; please indicate whether you do or do not wish to be recorded individual interview.

- ○ I give my consent to be audio and video recorded during my interview (1)
- ○ I do not give my consent to be audio and video recorded during my interview (2)

QC Audio and video recording is optional; please indicate whether you do or do not wish to be recorded focus group.

I give my consent to be audio and video recorded during the focus group. (1)

- ○ I do not give my consent to be audio and video recorded during the focus group. (2)

QD Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

End of Block: Informed Consent

Start of Block: Questionnaire Block

Q1 *Thank you for your participation. This form provides demographics for the primary researcher about your background that will allow her to understand if you meet all of the*

criterion of the study. The information collected from this questionnaire is solely accessible to and used by the primary researcher for data management purposes.

Q2 **Chosen Pseudonym Name**
A pseudonym name is a name that you would like to use for anonymity in place of your name.

_____

Q3 **Racial Demographic**
Please mark all that apply; also feel free to write in your response.

- ☐ African-American/Black (this includes persons of Caribbean or African descent) (1)
- ☐ Asian/Asian American (2)
- ☐ American Indian /Alaskan Native (3)
- ☐ Latinx/Hispanic (4)
- ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (5)
- ☐ White (6)
- ☐ Two or More Races (7)
- ☐ Other (8) _____

Q4 **Gender Demographic**
Feel free to write in your response.

- ☐ Enter Gender Here (8)

_____

Q5 Degree-level Obtained
Please choose your highest degree level obtained

- [ ] High School Diploma/GED (1)
- [ ] Associate Level Degree (2)
- [ ] Some Undergraduate Experience (3)
- [ ] Bachelor Level Degree (4)
- [ ] Some Master's Experience (5)
- [ ] Master Level Degree (6)
- [ ] Some Doctoral Experience (7)
- [ ] Doctoral Level Degree (8)

Q6 Years of Experience in Higher Education/Student Affairs
Please choose your years of experience in higher education Mark only one oval.

- ○ 0-6 months (1)
- ○ 6 months - One Year (2)
- ○ 1-3 years (3)
- ○ 4-7 years (4)
- ○ 7-10 years (5)
- ○ 10+ years (6)

Q7 Years of Experience in a Live-In Higher Education/Student Affairs Occupation
Please choose your years of experience in higher education as a live-on professional Mark only one oval

- ○ ● 0-6 months (1)
- ○ ● 6 months - One Year (2)
- ○ ● 1-3 years (3)
- ○ ● 4-7 years (4)
- ○ ● 7-10 years (5)
- ○ ● 10+ years (6)

Q8 Live-In Position Type
Please choose the type of community you have in your current live-in position.

- ○ Undergraduate Residence Life (1)
- ○ Graduate Residence Life (2)
- ○ Fraternity Housing (3)
- ○ Sorority Housing (4)
- ○ Other: (5)

Q9 Institution Type of Current Position
Please mark yes, no, or unsure

Q10 Is your current position at a historically white institution?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)
- ○ Unsure (3)

Q11 ○ Is your current position at a doctoral degree granting institution?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)
- ○ Unsure (3)

Q12 Region of Current Position
Please choose the region that your current institution is located in. The regions list is according

to the US Government region classification.
Mark only one oval.

○ NORTHEAST: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. (1)

○ MIDWEST: Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas. (2)

○ SOUTH: Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma. (3)

○ WEST: Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii. (4)

Q13 What timeframe is best for you to complete the components associated with this study?
See the informed consent form for details on the components of the study. Please mark all that apply; also, feel free to write in your response.

☐ Within One week (1)

☐ Within Two Weeks (2)

☐ Within Three Weeks (3)

☐ Within One Month (4)

☐ Within Two Months (5)

☐ Within Three months or more (6)

☐ Other (7) _____

Q14 What weeks work best for you to begin your participation in the data collection process?
Please mark all that apply; also feel free to write in your response.

- ☐ January 29 - February 4, 2023 (1)
- ☐ February 5 - February 11, 2023 (2)
- ☐ February 12 - February 18, 2023 (3)
- ☐ February 19 - February 25, 2023 (4)
- ☐ February 26 - March 4, 2023 (5)
- ☐ Other (6) _____

Q15 Would you like to meet with the primary researcher to discuss more details about the study?
Please mark yes, no, or unsure

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)
- ○ Unsure (3)

Q16 Are you interested in working with the primary researcher to publish research, present at conferences, or disseminate research through other mediums?
Please mark yes, no, unsure or write in your response.

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)
- ○ Unsure (3)

Q17 Are there any components described in the informed consent form that would deter you from completing the entire length of this study?

_____

Q18 Are there any components described in the informed consent form that would better assist you in completing the entire length of this study?

_____

Q27 Please list an email address where I can contact you

_____

End of Block: Questionnaire Block

Q27 Please list an email address where I can contact you

_____

End of Block: Questionnaire Block

Appendix C

Data Collection Protocol

RQ: *How do the live-in experiences of Black residential student affairs professionals (BRSAPs) shape their perceptions of their occupational wellness in campus housing units at historically white institutions (HWIs) in U.S. higher education?*

Individual Interview Protocol (90 minutes)

Opening: Hello, My name is Di-Tu Dissassa. Thank you for joining me for this interview. I am interviewing co-researchers for my research on the well-being of live-on Black Residential Student Affairs Professionals. I would like to address some logistics of our time together: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If at any time you wish to stop the interview, please let me know. You may withdraw at any time without consequence. I would like to audio/video record our conversations today. Only I will have access to the recordings, which will be used for note-taking and analysis purposes. You have the option to decline audio/video recording on the consent form. You have completed the consent form on Qualtrics, but I wanted to provide it if you need to review your consent to participate in this study. (Provide consent form—ask co-researchers to sign before we move on).

This study will consist of a brief questionnaire, an individual interview, a co-researcher reflective video, and a focus group interview. These data collection points will occur at different times, and I have provided more explanation on the instructional video on the ELMS page. I would like to record our session, and I will also take handwritten notes. Please let me know if this is comfortable.

- Think about your experiences as a professional living on campus and describe that in as much detail as possible [Experience]
    - Share an experience with me where you felt like your role (and or contributions to the department) is valued by the organization.
- Tell me about how you experience your living space (room, apartment, etc.). [Feeling]
- For the purpose of my study, I define personal well-being as an individual's quality of life that consists of physical, mental, and emotional health (Chari et al., 2018; Griffin et al., 2022). In what ways do your experiences with supervision support your well-being? [Knowledge]
- Please think back on a time when your experiences with evaluation (such as performance management or performance appraisals) supported your well-being. Please share your story. [Knowledge]

- While you've shared in the demographic questionnaire previously, how do you identify ethnically/racially? My question is connected to my follow-up questions…
- In recent years/months, share with me what significant national (international) incidents involving race have impacted you.
    - How have your experiences with the aforementioned incidents influenced your live-in role?
    - Now, during these experiences on the national (international) level involving race, what are your perceptions regarding how your racial/ethnic identity have been impacted while serving in your live-in role?
- Please share some examples of how/when your unit and/or the university have acknowledged the influence of anti-Blackness on you and your Black colleagues.
    - If the response is in negative:
        - In your opinion, what are the barriers preventing your work environment from supporting you during anti-Black incidents?
- If you could reimagine your workplace as an antiracist environment, share with me the ways you would like to experience this reimagined workplace.

Closing: Is there anything else you would like to discuss with me or tell me about with the remaining time? Do you have any questions for me? Pause for an answer. Thank you for your time and for sharing your experience with me. Thank you for your time. I will follow up soon to confirm your time for the focus groups if you are still interested and able to participate.

Coresearcher Reflective Video Prompt

Prompt: Record and share a 5-minute video/audio reflection on the elms site assignment titled "Reflective Video" about:

- What do you think was a salient moment for you in the interview, and how it relates to your racialized work experiences in residence life? (Suggest approximately 3 minutes).
- Through our individual interview, what structures in residence life do you question or affirm that produce wellness for Black residential student affairs professionals? (Suggest approximately 2 minutes).
- Please share a question with me

As a reminder, your recorded materials are protected under the informed consent letter you have signed to participate in this study. Therefore, your recording is protected and will only be viewed by me as the principal researcher. I will use the recordings to help shape the interview protocol for the focus group session we will all participate in during the coming weeks. Please upload your video/audio file using the pseudonym as the file name.

Focus Group Protocol (90 minutes)

Introduction to coresearchers:

Hello, and thank you for being here today! My name is Di-Tu Dissassa and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland. I appreciate your participation in my study about the lived experiences of Black Residential Student Affairs Professionals.

I would like to address some logistics of our time together: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If at any time you wish to stop the focus group, please let me know. You may withdraw at any time without consequence. I would like to audio/video record our conversations today. Only I will have access to the recordings, and they will be used for note-taking and analysis purposes. You have the option to decline audio/video recording on the consent form. All of you have completed the consent form, but I wanted to reshare your signed form with you and note that you would like to withdraw from the study without any penalty, I completely understand. The focus group discussion will focus on your overall occupational wellness:

Potential Focus Group Protocol (Semi-Structured Protocol because the questions may change as informed by the information I learn from the midpoint reflections from the co-researchers)

- Please share an experience on campus that affects your perceptions of well-being at work. [Experiences]
- An experience with the number of diverse staff?
- An experience with the history of the institution?
- Are there any experiences that have affected your mental health?
- Can you think of any interactions or practices that influence your well-being?
- How can or do we implement Black hope and Black joy into our work as BRSAP even with anti-Black experiences on campus?
- In what ways is your understanding of your well-being as a BRSAP heightened since participating in this study?

Conclusion

Do you have any questions for me? Is there anything else you all would like to discuss with me or tell me with the time we have remaining? I have recorded my notes and will share your responses' transcript with you for a final review. Again, I appreciate your time; if you need to contact me with any questions or concerns, please feel free to do so.

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