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The Intent of Residence Life Professionals to Leave the Field at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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The Intent of Residence Life Professionals to Leave the Field at
Historically Black Colleges and Universities

by
Cletra Peters

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Cletra Peters under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

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Cletra Peters

Name

April 6, 2018

Date

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Abstract

The Intent of Residence Life Professionals to Leave the Field at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Cletra Peters, 2018: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. Keywords: HBCUs, college environment, staff attrition, college housing, resident advisors

This mixed-methods research study was designed to explore and highlight the lived experiences of residence life professionals at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Data collection was completed using an online survey and one-on-one interviews. This study will contribute to the discussion of retaining live-in residence life professionals at HBCUs. This research study provided suggestions and opportunities for administrators to enhance the experience of residence life professionals while keeping the mission of educating HBCU students.

It is hoped that this study will continually prompt and influence dialogue to address the consistent attrition amongst residence life professionals, especially at HBCUs. The HBCU community is attractive to both students and professionals, but is also a common contributor to the decision to leave the position at HBCUs. This research will provide a platform to address the gap in literature on residence life professionals at HBCUs.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Residence life plays an important role in the experiences of residential students on campus. Living on campus can positively influence general cognitive growth and help students acclimate to their campuses (Reeder & Schmitt, 2013). Residence life, from its early beginnings, has been influenced by the parental role. From faculty members supervising their young students to the organizational roles of deans of men and women, residence life has evolved into the area within student affairs that not only houses students, but also seeks to provide a holistic learning environment both inside and outside of the classroom (Bettez & Suggs, 2012; Esters & Strayhorn, 2013; Hirt, Strayhorn, Amelink, & Bennett, 2006; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012).

The early development of higher education excluded Blacks from attending established colleges and universities. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) were created after the Civil War, and their main purpose was to educate Black citizens (Bettez & Suggs, 2012; Esters & Strayhorn, 2013; Gasman, 2013). Missionaries created these schools and sought to educate former slaves who wanted to learn and be trained (Brown, 2013). Today, HBCUs continue to be the choice of many Black students who seek nurturing environments and a family atmosphere (Brown, 2013).

Although HBCUs account for only a small portion of colleges and universities in the United States, they award one third of the bachelor's degrees earned by Blacks (Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). The HBCUs have increased enrollment and continue to make academic gains (Brown, 2013). Funding has and continues to be an issue for most HBCUs. Underfunding has led to lower salaries across the board for staff and faculty (Brown, 2013). Within student affairs and residence life, staff members continuously cite

lack of funds, operating with less faculty and staff, and poor infrastructures as repetitive concerns of HBCUs (Brown, 2013). Even with less, HBCUs continue to attract students and professionals who seek to provide a positive campus environment that aids in the persistence through graduation of students of color (Longmire-Avital & Miller-Dyce, 2015). For this chapter, the researcher discusses the statement of the problem, purpose statement, research problem, background and justification, deficiencies in the evidence, and the target audience.

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed by this study involved the attrition of residence life professionals at HBCUs. Residence life positions have attrition rates of approximately 45%, and little empirical data exist relative to the cause of this (Belch, Wilson, & Dunkel, 2009; Davidson, 2012; Lombardi, 2013). Although there is documented research on HBCUs, there is limited data specifically on residence life at HBCUs and attrition (Davidson, 2012; Lombardi, 2013). In addition, residence life departments in general are experiencing high attrition rates and burnout among their live in staff (Belch et al., 2009; Davidson, 2012; Lombardi, 2013). Davidson (2012) pointed out that attrition disrupts the residence hall environments. The students experience lack of continuity when new staff members are hired and have to adjust to new approaches to residence hall educational programming that address holistic learning (Davidson, 2012). Low pay and poor working conditions contribute to low job satisfaction, which, in turn, leads to attrition (Lombardi, 2013). High job satisfaction is pivotal to retaining professionals, high productivity and success in the workplace (Belch et al., 2009).

Although there is an adequate amount of research on student affairs professionals and work-life balance, the attrition of residence life professionals who live in the

residence halls at HBCUs has not been thoroughly investigated (Belch et al., 2009; Blakney, 2015). The cost and time spent recruiting new professionals are high, and turnover is having a negative effect on remaining staff. Turnover contributes to the decrease in productivity, and poor staff morale has a negative impact on the institution (Davidson, 2012; Lombardi, 2013). The goal of this study was to seek insight into the experiences of this particular group of residence life professionals and identify the causes of their departures.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine the reasons why residence life professionals leave or stay at an HBCU. Gaining insight into the factors will increase understanding of the conditions required for minimizing departure and enhancing retention of these professionals. Personal and professional considerations affecting decisions to leave or stay at the institution will also provide insight into this phenomenon. Some of the factors include communication issues, lack of flexibility, benefits, salary and opportunities for advancement.

The topic. There are many factors that contribute to the departure of residence life professionals at HBCUs, and they can be voluntary or involuntary factors (Lombardi, 2013). The economy, satisfaction, benefit packages, career advancement, and budgets are a few factors that contribute to departure from the field (Blimling, 2010; Lombardi, 2013). Full-time residence directors or residence life coordinators live in the residence halls with their students and are charged with providing a safe living and learning environment for a community of students. Residence directors or residence life coordinators living in the residence halls reported lack of personal space, stressful demands of the position, and poor supervision as reasons for leaving (Blakney, 2015).

Blakney also identified family concerns, lack of advancement opportunities, and a career interest outside of the residence life department as additional issues.

Research problem. Residence life departments are experiencing high attrition rates amongst their live in staff (Belch et al., 2009; Blakney, 2015). Some factors that contribute to attrition include lack of autonomy, low job satisfaction, poor work environments, and lack of advancement opportunities (Belch et al., 2009; Blakney, 2015). Attrition occurs in every organization, but the demands and intensity of residence life cause continuous turnover within the department (Blakney, 2015; Lombardi, 2013). When the decision has been made to leave, some of the reasons given by the staff include living conditions, salary, illness, institutional fit, and burnout (Belch et al., 2009; Lombardi, 2013). Within HBCUs, residence life professionals face the previously mentioned issues in addition to lack of staff, inadequate funding, and lackluster living conditions (Blakney, 2015; Hirt et al., 2006). The HBCU residence life professionals reported that their work was highly stressful and demanding (Blakney, 2015; Hirt et al., 2006).

Attrition affects students, residence life programs, and the institution in various ways. The cost to recruit and train new employees is significant and includes the funds spent on advertising the position, interviewing multiple candidates, and training the selected staff members (Lombardi, 2013). If the vacated position is not filled in a timely manner, other staff members have the burden of additional work, which may, in turn, affect the productivity of the institution and hinder services to students (Lombardi, 2013). Without these positions filled, programs within the residence halls may lack educational purpose and attention to student issues may not be timely (Davidson, 2012).

Background and Justification

The participants currently work or have worked in the residence life departments at HBCUs in the southeastern United States. Although attrition is a major issue in residence life across the nation, there are additional factors at HBCUs that contribute to the decision to leave (Blakney, 2015). Given the nature of the work at HBCUs, job satisfaction, burnout, and lack of funding are popular topics among HBCU professionals. Although residence life professionals at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) are facing similar issues as burnout and lack of job satisfaction, the discrepancies of state funds makes the experience a bit harder for HBCU professionals (Brown, 2013).

Despite the increased enrollments and academic successes at HBCUs, these institutions continue to be underfunded and are worse off than PWIs (Brown, 2013). Lower salaries, outdated infrastructure, and less staff are also factors that contribute to attrition at HBCUs (Brown, 2013). With such factors at HBCUs, retention of staff is harder to achieve (Brown, 2013). Barham and Winston (2006) observed that retention of professionals is “essential to the health of student affairs as a profession” (p. 64). Professionals who are retained reported high job satisfaction, good supervision, enjoyable environment, and effective communication (Belch et al., 2009; Davidson, 2012).

Community and racial uplift represented an essential part of the HBCU world. The HBCUs are known for the term *in loco parentis*, or in place of parent, and although that concept has been abolished, HBCUs still operate with that mindset (Blimling, 2010; Hirt et al., 2006). The term implies that the hired staff members will act as parents in the absence of the parents of the students. Students are attracted to HBCUs because it is known that faculty and staff provide advising beyond the classroom, and feel a sense of family (Collins & Hirt, 2006; Esters & Strayhorn, 2013; Hirt et al., 2006). These types of

communities provide an inclusive environment that aids in the retention and persistence of students of color and students with low-income backgrounds (Longmire-Avital & Miller-Dyce, 2015). Although professionals are willing to serve as surrogate family members for students, they are still required to perform the duties of the job in addition to other tasks assigned (Brown, 2013; Collins & Hirt, 2006).

The gap in the literature pertaining to student affairs functions at HBCUs necessitates research. This study was designed to enlighten professionals and students at HBCUs, particularly in the residence life departments, where administrators strive to retain residence life professionals at their institutions. The HBCUs constantly need to defend their existence and relevance in today's education system (Exkano, 2013). Although HBCUs account for a small portion of the colleges in the United States, one third of bachelor's degrees are awarded to Blacks by HBCUs (Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). Retaining qualified professional staff at these institutions is imperative to the survival of HBCUs and more HBCU research is required and welcomed.

Deficiencies in the evidence. Further study was needed on entry-level residence life positions and personal reasons for departures from their functional area (Davidson, 2012; Kortegast & Hamrick, 2009). Collins and Hirt (2006) highlighted the professional life of residence hall administrators and focused on the nature of their work, relationships, and rewards. They concluded that residence life professionals at times may feel isolated from the other departments at the institution and feel underappreciated, which can lead to stress and then attrition from the institution. Collins and Hirt suggested further qualitative research on the nature of work for residence life staff at different types of institutions. Additional research was recommended because there are various types of institutions, and deeply probing the issues that affect a particular institution type will

provide insight into the problem of attrition in residence life. Because HBCUs are the institutional type for this study, the research revealed factors that contributed to the decision to leave residence life departments at these institutions.

Hirt et al. (2006) recommended further exploration of the nature of student affairs work within functional areas at HBCUs. Their analysis explored various positions within student affairs with varying levels of responsibility, and did not focus specifically on residence life. There are few studies that focus on the departure of residence life staff at HBCUs (Blakney, 2015). The studies on residence life include job satisfaction, departure from the position at various institutional types, and recruiting and retraining residence life professionals, but they did not focus on attrition at HBCUs (Belch et al., 2009; Blakney, 2015; Davidson, 2012). Second, it was recommended that future researchers employ quantitative methods of inquiry to understand the professional lives of student affairs staff at HBCUs, specifically residence life staff (Blakney, 2015; Hirt et al., 2006).

Audience. The target audience included student affairs practitioners residence life professionals, higher education professionals, human resources personnel, and administrators who can benefit from the findings generated by this research. Practitioners who supervise professionals residing in residence halls may be able to use the data collected from the study. Other researchers, such as faculty members in graduate programs who are preparing future professionals for this field of study, can benefit from this research.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this applied dissertation, the following terms were defined.

Attrition. Kortegast and Hamrick (2009) defined attrition as the departure from a job, whether it is voluntary or involuntary. For this study, attrition will be specific to

HBCUs and will consist of the factors that contribute to the decision to leave the residence life position at HBCUs.

Burnout. Maslach and Jackson (1996) and Tümkaya (2006) defined burnout as emotional, physical, and intellectual exhaustion that includes chronic fatigue and helplessness. Although HBCU professionals are drawn to the challenging work and racial uplift, it has been characterized as highly stressful (Esters & Strayhorn, 2013).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). This term refers to institutions that were established after the Civil War ended through 1964 and are the only institutions created with the clear purpose of educating Black citizens (Bettez & Suggs, 2012; Esters & Strayhorn, 2013; Gasman, 2013).

Job satisfaction. Schubert-Irastorza and Fabry (2014) defined job satisfaction as the overall idea that employees choose to work for intrinsic reasons, which overshadows pay. Numerous satisfaction indicators affect job satisfaction, such as salary, pay increases, and the relationship the employee has with the institution (Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015). When staff members are satisfied, they are happier and less likely to leave the organization (Oshagbemi, 2013; Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014).

Residence life. This term refers to the department within a student affairs division that is responsible for housing students. Residence halls can accommodate single or double occupancy, private bathrooms, apartments, suites, kitchens, and high-speed Internet (Blimling, 2010; Shushok, Farquhar-Caddell, & Krimowski, 2014). Residence halls no longer just house students but encourage student learning outside of the classroom (Shushok et al., 2014). Additionally, the department is also responsible for the development of students and offers employment and leadership opportunities.

Residence life professional. This term refers to an individual who is responsible

for the overall well-being of students, ensuring that they have a well-balanced campus experience (Collins & Hirt, 2006; Dungy, 2003). Residence life divisions typically employ the greatest number of entry-level student affairs professionals, such as residence life coordinators or area coordinators who usually reside within the residence halls (Blimling, 2010). These positions are usually responsible for the overall well-being of the students who reside in the buildings and provide counseling, oversee conduct, and address other issues, such as excess noise and visitation violations (Blimling, 2010). The director of residence life usually oversees the entire housing operation, is responsible for staff recruitment, and provides supervision to the residence life coordinators or area coordinators.

Resident assistant. This term refers to students who are enrolled at the college and work within the residence halls where they live (Blimling, 2010). Resident assistants report to the resident director or residence life coordinator, who live within the residence hall. Resident assistants must serve as role models for their peers, mediate conflicts that may arise, and serve as a campus resource (Blimling, 2010). In addition to those responsibilities, resident assistants have administrative tasks, such as maintenance reports and incident reports and checking students in and out of the residence halls (Blimling, 2010).

Student affairs professionals. This term refers to professionals who work within the division of student affairs and are responsible for student life. Usually reporting to the vice president of student affairs or student services, these professionals provide student development outside of the academic classroom and foster personal growth (Blakney, 2015). Some of the areas include, but are not limited to, counseling, residence life, health services, Greek Life, student activities, and student conduct. These functional areas vary

based on institutional size, type, and location (Blimling, 2010). Recruitment for these positions can be formal or informal, and interviews can occur on campus or at placement exchanges across the country.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The student affairs field within higher education is one that is time consuming and very demanding yet rewarding. Many energetic professionals enter the field with high aspirations and goals, only to leave within a few years because of personal and professional factors. Student affairs professionals who work at HBCUs are faced with limited resources and lack of funding and are expected to provide adequate support for all students. For those who are residence life professionals, attrition represents a significant concern. Attrition can lead to low staff morale and decreased productivity at HBCUs and the cost of recruiting and training can be a strain on the budget. Topics covered in this literature review include the theoretical framework, a brief history of American higher education, the creation of HBCUs, evolution of residence life, recruitment in residence life, and job satisfaction, burnout, and attrition in residence life. By thoroughly reviewing these topics, the issue of attrition within residence life will emerge as a critical factor in the overall success of this sector at HBCUs.

Theoretical Framework

Student affairs professionals seek new career advancement opportunities within the field through a variety of means that include placement exchanges, higher education job sites, and referrals. Upon completion of a graduate program or when the decision is made to transition into another position, they will make an effort to move up the career ladder in order to find a satisfying and rewarding position that aligns with their career goals and needs. In residence life, most professionals begin their careers as resident directors or residence life coordinators, which are entry-level positions. Most staff members transition from those entry-level positions to positions with more supervisory responsibility after 2 to 4 years on the job (Belch et al., 2009).

Benjamin Schneider's attraction-selection-attrition theory posits that there are three steps in the process of transitioning into a new organization. The model suggests that people are drawn to an organization based on a fit between personal and organizational characteristics (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). People search and select positions based on the attributes they have in common with the organizations (Schneider et al., 1995). Throughout the search, information and perceptions of the organization can positively or negatively affect the decision to join it.

Attraction refers to the aspects of the organization that appeal to a person's interest or personality (Schneider et al., 1995). When searching for a new position, the positives and perks are what attract a person to a specific position. Schneider et al. (1995) confirmed that people find organizations attractive because of judgments made in relation to the culture and goals. Lyons and Marler (2011) noted that applicants favor positions in which they believe the culture of the organization is positive and that they would be able to perform at a high level. The benefits of joining the organization have to be favorable and can be both tangible and intangible (Lyons & Marler, 2011).

Some applicants may be attracted to a certain position because of status or the possibility of being a part of a highly selective group. For the applicant, these benefits are enough to apply for the position (Lyons & Marler, 2011). Attention to an organization can also be attributed to the design and images found on its website: the visual message can heighten the appeal of the organization for the applicant. Conversely, Lyons and Marler (2011) observed that negative images can deter a potential candidate from applying for the position.

The second component, selection, can be formal or informal and centered on identifying various competencies from a range of candidates (Schneider et al., 1995).

During the hiring process, it is common to interview numerous candidates and then narrow the selection to two or three finalists. Based on the skills and traits of these final candidates, the selection committee or supervisor will identify the individual who best fits the organization. Once the position is offered, the candidate must also select the organization. Denissen, Ulferts, Lüdtké, Muck, and Gerstorf (2014) observed that individuals statistically are more likely to select a new position that is more in line with their current personality. Although organizations typically assess the fit of the candidate with the ideals of the company, the applicants tend to select based on personality traits.

Attrition is the opposite of attraction and refers to employees no longer fitting the organization and deciding to leave (Schneider et al., 1995). After the novelty wears off and the position is no longer what the staff member desires, the individual may make the decision to move on. In higher education, this search may typically occur in the spring semester for the upcoming academic year. Kortegast and Hamrick (2009) defined attrition as the departure from a job, whether it is voluntary or involuntary. Although their analysis focused on voluntary departures, there are involuntary departures resulting from terminations. As studies have shown, it is largely the internal factors that lead to attrition, and this includes satisfaction, quality of supervisor, opportunities for career advancement, and satisfaction with working conditions (Kieckbusch, Price & Theis, 2007; Kortegast & Hamrick, 2009; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008).

Plash and Piotrowski (2006) cautioned that staff members who are more vulnerable to stress and burnout are more likely to quit their position. Kieckbusch et al. (2007) warned that the process of departing from a job usually begins with employee dissatisfaction, the search for a new position, and then a review of future career options related to leaving and beginning a new job. There are external factors such as the

economy, budgets, politics and benefits packages that may also contribute to the decision to leave (Kieckbusch et al., 2007).

American Higher Education: A Brief History

As higher education in America began to develop, the first institutions were created for White males of the Christian faith (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). Students of other ethnicities and races and women sought education through other means, such as at the early Black colleges and colleges for women, which were created to educate and meet the needs of the specific populations (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). The first colleges were sculpted after the Oxford-Cambridge system of residential colleges that were self-governing communities of scholars consisting of both faculty and students (Thelin & Gasman, 2011).

With the establishment of what became known as the nine colonial colleges, Thelin and Gasman (2011) observed that the seminaries, normal schools, and evolving secular universities began offering new degrees. Thelin and Gasman detailed the early struggles of American residential colleges that included dissatisfaction with the curriculum and complaints about unsavory food in the cafeteria. Tension between faculty and staff often led to student riots and revolts to combat issues. During this era, the faculty maintained the function of *in loco parentis* (Thelin & Gasman, 2011), whereby they assumed the role of parent, disciplinarian, and moral leader (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2011).

As the American higher education system began to grow, Thelin and Gasman (2011) rationalized that, although the American college system was not universally accepted, prominent families wanted their sons to obtain a college education. During this time, Thelin and Gasman pointed out that universities were relatively small, with only a

handful, such as Pennsylvania, Harvard, and Columbia, enrolling over 5,000 students. For a time, colleges and universities were largely society's aristocracy for the privileged who could afford the tuition.

Justin S. Morrill created the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 in an effort to provide an education to the children of farmers and others who lacked resources to attend existing institutions (Duemer, 2007). Thelin and Gasman (2011) noted that the Morrill Land Grant Act encouraged states to sell their land and create colleges that were focused on teaching agriculture, mining, and mechanics. Although being developed in Congress, many believed the current farming methods used were wasteful and ineffective, and, from this concern, the study of agriculture was formed (Duemer, 2007). Additionally, as higher education continued to grow institutions began offering new degree options, such as law, medicine, and commerce (Thelin & Gasman, 2011).

Nienkamp (2010) observed that the new land grant colleges would not be bound to the traditional idea of education, but rather were free to create a new curriculum that promoted the study of agriculture and mechanics. This did much to spur growth in the states through acceptance into college. For instance, prior to the Morrill Act, there were no public institutions in Nebraska. However, after the creation of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, a land grant school, students were provided with affordable educational opportunities.

Throughout this period, women were not welcomed at the traditional colleges. Thelin and Gasman (2011) observed that the creation of women's colleges from 1860 to 1930 provided an alternative for seeking higher learning, as women undergraduates were facing discrimination at other universities. Thelin and Gasman posited that, during this time, universities exercised their option to be selective and, in turn, denied admission to

women, other races, and religious minorities. The colleges and universities that were created to serve minorities are credited with bringing diversity to American higher education, and these include HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and, as mentioned above, women's colleges (Thelin & Gasman, 2011).

In Pennsylvania, a northern state, Cheyney University, founded in 1837, was the first college for Black students; Lincoln University soon followed in 1854. Harper and Harris (2012) observed that the attainment of an education was more favorable for Blacks in the North than in the South, where there were laws that prohibited the education of Blacks. In 1856, Wilberforce University was founded in Ohio and provided Blacks with another opportunity to earn an education. These schools were considered HBCUs because their primary focus was on the education of Blacks. Tribal Colleges and Universities were established in 1968 with the creation of Navajo Community College (Schmidt & Akande, 2011). Tribal Colleges and Universities were originally created to serve members of a particular tribe and provide an education that does not abandon culture or family in order to gain an education (Schmidt & Akande, 2011). Schmidt and Akande (2011) described the average student who attends a tribal college as nontraditional, older, and already a parent.

Under the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, most of the institutions are 2-year institutions and offer associate degrees (Schmidt & Akande, 2011). Faculty members expressed their concerns for students who attended tribal colleges, stating their lack of exposure to higher education and their inexperience in civilized culture affected their educational journeys (Schmidt & Akande, 2011). More programming aimed at orienting family members of students on the importance of education and how the student can assist in their community once they have graduated is needed (Schmidt & Akande,

2011).

The official title of Hispanic-serving institution was created in the 1980s and applied to institutions whose missions did not include specific education of Latinos (Santiago, 2006). Unlike HBCUs, Hispanic-serving institutions were applied to existing institutions that met the enrollment requirement. Hispanic-serving institutions were defined in 1992 as institutions that were degree granting, accredited, and had a Hispanic enrollment of at least 25% (Calderón-Galdeano, Flores, & Moder, 2012). This designation sets Hispanic-serving institutions apart from HBCUs and tribal colleges. This definition was signed into law in 1998 under an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Calderón-Galdeano et al., 2012).

The first institution in the United States created to serve the Hispanic population was Boricua College in New York in 1968 (Santiago, 2006). The mission of the institution is described as the integration of Puerto Rican and Latin cultures through bilingual and bicultural approaches to education (Santiago, 2006). With an emphasis on supporting the needs of students from the Latino culture, the institution provides an education and prepares them for a democratic culture (Santiago, 2006). The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities was created in 1985 as the voice for HSIs (Calderón-Galdeano et al., 2012). The organization seeks to create awareness and resources for the institutions that are granted the title of Hispanic-serving institution. Santiago (2006) revealed that the creation of the organization was an effort to assist with gaining federal funds for the institutions, as it was difficult to compete with large institutions and HBCUs. By 1986, there were 18 institutions that were charter members of the organization.

As higher education continued to evolve, veterans were another group seeking an

education at American colleges and universities. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, or GI Bill, was created to provide federal scholarships to veterans who wanted to obtain a higher education (Lattuca & Stark, 2011). The GI Bill provided funding for returning veterans to attend universities following the end of World War II. Lattuca and Stark (2011) detailed that universities had to cater to a different type of student when veterans began to enroll.

In sum, American higher education has experienced significant changes from the colonial time to the present period. The Higher Education Acts of 1965 and 1980 provided guidelines for the allocation of federal dollars to disadvantaged students and the promotion of retention and graduation rates (Ruiz, 2008). In the 1960s, public junior colleges began to expand and accounted for more than nearly half of the undergraduate students enrolled in college (Lattuca & Stark, 2011). This development was part of the evolving American higher education system that began to cater to the needs of the students. With the influx of adult learners, institutions began to offer external degrees and credit for life experiences outside of the formal classroom (Lattuca & Stark, 2011). Over time, students began to complain about the dull and boring curriculum and wanted new choices of study and opportunities to enhance their credentials (Lattuca & Stark, 2011).

In addition, as technology continued to develop, the use of computers increased and online colleges were created. This opportunity proved beneficial for the adult or student who worked full time or could not commit to physically sitting in a classroom (Lattuca & Stark, 2011). Thus, colleges and universities expanded their infrastructure to include distance and satellite campuses that enrolled students seeking degrees and other credentials. In 2006, nearly 3.5 million students were recorded as enrolling in online courses and, as this delivery model evolved, the higher education system needed to adjust

and meet the demands of students seeking new choices of study and opportunities to enhance their credentials (Lattuca & Stark, 2011).

Presently, institutions have opened their doors to all races and have nondiscrimination policies; there is still a large need for minority-serving institutions, such as tribal colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions, and HBCUs. Garcia (2012) argued Latino students often struggle to acclimate in predominantly-White campuses and often face hostilities that negatively affect their performance academically. Esters and Strayhorn (2013) claimed Black students are more comfortable at HBCUs where they believe faculty and staff understand their struggles.

History of HBCUs

The HBCUs were created during a time when college was mainly for White Christian young men and Black Americans were met with violence when they sought an education (Bettez & Suggs, 2012). Most HBCUs, which were established after the Civil War, are the only institutions created with the clear purpose of educating Black citizens (Bettez & Suggs, 2012; Esters & Strayhorn, 2013; Gasman, 2013). From the beginning, funding has been a major issue for HBCUs, but the Land Grant Act of 1890 assisted several colleges with funds (Esters & Strayhorn, 2013). The designation of HBCU only applies to an institution that has a history of accommodating the educational needs of the Black and other low-income populations (Bettez & Suggs, 2012; Esters & Strayhorn, 2013; Hirt et al., 2006; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012).

The early development of HBCUs included schools that sought to educate former slaves, those founded by missionaries wanting to provide training (Brown, 2013), and some beginning as preparatory schools and evolving into institutions of higher learning. Cheyney State University, founded in 1837, is hailed as the nation's first college for

Blacks and is designated as an HBCU. Lincoln University was chartered in 1854 and began offering collegiate level academics in 1856 (Brown, 2013; Harper & Harris, 2012). And Wilberforce University, founded in 1856, and is the third oldest HBCU.

Relevancy and threats of HBCUs. The HBCUs have faced their share of backlash and consistently defend their relevancy in today's higher education system (Exkano, 2013). Although critics of the HBCU system cite the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 as proof for the dismantling of such historic institutions, HBCUs remain the choice for many Black students (Esters & Strayhorn, 2013). Reeder and Schmitt (2013) supported the findings that HBCUs provide nurturing environments that lead to successful outcomes for students. Students at HBCUs have more interaction with faculty and experience cultural and social learning that is not necessarily confined to the classroom (Brown, 2013). Exkano (2013) advocated for the relevancy of HBCUs by stating the following:

When one understands that HBCUs were created in “less-than” circumstances, operated with “less-than” finances, and managed to educate the Black middle class in spite of a system that was never designed for it to succeed, the better questions surrounding HBCU relevancy become these: Is the broken system, which necessitated the dichotomy of dual higher education systems, fixed? Do Black students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) share the same experiences of affirmation and belonging they report at HBCUs? (p. 65)

Strayhorn and Mullins (2012) admitted that, although HBCUs represent a small portion of the colleges in the United States, they award one third of the bachelor's degrees earned by Blacks. Current national data showed there are 251,530 undergraduate students enrolled in HBCUs around the country (National Center for Education Statistics,

2014). There are 96,084 males and 155,446 females enrolled at 103 HBCUs. Although most of the HBCUs are located in the southern United States, there are some in the northern United States and others sprinkled throughout the United States (Esters & Strayhorn, 2013). The HBCUs are both private and public, and most have an affiliation with a church (Gasman, 2013). In 2012, there were 232,900 undergraduate students enrolled at 4-year HBCUs and 18,630 enrolled at 2-year HBCUs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Of those students enrolled, 183,019 undergraduates attended public HBCUs and 68,511 attended private HBCUs.

Compared to their PWI counterparts, HBCUs have always experienced concerns with financial security, and research has revealed an ongoing pattern of underfunding (Brown, 2013; Collins & Hirt, 2006). Brown (2013) posited that, despite increased enrollments and academic gains, HBCUs are disproportionately worse off than PWIs and receive fewer state dollars. Gasman (2013) observed that HBCUs have diverse faculties that offer high-quality education, although their salaries remain lower compared to PWIs (Brown, 2013; Gasman, 2013). Hirt et al. (2006) also found that student affairs staff continuously complained about the lack of funds and salaries for staff. Without adequate funding, HBCUs are forced to operate with less faculty and staff and, in turn, produce less academic programs (Brown, 2013).

The HBCU community. The HBCUs are largely known for their community feel and commitment to racial uplift and Black education (Brown, 2013, Collins & Hirt, 2006). Black students who attend HBCUs emphasized how important it is to relate culturally to their peers and professors (Esters & Strayhorn, 2013). Students are attracted to these institutions because their faculty and staff provide advising beyond the classroom, offer academic and personal support, and give a sense of family (Collins &

Hirt, 2006; Esters & Strayhorn, 2013; Hirt et al., 2006). Longmire-Avital and Miller-Dyce (2015) observed that HBCUs provide an inclusive environment, which can aid in the persistence for students of color and those from low-income background.

Student affairs staff at HBCUs reported forming meaningful relationships with students in an effort to integrate them into the college experience (Hirt, Amelink, McFeeters, & Strayhorn, 2008). The HBCU staff strives to maintain professional and personal lines of communication while providing such a high level of support for students (Collins & Hirt, 2006; Hirt et al., 2006). Hirt et al. (2008) observed that residence life professionals who referred to themselves as the other mothers or big sisters and brothers admitted they provided advice to students in addition to their administrative duties. Hirt et al. (2006) cautioned that, although many HBCU staff serve as surrogate parents for the students, it is often a hard task to switch back to the role of administrator. Administrators in the study referenced the support and guidance they received as undergraduates and want to provide the same for their students.

Hirt et al. (2006) noted that professionals at HBCUs reported their work as highly stressful because the institutions struggle financially and are slow to change. They also work long hours, have fewer staff members, and are required to perform multiple tasks at once. Limited funding and resources are a common theme, and professional staff continually earn lower salaries compared to their counterparts at PWIs (Hirt et al., 2006). Hirt et al. concluded, “HBCU student affairs professionals are much more like parents or extended family members to students” and that the HBCU campus is family oriented or like a really big family (p. 670). The HBCUs provide Black pride for Black students, and the students who enroll may need a little extra care, which they are willing to provide (Hirt et al., 2008).

Evolution of Residence Life

In the early years of higher education faculty, presidents and tutors were responsible for the academic success and management of the social lives of students (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Tension arose between the students and faculty in the early days of the colonial college, and complaints of bad food and dissatisfaction with the curriculum ignited riots on campus (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). As the faculty members began to revolt against their nonacademic duties, the position of dean of students was created to “address the nonintellectual, nonacademic needs of college students” (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2011, p. 12).

Schuster and Finkelstein (2011) pointed out that, as the student personnel movement evolved, the offices of student health services, career development, and counseling were established on campuses across the nation. The positions of dean of women and dean of men began to appear, and the range of responsibilities included the student problems that occurred in the classroom and dissatisfaction with their experience (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2011). Blimling (2010) suggested that deans of women were hired specifically to monitor and advise female students, whereas the deans of men were hired due to increased enrollments and housing concerns. Palmer, Broido, and Campbell (2008) also noted that the early deans focused solely student discipline and developing students’ moral character.

As the student affairs profession began to grow in the 1960s, student housing and staffing roles began to change (Palmer et al., 2008). The collegiate model or collegiate way is described as a formal system adopted from Europe that embraced living and learning within quadrangles (Thelin & Gasman, 2011), and this particular approach influenced the future development of student residence halls as they now viewed colleges

as a total institution (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). Blimling (2010) mentioned the goal of this system was to educate both character and intellect. Residence halls provided students with a place to live while attending a particular college or university.

The Oxford-Cambridge model. Blimling (2010) pointed out that, before the creation of residence halls, students were living in nearby towns in tents, fields, and sides of hills. Students as young as 13 or 14 years old traveled great distances to enroll in universities (Blimling, 2010). With this demand, universities began to provide housing to students as far back as 1,200 AD (Blimling, 2010). Leibowitz (2002) noted the Oxford-Cambridge model offered students a setting in which they could live and study with faculty while earning a degree. The classrooms and student and faculty residences were in the same general area. Thelin and Gasman (2011) described the Oxford-Cambridge model as a “formal system of endowed colleges that combined living and learning within quadrangles” (p. 4). The architectural design of the model was key, and instruction was designed to build character instead of producing just scholars. Under this model, which became known as residential education, students learned and developed both academically and socially while attending college (Thelin & Gasman, 2011).

Brubacher and Rudy (1997) explained that residential colleges were designed to foster the atmosphere of morality and academics through bringing together faculty, students and staff. The quadrangles provided the college community with a physical place to reside, teach, and engage with faculty and students. The faculty and staff members who resided in the quadrangles were also responsible for discipline and enforcing policy within the residential community. As time progressed, the role of tutor was created to teach life lessons and help build character while maintaining the role of disciplinarian and lecturer (Leibowitz, 2002).

The Oxford-Cambridge model was adopted in American higher education and labeled the collegiate way (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). The hope for recreating this English precedent was to provide an educational experience that produced responsible leaders once students graduated (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). American institutions replicated the Oxford-Cambridge organizational structure, architecture, and staffing requirements (Leibowitz, 2002). For instance, Harvard attempted to create the Oxford-Cambridge structure in an effort to graduate students as scholars, clergymen, and men of substance (Duke, 1996). With value placed on developing the personalities and identities of male students, Harvard created residential systems called houses (Duke, 1996).

Duke (1996) provided a critical review of Harvard's attempt to create the tutor position and stated the departmental structure was at fault. Harvard's system was not consistent and failed to promote a healthy relationship between tutor and student (Duke, 1996). There were also failed attempts at recreating the Oxford-Cambridge model in America. For instance, in 1902, it was the hope of University of Chicago President William Rainey Harper to build eight quadrangles, but his death in 1908 ended the plan. In 1906, the plans of Princeton's President Woodrow Wilson to transform the undergraduate eating clubs into Oxford style residential colleges also failed (Duke, 1996).

The concept of in loco parentis. Residential living has been an important part of the college experience since the early colonial colleges. Historically, residence life staff has been responsible for the overall well-being of students, ensuring that they have a well-balanced campus experience (Collins & Hirt, 2006; Dungy, 2003). The colonial colleges such as Harvard and Princeton were among the first to have housing facilities that were modeled after the English system (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). The early processes included faculty who served as tutors and resided with the students in the

housing facilities. Tutors were necessary because students admitted into college were as young as 14, and the living arrangements there would be similar to home (Blimling, 2010). Tutors were in place to adjudicate the conduct of students and oversee the enforcement of policies within the residential areas (Blimling, 2010).

Students who attended these early colleges were White, Christian young men, and institutional rosters typically listed them by social rank (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). This designation also caused issues for students because it separated where they dined and socialized (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). Thelin and Gasman (2011) recounted that this practice created clear separation and increased tension ensued between students. Although the Oxford-Cambridge model boasted a harmonious relationship between faculty and student, the reality was chaotic and acrimonious among students and faculty. There were also numerous complaints of bad food in the dining hall, strict policies, and student pranks, and the dissatisfaction with the curriculum often caused riots and revolts on campus (Blimling, 2010; Thelin & Gasman, 2011).

As residential living progressed, the staff in the dormitories, now residence halls, evolved from tutors to various support staff (Blimling, 2010). The support staff members provided supervision for students who had not yet matured and, in essence, were in charge of their welfare (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Dungy and Gordon (2011) rationalized that early administrators were empowered to act in loco parentis, or to serve in place of the students' parents while they were enrolled on campus. Parents viewed the education of their children as an investment, and, in order to protect their investment, they transferred guardianship to the administrators (Blimling, 2010). Blimling (2010) referenced the 1913 case of *Gott v. Berea College*, in which the institution created a rule that students were prohibited from patronizing restaurants not owned by the college. The

court decided in favor of the college, voting that staff members were authorized to act as parental figures in rendering these decisions (Blimling, 2010).

Unlike today, students were not viewed as consenting adults who would make wise decisions regarding their education and future. Administrators reserved the right to discipline students who did not adhere to the rules and policies on campus without the right of due process, as students today are accustomed to (Dungy & Gordon, 2011).

Palmer et al. (2008) noted that early residence life professionals were viewed as mothers or disciplinarians, although the staff had no educational preparation for their administrative roles. As the institutions diversified, the role of student personnel administrators began to expand and include the position of female administrators, specifically for the welfare and development of women (Dungy & Gordon, 2011).

Deans of women and men. As residential living progressed, the staff in the dormitories, now residence halls, evolved from tutors to various support staff (Blimling, 2010). With the addition of women attending and residing on college campuses, there was a need to provide adequate supervision (Blimling, 2010). Blimling (2010) stated, “Convention required a stricter supervision of women than was expected of men” (p. 11). As more women enrolled on college campuses, there was a shift in administration, and the early titles of lady principal or preceptess were the terms used to describe female administrators responsible for supervising the behavior of women on campus (Blimling, 2010). Over time, the title evolved into deans of women, and, in 1902, the National Association of Women Deans was created at Northwestern University (Blimling, 2010).

Schwartz (2003) noted the first deans of women were part of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae who championed the rights of women in higher education and sought to prove that women were smart enough to survive the rigors of college (Schwartz, 2003).

Many deans of women were focused on conducting research, collecting data, and encouraging their students to complete a graduate degree (Schwartz, 2003). Gerda (2006) pointed out that the first deans of women, Alice Freeman and her assistant, Marion Talbot, were appointed in 1892 at the University of Chicago. Gerda credited the deans of women position as the first student affairs officers to create a professional organization and organize a conference in 1903. Although there were no guidelines or manuals for the position, the early deans of women relied on their common sense, experience, on-the-job training (Gerda, 2006).

Unlike the dean of women position, the dean of men position was created because of increased enrollment across the nation (Blimling, 2010; Schwartz, 2003). The demand for more college administrators rose as enrollment “nearly tripled from 9,371 in 1869-1870 to 27,410 in 1899-1900” (Schwartz, 2003, p. 220). Harvard President, Charles Eliot, was credited as the first to appoint a dean of students, Le Baron Russell Briggs (Schwartz, 2003). Schwartz (2003) mentioned that most deans of men had a natural affinity and ability to work with students. As the dean of men, Briggs was a legend at Harvard; students would seek advice and often wait in long lines to meet with him (Schwartz, 2003).

Aware that balancing newfound social freedom and rigorous academics could be a stressful challenge for students, deans of men acted in loco parentis as disciplinarian and provided guidance to students (Schwartz, 2003). Discipline was a large part of the job for deans of men, who would handle violations such as gambling, playing cards, missing classes, and cheating on exams (Schwartz, 2003). Thelin and Gasman (2011) mentioned that religion was a part of the American culture, and the goal was to teach young men to be honorable and responsible and to build moral character.

As the residential life and housing profession continued to develop, the end of World War II brought a different type of student to college campuses. With the creation of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (i.e., GI Bill), more mature students were attending college and rules in place that parented students were no longer effective or necessary (Blimling, 2010). Colleges were now receiving requests to provide housing for students and their families, and they were not prepared to accommodate such requests (Blimling, 2010). Schwartz (2003) explained that the expanded number of students attending college forced the deans of men to manage numbers instead of individuals, as it previously had. Instead of the small college, institutions now had thousands of students enrolled and were no longer student oriented (Schwartz, 2003). With this change, there were new demands on the deans, and it forced the position to evolve.

Student personnel movement. With the increase in student enrollment, institutions sought to hire more administrators to handle student needs and concerns (Schwartz, 2003). As the numbers continued to grow, the new deans hired did not have the personal relationships and open-door policies as the previous deans of men (Schwartz, 2003). The student personnel movement sought to encourage administrators to seek a holistic approach to advising and counseling students (Roberts, 2012). This process included not only the academics, but also the emotional and social aspects of students and focused on developing the whole person (Roberts, 2012). Administrators were charged with promoting learning outside of the classroom, assisting students with finding their purpose, and fostering personal and group relationships (Blimling, 2010; Roberts, 2012).

Administrative roles continued to develop during the late 1930s, and the deans of women and men positions transitioned to the dean of students role (Roberts, 2012).

Schwartz (2003) observed that the increase of men after the war bolstered the need for more male administrators and, in essence, phased out the deans of women position. During their time, Schwartz noted, too, that the deans of women viewed the student personnel movement as an opportunity for more women to attend college and qualify for the position of dean of students. Unfortunately, in the late 1940s, the dean of students positions were occupied by men only. With male-dominated campuses, the deans of women were excommunicated, and men largely assumed the roles of leadership and authority (Schwartz, 2003). Additionally, the National Association of Deans of Men became the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators in 1951 (Schwartz, 2003).

Schwartz (2003) reported the student personnel movement ushered in a bureaucratic style of governance on college campuses across the nation. Personnel procedures mimicked those of the business, industry, and military procedures, and the men attending these institutions were familiar with this style (Schwartz, 2003). With the influx of new students on campuses, student personnel and other administrators adjusted by becoming creative with housing options and additional classroom space (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). With the U.S. government expanding access and affordability of higher education, college became a viable option for high school graduates, and institutions scrambled to accommodate the influx of students.

Residence life: 1960 to 1980. With the creation of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and the baby boom following World War II, enrollment in colleges and universities more than doubled by 1968 (Blimling, 2010). Residential campuses were no longer catering to only young White Christian men whose fathers wanted them to mature. Instead, the profile began diversifying and included the

populations of graduate, international, women and minority students, as well as students with disabilities (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). Thelin and Gasman (2011) rationalized that, although there was access to American higher education, colleges and universities struggled to retain students and provide a personalized educational experience although keeping expenses affordable. Blimling (2010) suggested the increased enrollments helped propel the community college movement and transition normal schools into comprehensive universities.

The role of residence life professionals was also forced to change in several ways. For instance, growth was seen in the range of administrative, managerial, and personnel functions and responsibilities. Furthermore, as institutions grew in size, makeshift residence halls served as temporary accommodations until new structures could be developed, and, often, the residence halls were created with space saving in mind and include bolted down furniture, which created cramped living spaces (Blimling, 2010). During the 1960s, students began to rebel against these living conditions and the rules and policies that governed residence halls (Blimling, 2010). The policies included the use of alcohol, curfew for men and women, limited visitation, and sign-in and sign-out forms, but, in the 1970s, these policies began to fade. Students were unhappy with the stringent rules, and policies allowing visitation, canceling curfew, and establishing coed residence halls began to emerge (Gerda, 2006; Roberts, 2012).

Thelin and Gasman (2011) noted that violent protests erupted between 1968 and 1972, when undergraduate students complained about the impersonal college feel, large lecture classes, and the relationship between faculty members and students. During this time, other notable causes concerned students, such as the Vietnam War, the military draft, the Civil Rights Movement, and women's rights (Roberts, 2012). With the protests

and radical events occurring, the American campus was viewed more as a battleground and less like the educational sanctuary it was hailed as in previous years (Roberts, 2012; Thelin & Gasman, 2011). As time progressed, the federal government provided students with various funding opportunities, such as the Basic Educational Opportunity Grants that were later known as Pell Grants, Supplementary Educational Opportunity Grants, and the Higher Education Act, which introduced Trio programs for underprivileged students (Thelin & Gasman, 2011).

As time progressed, the increased student enrollment in the 1960s and 1970s led to a diverse student body (Thelin & Gasman, 2011). No longer were students easily pleased by merely residing in the residence halls and attending classes; instead, there was a desire for activities, such as athletics, living and learning communities, and fraternities (Blimling, 2010; Roberts, 2012; Thelin & Gasman, 2011). As student development theories began to evolve, more student affairs practitioners understood the need to educate the whole student to ensure persistence and completion of degrees (Gerda, 2006; Roberts, 2012; Thelin & Gasman, 2011). Residence life staff fostered connections with academic affairs and hired staff members who would adequately support students residing on campus (Blimling, 2010; Davidson, 2012).

Contemporary Residence Life

Current demographics. Higher education in America has continued to grow and enrollment at various colleges and universities across the nation has increased (Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). Blimling (2010) noted that colleges and universities select students from those who apply and qualify. Institutions are selective based on Scholastic Achievement Test scores, grade point averages, and application essays (Blimling, 2010). Students select colleges and universities based on location, religious affiliation, size, race,

and gender (Blimling, 2010; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012).

The U.S. Department of Education (2015) reported that undergraduate enrollment has increased to 17.5 million in Fall 2013 from 12 million in 1990. Recent data show a 46% increase in 13 years, and enrollment is projected to increase to 19.6 million undergraduates by 2024 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). With the inclusion of various groups, the higher education population has grown to include women and different races. Unlike the early American colleges and universities, female students make up 56% of the total undergraduate enrollment, although males account for 44% (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Furthermore, of the 17.5 million undergraduate students, the demographics by race were as follows: White: 9.9 million, Hispanic: 2.9 million, Black: 2.5 million, Asian: 1.0 million, Indian-Alaska Native: 0.1 million American and Pacific Islander: 0.1 million (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

As enrollment continued to increase, the demand for on-campus housing grew. The National Survey of Student Engagement reported that 14% of enrolled students reside in residence halls. The report expounded that approximately 59% of the on-campus students are first-year students and 12% are seniors. Of those students, the following percentages by race were reported: American Indian-Alaska Native: 1%, Asian: 8%, Black: 9%, Hispanic: 11%, White: 58%, multiracial: 8%, and other racial or ethnic groups: 2% (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

With such a diverse student enrollment profile, American colleges and universities must continuously seek opportunities to attract and retain students, as their characteristics and needs vary by gender, year in college, race, and individual personalities (Blimling, 2010). The needs of the student influence the type of residential living students seek on campus. As more students enroll, different housing types have

evolved, such as family housing, themed housing, and off-campus housing (Blimling, 2010; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012).

Buildings and structure. With the assistance of government programs and funding, such as the Higher Education Facilities Act and the Higher Education Student Financial Aid Act, colleges and universities have been able to access low-interest government loans to build residence halls and provide approximately \$1 billion for campus construction (Blimling, 2010; Shushok et al., 2014). Blimling (2010) pointed out these loans allowed fixtures to be financed, which included permanently attached or built-in furniture. This provision was the cause of most residence halls having built-in beds, dressers, and desks (Blimling, 2010). These types of halls, which were constructed between 1960 and 1970, allowed institutions to save financially by creating space-saving living areas (Blimling, 2010; Shushok et al., 2014).

Shushok et al. (2014) wrote that most campuses today have embraced the idea of building residence halls that encourage student learning and merge the in- and out-of-classroom experiences. It is now common to find faculty offices, classrooms, and open common space within the residence halls (Shushok et al., 2014). Students are attracted to residence halls that are aesthetically pleasing and provide amenities and are spacious and flexible (Shushok et al., 2014; Watson, Bartlett, Sacks, & Davidson, 2013). Watson et al. (2013) cautioned that institutions must also adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Americans With Disabilities Act and provide the necessary access when building residence halls.

Blimling (2010) argued that students in the 21st century demanded more from their residence halls, and most housing offices complied with their requests. Today, residence halls can accommodate double or single rooms, private bathrooms, apartments,

suites, kitchens, air conditioning, and high-speed Internet (Blimling, 2010; Shushok et al., 2014), and, unlike the residence halls built in the 1960s, customizable furniture and spacious living options are available to students (Shushok et al., 2014). Students today have an array of housing options to select from, and institutions count on these options to attract more students to reside on campus (Blimling, 2010).

Range of job functions. Collins and Hirt (2006) credited residence life as the area that employs the greatest number of entry-level student affairs professionals. Residence life staff positions may include the title of resident directors, residence life coordinators, and graduate assistants who reside in the residence halls on campus (Collins & Hirt, 2006; Dungy, 2003). These entry-level positions vary on campuses, depending on the need of the residence life department, and, across the nation, they are responsible for the welfare of the students who reside in their assigned buildings.

Most residential institutions contain organization structures to support their residence life programming. Usually, there is a director of residence life overseeing the living facilities, and, depending on the type and size of the college or university, this individual may or may not be required to live on campus (Blimling, 2010). Directors are responsible for hiring qualified candidates for such positions as residence hall director, and most candidates are recipients of a bachelor's or master's degree, have prior residence hall experience, and are a good campus fit. The director of residence life provides guidance and support for the residence hall directors through professional development, daily guidance and supervision (Collins & Hirt, 2006; St. Onge, Ellett, & Nestor, 2008). The director manages the overall residence life budget and typically reports to the dean of students.

Residence hall directors are responsible for the oversight of a residential building

or area (Blimling, 2010). Most hall directors are professional staff members who hold a bachelor's degree, reside on campus, and work closely with students, parents, and faculty (Blimling, 2010; Collins & Hirt, 2006). These positions are directly responsible for the maintenance of the building or area, which can include heating and cooling issues, pest control, and daily cleanliness (Blimling, 2010; Collins & Hirt, 2006). The management of the building budget is also the responsibility of the residence hall director, and, among other things, this ensures that the resident assistants receive proper funding for floor and building-wide programming (Blimling, 2010; Collins & Hirt, 2006). Other responsibilities of the residence hall director include managing student conduct and addressing issues that include excess noise, visitation violations, and roommate conflicts (Blimling, 2010). Typically, residence hall directors participate in an on-call rotation and respond to emergencies, such as health crises, physical altercations, and assaults (St. Onge et al., 2008). Resident directors directly supervise resident assistants and provide guidance and support when needed (Blimling, 2010).

Although residence hall directors typically live in campus-based apartments, the resident assistants are students who reside directly with the students and attend classes (Blimling, 2010). Resident assistant positions are known as the most demanding student jobs and are considered one of the most important on campus (Blimling, 2010). Students who apply for and accept these positions must be able to balance their role with academics in order to be successful (Blimling, 2010). Resident assistants must be good role models for their peers, be a campus resource when needed, and be able to mediate conflicts (Blimling, 2010). The position also has its share of administrative tasks such as incident reports, maintenance reports, and check-in and check-out forms (Blimling, 2010). The role of the resident assistant is vital, as the resident director has broader

responsibilities that may not allow for the opportunity to dedicate a large amount of time to the small details (Blimling, 2010; Collins & Hirt, 2006).

Recruitment of Residence Life Professionals

Collins and Hirt (2006) indicated that, although the residence life sector usually employs the largest number of student affairs employees at various position levels, there have been documented concerns about recruitment and retention of staff across the nation (Collins & Hirt, 2006). Specifically, hiring qualified candidates with a master's degree and previous student development experience were the top two requirements referenced (Haggerty, 2011; St. Onge et al., 2008). Administrators seek candidates who possess strong leadership qualities, exhibit enthusiasm for the profession, and share in the vision of the organization (Blimling, 2010; Davidson, 2012; St. Onge et al., 2008). Blimling (2010) pointed out some of the skills needed for these positions are problem solving, counseling, conflict mediation, and campus resource identification. Supervisory skills are also essential, as most live-in residence life staff members oversee resident assistants and other staff in the residence hall (Blimling, 2010; Haggerty, 2011).

Ideal candidates also have residence hall or student engagement experience in addition to possessing a master's degree (St. Onge et al., 2008). The job of the residence hall director requires candidates to be the first responder to crises on campus (Blimling, 2010). Residence hall directors may be called upon to handle medical emergencies, fire, physical threat, suicidal students, homesickness, depression, or weather-related concerns (Blimling, 2010; Cendana, 2012). As a supervisor and leader, the selected person will be responsible for providing clear and appropriate instructions to the resident assistants and students during crises (St. Onge et al., 2008). This position may also be responsible for providing programs, adjudicating conduct hearings, and mediating roommate conflicts

for the residence hall (Cendana, 2012). With such responsibility, it is imperative to recruit and hire qualified candidates who can handle the unique demands of working in residence life (Collins & Hirt, 2006; St. Onge et al., 2008).

Recruitment can be formal and informal and includes networking at national and regional conferences, such as National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, American College Personnel Association, and Association of College and University Housing Officers-International. Job placement exchanges are also integral to many professional associations, and among them are the Placement Exchange and Oshkosh Placement Exchange. Placement exchanges allow organizations to recruit from a pool of registered candidates, interview at specified locations, usually at a small table, and decide whether to proceed with an on-campus interview. Job postings on appropriate student affairs sites, such as studentaffairs.com, higherjobs.com, or *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (i.e., chronicle.com), are also effective ways to recruit qualified candidates (Blimling, 2010; Collins & Hirt, 2006; Haggerty, 2011; St. Onge et al., 2008).

Additionally, St. Onge et al. (2008) observed that the declining interest in the residence life profession is alarming, especially because most student affairs practitioners began their careers in this area. Silver and Jakeman (2014) found that graduate students who have considered leaving the field noted that devalued work, lack of personal and professional fulfillment, and financial concerns were some of the main themes cited. Additionally, the demanding work hours of residence life and lack of work-life balance were cited as reasons why professionals are choosing to avoid the residence life route.

Participants described the work as emotional, heartbreaking and draining (Silver & Jakeman, 2014). Unrealistic job expectations, salary, stress, and supervision have also been cited as reasons professionals leave the field (Buchanan, 2012; Totman, 2012). Tull

(2011) estimated that 50% to 60% of new student affairs professionals depart within the first 5 years they are employed because of the lack of job satisfaction and burnout.

Buchanan (2012) observed that professionals who left the field found higher salaries and less stressful and demanding jobs outside of higher education. Cendana (2012) recognized that it takes an extremely dedicated person to be successful in the demanding field of residence life.

Compensation, salary, and benefits. Administrators who are recruiting must pay close attention to the salary, accommodations, and benefits that will be offered to potential candidates, as these are crucial to attracting qualified candidates for the live-in residence hall director position (Davidson, 2012). Most residence live-in hall director position salaries include an annual salary, health insurance, meal plan, education opportunities, retirement options, and on-campus accommodations (Blimling, 2010; Davidson, 2012). The College and University Professional Association for Human Resources survey reported the average salary of a live-in residence hall director with room and board is \$31,147.

Entry-level residence life positions, such as residence hall directors, vary on different campuses, depending on the needs of the residence life department. St. Onge et al. (2008) found that 83% of the professional residence life staff lived in apartments on campus, and 79% of the staff stayed in the position for more than 2 years. Living accommodations can attract potential candidates to the position and influence the final selection decision (Haggerty, 2011; St. Onge et al., 2008). Fully furnished apartments, meal plans, parking, and pets were listed as the most important recruitment factors for residence life staff (Davidson, 2012; Haggerty, 2011; St. Onge et al., 2008). Although on-campus apartments can be an attraction for candidates, Davidson (2012) observed that

some of the struggles with living on campus could become a factor in attrition.

Over time, quality of life and living conditions can become a major concern for live-in residence life staff (Davidson, 2012; St. Onge et al., 2008). Residence life staff members can begin to feel the strain of residing in the building where they work and, subsequently, struggle with work-life balance issues. Haggerty (2011) noted that disrupted sleep, longer work hours, and irregular work schedules could contribute to the stress of living and working in a residence hall. Totman (2012) suggested that resident directors make it a priority to go off campus and balance their personal and work lives.

Professional development. A major factor noted for recruiting and retaining residence life professionals was the availability and implementation of professional development opportunities (Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014; Totman, 2012). Residence life staff desired the opportunity to continue to grow professionally and prepare for future professional promotions (Davidson, 2012; St. Onge et al., 2008). Stafford (2012) advised that professional development included any opportunity for staff to obtain new skills, knowledge and ability to improve job performance. Similar to other entry-level positions, residence hall directors seek out professional development opportunities that will prepare them for future roles (Davidson, 2012).

One early definition of professional development put the burden on the institution to improve the faculty by stating it was “the purposeful attempt of institutions to provide for the continual improvement and growth of the faculty” (Caffey, 1979, p. 311).

Haggerty (2011) admitted that professional development is a large part of the student affairs profession, and institutions should make it a professional obligation. Ongoing and consistent professional development opportunities should be provided to staff and highly encouraged by the institution (Davidson, 2012; Haggerty, 2011). Winston, Creamer, and

Miller (2013) described professional development as an intentional plan by supervisors to ensure employees engage in best practices, which, in turn, foster benefits for the organization through more effective employees and enhanced organizational vitality. Browell (2000) later defined professional development as a “constant updating of professional knowledge throughout an individual’s work life requiring self-direction, self-management and responsiveness to the development opportunities offered by work experience” (p. 58). This definition has included the individual instead of just the organization.

Haggerty (2011) insisted that professional development and workforce preparation for most student affairs professionals begin in a graduate level program, and, because professionals entering the field have varied experiences and education, it should be an ongoing process. Professional associations, such as the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, and the American College Personnel Association, have included a serious commitment to continuous improvement and learning in their professional ethics statements (Komives & Carpenter, 2009). Student affairs professionals, specifically residence life staff, should have a personal commitment to continue their professional growth and development (Davidson, 2012; Haggerty, 2011).

Jones, Harper, and Schuh (2011) maintained that active participation in higher education associations is essential for those professionals who want to remain current and on the cutting edge of the profession. There are many avenues for professional development for residence life staff, including attending professional higher education association conferences such as the annual or regional conferences of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators scholarly journals, or themed-based

institutes (Jones et al., 2011). For residence life professionals, there is an institute called the Regional Entry-Level Institute. Offering a competency-based approach, the Institute focuses on developing entry-level residence life professionals to create a professional development plan. Depending on the preferences and interests of the professional, there are professional-development opportunities for all.

Job Satisfaction in Residence Life

Eagan et al. (2015) noted that job satisfaction is a multifaceted construct that has been redefined over time and has a strong correlation between individuals' values, needs and emotions. Schubert-Irastorza and Fabry (2014) defined job satisfaction as the overall idea that employees choose to work for intrinsic reasons, which overshadows pay. Job satisfaction in higher education is closely connected to the relationship the employee has with the organization, intention to stay at the organization, and productivity (Eagan et al. 2015).

Numerous satisfaction indicators affect job satisfaction. Flexibility and scheduling are valued among student affairs practitioners (Beeny, Guthrie, Rhodes, & Terrell, 2005; Buchanan, 2012). Although most were satisfied with their autonomy, fringe benefits, and development programs, salary and pay increases are less than satisfying to employees (Bender, 1980). Other satisfaction indicators were the interaction and appreciation between colleagues, the higher education setting, use of their degree, and the independence within their current positions (Bender, 1980).

Schubert-Irastorza and Fabry (2014) insisted that there is a direct correlation with job satisfaction and increased productivity. With job satisfaction, workers are happier, are less likely to leave the organization, and seemingly have better health (Oshagbemi, 2013; Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014). In turn, the organization benefits positively from a

satisfied worker. Schubert-Irastorza and Fabry cited reduced medical expenses, less turnover, decreased absenteeism, and reduced costs in training new staff as benefits to the organization.

The relationship between job satisfaction and turnover is evident in a study conducted using Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg, 1966). Participants expressed concerns about hygiene factors that contribute negatively to their jobs, such as working conditions and work relationships. Multiple turnover factors, such as personality variables, work equity, and employee connection, play a role in staff attrition. The number of hours spent traveling to and from work is a concern, and the time spent on work-related items at home is another factor that contributes to the lack of job satisfaction (Udechukwu, 2009).

In a landmark study on job satisfaction, Bender (1980) found that 66% of all student affairs employees were satisfied with their job, and 94% said they enjoyed the interaction with students on campus. In regard to future advancement opportunities, only 23% of women were satisfied compared to the 48% of men (Bender, 1980). Men were also more satisfied with their level of involvement with the institution and decision-making processes (Bender, 1980). McCoy, Newell, and Gardner (2013) affirmed these findings in their study and found that women still receive less recognition, fewer promotions, and less pay than their male counterparts do. Although there are various triggers and variables that contribute to job satisfaction, gender does matter (McCoy et al., 2013). Bender observed more dissatisfaction within the younger age group, who mostly occupied the entry-level positions, such as residence directors. The opportunities for advancement seemed bleak for this group, and they felt less included in the decision making process. However, satisfaction increased when employees considered their

supervisors effective and inclusive (Bender, 1980).

Totman (2012) recognized that residence hall directors found high levels of satisfaction when advising students, supervising and training staff, and collaborating with different departments. Effective mentors and supervisors play an important role in the development of entry-level staff and contribute to the job satisfaction of the employee (Davidson, 2012; Totman, 2012). Totman explained that supervisors encourage and teach entry-level residence hall directors the art of decision making and, in turn, use this skill when crises occur on campus.

Davidson (2012) pointed out that entry-level residence life professionals with less than 1 year of professional experience were highly satisfied with their work, if the institution presented opportunities for promotion. Employees were hopeful for a long tenure at the current institution if opportunities were viewed as attainable (Davidson, 2012). Employees who are able to successfully balance personal and professional life in the residence hall were highly satisfied with the profession (Totman, 2012). Autonomy allows the live-in residence hall director to think critically and create an environment within the hall that will be conducive to a healthy work-life balance (Totman, 2012).

Oshagbemi (2013) advised that organizations place job satisfaction at the forefront and consider it to be a moral responsibility in the workplace. Although it is impossible to control the intrinsic satisfaction of workers, organizations can improve the extrinsic factors, such as type of work, conditions, and salary (Oshagbemi, 2013; Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014). In the end, the attention to these factors will continuously improve the organization as a whole and help prevent workers from experiencing burnout (Oshagbemi, 2013).

Burnout in Residence Life

Burnout is a popular term used when referring to the work of student affairs (Bender, 1980; Collins & Hirt, 2006; Silver & Jakeman, 2014). Freudenberger (1974) was credited with formulating the term burnout and applied it to people who worked in helping or caring professions, such as teachers, nurses and counselors. Usually used to describe staff who are too dedicated and committed, burnout can cause exhaustion, decreased work performance, and serious health concerns (Freudenberger, 1974). As research continued, burnout was later defined by Tumkaya (2006) as emotional, physical, and intellectual exhaustion that included chronic fatigue and helplessness. It has been suggested, too, that burnout leads to absenteeism, poor work quality, and turnover (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014).

There are three key dimensions of burnout: overwhelming exhaustion, detachment from the position, and lack of self-efficacy (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Of the three, exhaustion has been widely reported and analyzed. Residence life staff members have reported their positions as highly stressful and conducive to burnout (Collins & Hirt, 2006; Silver & Jakeman, 2014). Long hours, a rigorous work schedule, lack of work-life balance, emotional stress, and low rewards are some of the issues that contribute to exhaustion (Collins & Hirt, 2006; Davidson, 2012; Haggerty, 2011; Silver & Jakeman, 2014).

Studies exploring emotional exhaustion levels reported by men and women have indicated that women with the highest educational levels were more emotionally exhausted than their male counterparts (Howard-Hamilton, Palmer, Johnson & Kicklighter, 1998; Stout, 2013). Women had additional duties at home and, combined with the nature of their work, suffered more stress. Purvanova and Muros (2010) warned

that men present symptoms of stress differently, and supervisors may overlook signs of stress. There are various positions within student affairs that may cause more stress to the employees, such as live-in residence life professionals and upper-level administrators (Davidson, 2012; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998).

Residence life positions are unique because, unlike other student affairs positions, residing on campus is required, and the evening and weekend work hours are significantly higher and have more administrative responsibilities (Collins & Hirt, 2006). With the high demands of the position, there is high turnover in residence life, and residence life staff members have divulged feelings of isolation on campus and lack of recognition (Collins & Hirt, 2006; Davidson, 2012). Issues such as job satisfaction and burnout can lead to attrition and cost the institution more money to recruit and replace staff (Buchanan, 2012; Davidson, 2012).

There is a direct correlation with the total number of hours spent at work, the number of evening and weekends devoted throughout the school year, and employee exhaustion and turnover (Haggerty, 2012; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998). Student affairs practitioners advise student groups who facilitate activities at night or on weekends, or both, as an added responsibility on top of their regular work schedule (Haggerty, 2012; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1991). Fatigue and the number of hours of sleep at night are also factors addressed in relation to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Buchanan, 2012; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998).

Attrition

Kortegast and Hamrick (2009) defined attrition in student affairs as the departure from a job. Voluntary and involuntary departures are two types of attrition (Kortegast & Hamrick, 2009; Lombardi, 2013). When an employee decides to leave the organization,

this departure is voluntary, whereas the departure is involuntary when the organization terminates the employment of a staff member (Kortegast & Hamrick, 2009; Lombardi, 2013). Although attrition affects the organization either way, the type of attrition can be detrimental to the organization. Continuous staff turnover can decrease productivity, lower staff morale, and reflect poorly on the department and institution (Davidson, 2012; Lombardi, 2013). McGowan, Auerbach, Conroy, Augsberger, and Schudrich (2010) observed that employees not considering leaving the organization were satisfied with the recognition, appreciation, and the nature of their work.

Kiekbusch et al. (2007) warned the process of departing from a job usually begins with employee dissatisfaction. A search for a new position and a review of the options then follow. Research shows there are varying reasons why professionals leave a position. There are external factors, such as the economy, budgets, politics, and benefit packages, that may also contribute to the decision to leave (Kiekbusch et al., 2007). Most of the literature focuses on the internal factors that lead to attrition, such as satisfaction, supervisor-staff relationship, career advancement, and working conditions (Kiekbusch et al., 2007; Kortegast & Hamrick, 2009; Lombardi, 2013; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008).

Renn and Jessup-Anger (2008) asserted attrition from the field of student affairs among new professionals is estimated at 50% to 60% within the first 5 years. Studies have found that student affairs practitioners often do not intentionally choose this field, but are encouraged by other student affairs professionals to do so; consequently, this may be a contributor to the attrition issue (Blimling, 2010; Collins & Hirt, 2006; Lombardi, 2013). Some professional departures may take 6 months to come to fruition and include the supervisor, at some point in the process, before the staff member actually leaves (Kortegast & Hamrick, 2009).

Blakney (2015) noted that residence life has the highest attrition rate when compared to other departments within student affairs. Specifically, residence life professionals reported dissatisfaction with lack of personal space, supervision and stressful demands of the job (Blakney, 2015). In addition, lack of advancement opportunities, family concerns, and career interest outside of residence life are other reasons that lead to attrition in residence life. Although attrition occurs in every organization, the intensity of the live-in residence life position causes continuous turnover in the department. These professionals are dedicated to their roles and are willing to go beyond their scope of duties to be available to students (Collins & Hirt, 2006). After time, these actions can begin to cause stress for the staff member and may lead to attrition (Blakney, 2015).

Job Satisfaction, Burnout, and Attrition Among Residence Life Staff at HBCUs

Although job satisfaction and burnout are hot topics for residence life professionals across the nation, it is especially so at HBCUs. In a recent study, Blakney (2015) found that residence life professionals at HBCUs had moderate feelings toward job satisfaction. Most participants were satisfied with the nature of the work and supervision, but they were unsatisfied with the opportunity for promotion (Blakney, 2015). The study also accepted there was no difference in satisfaction between public or private HBCUs or gender. Among residence life professionals at HBCUs, Hirt et al. (2006) also found that 74% reported their daily work as highly stressful, including participating in an on-call rotation and responding to crises in the early hours of the morning. The authors recognized and reported that the source of the additional stress for HBCU workers stems from the lack of staff and funding. Without a full staff, the other employees must pick up the slack in order for the department to continue to function

(Hirt et al., 2006).

Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature concerning the history and challenging work within student affairs, the foundation of the HBCU, the evolution of residence life, recruitment of residence life professionals, job satisfaction, burnout, and attrition.

Blimling (2010), Davidson (2012), Haggerty (2011), Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998), and Oshagbemi (2013) all studied burnout, job satisfaction, and attrition of student affairs practitioners, but none of the research looked at the effects on professionals who work at HBCUs.

Research Questions

The following research questions were established to guide this applied dissertation:

1. What are the personal experiences of residence life professionals at HBCUs that contribute to their decision to leave the institution?
2. What are the professional experiences of residence life professionals at HBCUs that contribute to their decision to leave the institution?
3. For those who have decided to leave the institution, have they pursued other residence life positions?
4. For those who have decided to remain with their institution in the residence life area, have they sought or are they seeking other positions within the institution?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Participants

The process to be utilized for selecting participants aligns with the purposeful sampling approach. Purposeful sampling entails the investigator selecting participants for the study because they can intentionally provide insight into the research problem and central phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 2013). This form of nonprobability sampling allows the investigator to strategically select cases that are rich with information (Patton, 2002) and offers the best possible answers to the study's research questions. Purposeful sampling also includes the sites chosen for the study and size of the sample. Creswell (2013) noted that, in phenomenological research, the number of recommended participants ranges from three to 10 individuals. Each participant must have a story to share about his or her lived experiences that will be documented throughout the research (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2009) suggested that a purposeful sample is the best possible selection method in qualitative research because it provides rich information.

For this study, the participants must have currently worked in residence life at an HBCU for at least 2 years. Research has shown there is a close relationship with the experiences that occurred and the accuracy of recalling those experiences (Clarke, Fiebig, & Gerdtham, 2008). Two years provides the participants with an adequate amount of time to debrief, process, and share their experiences in residence life at an HBCU. Because the focus of the study involved the attrition of residence life professionals at HBCUs, participants must have worked in residence life at an HBCU to have relevant experiences to share, and, again for this reason, previous employment at an HBCU was an established criterion.

Participants were chosen from the southeastern region of the United States, and the specific states included Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. These states form Region III of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, the leading association in student affairs, and, cumulatively, 88 of the 105 HBCUs are located in this sector (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The institutions are also listed on the U.S. Department of Education's website and are a part of the White House HBCU Initiative (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

In order to identify the participating institutions, the investigator identified the HBCUs in the southeastern United States with residence life departments first and then searched each institution's website for the contact information of the director of residence life or vice president of student affairs. An email was prepared for the purpose of obtaining permission to communicate with potential participants. The email was sent to the directors of residence life and vice presidents of student affairs at the 88 HBCUs, and it included the request for information related to staff who worked in residence life previously at an HBCU. The investigator received 11 approvals from department heads or student affairs vice presidents to provide the contact information of potential participants when the study commences. All emails were saved to a confidential email file for future reference.

Instruments

This study focused on factors influencing staff departure from residence life positions at an HBCU. To measure the above, two instruments were utilized: The Factors Affecting Departure From Residence Life Online Survey (see Appendix A), developed by Frank (2013), and a modified version of the Daly and Dee (2006) Turnover Intent

Survey.

Quantitative: Online survey about departure from residence life. Frank (2013) reported that, although the departure of student affairs professionals can be individual or personal in nature, the institution plays a critical role in the decision. From a professional standpoint, job opportunities outside of student affairs that provide shorter commutes, more time with family, less working hours, and opportunities for advancement are additional factors associated with enhancing staff retention and improving affiliation of those who do not feel connected to the institution (Oshagbemi, 2013; Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014).

For the quantitative portion of this investigation, the online survey about departure from residence life was employed. This instrument was utilized by Frank (2013) in a study focusing on departure from a student affairs division. It explored the factors that lead to the employee's decision to depart, and each participant had to select five factors of 20 and rank them from 1 to 5. The factors included (a) benefits package, (b) communication issues (i.e., with supervisors, coworkers), (c) sentiments about students, (d) family issues (i.e., children, spouse, partner, or other family members), (e) connectedness with institution, (f) felt work was not valued, (g) hours worked, (i) lack of flexibility, (j) job opportunity outside of residence life, (k) lack of autonomy, (l) lack of campus resources, (m) lack of clarification in job expectations, (n) multiple roles, (o) lack of professional-development opportunities, (p) limited opportunities for advancement, (q) organizational changes (i.e., reporting structure, change in mission, change in responsibilities), (r) relationship with supervisor, (s) profession no longer challenging, (t) lack of support, and (u) salary.

Frank (2013) grouped the above items under three categories: environmental,

psychological, and structural. Because the above information was considered insufficient for discerning the reasons why residence life professionals leave positions at HBCUs, this instrument was modified and adapted to fit residence life professionals at HBCUs who intend to leave the field. Thus, the name was changed to Factors Affecting Departure From Residence Life Online Survey. This allowed responders to rank the top five of 20 factors that contribute to their intent to leave.

Structural expectations may include work autonomy, communication, and workloads (Daly & Dee, 2006). Price (1997) defined autonomy as the opportunity for employees to create organizational goals, decide on work patterns, engage in the decision-making process, and face fewer restrictions. Communication is defined as the manner in which information is transmitted among members of the organization (Price, 1997). Open communication fosters employee integration into the organization, whereas a lack of communication can hinder socialization and contribute to the departure decision. Daly and Dee (2006) noted that heavy workloads were correlated with the stress that faculty experienced and the constant decline in their commitment to the institution. Items 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 20 were categorized under structural variables.

Psychological variables include job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job satisfaction has a strong correlation with individuals' personal values, needs, and emotions, and job satisfaction can be classified by intrinsic factors that refer to the job itself, supervision, and autonomy. The extrinsic factors have little to do with the job tasks that include salary, coworkers, and career advancement. When members of the organization are satisfied with their jobs, their commitment to the organization is strengthened, and attrition is less likely (Daly & Dee, 2006). Satisfied employees are

happier, less likely to leave the organization, and seemingly have better health (Oshagbemi, 2013; Schubert-Irastorza & Fabry, 2014). Organizational commitment is defined as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization” (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982, p. 226). It is more likely for employees to be committed to the organization if they have clear job expectations and positive organizational experiences and have interactive relationships with coworkers and supervisors (Mowday et al., 1982). Items 5, 6, 18, and 19 were categorized under psychological variables.

Environmental variables include potential job opportunities in the workforce that are external to the current place of employment. The perception of alternative opportunities can negatively affect staff retention and reduce the intent to stay with the organization, and, because they are attractive to unsatisfied workers, there is a positive correlation with increased turnover (Daly & Dee, 2006). Often, in higher education, faculty and staff members also accept positions far from home, which surfaces issues related to spousal employment, family responsibility, and community ties (Daly & Dee, 2006). Some organizations offer dual-career couples employment that allows both individuals to work at the institution, and it can positively affect the intent to stay with the organization (Daly & Dee, 2006). Kinship also refers to the involvement in the community and its positive ties to retaining the employee by providing a social support system outside of work (Daly & Dee, 2006). Items 4 and 9 were categorized under environmental variables.

Frank (2013) originally piloted the survey on a small sample of former professionals who left student affairs and then revised it once the feedback was received from the panel and the pilot participants. For the current study, the online survey about

departure from residence life was validated for the purpose of aligning the items with the work of residence life professionals at HBCUs. Validity refers to the accuracy of the data collected, and it gauges the extent to which an instrument uses research questions to correctly measure the variables or phenomenon in question. Historically, validity has been linked to numerically based quantitative research (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2011), but, with the rise in popularity of qualitative studies, validation definitions have changed over the years to include terms like internal and external validity, credibility and confirmability (Creswell, 2013).

Gay et al. (2011) noted the pressure for investigators to justify and defend the accuracy and credibility of studies conducted. Although there are various methods to prove validation, the author must provide evidence that will support the observations and conclusions made in the study (Creswell, 2013) in order to present accurate results. Face validity focuses on how accurately the survey measures the aspects of the question. Experts on the subject are given the opportunity to review the survey and provide feedback on the measurement (Creswell, 2013). This process provides an external check of the research.

The instrument was sent to four student affairs and residence life professionals (i.e., a dean of students, an associate dean of students, and two residence life coordinators) for review. All four are employed by an HBCU located in the midwestern United States. The dean of students has a doctorate in organizational leadership and currently oversees the offices of residence life and housing, conduct, health services, student engagement, and the campus bookstore. The associate dean of students is a doctoral candidate and directly oversees residence life and conduct. The two residence life coordinators are completing their master's programs in student affairs and are live-in

staff. In addition, the chair of the dissertation committee and member reviewed the instrument, and provided feedback.

Each person received an email explaining the research and instructions for the pilot study, and the individuals were given 10 days to review the online survey and provide recommendations regarding its face validity. Upon receipt of this group's responses, the researcher entered the following changes to questions:

1. Add the following: Fulfill multiple roles within the student affairs division (Item 13).
2. Add the following: Lack of support from supervisors, colleagues, and other administrators (Item 19).
3. Remove the following: Profession not what expected.
4. Remove the following: Lack of job security (see Appendix A).

Qualitative: Adaptation of Turnover Intent Survey for interview portion of study. For the second part of data collection, face-to-face interviews (see Appendix B), the questions to be utilized were drawn from a modified version of the Daly and Dee (2006) Turnover Intent Survey. This instrument focuses on faculty intention to stay at the current institution and seeks to clarify the reasons for departure. The survey questions were adapted for use in this study's interviews and modified to fit residence life staff at HBCUs. In its original form, the survey contains the same variables of structural, psychological, and environmental that were described earlier.

The Turnover Intent Survey (Daly & Dee, 2006), which included various factors from articles and conversations with professionals throughout the years, included items that pertained to higher education faculty. Frank (2013) then adapted the survey to focus on student affairs professionals' departure from the field, and, for this investigation, it

was further tailored for residence life professionals at HBCUs. Specifically, student affairs was replaced with residence life at HBCUs as needed across the questions. The Turnover Intent Survey was then sent the same four residence life professionals described earlier, as well as the dissertation committee chair and member for their feedback, and all agreed that it satisfied the criteria for face validity (i.e., the items assessed the constructs being investigated).

Procedures

Design. As a mixed-methods design, this investigation employed both quantitative and qualitative data-collection procedures in order to (a) gain a better understanding of broad survey results through a statistical analysis and (b) gain a deeper understanding of the human aspects based on interview data (Gay et al., 2011). There are three types of mixed-methods research, but, for the purpose of this study, the QUAN-qual model was used. The QUAN-qual model is also referred to as the explanatory mixed-methods design in which quantitative data are collected first, then the findings are used in the qualitative portion to better inform the interviewer, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of findings (Gay et al., 2011).

This investigation can also be considered action research, as it addressed a problem at the research sites in order to assess the factors that contribute to the departure from residence life positions at HBCUs. Action research refers to an investigation that is conducted by stakeholders who are interested in gathering information to address and improve issues within their environment (Gay et al., 2011). The qualitative portion utilized the phenomenology approach. Phenomenology is the detailed description of the immediate experience of an individual (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013). Creswell (2013) described this approach as seeking to understand the common or shared experiences of a

phenomenon in order to gain a deeper understanding. Edmond Husserl's philosophical approach is the foundation for this approach and focuses on the conscious perceptions and sensations that arise from life experience (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013). Husserl insisted that phenomenology is a science of consciousness rather than of experiential things and lies between quantitative and qualitative research (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013).

This investigation commenced during the summer and fall of 2017, and participation was voluntary, as individuals could decline at any time. The participants were both male and female, multiple races, and various ages. The investigator followed up with the 11 contacts who responded and sent follow-up emails to them regarding their participation. If response was low, phone calls were made to schools.

Identification of HBCUs. As noted earlier, the investigator contacted 88 HBCUs located in the southeastern United States. The states included the following; Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Email correspondence was sent to chief residence life officers and vice presidents of student affairs listed on each website at the targeted HBCUs requesting permission to contact previous or current staff. Eighty HBCUs were contacted and 69 did not respond to the request. Thus, the investigator received 11 responses providing approval to contact individuals for this study, and the institutions and their characteristics are in Appendix C. After the chief residence life officer or vice president of student affairs provided the names of potential participants, the investigator created a list of all contact information and individually emailed each staff member.

Procedures for implementing online survey. The online survey (Frank, 2013) was created on Google Docs forms and surveys. This program allows the researcher to

create, administer and collect data through a secure Google site. This program is web based and requires personal sign-in. The program allows users to create survey questions, send to numerous participants, and securely record all responses. The program, Google Docs, was used to collect all of the participant responses from the survey, transfer the responses to an Excel spreadsheet, if needed, or display responses in graph format.

The online survey was sent via email to the prospective participant pool identified by each respective school. The email contained a link to the Google Docs survey that required the participants to log in and complete the survey. Participants were instructed to thoroughly read the instructions. The online survey included 20 factors, and each participant was asked to rank only five. Participants placed a 1 next to the factor that most influenced their decision to leave their position at an HBCU. Second, the participant placed a 2 next to the factor that had the second most influence on their decision. Third, the participant placed a 3 next to the factor that had the third most influence on their decision to leave. Fourth, the participant placed a 4 next to the fourth factor that had the most influence on their decision.

Lastly, the participant placed a 5 next to the factor that was the fifth most important factor that led to departure from the department at an HBCU. If there was a factor not listed, the participant had the opportunity to write it in under another category. Participants completed the survey online through Google Docs, and the program notified the investigator of completion. Only the five factors identified in the survey were used for the second portion of the research. If more survey responses were required, the investigator contacted the participants who were emailed and reminded them to complete the online survey. A thank-you letter was also sent upon completion.

Once it was complete, Google Docs stored the survey responses online and

notified the investigator that a response had been received. Once participants had selected the five factors, the investigator recorded the responses and prepared for the second part of the survey. The online survey could be turned off at any point to stop collecting responses after the survey due date. Email reminders were sent out on the fifth, 10th, and 15th days to the participants who had agreed but did not complete the survey. All survey participants identities were kept confidential; the data were available only to the researcher and were kept in an online storage bank through Google Docs, a secure site. Google Docs did not identify which participant submitted responses, but participants self-identified within the survey. The investigator agreed not to use the data submitted for any other purpose and would not release information to other parties. For further protection of participants' identities, the survey data were stored in Google Docs and will be destroyed after three years.

The investigator kept a resource list of all emails sent and received throughout the process for reference. All emails were filed under HBCU emails in the investigator's email account. If needed, a follow-up email was sent to all participants. A comprehensive list was kept of all of the names, emails, and contact information provided. All potential participants were contacted via personal email. Google Docs sent an automatic email that alerted the investigator when the online survey had been completed. The investigator tracked all surveys through Google Docs to determine completion by said due date.

Procedures for arranging interviews. The modified interview protocol instrument was used for the qualitative portion of the interview. Participants were reminded that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any moment. Only participants who completed the online survey were placed in the pool for random selection and interviewed for the second portion of the study. Participants were randomly

selected through Google Sheets. This software, which is included in Google Docs, randomized the survey by numbers and selected the next set of participants to interview. If an individual did not want to participate in the second part of the study, the investigator went back to the random selection process again. Once the final pool of interviewees was established, the investigator forwarded a participation letter to each participant explaining the study and its importance. This letter was created through the program DocuSign, an online program that allows documents to be signed electronically. DocuSign allows the investigator to deliver the letter and participation agreement in a timely manner and asks that it be signed and returned by the due date provided.

The staff members identified by the vice president or director of residence life were contacted via email to confirm participation. This provided the investigator a chance to formally introduce herself to the participants and give them an opportunity to ask clarifying questions regarding the study. The requirement was that all participants must have previously worked at or are currently working in the residence life department at an HBCU; this was stipulated in the email the directors and vice presidents received. If the participants met the requirement, they were briefed about the next step in the interview process. If the participant did not meet the requirements, he or she was informed of such and thanked for their willingness to participate. The investigator communicated to the participants that their information would be shared if they participated. At any time, participants could opt to remove themselves the study.

The researcher interviewed participants individually via video conference. Video conferencing allows the investigator to make voice calls and video conferences over the internet (Gay et al., 2011). It is an inexpensive qualitative data tool for investigators unable to meet the participant in person. All video conferencing interviews occurred

using Zoom software that allowed the interviews to be recorded. Zoom allows participants to log in online or through telephone dial in, if necessary. Zoom is a secure site and requires a password to access and view all recorded interviews. The interviews were scheduled for one hour, and, if more time was needed, it was adjusted.

The second part of the study was a semistructured, qualitative interview. Gay et al. (2011) defined a structured interview as a specified set of questions for all participants that will elicit the same information. With this qualitative interview, the investigator adapted each scripted question with the factors each individual participant had previously identified. Those factors selected were used in the interview. Based on the survey responses, the factors were incorporated into the structured questions, thus making the questions semistructured. Semistructured interviews allow the investigator to combine a predetermined set of questions with the opportunity to explore responses further (Creswell, 2013).

Participants were notified via email that they had been randomly selected to participate in the second part of the study. During the interview, each participant was asked to describe how all five factors affected his or her work and his or her decision to leave the position. The investigator began the interview by asking participants to provide details about what attracted them to the position, what aspects of the position they enjoy and dislike, and how the position positively influenced the participant. The investigator listened intently and allowed the participants to openly share their responses. The investigator continued with the interview by asking each participant about Factor 1 that contributed to the decision to leave the position. Second, the investigator asked how Factor 2 affected their departure. Third, the investigator asked about how Factor 3 affected the decision to leave. Fourth, the investigator asked about how Factor 4

contributed to the decision to depart the department. Lastly, the investigator asked how Factor 5 contributed to the departure from the department.

The interview concluded with a few follow-up questions regarding lessons learned about residence life at HBCUs and if there was anything that might have changed the participants' minds about planning to or leaving the position. Participants had the opportunity to add anything to the interview before the investigator concluded the session. During this interview, the participants were encouraged to be as detailed as possible, as the purpose was to seek an understanding of a phenomenon. Toward the end of the interview, the participants were able to share additional insight on the topic. The investigator thanked the participants for their participation and informed them that they would have the opportunity to provide feedback once the transcript had been finalized. The participants were thanked once again, and the interview ended.

Storage. All interviews were recorded, and notes were taken and reviewed for accuracy. If needed, the investigator could watch the recorded interviews for more information. Once complete, the investigator reviewed and transcribed all interviews. The transcribed information was shared with participants. Participants had the opportunity to review the transcript and suggest edits. Once edits were received, the researcher made the necessary revisions. Notes and copies of interviews would be held for three years and then destroyed. The data were stored electronically on Google Docs and were available only to the investigator. The information was kept confidential between investigator and chair.

Data Analysis

As a mixed-method study, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. Johnson and Christensen (2014) noted that the use of both quantitative and

qualitative analytical techniques in a single research study allows for the qualitative data to build upon the quantitative results. Known as an explanatory design, this procedure first involves collecting and analyzing quantitative data and then using this information to drive a more in-depth qualitative analysis. In other words, the qualitative data are enhanced by the quantitative results (Creswell, 2013). For this investigation, the quantitative data were collected first via an online survey and analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics. The data were then be placed in rank order to allow participants to state the importance or priority assigned to each attitudinal object (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). NVivo software was used to analyze the data collected from this portion of the study.

Quantitative data. Following participants' completion of the online survey about departure from residence life, the investigator summarized the data (i.e., the top five factors selected by each respondent utilizing descriptive statistics, specifically mean, median and standard deviation via Excel). Excel is a spreadsheet program that allows users to organize data in cells and rows and perform statistical calculations. The descriptive statistics were calculated in Excel and organized by each participant. Excel allows the investigator to calculate the mean, median, and standard deviation. This analysis allows for a systematic arrangement of data values in rank order (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Specifically, the mean would be the average of the scores submitted in the online survey, although the median represents the middle point of the arranged numbers listed in ascending or descending order. Additionally, the standard deviation, which is the square root of the variance, served as the approximate indicator of how far the results varied from the mean (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

Following the initial analysis, the responses to the 20 items for each participant

were rank ordered, with the top five factors selected for each individual. Johnson and Christensen (2014) noted that participants should only be required to rank three to five responses because ranking can be a difficult task for individuals. The data were then coded by participant utilizing numbers to ensure each participant remained anonymous. The process of coding requires aggregating the text or visual data into manageable categories of information in order to analyze the data (Creswell, 2013). The data can be recorded with symbols, descriptive words, or category names (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Typically, descriptive statistics provide the investigator with summaries about the sample and the participant responses can be presented through charts and tables.

Qualitative data. The data analysis for this portion of the study stemmed from the five to seven randomly selected individual interviews with survey participants. The transcriptions were made of each interview and then uploaded into NVivo. NVivo provides a framework for both mixed methods and qualitative data research. The software is designed to classify, code, analyze, and highlight themes within the data that will explore promising attributes of the central phenomenon. NVivo arranges the raw data from textual interviews and meeting minutes in an organized method for the investigator to uncover themes and patterns. The software provides a framework that analyzes the data into trends, themes, and patterns. NVivo searches for key words or phrases that can be identified as a similar way of thinking. The data were recorded and summarized with important aspects emphasized.

Because the data collected from the online survey (i.e., quantitative portion) also incorporated the semistructured interview questions posed to participants (i.e., questions generated by the five factors that each participant identified in the online survey), the responses were also organized in NVivo in order to highlight additional important and

significant parts of the interviews. Moustakas (1994) defined this process as horizontalization, which is the process of highlighting meaningful statements from data that are collected in an effort to provide an understanding of the phenomenon that was experienced by the participants of the survey. This process can provide significant revelations and commonalities in responses and themes within the data. Overall, responses and comments were coded and categorized under psychological, structural, environmental, or miscellaneous. Depending on the number of participants, the researcher found the themes within the responses.

The recorded video interviews were analyzed by thoroughly reading and reviewing the transcripts and notes taken. The researcher continued to review the transcripts of the interviews and make detailed notes and edits in an organized manner. The researcher kept a record of key factors and significant items relating to attrition in residence life at HBCUs. The researcher was looking for the factors that contributed to the decision of leaving a residence life position at an HBCU. The statements and themes were then used to write the description of what the participants experienced.

Limitations

The study was limited to residence life professionals who previously worked or are currently working at HBCUs. This is a small representation of the many professionals who have worked at HBCUs and, as such, is a limited pool of participants. Second, the instruments were not originally tested, and there may have been some flaws. The investigator tested and updated the instruments and reported on their effectiveness. Lastly, there may have been researcher bias on the part of the investigator. The investigator previously worked in residence life at an HBCU in the southern United States for five years in residence life.

Chapter 4: Results

The primary purpose of this study was to examine how personal and professional experiences contributed to the decision to leave the institution. The investigator employed a mixed-methods design, beginning first with an online survey and then following up with one-on-one interviews. The study focused on the following research questions:

1. What are the personal experiences of residence life professionals at HBCUs that contributed to their decision to leave the institution?
2. What are the professional experiences of residence life professionals at HBCUs that contributed to their decision to leave the institution?
3. For those who have decided to leave the institution, have they pursued other residence life positions?
4. For those who have decided to remain with their institution in the residence life area, have they sought or are they seeking other positions within the institutions?

Response Rates

The investigator conducted the study during the fall semester of the 2017-2018 academic year. At the time of this study, 88 HBCUs located in the southeastern region of the United States were identified. The states included Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Emails requesting the names and email addresses of potential participants who met the criteria were sent to directors and vice presidents of student affairs. After contacting each school numerous times, the investigator received 11 responses from institutions providing approval to contact individuals for this study. Although four institutions granted Institutional Review Board approval and confirmed participation, only three furnished the names and email addresses of possible potential participants. In

sum, 39 individuals were identified, with 15 agreeing to participate and complete the online survey.

Institution 1 is classified as private, residential and baccalaureate, with an enrollment of 1,500. Institution 1 provided 15 names as possible potential participants, and 12 (80%) participated. Institution 4 is public, residential and doctoral, and its enrollment is 10,000. Institution 4 provided 16 names as possible potential participants, and two (12.5%) participated. Institution 5 is classified as private, residential and baccalaureate, with an enrollment of 1,700. Institution 5 provided eight names as possible potential participants, and one (12.5%) participated (see Appendix D).

Demographics of Participants

This study elicited data from a purposeful sampling of residence life professionals at HBCUs who have considered leaving or have already departed the field at an HBCU. In order to ensure the identities of the participants were protected, pseudonyms were chosen for each of the 15 individuals. Characters from the *Harry Potter* book series were chosen as pseudonyms, and an intentional effort was made to assign names that were dissimilar to the participant's actual names. Nine women (60%) and six men (40%) participated in this study (see Appendix E). One participant self-identified as Hispanic-Latino (6.6%), 13 identified as African American (86.6%), and one identified as Haitian-American (6.6%).

All participants currently or previously worked in the residence life department at an HBCU. Six participants identified their age as between 20 and 29 (40%), eight were between 30 and 39 (53.3%), and one participant reported being between 40 and 49 (6.6%). For a majority of participants (13, or 83.6%), the highest degree earned was a master's degree. For the remaining two, one participant had a bachelor's degree (12.5%),

and the other held a doctorate (12.5%). Participants' years in the field ranged from 1 to 2 years (20%), 3 to 5 years (53.3%), 6 to 10 years (20%), and 11 to 20 years (6.6%).

Findings for Online Survey

Participants responding to the introductory email and completing the consent form were sent the link to the online survey. The survey included a list of psychological, structural, and environmental factors contributing to departure from the residence life department at an HBCU. Each participant was asked to select and rank five factors that contributed most to their decision to leave the position. There were 20 factors listed on the Google Docs survey, and the option to select another category was listed as number 21. If participants selected the other category, they were able to enter a personal or professional reason for leaving the position that was not included in the original list.

Fifteen participants completed the online survey (see Appendix E). It is important to note that one participant did not submit responses for three factors. As part of the online survey, respondents were asked to provide demographic information about themselves, such as race, years in the field, and age. The online survey also included the institutional type, highest degree earned, and institutional population. In order to organize the results of the online survey, the decision was made to summarize the responses specific to age, race, degree earned, gender, years in the field, Carnegie classification of the institution, and number of students enrolled at the institution. The order of the factors or reasons selected for leaving the field are also provided in the summary. A brief background of each of the participants is provided below.

Katie. Katie is a Hispanic-Latino female who identified her age between 30 and 39. Katie earned a master's degree, has worked in the field for 6 to 10 years, and was at an HBCU that is classified as a baccalaureate college with an enrollment of 2,500 to

5,000 students. Katie's primary reason for leaving the field was attributed to lack of professionalism (1). Her other reasons were related to (2) family issues, (3) communication issues, (4) salary, and (5) benefits.

Harry. Harry is an African American male who identified his age between 30 and 39. Harry earned a master's degree, has been in the field for three to five years, and has worked at a baccalaureate college with an enrollment of 2,500 to 5,000 students. Harry selected (1) work not valued, (2) organizational changes, (3) lack of support from supervisors, (4) lack of autonomy, and (5) lack of campus resources as the top five reasons for leaving his position.

Hermione. Hermione is an African American female who identified her age between 30 and 39. She earned a doctoral degree, has been in the field for one to two years, and was at an HBCU classified as a master's college or university with less than 2,500 students. Hermione's reasons for leaving were (1) work not valued, (2) lack of support, (3) communications issues, (4) organizational changes and (5) job opportunity outside of residence life.

Luna. Luna identified as an African American woman between the ages of 20 and 29. Luna worked at a doctorate-granting university with 10,000 to 20,000 students enrolled and has been in the field for three to five years. Luna's first factor was (1) hours worked, followed by (2) lack of flexibility, (3) multiples roles in residence life, (4) organizational changes, and (5) lack of support from supervisors.

Ron. Ron is an African American male between the ages of 30 and 39. Ron has worked in the field for three to five years at a doctoral university with over 20,000 students enrolled. Ron selected (1) lack of support from supervisors, (2) limited opportunities for advancement, (3) lack of campus resources, (4) organizational changes,

and (5) communication issues.

James. James is an African American male between the ages of 20 and 29. James has been in the field for one to two years, earned a master's degree, and worked at a doctoral granting university with over 20,000 students enrolled. James indicated (1) lack of campus resources, (2) communication issues, (3) organizational changes, (4) job opportunity outside of residence life, and (5) sentiments about students.

Ginny. Ginny is an African American woman who is between the ages of 30 and 39. Ginny has been in the field for three to five years, earned a master's degree, and was at a doctoral granting university with 10,000 to 20,000 students. Ginny identified (1) job opportunity outside of residence life, (2) other: location away from family, (3) salary, (4) limited opportunities for advancement, and (5) lack of campus resources.

Draco. Draco is an African American male who identified his age between 30 and 39. Draco has worked three to five years in the field, earned a master's degree, and was at a doctoral granting university with over 20,000 students. Draco specified (1) family issues, (2) salary, and (3) other: health of children. He did not select a factor for 4 or 5.

Bellatrix. Bellatrix is an African American woman who identified her age between 30 and 39. Bellatrix earned a master's degree, has worked 6 to 10 years in the field, and was at a master's-granting institution with 2,500 to 5,000 students. Bellatrix noted (1) lack of support from supervisors, (2) organizational changes, (3) work not valued, (4) salary, and (5) lack of professional development as her reasons for leaving.

Remus. Remus is an African American male between the ages of 20 and 29. Remus has worked in the field for 6 to 10 years, earned a bachelor's degree, and currently works at a baccalaureate college with fewer than 2,500 students enrolled. Remus' factors were (1) salary, (2) hours worked, (3) multiple roles in student affairs, (4) lack of campus

resources, and (5) limited opportunities for advancement.

Minerva. Minerva is an African American woman between the ages of 20 to 29. Minerva has three to five years of experience in the field, earned a master's degree, and worked at a doctorate-granting university with over 20,000 students enrolled. Minerva chose (1) other: and did not provide a response, (2) job opportunity outside of residence life, (3) salary, (4) communication issues, and (5) profession no longer challenging.

Susan. Susan is a Haitian American female between the ages of 30 and 39. Susan earned a master's degree, has one to two years of experience in the field, and worked at a doctorate-granting university with fewer than 2,500 students. Susan's first choice was (1) other: no separation from work and home, (2) salary, (3) work not valued, (4) lack of campus resources, and (5) communications issues.

Neville. Neville is an African American male between the ages of 40 and 49. Neville earned a master's degree, has been in the field for 11 to 20 years, and is currently at a doctorate-granting university with 10,000 to 20,000 students enrolled. Neville selected (1) communication issues, (2) hours worked, (3) lack of flexibility, (4) lack of clarification in job expectations, and (5) organizational changes as his five factors.

Delores. Delores is an African American woman between the ages of 20 and 29. Delores has worked in the field for three to five years, earned a master's degree, and works at a doctorate-granting university with 10,000 to 20,000 students enrolled. Delores identified (1) hours worked, (2) lack of clarification in job expectations, (3) limited opportunities for advancement, (4) profession no longer challenging, and (5) organizational changes.

Fleur. Fleur is an African American female who identified her age between 20 and 29. She has earned a master's degree and worked at a doctorate-granting university

with 2,500 to 5,000 students enrolled. Fleur indicated (1) communication issues, (2) sentiments about students, (3) limited opportunities for advancement, (4) lack of professional development, and (5) work not valued. The factors selected for all 15 participants are summarized in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Factors selected by online survey participants.

Among the overall factors reported as reasons for leaving a residence life position, communication issues, and organizational changes were cited as the top two (i.e., both were chosen eight times). Salary was selected seven times, and lack of campus resources was designated six times. Lack of support from supervisors and limited opportunities for advancement were both chosen five times. None of the participants selected connectedness with institution or relationship with supervisors as a factor. The least cited factors were lack of autonomy, benefits, and lack or professionalism (see Appendix F).

Participant responses were also analyzed by gender and age in an effort to highlight some recurring factors or themes within each group. As shown in Figure 2, by gender, the factor of communication issues was selected by five women (62.5%) and three men (37.5%). Organizational changes were cited by four women (50%) and four men (50%). Overwhelmingly, more women selected salary (five, or 71.4%) than men (two, or 28.5%). On the other hand, more men (four, or 66.6%) selected lack of campus resources than women (two, or 33.3%). Women noted lack of support from supervisors (three, or 60%) and men (two, or 40%) as a factor. Lastly, limited opportunities for advancement was selected by women (three, or 60%) and men (two, or 40%). A more detailed summary of the participants' responses by gender can be found in Appendix G.

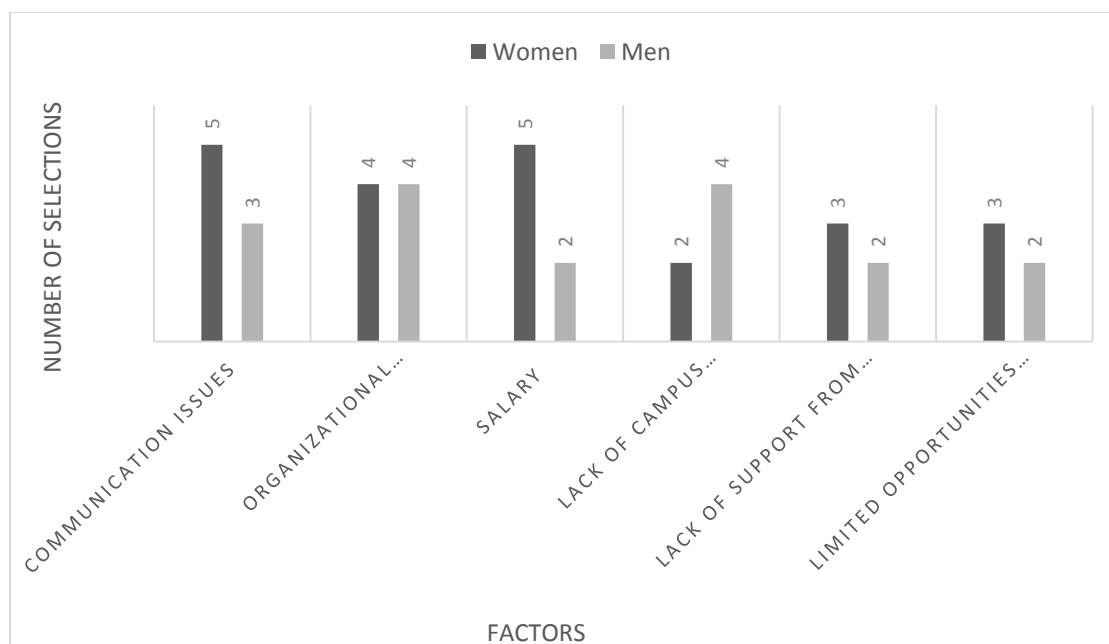


Figure 2. Top factors selected by gender.

As shown in Figure 3, by age, those between 30 and 39 selected communication issues and organizational changes four times (50%). For the remaining age groups, those who were 20 to 29 selected both factors three times (37.5%), and, for the 40 to 49 age

group, each was chosen once (12.5%). The age group between 30 and 39 selected salary five times (71.4%), although the age group between 20 and 29 chose this factor two times (28.5%). The fourth factor, lack of campus resources, was selected overwhelmingly by the 30 to 39 age group (83.3%) and (16.6%) by 20- to 29-year-olds. The 30 to 39 age group selected lack of support from supervisors (80%), although 20- to 29-year-olds only selected (20%). Finally, the 20 to 29 age group chose limited opportunities for advancement (60%) and 30- to 39-year-olds (40%). A more detailed summary of the participants' responses by age can be found in Appendix H.

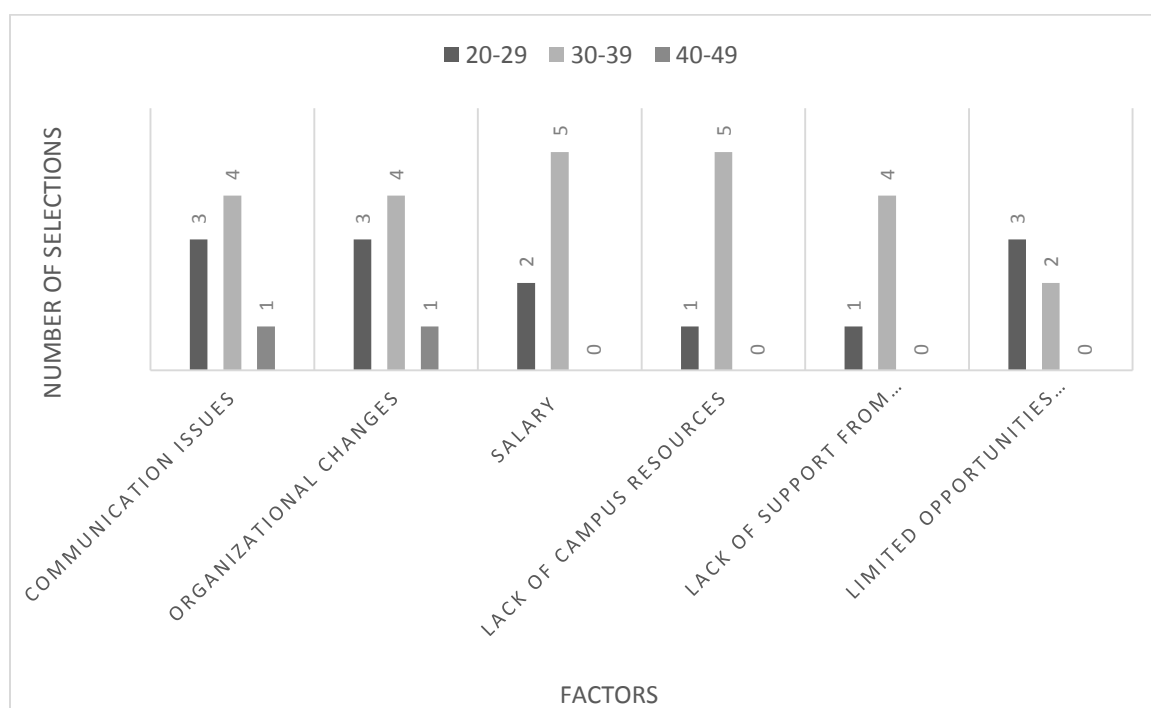


Figure 3. Top factors selected by age.

Findings for Interviews

The data collected for the qualitative portion of this study focused on the factors that contributed to the decision to leave the residence life department at an HBCU. The investigator chose a qualitative method in an effort to generate rich, unbiased and in-depth information regarding the phenomenon. Through the survey tool, research

participants were able to select five factors to be later discussed in detail during the interview. All interviews were conducted via Zoom, which allowed the investigator and participant to speak one on one. These responses were analyzed for trends, differences, and themes that contributed to the responses in the study.

Participants were randomly selected from the group of 15 who successfully completed the online survey. The investigator entered all 15 names into the Google Sheets software and selected the first nine names provided. The nine potential participants were sent an email notifying them that they were selected to participate in the second phase of the study: the interview. All nine participants agreed to participate and selected times to be interviewed. One participant did not show for his interview despite three attempts to contact him. Consequently, another name was selected through the Google Sheets software and contacted, and the individual agreed to be interviewed.

The participants were individually interviewed for their lived experiences through semistructured questions that were adapted to include their responses from the online survey. Each interview was individually recorded through Zoom and was transcribed into an electronic Microsoft Word document. Each transcript was printed out and read closely to identify any errors and repetitive words. The investigator utilized the qualitative data-analysis software, NVivo. With NVivo, the investigator sought to gain a deeper understanding within the textual categories and structural themes. NVivo captured, consolidated, and analyzed the data obtained from the interview transcripts.

The investigator ran a query within the NVivo software, and the transcripts were analyzed and coded into nodes or containers, and the prevalent topics were extracted. The nine participants interviewed were Katie, Harry, Hermione, Luna, Draco, Bellatrix, Remus, Susan, and Fleur, and the top factors for each participant were as follows: (a)

Katie: lack of professionalism, (b) Harry: work not valued, (c) Hermione: work not valued, (d) Luna: hours worked, (e) Draco: family issues, (f) Bellatrix: lack of support from supervisors, (g) Remus: salary, (h) Susan: no separation from work and home, and Fleur: communication issues.

Research Question 1. The interviews began with a discussion regarding the personal experiences based on the first question: What are the personal experiences of residence life professionals at HBCUs that contribute to their decision to leave the institution? The first section of the interview focused on the personal experience of the residence life professionals. In order to allow the participants to elaborate on their experience at the HBCU, the first couple of questions asked the following: What attracted you to the position? What are some experiences that positively and negatively impacted your experience at the HBCU? The themes that emerged from the interviews were HBCU community, students, opportunity, and work-life balance. Each theme is discussed in detail.

The HBCU community. The participants expressed great excitement about the HBCU community and their desire to be a part of this community. Luna commented as follows:

What attracted me to an HBCU specifically was the spirit and the sense of community because for so long, I had attended universities that were PWI, and I wanted to get not only the experience for my professional development, but I also wanted to get the experience personally because I'm from New Orleans so there's a lot of HBCUs in the city, and I've always heard good things about them, but I'd never been able to have a personal connection with any of them. So this gives me an opportunity to learn about the structure of an HBCU, the culture of an HBCU,

the students, and it also gave me a chance to really let my hair down. Like as far as literally, let my hair out. I was at PWI, I always felt like I had to wear my hair a certain way, I had to talk a certain way.

Draco acknowledged his excitement stemmed from personal reasons:

I think part of it was personal. Part of it was 50% personal, and 50% infatuation. The personal aspect of it was previously working at a predominately White institution, and being a student at a predominately White institution, and working in residence life during graduate school as an assistant hall director, and treated less than equal than my counterparts.

Unlike the other participants, Fleur returned to her alma mater to work and stated the following:

I think really based on the love affair that I developed here at my HBCU as far as being in residence life before, seeing the benefits of being on campus, and being able to see both sides of the spectrum: being a student and also being a staff member kind of gives you a unique perspective on the issues that we have, and, also, kind of the joys of the situation, too.

Many participants expressed joy in working alongside their peers and boasted about the support received within the HBCU community. Harry emphasized, "I had an amazing group of coworkers. Our ages ranged from 25 to 65 and it was like a wealth of experience but a wealth of wisdom at the same time." From the participant responses, there was clear excitement about joining the HBCU community. Katie remarked as follows:

It was connection with the employees; it was connection with the school, just the traditions, and the school spirit. Everything about the institution just attracted me

to working there, so much so that I even booked a flight to go to the school to see it without even having a job offer, because I wanted to know more about the school and I just felt such a strong connection.

Students. As a part of the community, students are the reason the institution is open and able to function. All nine of the participants referenced students throughout the interviews. Most of the references were positive, although some highlighted the negative interactions with some students. Some of the participants were excited to see the growth in students throughout the years. Draco expounded as follows:

Working within residence life at an HBCU is different from working in residence life at a PWI, because I can connect with the students that I identify with racially, without restraints. As an HBCU student within residence life, it's just different from the PWI student. I enjoyed the connection; a connection that I don't think I would ever have at a PWI within residence life.

Other participants described a sense of pride witnessing the resident assistants and students matriculate and enter the workforce. Hermione recounted her experience as follows:

I would probably say one of the most positive impacts was getting to work with the RA staff. One RA I took under my wing as a mentee and that's been a really positive relationship. I've really enjoyed being able to see her grow. She's graduated now and seeing her in the field of higher education. That's really exciting.

Remus shared the following:

You get a chance to see students grow. When freshmen come in, you meet them at one stage of their life, and they're still finding themselves, in an identity crisis,

and you get a chance to have input and help give them direction on where to go. I would definitely say it's the transformation process from being able to be there for someone who doesn't have someone to be there for them. Just being that liaison. Just being able to just cultivate someone to the next level, get them to the next level in life.

Although there are positive experiences with students, some participants detailed some negative experiences. Susan warned as follows:

You're taking time out of your day to make sure that you can help students find scholarships and get there. And that students are not advocating for themselves in a proper way, a manner that would get them heard.

Opportunity. As the interviews began, many of the participants referenced the opportunity to find employment in general, freedom of autonomy to create programs and opportunities for growth. Bellatrix offered the following:

I feel like there was a lot of opportunity. There was all these things, and during my interview people were talking about them, and half of them didn't make sense, and I was like, "Oh, there's a lot of opportunity to create, to help put things in order that seem a little bit just out of order."

Although most of the participants first applied for the position at placement exchanges or through the institution's website, Draco was recommended for an internship at the HBCU. He then applied to work at the HBCU after completing his master's degree. Draco mentioned the following:

I was blessed with the opportunity to go to the university; it was almost like a dream come true. It helped me with my research. It also gave me the opportunity to fulfill an experience that I never thought I would have. It is a blessing.

A few participants remarked about giving back to the community by investing in students, similar to what was done on their behalf. Fleur commented, “I was given a chance to give back to a community that I feel like has given so much to me.” There is a great sense of pride, appreciation, and love in the HBCU community.

Work-life balance. Throughout the interviews, participants commented about the work hours required for the position. All of the positions were live in and required the participants to live on campus in a residence hall. Two participants complained about the lack of separation between work and home. One participant discussed the lack of boundaries this requirement created. Susan described some encounters with students:

The fact that everybody else in other positions gets to go home away from the campus, they actually walk out of the building and go home where they do not share laundry with their students. No students look into your grocery bag and ask you, “What’s for dinner?”

Work-life balance can be difficult to achieve with the demand of students in the residence hall and the after-hours on-call system. Hermione recounted the following:

For me, it was more so that balance of life and work. Because you live on campus, you don’t have any separation. For me, it was just too much with living where the students were and being woken up in the middle of the night. I didn’t like being on call. I felt like a lot of the processes that we had to go through were just a little too much in the demands. I have been very adamant since leaving an HBCU of not checking my email when I leave work and just being off at 5:00 pm. I’m cut off, because I want to have that separation. It was just that on call schedule and living where I worked and not feeling like I had an out or just an outlet to not be at work.

Although residence life is known for a rigorous work schedule, during the interviews many of the participants still mentioned being unhappy about the amount of time spent at work and the lack of balance. Harry claimed the following:

Working in residence life it is a 24-7, 365-day gig. You are working all the time. Even when you are not on-call, you are still on-call; it is still your responsibility. I think when you do things like that, you're programming, you're teaching classes, you have these one-on-one meetings, you have students knocking on your door at all times of the night, these emergency phone calls, "Oh, I got to run to the emergency room."

Research Question 2. What are the professional experiences of residence life professionals at HBCUs that contributed to their decision to leave the institution?

Participants were comfortable and openly discussed their professional experiences.

Participants shared some professional reasons when addressing the following question:

What are some experiences that positively and negatively impacted your experience at the HBCU? The primary themes that emerged from the interviews were communication issues, salary, work not valued, organizational changes, and lack of support from supervisors. The participants mentioned these factors continuously during the interviews and indicated these factors were motivators in wanting to leave the position at an HBCU.

Communication issues. Five of the nine participants cited communication issues in the online survey as a reason for departure from the position. Participants discussed unclear communication, inappropriate and poor or complete lack of communication from the top administrators to the residence life staff as barriers. For example, Hermione mentioned; "I just think from the top down there was just poor communication and lack of trying to understand from the other side of things." Participants discussed examples in

which they were undermined by administration or other staff members, decisions would be overturned, and no communication was provided. Fleur warned as follows:

Well, for instance, there is a the hub of communication that you have to rely on to get students what they need. But then I don't know everything as a director, but I have to reach out to people sometimes and get the information to better serve the student that's in front of me. But you have some people, I believe, that are in other departments, maybe even within the department, that either have been here so long they think they know it all, or they have become bitter to the point where even if you're trying to be polite with them it comes off as nasty, maybe even a little bit snooty.

Professional communication lines have been described as blurred and confusing.

Katie commented as follows:

I feel the communication, because it was so fluid, there weren't any boundaries to say, no, this is what it is, or this is what it's going to be. It allowed for mistakes to happen and for gossip to occur and things of that nature. At times, I wished there was a little bit more structure with that, because it could have helped with my professional development.

Salary. Five participants discussed how salary contributed to the decision to leave their positions. Some left the institution because they were able to earn a higher salary elsewhere. Participants felt more money should have been offered for work that had to be done. Bellatrix offered the following:

I would guess that a lot of people working at HBCUs feel like they're underpaid, but it's because it's just part of the job. You don't expect to go to an HBCU and get a lot of money. That's not why you're there. You just don't do that unless

you're silly. However, I also felt like as hard as I worked, and as hard as the team worked that there could have been more, there could have been more of a salary, and there could have been more money.

All participants had master's degrees and felt the salary should have matched their education. Katie professed the following:

For salary, obviously we are in a service-based work field, so you can only expect so much. However, I knew the value of the work that I was doing, and I felt I definitely needed to do more. To have a master's degree, I definitely should have made more money.

One participant, Draco recounted, "Salary, it wasn't enough for a four-member family, and I was the only one working." Another participant stated she was offered a promotion and more money by her supervisor, but received neither. Bellatrix explained that she was informed, "Hey, you're not getting the salary increase, you're not getting the step up of a promotion or anything. It was devastating to me."

Work not valued. In the online survey, five participants selected work not valued as a contributing factor. Participants shared the demanding work schedule, felt stretched in many directions, and never received a thank you. Harry recounted the following:

I'm fighting fires every day on behalf of the department and it's something that I can't even control. The room has mold or it has bacteria or the appliances aren't new or the condition of the residents' rooms or the floors aren't buffed. Things that I have no control over but I'm still trying to make it work in my own power.

Hermione pointed out that "besides my direct supervisor, the administrators outside of the department did not value our work and we were often dismissed." Bellatrix mentioned the following:

I said this a few times, but in my first few years, I felt like the work that we did was so important. It was really foundational. There were many things that we did that improved the student experience, and I loved, loved that. Even though things were hard, and the students were hard, they didn't make it easy for us to do the work that we needed to do, but we were consistent, our team was consistently moving forward and taking steps to improve things, and it was super great.

Susan observed the following:

I think that, across the board, there needs to be more support. I think I said this, more support across the board for hall directors. People think hall directors don't need to be valued, but those of us who are hands on for real, want support. I sometimes think people look at us like we're crazy.

Organizational changes. Four of nine interviewees selected organizational changes in the online survey and discussed positions that were left vacant for a period of time. Hermione mentioned the following:

I think that was one of the main things that it just seemed odd the way the whole director situation went down with the first director departing and going to another position and then this new director, we weren't sure who it was going to be. People were moved to different buildings and were given different titles and things like that. For a although there we didn't really know who exactly to report to.

Significant turnover occurred at the Vice President level, as well as in residence life. Luna noted the following:

There was significant turnover in leadership. When a certain administrator was there, there was a sense of motivation, forward thinking, and excitement and hope

and it kind of was like, when he left, or when the idea of him leaving, it kind of drained all the energy out of the entire division.

Bellatrix discussed “bad experiences with the interim vice president and, subsequently, the appointed vice president of student affairs, who had no experience in the field.” A few of the participants mentioned how disruptive the organizational changes were for the residence life department. Harry recounted the following:

In about two years, I had three different vice presidents of student affairs. In two years and one month, I had four different bosses in residence life. It made it really difficult to adapt to any style or any change if change is every other Tuesday at 4:30. And they were drastic changes.

Many participants discussed not being included in the hiring process for selected leaders. Bellatrix rationalized as follows:

The president finally appointed a person to be a vice president; she didn't have any experience within student affairs. I mean, she talked about it a little bit in her dissertation, but she would say things like, “I don't need to know what you do in order to be a good leader,” to people. And it's like, “Oh, but wouldn't it be helpful? It wouldn't be helpful at all to know that; those things?”

Lack of support from supervisors. Lack of support from supervisors was selected four times. A few participants recalled support from particular supervisors, but not all.

Hermione noted the following:

I was coming in with no knowledge to residence life aside from living in a residence hall in my undergrad experience. I felt like I needed a little more guidance on what I needed to know. I felt like I was just kind of thrown to the wolves and like you sink or swim. I think that I at least treaded water well enough

but I did feel there needed to be a little bit better training for us when we were first coming in.

Luna discussed the following:

Without support, that is how you get burned out quickly. Because you want to do so much for these students and you put your heart into what you are doing, but it was discouraging when you felt like a select few were the only people really pushing to excel, if that makes sense.

Bellatrix documented the following:

There were so many changes with the pro staff it was like, very consistent of, like, “What’s next? Oh my God. What’s going to happen next? Like, what’s next?”

There was consistently a “Who’s going to come to our next meeting and drop a bomb on us?” That was what it was like for months. So just trying to keep up morale, trying to get people to take time off when they could, was like my priority. So, it stopped even being about the student experience.

Research Question 3. For those who have decided to leave the institution, have they pursued other residence life positions? Six of the nine interviewees have left their positions in residence life at HBCUs. Four of the six participants pursued residence life positions and all were at PWIs. Participants were also asked the following questions: Professionally, what have you done since leaving residence life at an HBCU? Do you find that any of your skills acquired at the HBCU have transferred to your experiences in your current position? Do you think anything might have changed your decision to leave the HBCU? Katie identified her top reason for leaving as lack of professionalism and stated the following:

I did stay in residence life for another year and a half after. I did move up in

position to an area coordinator at a larger institution, a midsize, but it was a PWI. It was a little bit of a culture shock to go from an HBCU back to a PWI, and especially in an affluent area. It was definitely different.

Katie discussed her contentment about living and working closer to her family, and she is thankful to have transitioned out of residence life. Harry's top factor was his work not valued and he explained as follows:

I work at a Division One Big Ten school now, and the resources here are absolutely amazing compared to residence life and housing departments because it's split here. Residence Life is one, housing is the other one. The resources that they have is amazing. Between technology and actual room quality, selection processes, it's just really helpful to students.

Bellatrix's reason for leaving the HBCU was lack of support from supervisors and she noted the following:

I have worked at two PWIs. One was a small private Catholic institution in Ohio, of all places, where it's cold and there's no beach. I could only do two years there because that was not a great experience either, and I currently work at a University in California, warm, Cali. So I am one of the assistant directors for residence life at the Village Community.

Although discussing her new role, Bellatrix mentioned being happier at her new school thanks to the location and new role. Luna selected hours worked as her main reason for leaving the position and admitted the following:

Professionally, I left and I worked for a PWI after working for HBCU in the residence life department. It was an elevated role where I had control over academic programming. So even though it was a lateral move, I was closer to

home which is essentially why I moved. I really was kind of happy with my time at the HBCU. My experience at the HBCU wasn't the reason why I left, like some people. But I was closer to home, even though it was a lateral move for me. But I was able to gain a lot of experience in the academic side which then led to my next position which I'm currently in, which is an academic counselor.

Although Luna was excited about her experience at the HBCU, she was also happy to be near family.

Hermione mentioned the following:

Since then, I have become an assistant director of career development. I have completed my PhD. I joined various organizations related to career services and been able to adjunct at the graduate levels, be able to teach graduate students not just undergrads, which is exciting. Then of course, moved to another state.

Hermione's main reason for leaving was work not valued and she mentioned enjoying her new role in career services. Draco insisted he would still be at an HBCU if it were not for his top factor, family issues. He mentioned the following:

Professionally, I gained more of the resources that I didn't have, and I have to be more centralized. At the HBCU, I wore several hats. I had to be a mentor, a role model, I had to be a hall director, and I assisted with several committees on campus. Then, coming back to a PWI and working at res life, it was just res life. I was just in a bubble. I wore so many hats at the HBCU it was almost like whatever they threw at me here at this large PWI it was like, "Okay, as soon as I get my bearings, this is going to be routine. And once it gets to be routine, I'm going to get bored."

Research Question 4. For those who have decided to remain with their institution

in the residence life area, have they sought or are they seeking other positions within the institutions? Three of the nine participants are currently employed in residence life at an HBCU, and all three are looking to transition outside of residence life. Participants were also asked the following question: What is one lesson you have learned about residence life at an HBCU that you might pass onto someone graduating from their master's program and going into their first job? Susan identified no separation from work and home as the main reason and she stated, "I am looking to work outside of residence life and would like some guidance on starting a search." Although considering leaving the HBCU, Remus identified salary as the main reason for his departure. When asked if anything would change his decision to leave the HBCU, Remus stated the following:

If you had more resources and enough people to actually work on the flexibility and a time constraint standpoint, I think it would be more of a great experience. Not to say that haven't had a great experience, but it'd just be a little bit more relaxed, and the students would have more than just one person to depend on and talk to.

As the participants were actively searching for their next position, they remained open to various roles outside of higher education. Communication issues were the top factor selected by Fleur, and she mentioned the following:

I've learned a lot in this position. I have. And I'm grateful for it. I believe that whoever comes after me, they stand to gain a lot from this position. But I wouldn't advise a person to just stay in this position for more than five or six years. You should always aim for the stars. Don't just stop here. Because I think there's a lot of people in residence life that have a lot to offer.

When asked about the one lesson learned about residence life at an HBCU that

might be passed onto someone graduating from a master's program and going into the first job, Draco stated the following:

Any student that comes across to me or is sent to me and stated they want to go to an HBCU first, I tell them go. You know? That's just because I'm an advocate of HBCU. Make sure that they understand time management and make sure that they're humble. And when I say "humble," because they might run into the same situation that I ran into. Most people that run into the situation I'd run into would run quick, fast, and in a hurry, and that's just the lack of resources.

Hermione mentioned the following:

I think especially if they're looking at HBCU, one, make sure that you can have that professional boundary. Especially if they're fresh off of master's and they're 24, they're not much older than some of these students that they'll be working for and supervising, so making sure you keep that professional boundary. Making sure that you have time set aside for your personal well-being and mental health because it can be stressful and there's a lot that you'll have to deal with in residence life.

Bellatrix recommended the following:

I would encourage them to have coping mechanisms that are not alcohol. Like, that can't be a dominant coping mechanism. Because I found I drank a whole lot during that time, and although it was fun, but it was really like a numbing. It wasn't good. It wasn't healthy. So I would encourage them to find coping strategies that are healthy and that nourish them instead of numbing them.

Harry advised as follows:

I would tell that person to make as many meaningful contacts as they can on

campus. Whether it's students, staff, or faculty administration, work hard, do great programming, but also take care of yourself. Yes, it's your job, you need to also be alive to take that job.

Luna shared the following:

I would say get a feel, sort of the climate before you put your personal views out there, or you try to up and just change everything. Just take a chill pill, sit back, watch and observe before just jumping straight in and thinking that you're going to rule the world. Because I find that young graduate students, they get all this inspiration from all the research and school and they still had that student voice as a graduate student. Once you leave out of the student realm, you do not have a voice until you become an administrator. Many people in the entry-level position, at mid-level position, don't really have control over anything they do. They are just there to implement the directions of the administrators.

Summary

The interviewees shared similar experiences and accounts of their time in residence life at an HBCU. The stories shared described low pay, frequent organizational changes, lack of support from supervisors, work not valued, poor or no communication, and dedication to the students. Throughout the interviews, participants elaborated on their passion for students and wanting to give back to the underserved population at HBCUs. However, in the end, many of the participants had left their positions at HBCUs, and the few who remained were actively seeking to leave the institution.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of the Study

This investigation focused on uncovering reasons why residence life professionals left their positions at HBCUs. It sought to answer four research questions through (a) an online survey that ranked the top five factors contributing to the decision to leave and (b) one-on-one interviews focusing on personal and professional experiences related to position satisfaction and career choices. Overall, 15 participants agreed to complete the online survey, and nine consented to be interviewed.

Discussion of Survey Findings

The participants overwhelmingly selected organizational changes and communication issues as the top reasons for leaving their residence life position at an HBCU. Similarly, participants selected organizational changes as one of the main reasons for departure in the Frank (2013) study. Within Frank's study, organizational changes and communication issues were labeled as organizational culture. Organizational culture solicited a high number of comments in both studies, and participants were very vocal about how the organizational culture affected them professionally. In both studies, participants openly discussed information being shared inefficiently, receiving information in bits and pieces, or not receiving any communication.

Organizational changes were deciding factors in both studies, as participants detailed radical changes occurring throughout the institution. In Frank's (2013) study, one participant, Arnold, admitted he was excited about the values of the department when he was hired, but since then the director and much of the department had changed. This led him to believe the department and institution were no longer a fit for him. Bellatrix voiced her concern that with so much visible change, she was forced into the director

role, unprepared and unpaid. Many of the other participants discussed how organizational changes affected their roles negatively and represented a contributing factor in their decision to leave the institution.

Surprisingly, there were several participants in Frank's (2013) study who selected child issues as a factor, although only one participant selected it in this study. Six participants in Frank's study selected child issues as a contributing factor to their departure. One individual stated her current compensation was too low to start a family that she desired. Frank cautioned that many new professionals are at an age when they are considering starting a family and beginning to take into consideration the financial impact this would cause. For the participants who already had children, balancing their jobs and the needs of their children became a consistent issue (Frank, 2013). Another participant noticed her family simply outgrew their campus apartment, and when she inquired about a larger building she was not considered. In this study, Draco also mentioned that, with two children and a wife, his family outgrew their living space but cited his children's development needs as the main factor for departing the position.

Discussion of Interview Findings

Research Question 1. What are the personal experiences of residence life professionals at HBCUs that contributed to their decision to leave the institution? In regard to personal experiences, throughout the interviews, the nine participants discussed the HBCU community, students, opportunity, and work-life balance. For some participants, the motivator was a combination of several things, and, for others, one factor led to their decision to leave the HBCU.

The HBCU community. All participants discussed the HBCU community as an attraction to the position, but, as time went on, the same community became a reason to

depart the institution. One of the participants cited the HBCU's location as the determining factor for her resignation, but did not apply to any HBCUs in her hometown. Another participant described the HBCU community as a family environment, but she became homesick and she sought to move closer to family. This factor was her main reason for leaving the HBCU. Although the HBCU community is known to be nurturing, racially uplifting, and supportive of students' interests outside the classroom (Brown, 2013; Collins & Hirt, 2006), this same community is not enough to prevent staff from leaving the HBCU.

Hirt et al. (2006) concluded that, when individuals' learning and working styles do not align with their current institution, they become less satisfied with their work and seek departure from the institution. Residence life staff at HBCUs provide additional support for students beyond their scope of work in the residence hall, which can often lead to burnout (Collins & Hirt, 2006). Residence life staff are still expected to provide a safe environment and around-the-clock supervision in the residence halls while fostering a community of learning, engagement outside of the classroom, and promoting the university culture (Brown, 2013; Collins & Hirt, 2006). These tasks can be stressful at a well-funded institution but perhaps overwhelming at underfunded or struggling HBCUs when wages are lower and living conditions are less satisfactory.

Students. Throughout the interviews, every participant cited students as their motivation to work at an HBCU. One participant discussed the HBCU as her alma mater, and she wanted to provide students the same support she received during her time at this HBCU. Over time, she began to feel overwhelmed as she assumed several roles. She began to feel burned out and is now seeking employment elsewhere. Many residence life staff members reported their work as highly stressful and conducive to burnout (Collins

& Hirt, 2006; Silver & Jakeman, 2014).

Although the dedication to students is evident, one participant discussed working with students as resident assistants. On one hand, the participant was proud to help mentor and guide a resident assistant through the process of becoming a student leader and successfully matriculating. The student then began working in the field of student affairs. Alternatively, the same participant discussed the administration undermining her work and not allowing her to terminate another one of her resident assistants who was non-compliant in her duties. She described the relationship as strained and frustrating.

Opportunity. For many of the participants, they were excited at the opportunity of working at HBCUs, making a difference, and developing professionally as a result. Although many of the participants cited working in multiple roles as a contributing factor for leaving the position, a few have benefited from the additional experience. As it relates to the decision to leave the position, all of the participants sought opportunities outside of residence life. While working at the HBCU, Hermione was able to work with the career services department and gain some experience. After deciding to leave the HBCU, Hermione sought only positions in career services.

As a residence life employee, Katie was able to volunteer in student activities, which later allowed her to apply for a position (in student activities) at the institution. Although Katie was not successful in her search at the HBCU, she accepted another position in residence life at a PWI closer to her family. After a year at the HBCU, Luna was able to solidify an elevated role in residence life at a PWI in her hometown. Overall, the opportunities afforded to the participants at the HBCUs helped open other employment opportunities outside of the institution.

Work-life balance. Many of the participants discussed work-life balance in

various cases. For Susan, having no work-home separation was the key factor in her decision to actively search for another position. Students invading her space was a deal breaker that she did not take into consideration before accepting the position. Susan described doing laundry in the same vicinity as students and coming home with grocery bags that prompted dinner questions from students. She also acknowledged the feeling of never “going home.” Harry recounted working in residence life as a “24-7, 365 gig” and “working all of the time.” He discussed the on-call system, the responsibility of taking students to the hospital, residence hall programming, and teaching classes on top of the daily job expectations. Silver and Jakeman (2014) warned that long hours, a rigorous work schedule, and lack of work-life balance are some of the factors that contribute to exhaustion.

Hermione also discussed living on campus and having no separation. She mentioned being awakened in the middle of the night for crises and that the demands were too much. Hermione stated that although the position at the HBCU had taught her invaluable lessons, she adjusted to working outside of residence life. She mentioned not checking email after 5:00 p.m. when she is officially off the clock and separating home from work. At the HBCU, she was required to work after hours, and this is not a practice she wished to continue. Luna confirmed she was burned out after a year because she “wearing too many hats” and working countless hours. She remarked positively that, while updating her curriculum vitae, she was shocked at all of the committees she served on while working in residence life. She also mentioned that, in her new role, she has the opportunity to do quality work versus being a “jack of all trades.”

Research Question 2. What are the professional experiences of residence life professionals at HBCUs that contribute to their decision to leave the institution?

Participants openly discussed the professional issues that plagued their work and contributed to the decision to leave the position. The constant themes addressed were communication issues, salary, work not valued, organizational change, and lack of support from supervisors.

Communication issues. Over half of the participants chose communication issues as a primary contribution to the decision to leave the institution. The participants recognized that good communication requires both parties (i.e., staff and supervisors) to engage with each other in order to be successful. A few of the participants discussed key decisions that were made in private by upper administrators and communicated poorly to the staff. Some reported little or no communication provided or unclear communication lines between administration and staff. Price (1997) warned that lack of communication can hinder employee integration into the workforce and adds to the decision to leave a position. Hermione claimed the communication at her HBCU was one sided on the part of the administrators, and the staff members were not heard. She openly discussed being told what to do, and “if you did not do as told, then you’ll just go.” This meant if you did not agree with the decisions of the administrators, you were encouraged to leave your position. The threat of job loss and this type of poor communication seemed only to sour the relationship of the staff and increased the desire to leave the position.

Salary. Although five participants noted salary as a factor for seeking outside employment, most acknowledged they were aware HBCUs were not going to pay a lot of money. The HBCUs consistently receive fewer state dollars than their PWI counterparts and operate with less staff due to funding (Brown, 2013; Gasman, 2013). As salary played some role in the decision to leave, it was not the deciding factor for most participants. Bellatrix acknowledged that, although she was aware of low salaries at

HBCUs, she had hoped that administration would have noticed the hard work of the staff and allocated more money to their salaries. Although most live-in residence life position salaries include health insurance, salary, and on-campus accommodations, HBCUs have consistently struggled with underfunding and financial security (Brown, 2013). One of the participants, Katie, felt salaries should have been higher because of her education. Administrators noted that, when hiring qualified candidates for these positions, master's degrees are typically required along with previous student development experience (Haggerty, 2011; St. Onge et al., 2008).

One of the participants noted that, although not rare, he accepted the position with a family in tow. While working at the HBCU, he was the sole breadwinner, and his wife and two children resided in the residence halls. Draco admitted that one salary was not enough for his family to survive. Another participant, Bellatrix, stated that she was verbally offered a new position with higher pay at the HBCU but never received it. Bellatrix stepped up in the absence of the director and fulfilled two roles within the department without compensation. Hirt et al. (2008) observed that student affairs professionals at HBCUs perform various functions outside of their roles and are willing to provide the extra care to students. Although Bellatrix was excited to provide additional services, when offered the additional pay, she welcomed the extra funds. When told later on she would not receive the funds or promotion, during the interview, while explaining the experience, Bellatrix became noticeably distraught and began to cry. She explained how this was such a stressful time in her life and the added cash would have allowed her to live more comfortably. She mentioned how devastating this experience was for her.

Work not valued. Five participants selected work not valued as a contributing factor to the decision to leave the position. Participants described experiences when they

were stretched in various roles at their HBCU. For instance, they were tasked with creating operating manuals, establishing an on-call system for the resident assistants and professional staff, and designing an online room selection system for the department, and sometimes it was perceived as a thankless job. Harry emphasized how he would represent the department by handling daily building issues such as mold and other room issues, and the administration did not acknowledge his work with a simple thank you. He expressed the feeling of being taken advantage of. Hermione mentioned her direct supervisors would praise her work, but the upper administration would be dismissive. Frank (2013) discussed those professionals who did not feel valued and pondered whether they felt their efforts were truly impactful or if their work truly mattered.

Bellatrix discussed the work within the department as foundational. She discussed working to improve the student experience and ensuring the staff was consistent. Bellatrix confessed that, even though the work was hard, she enjoyed the work because it was about the students. While Bellatrix discussed salary earlier, Frank (2013) also concluded that some might feel undervalued monetarily and felt they were not properly compensated for the work they did. Susan concluded that there needs to be more support across the board for hall directors. She stated they would like to be viewed as a valued part of the university. Frank pointed out that one participant mentioned understanding how people leave the profession feeling under-appreciated, not supported, and unrecognized.

Organizational changes. Organizational changes in the form of restructuring or replacement hires occurred throughout the participants' tenure at the HBCUs. Four participants selected organizational changes as a motivating factor to leave their position. Hermione discussed the removal of the residence life director and various building

changes for the live-in staff. Frank (2013) noted that many participants felt the culture of the department shifted with so many position changes. Some participants conceded they were having difficulty adjusting to the new expectations from the department or supervisors. Hermione expressed that, as these changes were occurring, she did not know whom she should report to. Turnover in organizations is inevitable and part of the cycle. From the vice president to the entry-level live-in positions, Hermione reported the confusion felt during this time. Frank noticed that individuals commented that the organizational changes created confusion and the organization was a mess.

Luna also noted that, when a certain administrator left the position, the positive environment, motivation, and forward thinking left with him. Due to bad experiences with newly appointed administrators, Bellatrix began to search for employment outside of the HBCU. While sarcastically stated, Harry mentioned he felt change occurred every Tuesday at 4:30. With such a statement, one can only wonder how frequently Harry's department experienced organizational changes. As the participants detailed various changes within their departments, one experience stood out. Bellatrix noted that the vice president of student affairs position was vacated, and the president appointed a new vice president. The newly appointed vice president admitted she had no experience in the field and no interest in learning what the staff in residence life did on a day-to-day basis. Bellatrix noted how disheartening this interaction was and how lost she felt attempting to navigate her role within the department.

Lack of support from supervisors. Participants selected lack of support from supervisors as one of the factors that contributed to their decision to leave the residence life department at the HBCU. Hermione described entering her new role as a live-in coordinator as being thrown to the wolves with no guidance or support. Effective

supervision has been characterized as key to employee satisfaction and, in turn, retention. Without support, Luna felt she would experience burn out faster in her role. With the constant staff turnover, Bellatrix maintained that there was little to no support from supervisors, as the person in the role changed often. Frank's (2013) study uncovered that some participants stated their decisions were undermined and overturned, and they lacked support from their supervisors. Those participants felt they did not matter to the department. Participants detailed unprofessional supervisors and some with unrealistic expectations for the role. One participant mentioned that, if he had received consistent support from his supervisors, his experience and decision to leave the field might have been different.

Research Question 3. For those who have decided to leave the institution, have they pursued other residence life positions? Six of the nine participants confirmed they have left their positions at the HBCUs and all were now employed at PWIs. Four of the six participants who left the HBCUs also left the residence life field. Although Katie's main reason for departure was to be closer to family, she stayed in residence life and accepted an elevated position as an area coordinator at a PWI near her family. She commented that working at a PWI was a culture shock for her and took some adjusting.

Harry also accepted a role in residence life at a larger institution. His top factor was work not valued, but now he is at an institution with a supervisor that supports him in various ways and encourages his creativity. Frank (2013) observed that student affairs administrators want their work to be meaningful and seek value. While discussing his new role and institution, Harry was seemingly very happy during the interview. He constantly referenced access to more resources and the separation from housing and residence life departments at his current institution.

Bellatrix's departure from the HBCU was credited to the lack of support she received from supervisors and lack of pay. Effective socialization from a supervisor can help staff members acclimate to their new community (Daly & Dee, 2006; Frank, 2013). Bellatrix transitioned to a small private PWI in the midwestern United States but found she was soon unhappy in her role. She is currently working in residence life at a university in California, and she referenced her preference for warm weather. She serves as an assistant director in a large community. During her interview, Bellatrix cried while she detailed her experience at the HBCU, but she was very energetic and cheerful describing her new experience at the PWI.

Luna selected hours worked as her main reason for leaving the position at the HBCU, but talked extensively about her desire to be closer to family. She transitioned to a PWI closer to family and accepted a lateral position. Eventually, Luna moved into an academic counselor position at another PWI and expressed how thankful she was to the HBCU for equipping her with the tools necessary to transition to an academic role.

Hermione was intentional about her search although working at the HBCU. She accepted a position in career services at a PWI in North Carolina. While at the HBCU, she was able to shadow and learn several aspects of the career services department. This experience equipped her with the skills necessary to interview and accept the position and perform her duties.

Draco acknowledged that, if it were not for his family, he would still be employed at the HBCU. Daly and Dee (2006) insinuated that kinship ties within the community produce a greater intent for families to stay with their institution. With his family, Draco accepted a residence life position at a PWI in Illinois. He described his experience as routine and boring. At his current institution, he described his experience as living and

working in a bubble. He no longer has the opportunity to shadow and learn other areas as he did at the HBCU. Draco was very pleased with the services his sons have received in the new location. The salary and benefits are enough to sustain his family.

Research Question 4. For those who have decided to remain with their institution in the residence life area, have they sought or are they seeking other positions within the institution? Three of the nine participants are still employed at HBCUs. Throughout the interviews, all three participants made mention of planning their exit strategy out of residence life and the HBCU. Susan stressed that no separation from home and work is her main reason for wanting to depart from the HBCU. She mentioned students knocking on her door at late hours of the night and her lack of privacy as some of the examples of no separation. As referenced in the first research question, students are drawn to HBCUs because of their family environment and may not be aware of the personal and professional lines they may be crossing as a result of seeking their campus family.

Hirt et al. (2006) maintained that student affairs professionals at HBCUs are more like parents or extended family members to students, and the students' parents believe the staff are their children's parents when away from home. This type of devotion to students can cause additional stress on the residence life staff and cause professional lines to blur. As a single woman, Susan sought separation from work and students after the workday ended, but she has not been successful. Lester (2015) stated work-life balance is sensitive to an individual's circumstance such as caring for children or an elderly parent or being ill. Depending on the circumstances, the balance the individual seeks may conflict with the ambiguities rooted in the institution. Mayo (2013) suggested that institutions must create a culture that will support work-life balance by designing and implementing initiatives and policies.

Remus concluded that salary was his reason for seeking outside employment. As he discussed the lack of campus resources at his current HBCU, he mentioned seeking a position that will increase his current salary. Marshall, Gardner, Hughes, and Lowery (2016) reported that only 28% of participants in student affairs were satisfied with their salaries. The majority of their participants left the field and attributed salary as their reason for departing the institution. As previously stated, most of the participants admitted to being aware that HBCU salaries would be lower, but they still held hope that an increase would be forthcoming because of their hard work and education.

Fleur explained that communication issues represented the top reason for the desire to leave her current position and her alma mater. She struggled with communication between her peers and other staff members. Moyer (2011) acknowledged that effective communication could help create a healthy work atmosphere of trust, engagement, motivation, and sharing of thoughts and ideas freely. Fleur often felt they were not on the same team and were not working towards the common goal of supporting students. Frank (2013) found that ineffective communication among staff led to bad practices, and, as a result, the department was out of touch with what the students needed.

Findings Linked to Relevant Research

The results of this study indicated gaps and significant issues that require attention within residence life departments at HBCUs. During early parts of the interviews, participants raved about the HBCU community and their desire to be a part of this experience. Participants went into the role with the hopes of seamlessly integrating into the HBCU community and positively contributing to the lives of the students with whom they interact daily. Unfortunately, after some time working at the HBCU, their expectations of solving issues and changing the culture were not met. Participants

recalled how the HBCU community lured them into applying for a position. Each individual recounted some aspect of the HBCU world that was appealing, but sadly it was not enough to keep him or her employed. All participants detailed stories of being burned out, stretched to the limit, and looking for opportunities outside of their institution. They expressed concerns about supervision, campus resources, and organizational changes. Collins and Hirt (2006) warned that residence life professionals work significantly more hours and have more responsibility, which can lead to attrition.

The findings of this study are linked to the relevant research of Collins and Hirt (2006), Daly and Dee (2006), Exkano (2013), and Strayhorn and Mullins (2012). These studies have revealed the continuous lack of funding for HBCUs, even though they continue to be the top producers of African American bachelor degrees (Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). Even as enrollment continues to increase and the academic programs continuously develop, HBCUs are still struggling with underfunding (Brown, 2013). Knowing this can foster greater understanding of the struggle that HBCUs currently have with attrition.

Effective supervision can make the difference. Davidson (2012) asserted that effective mentors and supervisors have a key role in development of staff and can contribute to the job satisfaction of their employees. Throughout the nine interviews, participants detailed how a supervisor shaped their experiences at the HBCU. Some described supervisors who were actively engaged in the department and provided mentorship for the entry-level positions. Those individuals were then disappointed when their supervisors left their positions and were replaced with new supervisors who did not share the same ideology. The HBCUs must invest in staff members who understand the art of leadership and will make the time to develop their staff. This will not only provide

a sense of belonging for the entry-level staff, but it will also aid in retaining and recruiting. Tull (2011) cited that synergistic supervision is a joint effort that includes proactive two-way communication and a goal-based approach. Throughout the interviews, many of the participants expressed a longing for affirmation from their supervisor: Some wanted to be valued as employees, and others sought professional-development support from their supervisors.

Lack of campus resources has been a consistent struggle for HBCUs. From the inception, primarily after the Civil War, funding has been a major issue and HBCU leaders have been creative with funding sources (Esters & Strayhorn, 2013). Gasman (2010) advised that equal and consistent funding from the state, federal, and private sectors would bolster HBCUs, making them stronger and more viable institutions. The lack of resources has slowed the implementation of programs and initiatives the participants were passionate about while employed at the HBCU. Without the funding to implement such programs, the participants' ideas and passion began to diminish, and, as a result, they decided to leave the HBCU.

Through all of the adversity, HBCUs remain the choice for Black students (Esters & Strayhorn, 2013). The HBCUs remain committed to educating historically underrepresented students, and Black students are attracted to the community, support, and familiarity that HBCUs offer (Esters & Strayhorn, 2013; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). The HBCUs provide a safe space in which students can celebrate the uniqueness associated with being Black and not have to worry about assimilating at a PWI, in addition to navigating their studies (Reeder & Schmitt, 2013). Students experience greater involvement throughout their educational journey, and, as a result, HBCUs continue to award one-third of all bachelor's degrees earned by Blacks each year

(Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012).

Overall, HBCUs are expected to operate as well as PWIs, even though the lack of funding has been consistently lacking (Gasman, 2010). Brown (2013) observed that the lack of adequate funding affects the number of quality faculty and staff members who can be hired. With the funding issue, salaries are lower than those of PWIs, and, in turn, attrition is a result. Attrition can be attributed to a number of variables, but salary is a constant factor that is referenced by residence life professionals when leaving the field (Kieckbusch et al., 2007; Kortegast & Hamrick, 2009; Lombardi, 2013). With attrition, a few of the participants described how often the staff structure would change and the position may or may not be filled as a cost saving method. Collins and Hirt (2006) confirmed that many positions go unfilled at HBCUs, and other staff members are required to fill in. Although this strategy may save the institution a salary, it created additional stress on the remaining staff as they continued work long hours and were expected to perform multiple tasks due to understaffing (Hirt et al., 2006). This continuous cycle of organizational change contributed heavily to the decision to leave the HBCU for many of the residence life professionals.

Communication issues represented another highly ranked factor in this study. Participants discussed how bureaucracy and red tape was evident in the department and division of student affairs. Kinser (1993) found that 40% of participants were unprepared and surprised by campus politics and poor communication from upper administration. Participants in this study described encounters in which they felt bureaucracy prevented them from doing their job effectively. One participant described how a resident assistant was ineffective at her job in the residence hall, but there were so many steps required before she could terminate this staff member. The resident assistant remained in the

position, per the vice president, despite the recommendation of termination. This participant discussed how bureaucracy fueled her decision to seek employment outside of the HBCU, as there was not a two-way communication stream between her and her supervisor.

Many participants openly discussed decisions made before the scheduled meeting that were handed down to them to execute. There was no discussion prior to the meeting, and their input was not requested or desired. Participants often felt out of the loop and were intentionally excluded from the decision making process that involved students they were closely supervising or mentoring. Carey (2016) observed that supervisors should be proactive with staff by including them in decisions that affect their areas. Unfortunately, those decisions often made by the vice president led to ineffective communication practices and, subsequently, seemed to be out of touch with the students' needs. This practice consistently downgraded the experience of the staff at the HBCU and led to their departure. Wilcoxson (2007) found that supervisors who intentionally sought to communicate effectively with their staff were viewed as approachable; staff understood their roles and were retained.

Another example of poor communication was exhibited when a participant stated that, if any of the staff members asked questions during staff meetings, they were threatened with the my-way-or-the-highway speech. In fear of losing their jobs, the participants went along with the decisions handed down and continued to search for other opportunities outside of the HBCU. Kinser (1993) discussed how staff members would remain quiet during meetings so they would not be viewed as the troublemaker of the group. Wilcoxson (2007) found that supervisors who attempt to motivate an employee in a verbally abusive way in front of others compromise their role as a leader. This type of

poor communication stifles growth, fosters an inability to attain goals, and lowers staff morale.

Overall, this study highlighted several aspects of the residence life department at HBCUs in which attention and improvements are needed. As HBCUs continue to experience enrollment growth, residence life departments are an essential part of the higher education system. Without it, students who do not live locally would be forced to find housing off campus and without financial assistance. This can affect the retention of students and, in turn, the financial status of the institution.

Conclusions and Implications

This study delved into the lived experiences of residence life professionals at HBCUs and provided insight into the complicated factors that contribute to the decision to leave a position. Although residence life professionals are a vital part of the HBCU community, their experiences have led them to seek employment elsewhere. Based on the results and above analyses, the conclusions are as follows.

HBCU communities nurture their students, but additional burdens are experienced by live-in residence life staff members who may not experience the same level of support. Based on the findings, there appears to be a contradiction in the level of support afforded to students at HBCUs and the lived experiences of residence life staff members. As students continually seek the support from their HBCU community while they matriculate, residence life staff members experience duress related to the amount of work that is required to ensure the community is thriving. Too often, most, if not all, of the responsibility for ensuring the students are engaged outside of the classroom falls on the entry-level professionals. This practice has caused residence life professionals to feel overwhelmed with their duties, and, as a result, they seek other

opportunities to remove themselves from a stressful and draining community. This finding is of great import, as a decrease in staff morale and overall job performance has the potential to negatively affect students' on-campus experiences that include satisfaction with residence halls living conditions, engagement in the co-curriculum, and pursuit of activities that are educationally purposeful.

Residence life professionals are more likely to feel connected to the department or institution when effective communication is the standard. This study also illustrated the need for effective communication between the administration and residence life professionals. Administrators should encourage open lines of communication on all levels, including supervisor-to-staff communication and residence life staff-to-student communication. When residence life staff experienced an information gap or instructions were provided without any discussion or explanation, they believed the administration was working against them and not toward a common goal. Communication should be clear and, when applicable, written so there is no confusion on what is expected.

This finding is consistent with studies indicating that insufficient or poor communication is a barrier to employee success at the institution (Davidson, 2012; Totman, 2012). When communication is open, employee needs, concerns and problems are resolved in a more effective and efficient manner (Society for Human Resource Management, 2012). Ramirez (2012) also noted that professional and interpersonal relationships developed more easily in the workplace when the parties were attentive, courteous, and actively engaged with each other. This, again, is a key factor in promoting a perceived sense of community, which, in turn, can foster staff retention and overall institutional performance.

An open and inclusive hiring process can reduce disgruntled professionals and boost staff morale although increasing staff retention. Residence life staff observed that constant change within the organizational structure was a deciding factor in leaving the institution. Professional relationships with supervisors were affected and there was no consistency in supervisory styles or practices. With a revolving door of supervisors, residence life staff were, at times, left with little or no direction and operated in that manner until told otherwise. Some of the staff admitted they no longer had a sense of belonging or attachment to the department or institution. With the constant turnover, staff had no expectations that the vacant role would be filled with a competent replacement. Continuous turnover can lead to decreased productivity in the workplace and poor staff morale (Davidson, 2012; Lombardi, 2013). Thus, hiring officials need to ensure that the current residence life staff are actively involved in the search process and that their observations are considered when making final hiring decisions. This sense of ownership in the process can improve the overall selection of staff members who are a good fit for the institution.

Creating policies that encourage a work-life balance can make the difference in reducing attrition at HBCUs. Work-life balance continues to be a hot topic in student affairs and, more notably, residence life. This study supports the literature that states residence life professionals leave their positions at a higher rate than the other departments within student affairs because of the stressful demands of the job and lack of personal space (Blakney, 2015; Blimling, 2010; Collins & Hirt, 2006; Lombardi, 2013). The demands of the position remain high, and residence life staff who are affected need to identify and implement various practices that will enable them to balance work demands and their personal life demands in a more effective manner. Schubert-Irastorza

and Fabry (2014) cautioned that employees experience fatigue and exhaustion due to the demands of the job and personal life, which leads to burnout.

Burnout, in turn, can lead to absenteeism, decreased work performance, serious health issues, and distancing from the job (Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Burnout can also reduce employee empathy toward students, which is important to their personal development and overall satisfaction with campus life. Thus, it would behoove institutions to be proactive in helping residence life professionals attain balance by supporting flexible time and scheduling practices that will provide staff with additional opportunities to engage in other activities outside of work. Such an approach would be of great benefit to both the institution and individual (Beeny et al., 2005; Buchanan, 2012). Residence life professionals are connected with the students on various levels, and it is imperative that they are satisfied with their work-life balance so that their work translates into positive interactions with students at all times.

Limitations

One limitation of the study was related to the number of individual interviews that were conducted in this study. In 2017, there were approximately 88 institutions that were eligible to participate in the study, but only three elected to sign on. The process yielded fewer responses than the investigator had hoped. Despite many attempts, the investigator was unable to recruit additional participants. With greater participation, the online survey could have garnered additional data on the topic of residence life attrition rates at HBCUs. The additional survey responses would have helped in adding participant perspectives and learning more about the lived experiences of residence life professionals.

Another limitation involved having two sets of participants: those who still

worked at an HBCU and those who had already departed their position. It would have been enlightening to only survey and report the lived experiences of those professionals who already departed the HBCU. This process would provide more information about the topic. For the third and fourth research questions, only certain participants could answer each question and not the other. For instance, if the participant was still employed at the HBCU, he or she could not contribute to the third research question because that individual would have had to be employed elsewhere. By narrowing the focus to only those who departed the field, all research questions can be tailored to the experience to gain a better understanding.

Data were collected from residence life professionals who had worked previously or currently at HBCUs. For those who had been out of their positions for more than two years, temporal distance may have affected their recollections of work experiences. Thus, participants may have been unable to accurately recall the particulars of their departure, and, as a result, some information may have been overlooked or simply forgotten. This could have a negative effect on the data collected and reported. Two years or less provides the participants with an adequate amount of time to debrief, process, and share their experiences in residence life at an HBCU (Clarke et al., 2008).

Recommendations for Future Research

From a research standpoint, the findings of this study offer a number of potential next steps an investigator can employ. Future studies can focus on understanding the experiences of residence life professionals within the HBCU community. Residence life staff members' living environments can be the focus of this research. One of the major findings in this study addressed the lack of work-life balance residence life professionals felt within the HBCU community. Focusing on the living environment such as housing

location, separate apartment entrances and on-campus living policies may be able to provide additional lived experiences within the HBCU community that were not identified in this study. A quantitative survey can potentially yield a larger sample size and produce a more diverse group of participants. This may be able to help provide additional data to help slow the attrition rate of residence life professionals at HBCUs.

Future researchers may want to replicate this study with similar groups at different institution types, such as tribal colleges and Hispanic-serving institutions across the country, to discern if the findings are similar. Additionally, researchers can use a qualitative approach to examine the role of location, marital status, race, age, or salary on the job satisfaction of residence life professionals at these various institutional types. The findings identified within this study may help serve as a foundation for research focused on slowing the attrition rate at institutions. The findings can also help improve staff training, communication, and supervision.

Further research can be conducted on the roles of live-in residence life professionals and the scope of their job responsibilities. Although this research uncovered some stressful aspects of the HBCU community, participants recounted numerous times how the students were their motivating factor for applying and accepting the position at the HBCU. Most of the participants described countless circumstances in which they went beyond their duties to meet the needs of the students, without a second thought. Future research could uncover more information about the experiences and impacts that residence life professionals have while connecting with students at their institutions. The results of this study can assist institutions with improving student success.

Summary

This study's results identified the concerns of residence life professionals at

HBCUs that contributed to their decision to leave the institution. Students are attracted to HBCUs because of the welcoming family atmosphere that is highlighted and portrayed as a prominent incentive. Yet, the staff members who are intimately involved with providing students with a safe space to live and learn are increasingly unhappy with the work conditions in residence life. For HBCUs, this revelation can have a significant impact on student satisfaction, retention, and matriculation at the institution. This can have a negative impact on the future of the institution and its community dynamics and infrastructure.

Throughout the interviews, various themes emerged, and the participants shared their stories. Some of the stories were quite animated, and some were difficult for the participant to share. The issues that were brought to light may cause discomfort for upper administration at HBCUs, but these results can help build a foundation for future growth. The interviews were used to explore attrition in the residence life departments at HBCUs and provided an opportunity for the interviewees to share their personal and professional experiences. Within the stories are opportunities for improvement and growth at HBCUs that can be shared across the nation to help reduce staff attrition rates.

The participants were initially drawn and recruited to the HBCUs for the same reasons as the students, which is community. Once a part of the community, the participants began to experience the struggles, hard work, and limitations that come with being actively involved. From the outside, the community seemed to be positive, nurturing, and forward thinking. On the inside, the residence life staff members faced struggles with communication issues from supervisors and administrators and were forced to navigate the ongoing organizational changes that occurred regularly. These unfortunate events created internal barriers, and the participants no longer yearned to be a

part of the community.

Leaving behind relationships they had fostered with students, participants sought to find a better working environment where they would be welcomed and appreciated. As residence life professionals continue to be hired every year for entry-level positions, it is imperative that HBCUs be intentional in seeking those candidates who are a good fit for the institution and the students. With proper training and effective supervision, it is possible to retain residence life professionals at a higher rate. With less turnover, institutions can ensure student satisfaction through the residence hall experience.

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Appendix A

Survey

Online Attrition Factor Survey

Demographic Information

1. What is your age?
 - 20-29 years
 - 30-39 years
 - 40-49 years
 - 50-59 years
 - 60 plus years

2. What is your race?
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - Asian
 - African American
 - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 - Caucasian
 - Prefer not to answer
 - Other

3. Which do you most identify with?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Gender neutral
 - Prefer not to say

4. How many years have you worked professionally in residence life?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1-2 years
 - 3-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - 11-20 years
 - Over 20 years

5. What was your highest degree obtained?
 - High school diploma
 - Associate's
 - Bachelor's
 - Doctorate
 - Other

6. Have you worked at an HBCU?
 - Yes
 - No

7. What is your institution's Carnegie classification?
 - Doctoral University
 - Master's College and University
 - Baccalaureate College
 - Associate's College

8. How many students are currently enrolled at your institution?
- Less than 2,500
 - 2,500-5,000
 - 10,000-20,000
 - Over 20,000

Below is a list of reasons that may have or already influenced your decision to leave your position in residence life at an HBCU. Please review the list and identify 5 factors that you considered most important to you. Place “1” next to the factor that most influenced your decision, a “2” next to the factor that had the second most influence, and so on until you have placed a “5” next to the fifth most important factor that led to your departure from the field. If there are other factors that influenced your decision but are not listed here, please feel free to put a number next to “other” below and briefly identify that factor.

- 1) ___ Benefits package
- 2) ___ Communication issues (with supervisors, co-workers, etc.)
- 3) ___ Sentiments about students
- 4) ___ Family issues (Children, spouse/partner or other family members)
- 5) ___ Connectedness with institution
- 6) ___ Felt work was not valued
- 7) ___ Hours worked
- 8) ___ Lack of flexibility
- 9) ___ Job opportunity outside of residence life
- 10) ___ Lack of autonomy
- 11) ___ Lack of campus resources
- 12) ___ Lack of clarification in job expectations
- 13) ___ Fulfill multiple roles within the student affairs division
- 14) ___ Lack of professional development opportunities
- 15) ___ Limited opportunities for advancement
- 16) ___ Organizational changes (reporting structure, change in mission, change in responsibilities, etc)
- 17) ___ Relationship with supervisor
- 18) ___ Profession no longer challenging
- 19) ___ Lack of support from supervisors, colleagues and other administrators
- 20) ___ Salary
- 21) ___ Other (please identify): _____

Appendix B
Interview Protocol

Can you tell me about a time when {insert factor} affected your work? [insert relevant prompt questions for this factor]

- 5) You listed {reason 2) next.

Factor One: _____

- Environmental
- Psychological
- Structural
- Other

Can you tell me about a time when {insert factor} affected your work? [insert relevant prompt questions for this factor]

- 6) You listed {reason 3) next.

Factor One: _____

- Environmental
- Psychological
- Structural
- Other

Can you tell me about a time when {insert factor} affected your work? [insert relevant prompt questions for this factor]

- 7) You listed {reason 4) next.

Factor One: _____

- Environmental
- Psychological
- Structural
- Other

Can you tell me about a time when {insert factor} affected your work? [insert relevant prompt questions for this factor]

- 8) You listed {reason 5) next.

Factor One: _____

- Environmental
- Psychological
- Structural
- Other

Can you tell me about a time when {insert factor} affected your work? [insert relevant prompt questions for this factor]

- 9) Professionally, what have you done since leaving residence life at an HBCU?
(Where, what position and how long)

10) Do you find that any of your skills acquired at the HBCU have transferred to your experiences in your current position?

III. Conclusion

Just a few more questions before we wrap-up.

11) Do you think anything might have changed your decision to leave the HBCU?

12) What is one lesson you have learned about residence life at an HBCU that you might pass onto someone graduation from their master's program and going into their first job?

13) Is there anything you would like to add?

Script:

Thanks for taking the time to speak with me today. I want to recap some of the points I heard you mention today to make sure I have captured your thoughts accurately [recap responses].

In addition, in the next month, I would like to email you a transcript of this interview for your review. I would appreciate any feedback you might have after reading the transcript, particularly if you have anything to add, correct, or change. I want to make sure the transcript represents your comments fully and accurately.

If I have, any further questions or need further clarification, is it okay for me to call you again? I really do appreciate your time today and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Have a great day!

Appendix C

Demographics of HBCU Respondents

Demographics of HBCU Respondents

Institution	Type	Residential	Carnegie Classification	Enrollment
1	Private	Yes	Baccalaureate	1,500
2	Private	Yes	Baccalaureate	2,000
3	Public	Yes	Doctoral	9,200
4	Public	Yes	Doctoral	10,000
5	Private	Yes	Baccalaureate	1,700
6	Private	Yes	Baccalaureate	800
7	Public	Yes	Master's	4,700
8	Private	Yes	Baccalaureate	2,200
9	Private	Yes	Baccalaureate	3,900
10	Public	Yes	Master's	5,400
11	Public	Yes	Doctoral	9,800

Appendix D
Institution Response Rates

Institution Response Rates

Institution	Type	Residential	Carnegie Classification	Enrollment	No. of names provided	No. of responses received	% of responses
1	Private	Yes	Baccalaureate	1,500	15	12	80%
2	Private	Yes	Baccalaureate	2,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	Public	Yes	Doctoral	9,200	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	Public	Yes	Doctoral	10,000	16	2	12.5%
5	Private	Yes	Baccalaureate	1,700	8	1	12.5%
6	Private	Yes	Baccalaureate	800	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	Public	Yes	Master's	4,700	N/A	N/A	N/A
8	Private	Yes	Baccalaureate	2,200	N/A	N/A	N/A
9	Private	Yes	Baccalaureate	3,900	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	Public	Yes	Master's	5,400	N/A	N/A	N/A
11	Public	Yes	Doctoral	9,800	N/A	N/A	N/A

Appendix E
Participant Demographics

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age Range	Ethnicity/Race	Gender	Years in Field	Highest Degree Earned	Institution's Carnegie Classification	# of Students Enrolled at institution
Katie	30-39	Hispanic or Latino	Female	6-10 years	Master's	Baccalaureate College	2,500- 5,000
Harry	30-39	African American	Male	3-5 years	Master's	Baccalaureate College	2,500- 5,000
Hermione	30-39	African American	Female	1-2 years	Doctorate	Master's College or University	Less than 2,500
Luna	20-29	African American	Female	3-5 years	Master's	Doctoral University	10,000-20,000
Ron	30-39	African American	Male	3-5 years	Master's	Doctoral University	Over 20,000
James	20-29	African American	Male	1-2 years	Master's	Doctoral University	Over 20,000
Ginny	30-39	African American	Female	3-5 years	Master's	Doctoral University	10,000-20,000
Draco	30-39	African American	Male	3-5 years	Master's	Doctoral University	Over 20,000
Bellatrix	30-39	African American	Female	6-10 years	Master's	Master's College or University	2,500- 5,000
Remus	20-29	African American	Male	6-10 years	Bachelor's	Baccalaureate College	Less than 2,500
Minerva	20-29	African American	Female	3-5 years	Master's	Doctoral University	Over 20,000
Susan	30-39	Haitian American	Female	1-2 years	Master's	Doctoral University	Less than 2,500
Neville	40-49	African American	Male	11-20 years	Master's	Doctoral University	10,000-20,000
Delores	20-29	African American	Female	3-5 years	Master's	Doctoral University	10,000-20,000
Fleur	20-29	African American	Female	3-5 years	Master's	Doctoral University	2,500- 5,000

Appendix F
Online Survey Responses

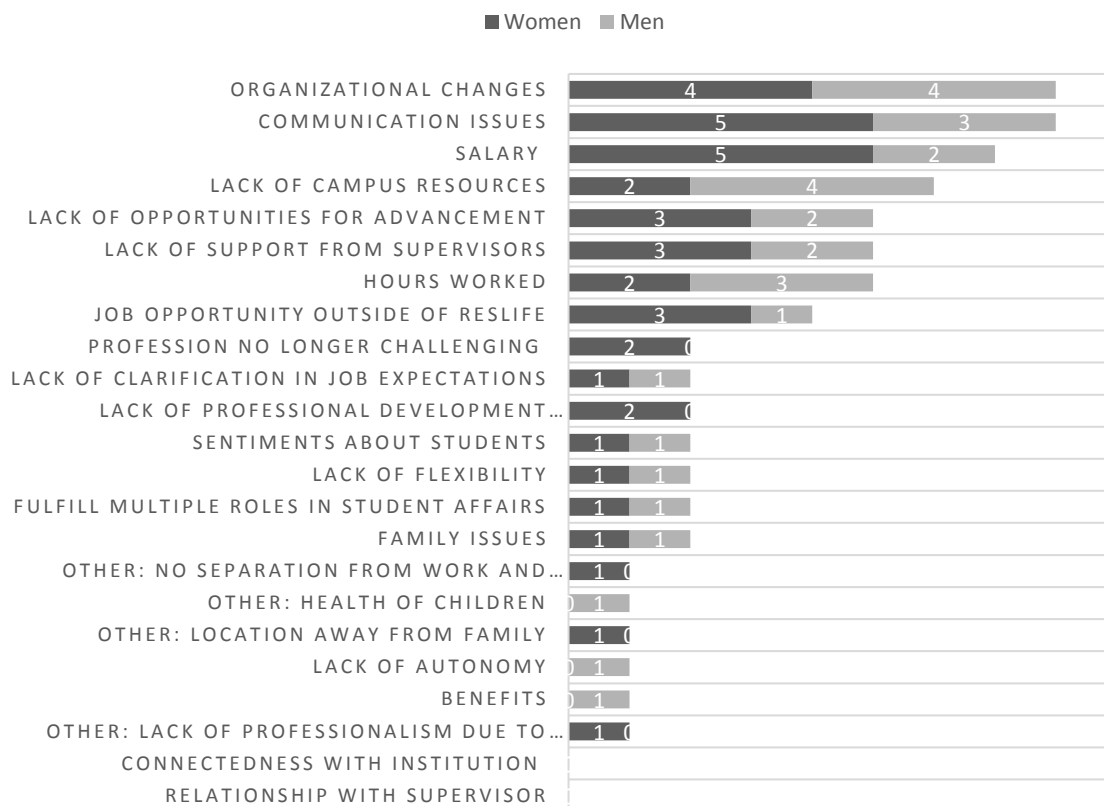
Online Survey Responses

Participant	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Katie	Lack of Professionalism	Family Issues	Communication Issues	Salary	Benefits
Harry	Work not valued	Organizational Changes	Lack of support from supervisors etc.	Lack of autonomy	Lack of campus resources
Hermione	Work not valued	Lack of support from supervisors etc.	Communication Issues	Organizational Changes	Job opportunity outside of Reslife
Luna	Hours worked	Lack of Flexibility	Multiple roles in Student Affairs	Organizational Changes	Lack of support from supervisors etc.
Ron	Lack of support from supervisors etc.	Limited opportunities for advancement	Lack of campus resources	Organizational Changes	Communication Issues
James	Lack of campus resources	Communication Issues	Organizational Changes	Job opportunity outside of Reslife	Sentiments about students
Ginny	Job opportunity outside of Reslife	Other: Location away from family	Salary	Limited opportunities for advancement	Lack of campus resources
Draco	Family Issues	Salary	Other: Health of Children	Did not provide response	Did not provide response
Bellatrix	Lack of support from supervisors etc.	Organizational Changes	Work not valued	Salary	Lack of professional development
Remus	Salary	Hours worked	Multiple roles in Student Affairs	Lack of campus resources	Limited opportunities for advancement
Minerva	Other: Did not provide response	Job opportunity outside of Reslife	Salary	Communication Issues	Profession no longer challenging
Susan	Other: No separation from work and home	Salary	Work not valued	Lack of campus resources	Communication Issues
Neville	Communication Issues	Hours worked	Lack of Flexibility	Lack of clarification in job expectations	Organizational Changes
Delores	Hours worked	Lack of clarification in job expectations	Limited opportunities for advancement	Profession no longer challenging	Organizational Changes

Fleur	Communication Issues	Sentiments about students	Limited opportunities for advancement	Lack of professional development	Work not valued
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Appendix G
Factors Selected by Gender

Factors Selected by Gender



Appendix H
Factors Selected by Age

Factors Selected by Age

