

FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION:
THE STORIES OF MOTHERING AND FATHERING PH.D. STUDENTS SEEKING THEIR
DOCTORAL DEGREES AT A MIDWESTERN PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTION
AS INDIVIDUALS WITH RACIALLY DIVERSE INTERSECTING IDENTITIES AND
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Most higher education student support services and resources do not pertain to parenting doctoral students' needs. Therefore, mothering and fathering students are left thinking they are alone in navigating their degrees independently. The primary goal of my study is to learn from the perspectives of mothering and fathering doctoral students. I want to understand how parental status and other intersectional identities influence the experiences of mothering and fathering Ph.D. students. Secondly, I am interested in learning about their challenges as Ph.D. students with dependents seeking their doctorate at a research-intensive institution in the Midwest. Thirdly, I want to learn about the support doctoral students need to help them care for their children, financially provide for their household, and attain their advanced degrees. My dissertation is a qualitative study guided by an intersectional theoretical framework. I interviewed eight mothering and five fathering doctoral students from racially diverse backgrounds and ages. Findings reveal how determined mothers and fathers are in caring and providing for their children of different ages and needs. Being a positive role model in their children's lives was the primary means of attaining an advanced education. Thoughts of guilt were a common emotion reported by all 13 participants regardless of race, gender, age, marital status, and financial status. Mothers and fathers struggled with managing time between their children, studies, and assistantships. Each participant reported physical changes in health and high-stress levels as a concern. When I asked about their support system, they said their immediate and extended families, local communities, and graduate peers contributed to their ability to provide care for their children and manage their doctoral program expectations. Participants emphasized that they would not have maintained their doctorate program attendance without the love and support of their families, children, and colleagues. This dissertation

contributes to the literature on underrepresented diverse populations in doctoral education. It also contributes to the first-generation graduate and doctoral student literature that misses the voices of mothering and fathering students representing diverse backgrounds and intersecting identities. Finally, this study adds to the growing ideology and theoretical approach to intersectionality.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Of the 3.8 million students enrolled in higher education 2015-2016, Radwin et al. (2018) reported that 70% (2.7 million) of these students are mothering students, and 30% (1.1 million) are fathering students. Sixty-two percent of these students are single mothers, and 61% are married fathers. Fathering students are 1.6 times more likely to be married than mothering students. In addition, parenting students are likely to be of color, older than non-parenting students, and raising children preschool-age or younger (Cruse et al., (2019). Nelson et al. (2013) found that more than a third of the low-income first-generation student population are parents and students of color who manage school and different family-oriented lifestyles all at once. They also reported that 53% of parents versus nonparents (31%) have a higher risk of leaving college without a degree after six years. A study by Cruse et al. (2019) found parenting students graduate with nearly twice the student loan debt.

Studies on mothering and fathering doctoral students' success and challenges are limited (Kreischer, 2017; Macaluso, 2020). Most of the literature analyzed for this study addresses the experiences and challenges of mothering students enrolled at community colleges and attaining undergraduate degrees (Cruse et al., 2018; Hanniford & Sagaria, 1994; Kruvelis et al., 2017; Nishi, 2018). Another area of research that includes parental status is the *nontraditional* student literature (Brenden et al., 2015; Duke-Benfield, 2015; Radda, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 1996; 2015). When conducting and reporting findings on parenting students, mentioning parental status and other demographics (e.g., age, gender, parental status, enrollment status, employment) identities and characteristics alone does not tell us how parental status,

among different intersecting identities, contributes to postsecondary and advanced degree attainment. For example, when researching fathering students' experiences and success in attaining postsecondary and advanced degrees (Cook, 2005), research in this area needs to include gender, parental status, and other identities in their analysis to find what contributes to their experiences. Not including these intersectional diversity differences will lead to assumptions that mothering and fathering students, regardless of gender, age, parental and marital status, have the same outcome in completing undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Significance of the Study

This study reports on the success and challenges of a segment group of students who are not researched from an intersectional lens in higher education and within the doctoral education literature. As a Chicana mothering doctoral student, I understand how complicated and challenging the doctoral process can be for mothering and fathering Ph.D. students, students of color, lower-income families, and single parents. Attaining a Ph.D. is considered the monarch of the academy and is expressed as the very highest accomplishment students can seek (Baum & Steele, 2017; Walker et al., 2008). However, when navigating this prestigious doctorate, the success and challenges of diverse mothering and fathering Ph.D. students are absent in contemporary higher education discussions and practices (Gardner, 2009a; 2009c; Gardner et al., 2007; Gardner & Holley, 2011; Holly & Gardner, 2012; Lunceford, 2011). Furthermore, when it comes to the development of doctoral students, the organization of doctoral programs assumes that graduate students are “completely self-aware and entirely developed upon entering graduate school, almost as if the development of the student ceases upon graduation from an undergraduate institution” (Gardner, 2009, p.4). This type of organization, along with the socialization and culture in doctoral education, places mothering and fathering doctoral students

at risk, especially those who come from lower-income backgrounds, communities of color, and first-generation status (Craddock et al., 2011; Gardner, 2010; Gardner & Holley, 2011; Holley & Gardner, 2012; Lunceford, 2011; Roksa et al., 2018).

On a practical level, it does not make sense that institutions, departments, graduate colleges, and those in leadership positions expect Ph.D. students to manage alone with little guidance and minimal funding. Therefore, the significance of my dissertation study is to illuminate the challenges and success of eight mothering and five fathering doctoral students at a Midwestern PWI so that we understand what contributes to their experiences and ways of navigating doctoral programs. Participants represent intersectional diversity¹. When it comes to the race/ethnicity of mothers and fathers, they self-identify as Native American-White (1 mother), Puerto Rican (1 father), Chicana (1 mother), Afro-Puerto Rican (1 father), Black/African American (4 mothers/1 father), and White (2 mothers/2 fathers). Their children and their ages are also intersectional and contribute to how they navigate to seek support and advance in their doctoral program.

My research represents the stories and counternarratives of thirteen diverse mothering and fathering graduate students seeking doctoral degrees while parenting children of different ages and care needs. According to the literature reviewed, diverse student populations, such as mothering and fathering students of color, go unidentified and underserved within postsecondary settings and in doctoral education because of colorblind ideologies and policies that place single, childless, white, and male as the dominant student ideology and profile (Brabeck, 2003; Crenshaw, 1991; DeAngelo, 2016; Delgado Bernal, 2016; Ogren, 2003; Urias et al., 2017). Furthermore, institutional gender bias and assumed roles about women as only caregivers and

¹ Terms and social identities that represent participants' intersectional diversity will be define and discussed in the Review of Key Terms section of this chapter.

not leaders influence how women in the academy are received and seen in higher administrator positions and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields (Burke & Mattis, 2007; Eversole et al., 2018; Hess et al., 2020; Hill et al., 2016; Robinson et al., 2017; Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Racially diverse mothering and fathering students above the age of 30, raising children of different ages and needs with family-oriented lifestyles seeking doctoral degrees in various colleges, departments, and fields exist. The findings in this dissertation report on the success and challenges of thirteen mothers and fathering Ph.D. students fitting this phenomenon in higher education.

Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality guides me in understanding and analyzing the complexity of attaining doctoral degrees at a PWI in the Midwest by racially diverse mothering and fathering doctoral students. An intersectional approach endorses rational thinking, which helps me embrace a multiple influence framework and to reject the solo influence contribution (Collins & Bilge, 2016). When it comes to the relationship of power, the ideology of intersectionality guides me in understanding how relationships of power occur in predominately white spaces. Furthermore, intersectionality helps me contextualize social inequity, relational thinking, and the relationships of power within a social context as one entity influencing one another. Analyzing the experiences of racially diverse mothering and fathering students seeking their doctoral degrees at a midwestern PWI from an intersectional lens helps me understand the historical, intellectual, and political forces influencing participants' challenges and achievements.

Methodology

My dissertation utilizes a qualitative methodology to conduct face-to-face semi-structured interviews with thirteen mothering (8) and fathering (5) doctoral students. Conducting

a qualitative study allowed me methodologically to collect stories from diverse mothering and fathering Ph.D. students to understand how parental status and other intersecting identities influence the attainment of advanced degrees. In addition, I was interested in learning about the challenges and support they used to help them navigate their doctoral program and how they cared for their children. The following research question guide this qualitative study:

1. What are the experiences of mothering and fathering Ph.D. students seeking their degrees at a predominately white institution in the Midwest?
 - How do parental status and other intersectional identities influence the experience of mothering and fathering Ph.D. students?
 - What challenges do mothering and fathering Ph.D. students experience?
 - What type of support does mothering and fathering Ph.D. students need and utilize to help them care for their children, financially provide for their household, and attain their degrees?

Participants and Source of Data

The eight mothering and five fathering doctoral students I interviewed provide the data source for this study. At the time of data collection, participants enroll at the University of Casterly Rock (UCR) (pseudonym), a PWI in the Midwest, seeking doctoral degrees and raising children of different ages from infancy to 18. Participants represent a variety of races/ethnicities (Native American-White, Puerto Rican, Chicana, Afro-Puerto Rican, Black/African American, and White. Seven participants are married, three are divorced, two are in a relationship with their children's biological parent, and a father separated from his son's mother. Within five months, I conducted two face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 12 participants and one interview with one participant. Each interview was approximately one to two hours long. I met participants

in a private or public location (public library conference meeting room, private office, or participant's home) of their choice. Consent forms were given and explained to participants at their first interviews. All participants agreed to have their interviews audio recorded.

Review of Key Terms

Throughout this paper, I will be using and referring to various terms. In the literature analyzed for this study, I learned that different terminology and labels are used to reference students raising children while seeking higher education degrees at community colleges, universities, and for-profit schools. Not all studies discuss and report on mothering and fathering students. To understand how parenting students are identified and researched in the published literature, I analyzed studies and reports on nontraditional students, first-generation students, parenting students, and low-income students enrolled at two-year and four-year degree-granting institutions. I also examined the literature on doctoral education and development. In the following, I discuss each of the terms in detail with an explanation for clarity.

Parenting graduate Students, Parenting Ph.D. Students, Mothering and Fathering Doctoral (Ph.D.) Students: Participants in this study are doctoral mothering and fathering students raising children (dependents) between the ages of infancy to 18 years old seeking doctoral degrees (at the time of data collection). The relationship status of these individuals varies and falls into one or more of the following categories: single, married, divorced, widowed, separate, or in a relationship. Participants may be raising children as a single parent or co-parenting with their child's or children's other biological parent. Some participants may be part of blended families. Their families consist of step-parents and children from current and/or previous relationships. Parenting students' ages ranged from 28 to 43 years old. I asked them how they wanted me to reference their parental and student status. They said their parental status (mother,

mothering, father, and fathering) comes before their student status. Therefore, when discussing them in this paper, participants will be referred to as mothering and fathering doctoral (Ph.D.) students or parenting doctoral (Ph.D.) students. A detailed explanation of each of the participants is available in chapter 5.

Parents, Student-parents, Parenting Students, Students with Dependents/Children, and Mothering Students: Researchers use the following terms *parents* (Cruse et al., 2019; Kreischer, 2017), *student-parents* (Coronel, 2020; Huelsman & Engle, 2013; Miller et al., 2011; Perez, 2016; Peterson, 2016; Schumacher, 2013), *parenting students* (Brown & Nicols, 2012;), *students with dependents/children* (Gault et al., 2014a; 2014b) to reference students parenting children while seeking higher education degrees at community colleges, universities, and for-profit schools. Some literature that reports on the experiences and challenges of mothers in higher education use the term *mothering students* (Eversole et al., 2018; Perez & Turner, 2020; Prikhidko & Haynes, 2018).

Family and Family Background: The word *family* is a broad term used in higher education literature. *Family background* defines and discusses single-status students' parents' educational and financial statuses in first-generation and undergraduate studies (Clark, 1993; Hannifors & Sagaria, 1994; Hartig & Steigerwald, 2007; Lareau, 2003; Stuber, 2011). It is unclear in the literature whether these parents are biological or step-parents. Therefore, to stay within the context of this paper, when I say *family background*, I am referring to the parents of college students aged between 18 to 23 years old that are reported and discussed in the literature reviewed for this study. Then, when I say *family*, I am talking about participants' immediate family members (children, stepchildren, and spouses/partners).

First-Generation College Students, Continuing-Generation College Students, and Second-Generation College Students: The definition most used to define *first-generation college (FGC) students* are those individuals whose parents have not attended or attained postsecondary degrees at four-year degree-granting institutions (Giancola et al., 2008, Hartig & Steigerwald, 2007; London, 1989). *Continuing-generation college (CGC) students* come from families who have attained bachelorette degrees for generations (consisting of grandparents and beyond) (Dumais & Ward, 2009; Hartig & Steigerwald, 2007; London, 1989; Stuber, 2011). The *second-generation college (SGC) student* term refers to students who do not come from a family generation of college attainment but raise by one parent or guardian who earned a baccalaureate degree from a university (Pike & Kuh, 2005).

Nontraditional and Nontraditional-age: Students in these categories are often over the age of 24, married, have children, hold full-time employment, attend college part-time, hold a GED (General Education diploma), and/or attend college after delaying enrollment after graduating from high school (Brenden et al., 2015; Brock, 2010; Duke-Benfield, 2015; Gulley, 2016; Ogren, 2003; Robertson et al., 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Nontraditional-age students are individuals over 24 years old pursuing undergraduate degrees (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Brenden et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Although *nontraditional* and *nontraditional-age* have similar social characteristics, the *nontraditional age term* only references the age of students 24 years or older.

Traditional and Traditional-age: *Traditional* students are single (not married), not a parent of dependent children, who are enrolled full-time (12 college credits or higher), and who attend universities directly after graduating from high school (Hand & Payne, 2008, Offerman, 2011; Stuber, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 1996, 2015). *Traditional-age* students are

individuals between 18-23 years old seeking undergraduate degrees at different colleges and universities and who may have started their postsecondary education trajectory at community colleges (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2011; Hand & Payne, 2008). Similar to the previous section.

Traditional-age only references the age of students between 18-23 years old.

Review of Subsequent Chapters

Chapter one begins with my dissertation's introduction by discussing the problem's statement, the study's significance, sources of data, and a review of key terms. Intersectionality and the theoretical framework for this study are discussed in chapter two. Chapter three is the literature reviewed for this study. Next, chapter four discusses the methodology, research approach and rationale, data collection and analysis, and participants' recruitment process and selection. Then, in chapter five, I explain each of the 13 participants' identities, backgrounds, and children. Lastly, chapter six is where I report my study's findings, and chapter seven is the discussion, conclusion, and recommendation for future research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

By discussing our feelings of vulnerability and mistrust openly, we began to build a space where we learned to listen, evaluate, and question each other in nonjudgement ways. We learned how to construct a safer space that was not assumed a priori to be safe based simply on gender and national/ethnic affiliations. Testimonio was critical for breaking down essential categories, since it was through telling life stories and reflecting upon them that we gained nuanced understandings of differences and connections among us.

(The Latina Feminist Group, 2001, p. 11)

I completed three degrees and successfully progressed in my doctoral program as a Chicana mothering two children from the community college to the Ph.D. Attaining my degrees and academic success did not come without challenges. As a first-generation college and graduate student, navigating educational spaces and expectations was a process that included financial assistance and seeking mentorship from peers, colleagues, and professors. Family and close friends were also significant to my postsecondary education advances. Receiving financial aid as a community college student and undergraduate was critical for attaining my first two degrees. As I advanced to graduate school, securing funding as a master's and Ph.D. student was challenging. Constantly seeking and applying for graduate assistantships (employment) to pay for my tuition caused me to experience high-stress levels.

Even though I received fellowships and travel grants to attend conferences and attained several graduate assistantships, these funding sources came with restrictions. They limited the funds I could receive per semester. As a Ph.D. student with a family, funds were never enough because my yearly financial review conducted by The Financial Aid office did not consider my children as dependents and evaluated me as a single graduate student with no children. Although student loans are available, loans decreased when I received a scholarship, travel grant, or fellowship. Also, as a full-time graduate student, the number of graduate assistantships hours I

could work was 20 hours or less per week during the academic year. A combination of funding and graduate assistantships approved for a single graduate student with no children is insufficient for living and graduate school expenses. So, imagine how difficult managing graduate school can be for mothers and fathers who are single parents caring and providing for a child or children alone with one income.

I decided to start this chapter with my *testimonio*² to give readers a perspective of intersecting factors contributing to my experiences and challenges as a Chicana mothering Ph.D. student in her forties raising two children to their adult age. *Testimonios*, as a critical methodological technique, converts personal stories into narratives of resistance (Brabeck, 2003; Espino et al., 2012), a source of empowerment that validates one's testimony of oppression and injustice (Huber, 2009; Yúdice, 1991). According to The Latina Feminist Group (2001), *testimonios* address the complexity of *latinidad*³ and help theorize about Latinas' lived experiences, community, and trajectory in education. As a first-generation college student, not only am I the first to complete a bachelor's degree, but I am also the only person in my family to attend graduate school, complete a master's degree, and soon be a Ph.D. graduate. My generational identity alone does not contribute to my experiences, successes, and challenges in completing degrees. My identity as a Chicana bilingual student in her forties mothering two children (now adult children) and navigating a matriarchal role for my extended family contributes to my navigational strategies and challenges with seeking higher education degrees and advancing in my Ph.D. program.

Again, *I am not alone*. Many women and men of different ethnicities/races, ages, SES, gender, LGBTQ+, parental status, single or not single, are raising children while seeking

² English translation "story."

³ English translation "Latina identity."

doctoral degrees. The eight mothers and five fathers I interviewed for this study represent intersectional diversity, which includes race, gender, and other identity markers (e.g., age, parental status, etc.) connecting to multiple and intersecting sociohistorical structures of dominance (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; *Anzaldúa*, 1990; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991; Harris & Patton, 2019; Luft & Ward, 2009; Macias & Stephens, 2019; May 2016). They all have similar experiences and challenges they shared with me during their interviews. However, participants reported different experiences rarely acknowledged in the graduate education literature. In the following sections, I will first discuss the origin of intersectionality and its relation to women of color fighting against the matrix of oppression. Then, I will discuss the scholarship of Kimberley W. Crenshaw, a Black woman legal scholar and critical race theorist who created the term *intersectionality*. After that, I will include a section discussing past studies with intersectional ideologies and approaches to looking at equity issues in society and higher education as having intersecting relations with other social divisions such as ethnicity/race, nationality, age, religion, and language, sexuality, and more. Lastly, I will share how intersectionality as a theoretical framework guides me in developing this study and conducting interviews with 13 mothering and fathering Ph.D. students—furthermore, an intersectional analysis guides me in answering the main research questions for this study.

Origin of Intersectional Thought

Before I discuss Kimberly Crenshaw, there is a necessity to honor women of color before her who have contributed to the consciousness of intersectionality. The historical consciousness of intersectionality originated before the 1960s; however, in the Civil Rights Movement, Chicano Movement, Red Power Movement, and Asian-American Movement between the 1960s to 1970s. Black women, Chicanas, Native women, and Asian Americans developed a systemic

understanding of their experience with oppression, which placed them subordinated to men, including men of color. Even in the second-wave movement of feminism in the 1960s, white women's cause and advocacy were at the forefront of this coalition, ignoring oppressive behaviors endured by women of color (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Women of color dealt with "interactive oppression," an intersectional metaphor by Deborah King (1988) that goes beyond womanism and interprets women of color's experiences in the U.S. as a nexus of oppression.

Before the 1970s, African American women began to develop an intersectional consciousness and expressed their experiences through poetry, art, essays, and other venues to advocate and end unjust treatment (Azaransky, 2013; Cooper, 2020; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1993; Jones, 1949; Murray, 2018). Additionally, African American women served in leadership roles during the civil rights and Black Power movements. They learned how to analyze social inequality critically and organize within political contexts (Collins & Bilge, 2016). They understood that the oppression they faced could not only be addressed by "race-only, or class-only, or gender-only, or sexuality-only frameworks" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 65). During this time, African American women in the United States started creating their political organization, using the descriptive phrase *Black feminists*. As well, Mexican-American feminists articulated a political subjectivity calling themselves *Chicanas* and forming the Chicana feminist movement (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Frances Beal's (1969) *Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female*, distributed by New York's Third World Women's Alliance, represents intersectional thought and critique between racism and capitalism. Beal refers to racism as an afterbirth of capitalism. In her essay, Beal says:

The economic system of capitalism finds it expedient to reduce women to a state of enslavement. They often-times serve as a scapegoat for the evils of this system. Much in the same way that the poor white cracker of the South, who is equally victimized, look down upon black and contributes to the oppression of black, so by giving to men a false feeling of superiority (at least in their own home or in their relationship with women), the oppression of women acts as an escape valve for capitalism. (Beal, 1969, p. 5-6).

U.S. history documents the discrimination against women of African descent and grants African American women ownership of intersectional analysis before Kimberley Crenshaw introduced the term *intersectionality* in 1989 (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989). However, as stated previously, African American women were not alone in the fight for social and political justice. The alliance between Black, Chicana (Mexican American), Native American, and Asian American women raised arguments about the interconnections of race, gender, class, and sexuality (Collins, 2015; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989).

Chicana feminists Dorinda Moreno and Marta Cotera are part of the grassroots movement in the 1970s who wrote about the social and political tensions and inequity *mujers* (women) faced from an intersectional approach (Cortera, 1997; Garcia, 1997; Moreno, 1973). In the 1980s, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, initially published in 1981, significantly contributed to intersectional critique and analysis. The book is an anthology collectively written by Black, Chicana, Latina, Native American, and Asian American women in solidarity to create awareness about acts of oppression experienced by women of color. In the opening of the book's fourth edition, Cherrie Moraga writes,

For the first time in the United States, women of color, who had been historically denied a shared political voice, endeavored to create bridges of consciousness through the exploration, in part, of their diverse classes, cultures, and sexualities—we turned our gaze *away* from a feminism prescribed by white women of privileged (even in opposition to them) and turned *toward* the process of discerning the multilayered and intersecting sites of identity and struggle. (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015, p. xvi).

Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, among other feminists of color, including Indigenous Feminists and Asian American Feminists, laid the foundation for the third wave movement of feminism and contributed to feminists of color theory and intersectional theorizing that is referenced today as *intersectionality*.

Intersectionality

Black legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberley W. Crenshaw introduced the term *intersectionality* to explain the multiple factors that contribute to the marginalization and oppression of Black women. Crenshaw understood “intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and praxis honed within social movement settings, and intersectionality as a legitimate field of academic inquiry” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 81). In her 1989 article, Crenshaw critiques single-axis frameworks of inquiry and praxis contributing to the marginalization and oppression of Black women. She said studying racism, and genderism apart cannot explain the experiences and challenges of Black women. Crenshaw argued that:

Single-axis frameworks erase Black women in the conceptualization, identification, and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group to be viewed in terms of sex- or class-

privilege Blacks; in sex discrimination cases, the focus is on race- and class-privilege women. (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140)

Criticism of Black feminists argues that single-axis frameworks contribute to the marginalization of feminist theory and antiracist politics (Harris & Patton, 2019). Crenshaw states that:

Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender. These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140)

Intersectionality, as a theoretical framework, helps analyze how systems of oppression are multi-dimensional. The analysis of single-axis frameworks is one-sided, placing the dominant group perspectives and ideologies as the majority while minoritizing non-dominant voices and experiences.

The Value of Intersectional Analysis in Educational and Equity Research

Educational research has addressed inequity around gender, race/ethnicity, SES, and sexual orientation from an intersectional lens. Intersectionality as an analytical tool guides researchers in addressing the complexity of systemic issues concerning race, gender, SES, age, sexual orientation, culture, and other demographic identities and markers (Allen & Solórzano, 2001; Anderson, 1993; Blea, 1992; Brenden, Deil-Amen, & Rios-Aguilar, 2015; Huber, 2010; Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995; Ochoa, 2013; Moore & Brainer, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

In education, poststructural feminism researchers use intersectional approaches to analyze issues of power, social justice, and oppression of women of color (Anzaldúa, 2012; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015; St. Pierre, 2000). For example, in her book *Making Face, Making Soul (Haciendo Caras): Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color*, Anzaldúa (1990) states:

What is considered theory in the dominant academic community is not necessarily what counts as theory for women-of-color. Theory produces *effects* that change people and the way they perceive the world...*Necesitamos teorías*⁴ that will rewrite history using race, class, gender, and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross borders, that blur boundaries—new kinds of theories with new theorizing methods. (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xxv).

Anzaldúa expresses a need for theories that will speak to the lived experiences of individuals outside dominant categories in academia. An intersectional analysis crosses borders and blurs boundaries to point out experiences from formed categories and theoretical models, erasing narratives of the oppress (Anzaldúa, 1990).

A historical inquiry of the U.S. educational system (K-12 and higher education) (Lauder, 1991; Levin & Kelley, 1994; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Thelin, 2011) uses intersectional thought to analyze inequity practices in education as a systemic issue permitting dominance for Whites while oppressing people of color (Anderson & Collins, 2016; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; Freire, 2016; Tellbear, 2013). For instance, less than 12% of women teachers identify as Black, Latina, and Asian in primary and secondary schools, and approximately 83% to 87% of teachers are White women (U.S. Department of Education, 2018a). Additionally,

⁴ English translation “we need theories”

within primary and secondary leadership roles, White men represent 75% of school district superintendents, while White women represent 18.5% (Hill et al., 2016). Furthermore, women of color and men of color hold the lowest number of administrator roles in K-12 education (Kowalski et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2017b).

Women of color are disproportionately absent in leadership and senior-level positions in higher education. White women hold higher-ranking and senior-level positions in higher education institutions, while women of color work in entry-level positions (Macias & Stephens, 2019; Pollard, 1997). Studies in the K-12 and higher education sectors found that assumptions about gender (women v. men) roles in society and systemic racism influence how women of color are portrayed and not seen as meaningful leaders in the academy (Eversole et al., 2018; Tallerico, 2000; Tallerico & Blount, 2004; Turner et al., 2011). Intersectionality as a theoretical framework help guide researchers in discussing the construction and premises contributing to paradigm shifts of power and social inequality in education concerning race, gender, SES, age, sexual orientation, culture, and other demographic identities.

Intersectional Thought as a Theoretical Framework

As a critical researcher, I am interested in learning about the experiences of diverse mothers and fathers raising children while seeking their doctoral degrees from an intersectional theoretical framework. Using an intersectional analysis is of value to my study because the 13 mothering and fathering Ph.D. students I interviewed for this study represent different ages, races/ethnicities, genders, SES, and parental and relationship statuses. Although participants identify as parents, their family-oriented lifestyles and households are different. Their support system varies in different ways, and they report similar ways of seeking support from their near and far communities and families.

As my study's theoretical framework, intersectionality guides me in understanding and analyzing the complexity of attaining doctoral degrees at a PWI in the Midwest by racially diverse mothering and fathering Ph.D. students. An intersectional approach endorses rational thinking, which helps me embrace a multiple influence framework and rejects the solo influence contribution (Collins & Bilge, 2016). When it comes to power relations at PWIs, the ideology of intersectionality guides me in understanding relationships of power occurring because of mutual factors that influence diverse societies, populations, and social institutions. Furthermore, intersectionality helps me contextualize social inequality, relational thinking, and the relationships of power within a social context as one entity influencing another. Analyzing the experiences of graduate students raising children at PWIs from an intersectional lens helps me understand the historical, intellectual, and political forces influencing and affecting mothering and fathering Ph.D. students' challenges and achievements.

The six core ideas of intersectionality (social inequality, relationality, power, social context, social justice, and complexity) help me analyze the experiences of parenting graduate students as a diverse population of individuals navigating dominant white spaces controlled by the social system of power and complexity (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Intersectionality helps me understand that a single factor does not cause equity issues regarding social inequality. Still, its rationale embraces a multiple influence framework rejecting the sole influence framework. An intersectional framework also guides me in analyzing and discussing relationships of power as a mutual factor that influences diverse societies from varying angles. Contextualizing in this framework comes with the ability to think about social inequality, relational thinking, and relationships of power as one social entity influencing one another, a social construction shaped by historical, intellectual, and political forces.

Further, when it comes to social justice, intersectional analysis helps me discuss diverse perspectives to reveal oppressive behavior while also implementing best practices for graduate students parenting their children in graduate school. Lastly, intersectionality as a theoretical framework helps me introduce the elements of complexity between social inequality, relationality, power, social context, and social justice altogether, not separate (Collins & Bilge, 2016). These six principles of intersectionality guide my dissertation study to help me answer the main research questions.

Summary

In this chapter, I discuss the origin of intersectional thought, Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, and the value of intersectional analysis in educational research. Furthermore, I discussed how intersectional thinking and analysis help me in identifying and talking about the experiences of ethnically diverse (Black/African American, White, Afro-Puerto Rican/Puerto Rican, Chicana, Native American-White) mothers and fathers raising children between the ages of 11 months to 18 years old. In chapter 6, I will give a more detailed description of each of the mothers and fathers that participated in my study. The next chapter discusses the literature I reviewed on parenting students in high education. I aim to give readers an overview of how students raising children are identified and researched in postsecondary education and graduate education.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, the review of the literature analyzed for this study on parenting students is discussed from various perspectives to give readers an understanding of how mothering and fathering students advancing their education are underrepresented in higher education because of the racially diverse backgrounds and social identities they represent. The racial, cultural, age, gender identities, SES, generational, educational attainment status, and more get overlooked or misplaced by systems of oppression that place single, childless, young (under the age of 23), and males as the dominant ideology of students in postsecondary education. The dominant ideology is incorrect because women of all races and ages are the most individuals completing bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees (U.S. Department of Education, 2018c, 2018d; 2019a, 2019b). However, in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields, women, especially women of color, attain fewer degrees than White women. More women of color are completing Humanities and Social Science degrees, especially in education (U.S. Department of Education, 2019a).

To understand the experiences and challenges of mothering and fathering Ph.D. students. I reviewed the literature on nontraditional and first-generation college students. I found that mothering and fathering parenting students' voices are not present in the nontraditional and first-generation literature. Students with dependents are mentioned as part of the student population in the nontraditional literature. However, the published literature does not discuss mothering and fathering students' experiences and challenges. Then, when it comes to the first-generation literature, most studies analyzed are based on undergraduate students' access, retention, and completion of degrees (DeAngelo & Frank, 2016; Dumais & Ward, 2009; Furquim et al., 2017;

Hand & Payne, 2008; Ishitani, 2003; Martinez, 2018; Mehta et al., 2011). Some peer-reviewed articles on first-generation doctoral students (Fussell-Ware, 2017; Gardner, 2011; Gardner, 2013; Holley & Gardner, 2012; Howard, 2017; Jenkins, 2019; Roska et al., 2018; Vasil & McCall, 2018). However, none of the first-generation articles mention parental status among their students' demographic reporting.

Regarding specific studies directed toward mothering and fathering doctoral students in doctoral education, the two studies I found were dissertations (Kreischer, 2017; Macaluso, 2020). Past studies reported more on parenthood, parental status, and mothering students (single and non-single mothers) at community colleges and attaining bachelorette degrees (Coronel; 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020; Huelsman & Engle, 2013; Miller et al., 2011; Noll et al., 2017). The only study I found on fathering students was by Cook (2005). Cook's dissertation looked at fathering students' experiences at a community college level. More research is needed in this area. There is a need to understand fathering students' experiences at two-year and four-year institutions and advanced education degree programs.

In the following sections, I discuss the identities and labeling of students with dependents raising their children while seeking postsecondary degrees. Then, I provide an overview of the first-generation literature I reviewed. After that, I discuss the different institutions used by parenting students and give an overview of the profile of doctoral students and advanced degree attainment. Lastly, I end this chapter by discussing the lack of support for students raising children seeking postsecondary and advanced degrees.

Identities and Labeling of Students Mothering and Fathering Their Children While Seeking Postsecondary Degrees

Nontraditional v. Traditional

Students are categorized and given cultural markers in postsecondary institutions according to their social statuses, demographic qualities, and family educational background. Students' standard terms are nontraditional, nontraditional-age, traditional-age, traditional, and first-generation. Age and family educational background are the defining characteristics for separating students into groups within these categories. Other variables that associate students with traditional or nontraditional labeling relate to their social demographics, residency, level of employment, and nondegree occupational program enrollment (Duke-Benfield, 2015; Offerman, 2011; Ogren, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 1996, 2015). Students' enrollment status is an indicator for identifying students as traditional or nontraditional.

Nontraditional and Nontraditional-age

A wide range of characteristics identifies nontraditional students. Students in this category are to experience:

Delayed enrollment (not matriculating into college immediately after high school graduation), and tend to have independent financial status, attend college part-time, work full-time, have a spouse and/or children (or other dependents beyond a spouse), be single parents, or not have completed a traditional high school diploma. (Brenden, Deli-Amen, & Rios-Aguliar, 2015, p.8)

The National Center for Education Statistics bases nontraditional status on one or more nontraditional characteristics. Nontraditional qualities as either *minimal*, *moderate*, or *high*. The following criteria define each level:

Minimally Nontraditional. Students with only one nontraditional characteristic were considered “minimally nontraditional.” These students were most often either older than typical or enrolled part-time in postsecondary education. Minimally nontraditional undergraduates accounted for about fourteen to fifteen percent of students in each of the three NPSAS samples.

Moderately Nontraditional. Students with two or three nontraditional characteristics were considered moderately nontraditional. These students, who made up 25 to 31 percent of undergraduates in the three NPSAS surveys, tended to be older than typical, independent, and to attend part-time.

Highly Nontraditional. Having four or more nontraditional characteristics distinguished students identified as highly nontraditional. In addition to those characteristics associated with moderately nontraditional students, about two-thirds of highly nontraditional students either had dependents or worked full time, and about one-quarter were single parents. Highly nontraditional students accounted for about one in four undergraduates in the three NPSAS surveys. (U.S. Department of Education, 1996, p. 8-9)

Furthermore, nontraditional students are likely to be women, individuals of color, and the first in their families to attend college and complete degrees.

Traditional and Traditional-age

The term traditional-age student is a category that identifies students between 18 to 23 years old. Traditional students are single (not married), not a parent of dependent children, enrolled full-time (12 college credits or higher), and transition into college directly after graduating from high school. Students in the traditional category are more likely to enroll at a four-year degree-granting institution. On the other hand, traditional-age students can enroll in

different colleges and universities. Family educational background plays a factor in the traditional category. Students who make up this population are likely to come from affluent families and parents who have attained bachelorette degrees or higher. These families see earning postsecondary degrees as a family tradition (Hand & Payne, 2008; Stuber, 2011).

First-generation students also fall into the traditional-age category. If students are between 18 and 23 years old and attend a four-year degree-granting institution right after graduating from high school, they are considered traditional-age college students. On the other hand, they are not regarded as traditional college students because their parents do not have college degrees. I found researchers looking at the access and completion rates between students most and least achieved in higher education using the traditional and traditional-age terms to discuss their findings (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2011; Hand & Payne, 2008; Offerman, 2011; Stuber, 2011). Considering parental status in studies directed towards nontraditional and traditional students is essential. A third of low-income and first-generation students are parenting students and students of color, managing family-oriented lifestyles raising children while seeking postsecondary degrees (Nelson et al., 2013). However, I found that parental status was minimally discussed or not reported in past studies' analysis and finding sections of reports.

Considering First-Generation Status Among Parenting Students

Most studies discuss young students between 18 and 23 years old (traditional-age) in the first-generation literature and inquire about undergraduate experiences. Many studies compare first-generation to other student groups in higher education, such as "second-generation" and "continuing-generation" students. The second-generation term refers to students whose parents or guardians earned baccalaureate degrees (Pike & Kuh, 2005). In the second-generation category, grandparents and extended family members do not apply. Students' parents' and

extended family members' educational background is part of the continuing-generation class. CGC (continuing-generation college) students refer to individuals from biological parents with generational family status to attain higher education degrees (Cataldi et al., 2018; Dumais & Ward, 2009; Stuber, 2011).

The literature reviewed on FGC (first-generation college) students falls into three distinct categories: (1) college choice and preparation, (2) college persistence and completion rates, (3) and high school to college transition (Pascarella et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996). When it comes to college choice and preparation, FGC students' family educational background and SES contribute to their academic experiences and outcomes in completing higher education degrees (Dumais & Ward, 2009; Hartig & Steigerwald, 2007; Ishitani, 2006; Kaufman & Gabler, 2004; London, 1989; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Tierney & Colyar, 2006). Most studies analyzed found that:

First-generation college students tend to be at a distinct disadvantage with respect to basic knowledge about postsecondary education (e.g., costs and application process), level of family income and support, educational degree expectations and plans, and academic preparation in high school. (Pascarella et al., 2004, p. 250)

First-generation students are reported to experience a higher delay in completing their college degrees and are likely to be managing employment and school simultaneously.

The second area of research analyzed focuses on FGC students' persistence in attaining and completing college degrees (Giancola et al., 2004; Hand & Payne, 2008; Ishitani, 2006; Ishiyama, 2007; London, 1989; Pascarella et al., 2004; Richard & Skinner, 1992). These studies found students to endure more challenges than continuing-generation students. FGC students are:

More likely to leave a four-year institution at the end of the first year, less inclined to remain enrolled in a four-year institution or be on a persistence track to a bachelor's degree after three years, and are less likely to stay enrolled or attain a bachelor's degree after five years. (Pascarella et al., 2004, p. 250)

When considering the literature on access, retention, and completion of higher education for FGC students, the ages of students most reported are between 18 to 23 years old. The studies analyzed do not mention parental status as part of their demographic reporting and data analysis.

Next, the third area found in the literature analyzed discusses the transition from high school to college (Bastedo & Jaquette, 2011; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Giancola et al., 2004; Hand & Payne, 2008; Ishitani, 2006; Lehmann, 2007; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Tierney & Colyar, 2006). In these studies, different forms of capital and cultural wealth contribute to FGC students' success and/or challenges in accessing and achieving higher education opportunities and degrees. Pierre Bourdieu's forms of capital (cultural, social, and institutional capital) and Tara Yosso's cultural wealth are two of the theories used in analyzing student academic success amongst different socioeconomic and racial-cultural groups (Sadovnik, 2011; Stuber, 2011; Swartz, 1997; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, 2005).

Diversity of First-Generation College Students

The first-generation literature is missing mothering and fathering students' stories and experiences. Undergraduates and single-status students without children are the primary student populations in FGC student studies (Pascarella et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996). Regardless of age and degree level, mothering and fathering students' stories are essential to understanding how many students are raising children and how their parental status and other intersectional identities contribute to their success and challenges in completing higher education degrees. For

example, Nelson et al. (2013) found an increased presence of college students with dependent children who fall into the first-generation category. Nelson et al. reported that more than a third of the low-income and first-generation student population are parents and students of color raising children while seeking postsecondary degrees. Among this population, 37% are African American, 33% are Native American, and 25% identify as Latino (Nelson et al., 2013). In 2019, the U.S. Department of Education reported that:

The 6-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began their pursuit of a bachelor's degree at a 4-year degree-granting institution in fall 2010 was highest for Asian students (74 percent), followed by White students (64 percent), students of Two or more races (60 percent), Hispanic students (54 percent), Pacific Islander students (51 percent), Black students (40 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native students (39 percent) (p. vi).

However, when considering the statistical reporting increase of racial/ethnic populations by the U.S. Department of Education, these findings do not report if these students are single with no children.

Parental status is critical to document because 53% of parenting students versus 31% of non-parenting students have a greater risk of leaving college without degrees after six years (Nelson et al., 2013). Among lower-income college students with children, parenting students are 25% less likely to obtain a degree than low-income adults without children. Parenting students have a higher daily demand for their time, with more than 40% working full time or more and over half spending 30 hours per week on caregiving (Gault et al., 2014b; Hauelsman & Engle, 2013; Miller et al., 2011; Nelson et al., 2013). As a result, they require different types of support because students with no children do not have the same responsibilities as parenting students

when caring for and financially providing for a family. Also, it is essential to note that students with dependents achieving success in attaining their degrees have higher grade point averages than non-parenting students (Nelson et al., 2013).

First-Generation Status Postbaccalaureate

Another area in the first-generation (FG) literature that needs further research is the implications of FG status postbaccalaureate. Completing bachelor's degrees does not erase first-generation status. According to Cataldi, Bennett, and Chen (2018), 29% of students enrolled in master's degrees or beyond master's certificate programs are FG, and 4% of students enrolled in doctoral or professional degree programs are the first individual in their families to pursue an advance degree. The traditional doctoral student is not an unmarried White male with no children. Offerman (2011) states that the profile of students postbaccalaureate for the last fifty years continues to change and includes more ethnically diverse adults over the age of 33 who are married and have children. In his review of nontraditional doctoral students, Offerman cites that among Capella University's graduate student enrollment (80%). Fifty-nine percent are married, 52% are students of color, 68% are women, and the average age of graduate students is 43 years old (Offerman, 2011).

First-Generation Doctoral Students

FG students have enrolled and completed doctoral degrees since 1963 (Hoffer et al., 2006). Hoffer et al. (2006) reported that in 2005 22% of doctoral students were FG. The literature I analyzed for this study did not report how mothering and fathering FG students navigate attaining doctoral degrees. However, the literature does discuss the experiences and challenges of FG doctoral students (Fussell-Ware, 2021; Gardner & Holly, 2011; Gardner, 2013; Holly & Gardner, 2012; Lunceford, 2011; Roska et al., 2018). Roska et al. (2018) found that

doctoral students of FG status are more likely to come from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups (Black, African American, Latina/o/x; Native American) and are less likely to have attended research-intensive institutions (R1) for their undergraduate degrees. Furthermore, published literature reported that FG students seeking doctoral degrees often face financial constraints, struggle in understanding the doctoral education system, and feelings of otherness as if they are between two worlds (Fussell-Ware, 2021; Gardner, 2013; Holly & Gardner, 2012).

Regardless of FG students' challenges, Hoffer et al. (2006) say FG students complete advanced degrees faster than non-FG students (Hoffer et al., 2006). However, when it comes to student loans and funding, Hoffer et al. (2006) reported that FG doctoral students graduate with higher student loan debt and often must find funding to help them pay for their advanced education. Whereas non-FG doctoral students often hold graduate assistantships (teaching or research paid positions) and/or grants/fellowships that help them fund their doctoral education. Regarding access, retention, and completion of doctoral degrees among underrepresented populations, such as FG mothering and fathering Ph.D. students. More research needs to be inquired from an intersectional perspective to understand how FG status and other intersecting identities plus institutional practices contribute to the experiences and challenges of Ph.D. students.

Postsecondary Enrollment and Institutions Utilized by Parenting Students

Parenting students are in attendance at various institutions. Nationally, parenting students enrolled in postsecondary education has increased by 30%, from 3.7 million to 4.8 million between 2004 and 2012 (Noll et al., 2017). Noll et al. (2017) reported that 26% of the undergraduate population raised children. In a 2017 research report on graduate school enrollment, Baum & Steele (2017) wrote that 29% of the 1992-93 bachelor's degree recipients

who enrolled in graduate school and completed master's degrees by 2003 were parenting students, and 23% were non-parenting students. Therefore, when discussing college access and completion rates for parenting students. It is necessary to understand what type of institutions mothering and fathering students utilize to attain their credentials and what resources they seek to support their efforts in managing family-oriented lifestyles and caring for their children.

Community Colleges

Thirty percent of the community college student body is parenting students (Noll et al., 2017). Noll et al. (2017) report that community colleges enroll 45% (2.1 million) of the total parenting student population in higher education nationally and regionally. Two-year institutions are valuable outlets for mothering and fathering students because parents find these institutions more accessible. Community colleges have an open mission policy, lower tuition fees, and costs, flexible course scheduling (night classes), and pathway entrance to four-year institutions (the transfer function) (Arcand, 2015; Cohen, 2014; Dougherty, 2014; Ma. & Baum, 2016; St. Rose & Hill, 2013). Furthermore, community colleges offer a variety of credentials and training, which include:

Associate degrees and certificate programs, remedial and developmental education, career and technical education (formally called vocational education) customized or “contract” courses to meet the needs of local employers, adult basic education classes, English courses for speakers of other languages, noncredit recreational courses, and dual enrollment opportunities for high school students. (St. Rose & Hill, 2013, p. 6)

Parenting students often have limited to no financial resources to contribute to attaining postsecondary education (Duke-Benfield, 2015; Gault et al., 2014a). They rely heavily on financial aid, such as the Pell Grant and scholarships, to fund their education (Baum & Steele,

2017; Gault et al., 2014a; Kaushal et al., 2011). Ma and Baum (2016) express how the cost of raising children and affordable childcare plus the average tuition and fees for attending the public two-year institution can detain parenting students from completing their credentials. At the same time, Ma and Baum say that community college students are less likely to graduate with little to no debt because they rely more on federal student loans than any other higher education sector.

For-Profit Schools

Historically, for-profit schools are controversial institutions of higher education because they are not seen as providing quality education and not preparing students to be successful in navigating and entering the workforce (Beaver, 2009; Deming, Goldin, & Katz, 2012; Dundon, 2015; Hogman, 2018; Liu, 2011). For-profit schools are a streamlined system that offers convenience and responsiveness by providing more course schedule flexibility and location availability closer to home (Arcand, 2015; Bailey, Badway, & Gumport, 2003; Lloah & Tierney, 2014). Furthermore, for-profit schools serve parenting students' needs differently than two- and four-year institutions do not provide. Although, for-profit schools are more expensive and have a higher debt risk for individuals who attend these schools (Arcand, 2015; Lloh & Tierney, 2013; Nelson et al., 2013; Oseguera et al., 2011). Students with higher secondary school absenteeism and those seeking a credential or training to enhance their opportunities of finding a job find these schools desirable in meeting their needs regardless of financial increase (Chung, 2012; Lloh & Tierney, 2013; Nelson et al., 2013; Oseguera et al., 2011).

A study by Arcand (2015) inquires why low-income single mothers prefer to attend for-profit schools versus community colleges. Her findings revealed that for-profit schools offered mother students a higher advantage in completing their degrees quicker. They benefited from the student support services, course scheduling flexibility and availability, and various locations

(Arcand, 2015). For-profit schools efficiently and quickly meet new economic demands because of their “reliance on part-time faculty, corporate governance structures, standardized and non-teaching faculty” (Lloh & Tierney, 2013, p. 6) and no support for research. These institutions do not require placement testing to enroll, and remedial courses as expected by the two-year and four-year degree-granting institutions. Therefore, for-profit schools serve parenting students more efficiently to their needs in attaining credentials. On another note, students with dependents leave these for-profit schools with higher debt and uncertain job placement (Lloh & Tierney, 2013).

Four-year Degree-Granting Institutions

The educational trajectories and completion of degrees for mothering and fathering students enrolled at four-year degree-granting institutions need further research. The documentation of parenting students in undergraduate programs at universities is mixed between two- and four-year institutions, mainly inquiring about mothering students and discussing the profile of parenting students without disfiguring gender (Gault et al., 2014b; Huelsman & Engles, 2013; Kruevelis et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2011; Noll et al., 2017). Another study with similar findings discusses how traditional-age college students between 18 and 23 years old with dependents require a support system that understands the challenges of managing school while caring for children (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2011). Goldrick-Rab et al. (2011) specifically found differences between mothering and fathering students. They report that mothers in their study were the primary breadwinners in their households and caregivers for their children. At the same time, fathers had an active presence in their children’s lives but were not the primary caregivers. Goldrick-Rab et al. reported a critical difference between mothering and fathering students in their study. Mothers and fathers did not manage the same parental responsibilities. In single-

parent households, single mothers cared for and raised their children without the support of their children's biological fathers. Inquiring about mothering and fathering students' experiences at four-year degree-granting institutions seeking undergraduate and graduate degrees requires further research from an intersectional approach. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework will limit general statements that gender, race, age, and other demographic characteristics plus acts of power and oppression alone do not affect the attainment of postsecondary degrees by diverse mothering and fathering students at PWIs and other institutions.

The Profile of Doctoral Students and Doctoral Education

The Profiles of Doctoral Students

The intersectional identity of students contributes to the access, retention, and completion of advanced degrees. Offerman (2011) says that the profile of doctoral students has changed. He argues how the portrait of doctoral students as single, White, male, and childless is not the norm and has not been the case for the last fifty years. Offerman argues that men and women seeking advanced degrees often work full time, are married with children, and seek credentials while managing busy lifestyles. Offerman states nontraditional graduate students have different reasons why they seek doctoral degrees:

Whether courses are offered on weekends, in the evenings, or online, flexibility has caused major changes in scheduling, faculty work hours, and more. Students cannot be assumed to be on campus or even coming to campus at all. Increasingly, they study online or in intensive formats that allow them to control when they will engage in the study (p. 27)

When considering graduate school advancement and socioeconomic status, Baum and Steel (2017) reported that college graduates from lower-income backgrounds are:

Less likely than others to go to graduate school. When they do continue their education beyond college, they are more likely than those from higher-income backgrounds to seek master's degrees, which yield a considerably lower earnings premium than doctoral and professional degrees (p. 8).

According to the literature analyzed, seeking, and attaining degrees for lower-income communities, adults, and students with dependent children is impossible or extremely difficult. More research is needed to investigate low-income communities' experiences and degree advancement in Ph.D. programs.

Okahana et al. (2020) reported that in the fall of 2019, more than half of first-time graduate students enrolled in master's degree, certificate, and doctoral programs were women. Authors found women earned the "majority of graduate certificates (62.2%), master's degrees (58.5%), and doctoral degrees (52.9%)" at U.S. institutions in 2019 (Okahana et al., 2020, p. iv). Regarding race and gender, women enroll in doctoral programs at a higher rate than men across all racial/ethnic populations (U.S. Department of Education, 2019, p. vi). Communities of color are less likely to complete advanced degrees. In 2013, Latinos represented the lowest numbers of graduate students completing master's degrees (3%) and doctoral degrees (0.5%) at U.S. institutions (Santiago, 2015). Asians hold the highest number of master's degrees (15%) and doctoral degrees (4%) completed in 2013 (Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015). The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS, 2020) reported that in 2015 the completion of Ph.D. degrees by African Americans and Latinos was less than 50%. In 465 African American doctoral students, only 35% completed their Ph.D. degrees, and in a group of 469 Latino doctoral students, only 45% completed their Ph.D. degrees.

A continuum disadvantage occurs for students of color in graduate education. Accessing and completing advanced degrees by populations of color is a significant issue in the U.S. There

are reports of increased graduate school enrollment for African Americans and Latinos. For example, between 2000 and 2016, the registration of Latinos in advanced degree programs increased from 111,000 to 260,000 students, and for African Americans, from 181,000 to 363,000 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019, p. vi). Although the enrollment rate for African Americans and Latinos increased, completing advanced degrees for ethnic-racial groups is lower. In fall 2019, Okahana et al. (2020) reported that only 24.8% of students enrolled in graduate school were from populations of color (0.5% American Indian/Alaska Native, 12.1% Black/African American, 0.2% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and 11.9% Latinx).

The Parenting Student Population in Doctoral Education

Many studies analyzed do not research mothering and fathering Ph.D. students' experiences in doctoral programs (Kreiscer, 2017; Prikhidko & Haynes, 2018). Most studies focus on parenting students' experiences and enrollment at the community college and undergraduate level (Coronel, 2020; Gault et al., 2014a; Huelsman & Engle, 2013; Miller et al., 2011). When considering the experiences of students mothering and fathering children while enrolled in higher education, many studies discuss mothering students or students with dependents without reporting gender-specific findings (Coronel, 2020; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2011; Huelsman & Eagle, 2013; Kreischer, 2017; Miller et al., 2011; Perez, 2016; Peterson, 2016; Schumacher, 2013). Discussing the parenting student population experiences in doctoral education from a non-gender and non-intersectional approach ignores the diversity of challenges and successes contributing to their experiences in completing and/or progressing in doctoral studies.

Prikhidko and Haynes (2018) and Kreiscer (2017) researched the experiences of parenting graduate students. Prikhidko and Haynes examined the emotions and stress levels of

mothering graduate students. They found mothering graduate students experience cognitive dissonance (a state of having inconsistent thoughts and beliefs) and perceived managing graduate school as mothers challenging. Stress resulted from not being able to choose between school and mothering responsibilities, which caused changes in their behavior and thoughts. Often, mothers felt guilty for not spending enough time with their children and studies.

Kreischer's (2017) dissertation study looked at parents enrolled in graduate school and inquired about their experiences with faculty. She interviewed 16 parenting graduate students (13 mothers and 3 fathers; 8 doctoral students, 5 master's students, and 3 alumni) and reported on eight common themes in her findings chapter. Her overall results were related to race, international student status, gender, marital status, and participants' children's ages. She reported that parenting graduate students' experiences resulted from role conflict and enhancement, which faculty and graduate programs contributed. Participants in the study said their campus needed family-friendly structures, paid maternity and paternity leave, and more flexibility and empathy from faculty members towards parenting students (Kreischer, 2017). Her study also discussed the value of community-building and reported how parenting graduate students struggled to find support within their department and cohort. The parents who developed a support network had more interactions with peers than those who had little interaction with colleagues.

Doctoral Education

Regarding doctoral studies, Gardner (2009) discusses the importance of student development and the effects of doctoral education on students. Gardner reports that the significant areas of scholarship that need more research are doctoral students' experiences and professional development outcomes in Ph.D. programs. In her article, Gardner discusses (see Exhibit 1) the seven main areas of study she found in the literature on doctoral education.

Exhibit 1

Significant Areas of Scholarship in Doctoral Education

Areas of Scholarship	Major Authors
Doctoral student completion and attribution	Bowen and Rudenstine, 1992; Council of Graduate completion and Schools, 2008; Golde, 2005; Lovitts, 2001; Nerad and Miller, 1996; Tinto, 1993
Time to degree	Abedi and Benkin, 1987; Baird, 1993; Ferrer de Valero, 2001
Socialization process	Antony, 2002; Austin, 2002; Baird, 1972; Ellis, 2001; Gonzalez, 2006; Margolis and Romero, 1998; Mendoza, 2007; Rosen and Bates, 1967; Weidman, Twale, and Stein, 2001
Dissertation	Baird, 1997; Boote and Beile, 2005; Goodchild, Green, Katz, and Kluever, 1997; Isaac, Quinlan, and Walker, 1992
Advising roles and relationships	Aguinis and others, 1996; Baird, 1995; Bargar and Mayo-Chamberlain, 1983; Clark and Corcoran, 1986; Schroeder and Mynatt, 1993
Gender and race in the above categories	Cao, 2001; Ellis, 2001; Gonzalez and Marin, 2002; Green and Scott, 2003; Heinrich, 1995; Herzig, 2004a; Maher, Ford, and Thompson, 2004; National Research Council, 2001; Soto Antony and Taylor, 2004; Turner and Thompson, 1993
Discipline differences in the above categories	Crosby, 1996; Elkana, 2006; Gardner, 2007; Golde, 2005; Golde and Walker, 2006; Lott and Gardner, forthcoming; Walker and others, 2008

(Gardner, 2009, p. 6)

However, none of these studies inquire about the development of mothering and fathering doctoral students from an intersectional perspective. Furthermore, Gardner says that there is an assumption that graduate students are “completely self-aware and entirely developed upon

entering graduate school, almost as if the development of the student ceases upon graduating from an undergraduate institution” (p. 4). Then, when it comes to the overarching field of students’ development, Gardner reports how most of the literature is on undergraduate experiences. Regarding the professional development of Ph.D. students, first-generation status and other intersecting identities need further inquiry to understand the experiences and outcomes of underrepresented populations, such as parenting students in doctoral education.

Inclusiveness and Lack of Institutional Support for Parenting Students

Regarding the success of parenting students in higher education, various studies have pointed out how crucial institutional support is for academic retention and degree completion. A study by Brown and Nichols (2012) examined pregnancy and parenting students’ policies and programmatic needs at a mid-Atlantic state university. What they found was that few resources exist for mothering and fathering students. They claim that institutions of higher education, especially universities, demonstrate little effort in organizing family-friendly events for parenting students and their children.

Schumacher (2013) argues that colleges need to talk about inclusiveness when it comes to parenting students but implement practices in understanding the needs of mothering and fathering students. In her article, *Prepping Colleges for Parents: Strategies for Supporting Student’s Parent Success in Postsecondary Education*, Schumacher suggests the following guidelines as to ways of supporting parenting students enrolled in college:

Make campuses welcoming and responsive to student parents. Increase recognition and responsiveness to the needs of student parents on campus through existing structures, such as outreach, admissions, financial aid, coursework scheduling and advising, and campus life and social supports.

Provide access to a range of services to support low-income families. Expand the continuum of services to student parents' access on campus to address child and family needs.

Integrate support for academic and family success. Make it easier for student parents to access the services they need to be successful academically while also meeting their responsibilities as parents. (p. 4)

Like Schumacher's guidelines, other scholars discuss the importance of implementing more policies and student support programs for mothers and fathering students (Miller et al., 2011; Nelson et al., 2013; St. Rose & Hill, 2013).

For example, a study by Miller et al. (2011) reported the importance of improving access to affordable childcare for low-income families pursuing postsecondary education. Authors demonstrated in their report that:

Nearly half of student parents work full-time while enrolled, in addition to caregiving responsibilities, which are heavier for enrolled mothers than for their male counterparts. Single student parents, in particular, are likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds or situations: they are less likely to have parents who have earned postsecondary degrees and more likely to be low-income and to qualify for need-based financial aid. (Miller et al., 2011, p.1)

One of the most significant challenges students with young-age children face is accessing affordable childcare—parenting students pursuing their higher education degrees attempt to balance work, school, studying, and family. Childcare is a necessity for individuals with elementary-age children or younger.

In using data from the Department of Education and other government sources, Miller et al. (2011) estimate that:

Only 5 percent of the childcare needed by student parents is supplied at on-campus childcare centers. Placements can require months or years on waiting lists, especially for infants or toddlers, and centers that are able to provide care during evening or weekend hours are scarce. Between 2003 and 2009, the number of two- and four-year institutions providing care has decreased, with a large drop between 2007 and 2009 in the number of community colleges providing care. (Miller et al., 2011, p.1)

Research looking at parenting students enrolled at community college found childcare, financial aid, and scheduling of courses to be the primary factors affecting the completion of degrees for parenting students (Arcand, 2015; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2011; Peterson, 2016).

The attendance of mothering and fathering students in postsecondary education needs to be acknowledged with interest importance because they demonstrate a continued increase in enrollment in a variety of institutional types, degrees levels, and majors (Gault et al., 2014b; Kruvelis et al., 2017; Nelson et al., 2013; Prikhidko & Haynes, 2018). Regarding the diversity of students represented in postsecondary education on race, gender, age, and other demographic identities, it is uncertain how many students seek a doctoral degree and education. In this case, there need to be policies and intentional practices that document and protect the number of mothering and fathering students enrolled in higher education to support them and their children an opportunity to advance in attaining their knowledge of any degree and field type.

Summary

The literature analyzed for this study was presented to give readers an overview of the master narrative of how parenting students are defined, researched, and discussed in the

published literature in higher education. The master narrative is categorized and described by the term nontraditional, which is not helpful but more problematic. Nontraditional is a broad term that consists of different identities and characteristics around race, gender, age, parental status, and more (Brenden, Deli-Amen, & Rios-Aguliar, 2015; Ogren, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Each of these characteristics contributes to students' experiences in different ways. Examining parenting students' challenges and success from a nontraditional student perspective is misleading. Parental status, age, race, and gender, among other intersecting identities and characteristics, methodologically need to be included in the collection and analysis process inquiring about racially diverse mothering and fathering students' success and challenges in attaining higher education degrees and advanced degrees. Researching this population under broader terms, such as *parents*, *student-parents*, *parenting students*, and *students with dependents/children*, without implementing an intersectional lens and analysis is misleading and assumes one factor contributes to degree completion.

As a critical theorist of intersectionality, I argue that racially diverse mothering and fathering Ph.D. students with intersectional identities and characteristics navigate attaining doctoral degrees similarly and differently. Not understanding what type of support they require and seek places them at a significant advantage of being overlooked and not getting adequate support to help them attain doctoral degrees, which minimizes the diversity in doctoral education advancement and attainment. This phenomenon needs to be researched from an intersectional lens to learn what contributes to their successes and challenges in completing doctoral degrees. In the next chapter, I discuss the research design and methodology used for this study, including an overview of the data collection and analysis process and my role and positionality as the researcher.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Outgroups, groups whose marginality defines the boundaries of the mainstream, whose voice and perspective - whose consciousness - has been suppressed, devalued, and abnormalized. The attraction of stories for these groups should come as no surprise. For stories create their own bonds, represent cohesion, shared understandings, and meanings. The cohesiveness that stories bring is part of the strength of the outgroup. An outgroup creates its own stories, which circulate within the group as a kind of counter-reality.

(Delgado, 1989, p. 2412)

In designing this study, I wanted a methodology that supported storytelling and narrative reporting. As a qualitative researcher, I am interested in talking with people and listening to them tell their stories. Seidman (2013) says, "stories are a way of knowing. Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness" (p. 7). Additionally, Seidman explains that to give a detailed explanation of one's experiences from beginning to end, one must reflect on a process, which consists of having the ability to establish a selected experience(s), reflecting and giving incidents orders, and then try to make sense of the experience that results in telling stories, a "meaning-making experience" (Seidman, 2013, p. 7).

First, I understand the expectations and challenges of a doctoral program at a PWI in the Midwest as a mothering Ph.D. student with dependents. I co-founded *Students with Families* (SWF), a registered student organization (RSO), with another mothering Ph.D. student of color raising three children. We both sought our doctoral degrees away from our extended families in another state. Academic and personal support and mentorship were a must. Creating SWF gave us a foundation to connect and meet other parenting students. At SWF social events, parenting undergraduate and graduate students could network and collaborate with other mothers and fathers to manage to attain their degrees while caring for their children. Being part of SWF gave

me the courage and an outlet to support and advocate for other parenting students. I learned that higher education institutions need to have accessible resources and appointed space for the parenting student population they serve.

For this study, I wanted to participate in a conversation with other parenting Ph.D. students to learn about their experiences from their perspectives. I also wanted to contribute to the literature on the importance of mothering and fathering doctoral students in graduate education and the value they contribute to higher education as a whole. In addition, to understand what type of resources and support they need, mothering and fathering doctoral students need to have the opportunity to share their stories and express their necessities. The following research question guide this qualitative dissertation study:

1. What are the experiences of mothering and fathering Ph.D. students seeking their degrees at a predominately white institution in the Midwest?
 - How do parental status and other intersectional identities influence the experience of mothering and fathering Ph.D. students?
 - What challenges do mothering and fathering Ph.D. students experience?
 - What type of support does mothering and fathering Ph.D. students need and utilize to help them care for their children, financially provide for their household, and attain their degrees?

In the following sections, I will discuss qualitative research methodology and the purpose and characteristics of qualitative inquiry for this study. Then I will talk about counter-storytelling as a method. Thirdly, I will share my *testimonio* (personal narrative of resistance) and positionality as the researcher. The research design will follow, including the site of study, participants' recruitment and selection, and then a section on the participants' overview. Finally,

this last section of the chapter will discuss the data collection and analysis process with a summary of the chapter and the next chapter.

Qualitative Methodology

Purpose and Function of Qualitative Inquiry

The function of qualitative inquiry is to:

Seek to discover and to describe in narrative reporting what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them. It identifies meaning-relevant *kinds* of things in the world—kinds of people, kinds of actions, kinds of beliefs and interest—focusing on differences in forms of things that make a difference for meaning. (Erickson, 2011, p. 43)

Qualitative research is an umbrella term representing several research strategies with common characteristics (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The data collected is based on conversations, people, and places. Research questions guide researchers in investigating a phenomenon in all its complexity. Qualitative research aims not to approach inquiry with specific questions or hypotheses to test (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Instead, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding experiences from the informant's perspective, collected through face-to-face interviewing and/or participant observation.

In-depth interviewing consists of "unstructured" and "open-ended" questions that allow the informant to answer from their frame of reference rather than prearranged questions. The researcher's goal is to get the informant to express their thoughts on specific topics freely. On the other hand, participant observation is when the researcher gains access to the world setting of the people they are studying-observing. This research approach is a reference to fieldwork by anthropologists. However, in education, qualitative methodology is referenced as *naturalistic*

(Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Meaning researchers place themselves within a naturally occurring setting they desire to observe. Qualitative research is also descriptive and consists of words that express everyday experiences and practices. The written results consist of quotes and/or pictures instead of statistical numbers. The data collection includes interviews, transcription of interviews, field notes and jottings, audio or video recording, personal documents, or official records (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Overall, qualitative researchers are interested in how people negotiate to mean and make sense of their lives. One approach to data analysis is through an inductive process, which is "grounded in particular pieces of data that are sorted and interrelated in order to understand the dimensions and dynamics of some phenomenon as it is enacted by intentional social actors in some time and place" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 82).

Studies using quantitative methods and analysis are also of value because of the massive data reporting they present (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Brenden, Deli-Amen, & Rios-Aguliar, 2015; Brock, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2015). However, when inquiring about students' day-to-day experiences in postsecondary education, a qualitative approach guides researchers in conducting research in the field. Quantitative methods are limited because the statistical analysis used in quant data reporting cannot report the personal journey of one's experiences with injustice, political, and racial practices in U.S. institutions of higher education.

Historically, qualitative research in the field of education is to understand political and governmental upheavals affecting specific populations, such as Black and Brown women and people of color impacted by racism, genderism, and other intersectional isms (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Erickson, 2011; Harper, 2007; Huber, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a). Conducting qualitative inquiry through a critical lens plays value in understanding the attribution, navigational strategies, and college impact for students of color who seek to complete higher

education degrees and advance degrees, but encounter injustice practices caused by oppression (Coronel, 2020; Gardner, 2009a; Harper, 2007; Huber, 2010). A qualitative approach guides this study, which provides me with the techniques necessary to conduct and analyze participants' interviews. My goal is to understand how gender, age, race/ethnicity, parental status, and other intersecting identities and factors contribute to attaining doctoral degrees by racially diverse parenting Ph.D. students at a PWI in the Midwest.

Counter-Storytelling as a Method of Inquiry for Challenging Majoritarian Stories

Solórzano and Yosso (2002b) define counter-storytelling as a method of telling the stories of people of color whose experiences are often not told but more placed within the margins of U.S. societies. They express that counter-storytelling is "a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002b, p. 32). Storytelling and counter-storytelling the experiences of people of color and their histories "help strengthen traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002b, p. 32). There are different types of counter-narratives and storytelling. Personal narratives or storytelling are autobiographical reflections from the author expressing their experiences with various forms of oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, ageism).

The Latina Feminist Group (2001) describes personal storytelling as *testimonios*. As a methodological technique, *testimonios* address the complexity of *latinidad* (Latina/o identity) and guide theorizing about their lived experiences, community, and trajectory in education plus the academy. These ladies identifying themselves as *latinidades feministas* was motivated by their efforts of claiming their social discourses and mode to confront "established and contested terms, identities, frameworks, and coalitions that have emerged in particular" from the historical context that oppress them rather than enlighten them (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001, p. 2).

Within a Latina and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) epistemology. Expressing and sharing *testimonies* empowers Latinas in the academy to develop their course by challenging traditional notions of nationalism and ethnicity. While also questioning Eurocentric feminist frameworks and situating themselves as women of color activists and writers (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Huber, 2009; 2010; Saavedra, 2011).

Derrick Bell (1987, 1992) and Richard Delgado (1996, 2000) provide another example of counter-narrative. Delgado says:

Stories build consensus, a common culture of shared understandings, and deeper, more vital ethics. Counterstories, which challenge the received wisdom, do that as well. They can open new windows into reality, showing us that there are possibilities for life other than the ones we live. They enrich imagination and teach that by combining elements from the story and current reality, we may construct a new world richer than either alone. Counterstories can quicken and engage conscience. Their graphic quality can stir imagination in ways in which more conventional discourse cannot. (Delgado, 1989, p. 2414-2415)

Bell and Delgado, among other critical race scholars and feminist scholars of color, offer "both biographical and autobiographical analyses because the authors create composite characters and place them in social, historical, and political situations to discuss racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002b, p. 33). Composite stories and narratives draw from various forms of data to account for the racism, sexism, and classism experienced by women and men of color. Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso (2002c) and Delores Delgado Bernal (1998) discuss the importance of counter-narratives and storytelling as a process of empowerment and validity for minoritized populations in education, such as women and people

of color. In this study, I use participants' stories as counter-narratives for challenging the master narrative that racially diverse mothering and fathering Ph.D. students with intersectional identities and characteristics are not rare and do exist in doctoral programs at a midwestern PWI. Participants' stories demonstrate the cultural survival and resistance used to battle various forms of oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, ageism) and privileges.

Perez's Testimonio and Positionality as the Researcher

Discovering My Testimonio

Growing up as a migrant worker in the Central Valley of California, my mother learned about physical labor and picking cotton at a young age. She often tells my siblings and me about her many experiences in the fields. I was raised in East San Jose, California, and have lived in this community for most of my life. I have many memories of playing outside with friends and visiting my grandma's house. As a child, I spent many days and nights at my grandma's house when my mom worked early mornings and late nights. My grandma's house was a second home to me. After my grandmother passed away, I continued to have close relationships with Tio⁵ Tino and Tio Johnny. I appreciate and embrace my upbringing of being raised by a single mother and two loving Tios.

My mother would refer to herself as Chicana. She said, "a Chicana stands up for herself and does not take any shit from anybody, especially men." As a child, she witnesses a lot of physical and verbal abuse. Her father would physically and emotionally abuse her mother regularly. At the same time, my mother would tell me, "all the stories about the family, stay in the family." My mother did not see the value of sharing *testimonios* with anyone outside the family. If my mother was alive today and she read this section of my dissertation. *Ella estaria*

⁵ Tio means uncle in Spanish. I was raised to call my mother's brothers Tio. Referring to my mother's brothers as Tio was a sign of respect.

enojado conmigo (she would be made at me). She would probably tell me, "Do not talk about the family business outside the house. It is nobody's business." I feel guilty for openly talking about my childhood and upbringing. Then, I feel shame for thinking that sharing my testimonio is wrong. It would take me almost 40 years to learn about the empowerment of *testimonios* and process the family guilt.

In this reflection, I ask myself what contributes to my strength and ability to share my story openly and feel proud of what contributes to the Chicana, daughter, niece, aunt, sister, mother, and wife I am today. My response is my family, friends, and loved ones near and far. Everyone who took the time to talk with me, teach me, and guide me through the difficult times of growing and living my best life while I try to stay dedicated to my genuine self. So even if my mom went through some challenging times in her childhood and adulthood, she remained devoted to her family and the ones she loved dearly. She loved in her way and showed appreciation the best way she knew how. Although my mother was stubborn and made being her daughter difficult at times, she showed me how to stand up for myself and be a proud woman and mother.

Before attending graduate school in Illinois, I had never read Chicana and Black feminists' writings. The writings and words of Black and Brown women scholars, such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Frances M. Beal, Dolores Delgado Bernal, Patricia H. Collins, Patricia Gándara, Lindsay P. Huber, Tara J. Yosso, and many more reminded me how powerful my story is to the family and community I represent. I had the privilege of meeting Delores Delgado Bernal at a conference where she was the keynote speaker. We discussed her work on cultural intuition. I asked if she doubted herself as a writer. She said YES! She said she still deals with self-doubt and gets nervous speaking in front of large crowds. She said, "writing is a process, don't give up.

Your work is important." Our conversation inspired and encouraged me to honor my story and the voice I have to tell it!

Testimonio is a source of empowerment and the validity of one's testimony dealing with oppression and injustice (Brabeck, 2003; Huber, 2009; Yúdice, 1991). Voicing one's "testimonio offers new potential for the marginalized voice to speak on its behalf and for those in the dominant group to understand that voice because of its unique characteristics" (Brabeck, 2003. p. 253). For this reason and more is what inspires my research and practices of self-expression through writing. Furthermore, my intellectual and spiritual growth comes from a process of *reflexión*.⁶ Espino et al. (2012) define *reflexión* as enhancing "the level of knowledge construction that *testimonios* offers in formulating a collective consciousness across generation and social identities, crafting theories about Latina scholars in academe and demonstrating that lived experiences are integral to knowledge creation" (p. 444). I go a step further and say *reflexión* as a method consists of a reflection process that questions cultural, social, and familial norms, teachings, and meanings that demonstrate strength and vulnerability. This method includes a researcher's willingness to tell stories from individuals' perspectives.

My journey in attaining three degrees (Associate of Arts, Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts) and soon-to-be doctoral degree as a mothering student has given me an insight into the parenting population in higher education. I understand the obstacles and challenges parenting graduate students face in doctoral programs. By sharing my story and conducting this dissertation project, I hope to encourage other mothering and fathering students of all ages and races/ethnicities to share their stories as a way of empowerment. This section of the chapter is essential for me, my children, and my family to discuss my testimonio.

⁶ English translation "reflection."

Positionality as the Researcher

In 2015, I co-founded *Students with Families* (SWF) with another mothering doctoral student of color. SWF was born of our shared experiences and needs as mothering students of color. We recognize that the term *family* is both broad and unique. Therefore, SWF membership was open to students juggling family lifestyles and pursuing higher education degrees. As President of SWF, my role involves connecting with cross-campus, cross-discipline, and cross-classification relationships to assess and meet the needs of parenting student colleagues and members.

As SWF organizers, we collaborated with the College of Education, the Student Assistance Center Office of the Deans of Students, the Women Resource Center, University Housing, Center for Wounded Veterans in Higher Education, the Office of Minority Student Affairs, the Graduate Employee Organization, and the Graduate College's Educational Equity Programs. Some SWF signature events include our monthly Coffee Chat, biannual Cinema & Study, and a season-specific Family Night that we hold each semester. Additionally, we sponsored and co-sponsored various events on campus with the stipulation that they must be family friendly. These events included panel discussions and various educational and outreach events to support, inform, and provide resources to parenting students and students caring for loved ones.

Parenting students seek degrees in a variety of degree programs and institutions of higher education. Diverse mothers and fathers with intersecting identities seek postsecondary degrees for various reasons juggling similar and different family lifestyles, raising children while also providing for their household, and advancing their education. As a mothering doctoral student and UCR student program organizer, I witness other parenting students' necessities not being

considered at the university and departmental levels. For this reason and more, is why I am proactive about creating spaces for community building and support for other students like me. In addition, for the last eight years, I have researched parenting students, first-generation college students, nontraditional students, women of color, working-lower-class, and racial/ethnic groups in higher education at two- and four-year colleges and universities. My research background, professional experiences, and educational trajectory contribute to my positionality as the researcher for this dissertation study inquiring about diverse mothering and fathering doctoral students' experiences at a PWI in the Midwest.

Research Design and Procedures

Participants Recruitment and Selection

My positionality as a Chicana mothering Ph.D. student contributes to the recruitment of participants. My SWF work helped me access mothering and fathering doctoral students at UCR. Before the recruitment process began, each participant was aware of SWF, my intersectional roles, and statuses, which helped me gain their trust to participate in my study. Regarding the recruitment process, I recruited half of the participants by email using the *Participants Correspondence Letter* (See Appendix A), which listed my study's purpose and goal, participation criteria, confidentiality, and voluntary options. The other participants I recruited were in person through verbal conversations. During these conversations, I talked about the purpose and goal of my dissertation study. Furthermore, I explained that their participation was private and confidential and that they had the option to withdraw from any part of the study at any time. Participation criteria included the following:

1. Enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the University of Casterly Rock
2. A parent of a child/children between the ages of infancy to 17 years old

3. Between the age of 24 to 50 years old
4. Must be able to participate in two interviews and agree for interviews to be audio recorded at the time of data collection
5. Identify as a ⁷domestic student according to the University of Castle Rock's citizen/visa status

Once individuals agreed to participate in my study, the *Personal Information Form* (See Appendix C) was emailed to them with a Google Survey link granting them access to the form. I used the form to select the final 13 participants.

The selection process involves reviewing the *Personal Information Form* guided by the participant criteria. I wanted a diverse representation of mothers and fathering doctoral students from different backgrounds, statuses, ethnicity/race, gender, ages, and SES. On the form, I included questions about their demographic identities (race/nationality, gender, age, etc.), children's ages and grade level, relationship status, their parents' educational background, and employment to guide me with the selection process. I recruited mothers and fathers seeking doctoral degrees from different disciplines, fields, and degree completion levels.

I gave participants a choice to choose places to conduct their interviews. The preferred locations were their home, public library (meeting room for privacy), work office, or local café. Once participants were selected, I emailed or texted them (participant's preference) to schedule their first interview and arrange a meeting location. Consent forms (See Appendix B) were provided, signed, and collected at the first interview meeting.

⁷ A citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States, or have been granted Asylee, Refugee or Paroled in the Public Interest status by the United States government.

Participants Overview

The thirteen participants interviewed for this study represent eight mothering and five fathering Ph.D. students' narratives of what they experienced raising their children while seeking a Ph.D. degree at UCR. When it comes to the race/ethnicity of mothers and fathers, they self-identify as Native American-White (1 mother), Puerto Rican (1 father), Chicana (1 mother), Afro-Puerto Rican (1 father), Black/African American (4 mothers/1 father), and White (2 mothers/2 fathers) (See Table 1). Seven of the participants were married, three were divorced, two were in a relationship with their children's biological parents, and a father was separated from his son's biological mother. Eight of the participants own their homes, and five are renters.

Participants represent five colleges and eight disciplines and fields. The names of colleges and disciplines will remain anonymous to protect the identities of mothering and fathering students who participated in my study. Nine are first-generation college students, and five are continuing-generation college students. Nine are first-generation graduate students, and three are not the first in their families to attend graduate school. Four individuals (3 women/1 male) attended and graduated from community colleges and transferred to universities to complete their bachelor's degrees. All participants except Christine and Ruben worked in one or more of the following positions: teaching assistant (TA), research assistant (RA), graduate assistant, and graduate hourly. Christine is a UCR full-time staff member, and Ruben is a stay-at-home spouse-parent. Since data collection, six participants (two fathers and four mothers) have completed their doctoral degrees. I will discuss more detailed information per participant in Chapter 5.

Table 1*Participants' Demographics and Children's Information*

Synonym	Gender	Age	Nationality	Relationship Status	Children
Miguel	M	32	Afro-Puerto Rican	Married	One child: ➤ Son: 1 yr. old/ daycare
Samantha	F	43	African American	Divorced Single Parent	Two children: ➤ Daughter: 10 yrs. old/4 th grade ➤ Daughter: 6 yrs. old/ kindergarten
Amanda	F	37	White	Married	Three children: ➤ Daughter: 10 yrs. old/5 th grade ➤ Son: 8 yrs. old/2 nd grade ➤ Son: 5 yrs. Old/kindergarten
Mike	M	37	White	Married	Two children: ➤ Daughter: 4 yrs. old/daycare ➤ Daughter: 2 yrs. Old/daycare
Tina	F	36	White	Divorced Co-parents with son's father	One child: ➤ Son: 7 years old/2nd grade
Alberto	M	28	Puerto Rican	Separated Blended family Co-parents with son's mother	Two children: ➤ Step-daughter: 11 yrs. old/ 6 th grade ➤ Son: 5 yrs. old/ kindergarten
Christine	F	35	Native American & White	Married Blended family	Three children: ➤ Son: 10 yrs. old/5th grade ➤ Daughter: 7 yrs. old/2nd grade ➤ Son: 11 months/daycare

Table 1 (continue)

Synonym	Gender	Age	Nationality	Relationship Status	Children
Olivia	F	35	Chicana	Married	Two children: ➤ Son: 2.5 yrs. old/daycare *Son: Newborn was born after data collection.
Aaron	M	39	African American	In a relationship with his son's mother	One child: ➤ Son: 3 yrs. old/daycare
Charlotte	F	41	Black American	Divorced Single parent	Three children: ➤ Daughter: 18 yrs. old/12 th grade ➤ Son: 12 yrs. old/5th grade Son: 10 yrs. old/4th grade
Alyssa	F	28	African American	Married	One child: ➤ Daughter: 8 weeks old/daycare
Ruben	M	34	White	Married	Two children: ➤ Son: 3 yrs. old/homecare Son: 1 yr. old/homecare
Gina	F	28	Black & White	Single/In a relationship with her son's father	One child: ➤ Son: 11 months old/daycare

Study's Site

The University of Casterly Rock (UCR) is a public land-grant doctoral research institution in a Midwest metropolitan area with approximately 226,033 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). In spring 2018, the total enrollment of graduate students was 12,979 and 31,859 undergraduates (Division of Management Information, 2018). Sixteen colleges and schools offer approximately 100 graduate programs of study. UCR is a PWI. Most of the students enrolled in 2018 were White students (5,053 graduate, 14,327 undergraduate) (Division of Management

Information, 2018). According to the Division of Management Information (2018), 1,153 Asian Americans, 505 African Americans, 667 Hispanic, 7 Native Americans, and 4 Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders were in graduate programs (master's and doctoral studies) in 2018. In addition, 6,561 women and 8,091 men enrolled in graduate programs in spring 2018.

Update: After the Start of COVID-19

I wanted to revisit the enrollment status of graduate students for spring 2022 since I conducted the interviews for this study before the pandemic. The total of full-time graduate students (master's and doctoral students) enrolled in spring 2022 is 19,626 (7747 women, 10,198 men). Regarding race/ethnicity, UCR registered 7080 White, 2,271 Asian Americans, 842 African Americans, 1313 Hispanics, 10 Native Americans, and 18 Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders (Division of Management, 2022). As of 2018, White students (7,080 graduates, 32,973 undergraduates) are the majority served at UCR. The parental status of students was not documented in the 2018 and 2022 reports.

UCR Graduate Studies Funding Policies

The College of Graduate Studies⁸ (CGS) handbook lists academic policies and requirements for graduate students at UCR. The Graduate Employee's Union (GEU) also has information about graduate students' rights on its website. GEU site lists tuition waivers, appointment letters, and paid leave for graduate students. Appointment types include teaching assistants (TAs), research assistants (RAs), graduate assistants (Gas), and preprofessional graduate assistants (PGAs). Although specific departments have policies, the CGS handbook applies to all graduate students enrolled at UCR and lists the minimum stipend for a 12-months appointment as \$13,333. The CGS handbook and GEU site reference the UCR policies for

⁸ Pseudonym

graduate students. These policies do not include students' dependents and household income or size. The handbook does not mention funding policies specifically for students with dependents. Also, the manual does not explicitly state how student loans, appointments, stipends, and fellowships per graduate student per academic year are determined.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection Procedures

Each participant was interviewed twice within five months, except Aaron (participant #9), because he did not respond to my second interview request. The interview time for each participant was approximately 60-90 minutes per interview and took place in a public library in a private meeting room, their office at work, or a local coffee shop. I use Interview Protocols #1 and #2 (See Appendix D) to help me start a conversation with participants. Both protocols included open-ended questions that enabled me to elaborate on significant responses and avoid close-ended questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Seidman, 2013). I also took handwritten notes during the interviews. Once I conducted each interview, I wrote descriptive and reflective field notes using the Post-Interview Notes and Jotting Guide (See Appendix E). This note-taking method is helpful during the analysis process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Emerson et al., 2011; Seidman, 2013, Glesne, 1999).

In addition, I gave all participants a consent form during their first interview. The information contained on the form was discussed with the participants, including the goal and purpose of my study, any risk associated with their participation, and reinsurance they could withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, I reminded participants that I would audio record both interviews and later delete the recording after the research was done. Once participants agreed, they were asked to provide written consent and a copy of the consent form.

Pseudonyms were used for all participants during data collection and analysis and in writing this dissertation to ensure confidentiality.

To help me keep track of participants' personal information, such as employment, housing situation (rent or homeowner), relationship (single, married, divorced, in a relationship), and parental statuses (single, co-parent, step-parent, divorce), and their children ages, school grades, and gender. I created the *Participants Name & Background Informational Guide* (Excel document). In addition, I am the only person who has access to all the materials used for this study to maintain confidentiality. I stored all documents listing participants' personal information in a secured electronic file on my personal computer. All hard copy materials and instruments, such as consent forms and personal information forms, were stored in a secure cabinet in my home.

Data Analysis Procedure and Development of Findings-Themes

Once interviews were conducted, the transcription process started. The first set of interviews collected was personally hand transcribed using Microsoft Word as the template. Transcribing the first set of interviews was a timely process. Therefore, I used Temi (speech-to-text transcription software) for the second set of interviews to help me with the transcription process. The second set of interviews was transcribed within two weeks. The *Participants Transcription Tracker* (Excel document) helped me organize all transcriptions, preliminary codes, and final codes, and the analysis process. All electronic files and recordings were titled and stored with a secure password on my personal computer.

The goal of my analysis was to answer the main research questions directed at understanding the phenomenon of mothering and fathering Ph.D. students' success, challenges, and support in navigating graduate school at UCR. Data analysis consists of a "process by which

one transforms data (field notes, interviews, artifacts) into findings (assertions about a studied phenomenon that answers posed questions)" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 79). In selecting a coding method, I followed Saldaña's (2013) foundation principles to help me decide which type of coding fit my study's goal. These are the principles I followed:

- Because each qualitative study is unique, the analytical approach will be unique.
- Some methodologies advise that your choice of coding method(s) and even a provisional list of codes should be determined beforehand (deductive) to harmonize with your study's conceptual framework, paradigm, or research goals.
- During initial data collection and review, keep yourself open before determining which coding method(s)...will be most appropriate and most likely to yield a substantive analysis.
- Start with "generic" coding methods as a beginning approach to your data and analysis, but remain open to changing them if they are not generating substantive discoveries (Saldaña, 2013, p. 65)

Therefore, the coding method selected for this study's inquiry was *narrative coding*.

Narrative coding "applies the convention of (primarily) literacy elements and analysis to qualitative texts most often in the form of stories (Saldaña, 2013, p. 131). Saldaña cites Polkinghorne's (1995) words and says, "stories express a kind of knowledge that uniquely describes human experiences in which actions and happenings contribute positively and negatively to attain goals and fulfilling purpose" (p. 8). Then, the analysis process for this study was inductive. Inductive as a methodological process is:

Grounded in the collected data—the artifacts (e.g., the books), the field notes on people's actions in particular contexts, and the interview transcripts of people's reflective talk. As

pieces of data are organized and compared, as their variables natures are identified and named (or coded), as their interrelationships are examined, the researcher uncovers new spaces—new holes—in the developing portraits of the case, which need to be at least tentatively filled in; thus, new questions may take shape. (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 81)

Beyond the inductive process, my positionality as the researcher and my theoretical framework guided the coding and analysis process from beginning to end.

Two sets of interviews with 12 participants and one interview with one participant provide this study's data. After transcribing all the interviews, I read each interview line by line. At this time is when I developed the first set of codes. I put codes in the comment boxes on the Microsoft Word documents. The codes consisted of keywords and phrases relating to the main research questions, conceptual framework, and the literature reviewed. The use of symbols and numeric signs also helped me identify words and sentences related to participants' experiences and narratives. Once I conducted the first coding round, I performed another round of coding. Developing codes is referred to as *flourishing* (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I created the Master Code Workbook (See Appendix H) listing all the final codes, including a 14-page table with main code titles, subtitles, and colors to separate all code descriptions and personal notes. Developing this type of code workbook guided me during the analysis process and helped me stay organized while writing this paper.

When coding and analyzing the interviews, the Data Analysis Table of Contents, Master Code Workbook, and the Data Transcription Tracker (See Appendix F) helped me keep track of all coding and analysis activities. In addition, the Data Analysis Table of Contents (See Appendix G) helped me stay organized throughout the data analysis process. I also used my handwritten notes, jottings, and interview reflections in the analysis process. Pseudonyms were

used on all electronic and handwritten materials from the beginning to the end of data collection, transcriptions, analysis process, and report of findings. As a result, the following themes emerged:

1. Theme #1: The University of Casterly Rock
2. Theme #2: The Diversity and Intersectionality of Parenthood and Family
3. Theme #3: The Different Aspects of Need and Support That Contribute to Mothering and Fathering Ph.D. Students' Successes and Challenges in Attaining a Doctoral Education

Summary

This chapter gives qualitative research background and how this methodology guide this dissertation study. I also talked about the validity of counter-storytelling as a method and technique for documenting and reporting mothering and fathering Ph.D. students' stories. Thirdly, I shared my *testimonio* and discussed how my positionality as a Chicana mothering Ph.D. student inspired the development of this research project. Finally, the last sections of the chapter discussed UCR, the recruitment and selection of participants, participants' overview, and the data collection and analysis process. The following chapter discusses the eight mothers and five fathers that willingly gave their time to sit with me and have conversations about their experiences as doctoral students. In the chapter, I aim to give readers a portrait of the mother and father participants' backgrounds, identities, children and families, and personal stories they shared with me during their interview

CHAPTER 5

PARTICIPANTS

...I AM A PARENT FIRST!

*I start every bio with the fact that **I'm a mother**. People tell me consistently to stop doing it because maybe I won't get hired. But if grad school was this way because maybe I didn't make it clear enough, what kind of mother that I am, then I need employment to know that I am an intentional mother, and that is going to color how I am at your place. And if that bothers them, don't hire me.*

(Charlotte, Black mother of a daughter and two sons)

I dedicate this chapter to the eight mothers and five fathers who willingly shared their personal stories with me about their experiences in navigating their doctoral programs. Each participant has unique stories and reasons why they decided to attend graduate school at this stage in their lives. They say clearly and willingly that their children and families are their primary motivators and reasons they seek their doctoral degrees. The participants interviewed for this study represent racially diverse families, ages, SES, and genders. Some individuals are married, and some are parenting solo. Participants' children's ages, genders, schooling, and care needs are similar and different. Those with younger children need all-day child care, while school-age children require transportation to and from school, and need help with homework. School-age children are also involved in after-school activities (e.g., sports, gymnastics, and dance), which require transporting them to and from activities.

In this chapter, I provide detailed descriptions of participants' demographic background and identities (e.g., race, gender, age, relationship status), household and living arrangements, and financial and employment statuses. I also discuss their children's ages, schooling, and caring needs to inform readers of what the 13 mothers and fathers manage as graduate students raising children while seeking their doctoral degrees. In addition, I have included a participants' profile

table (see Table 2) for additional references. Lastly, I include information about their academic backgrounds and parents' education so that readers can identify which participants are first-generation college students and those who are first-generation graduate students or both. As a reminder, I gave all participants a pseudonym, and I will not be mentioning participants' children and family members' names in any part of this paper.

Table 2

Participants' Profile

Synonym	Gender	Age	Nationality	Relationship Status	Children
Samantha	F	43	African American	Divorced Single Parent	Two children: ➤ Daughter: 10 yrs. old/4 th grade ➤ Daughter: 6 yrs. old/ kindergarten
Amanda	F	37	White	Married	Three children: ➤ Daughter: 10 yrs. old/5 th grade ➤ Son: 8 yrs. old/2 nd grade ➤ Son: 5 yrs. Old/kindergarten
Mike	M	37	White	Married	Two children: ➤ Daughter: 4 yrs. old/daycare ➤ Daughter: 2 yrs. Old/daycare
Tina	F	36	White	Divorced Co-parents with son's father	One child: ➤ Son: 7 years old/2nd grade
Alberto	M	28	Puerto Rican	Separated Blended family Co-parents with son's mother	Two children: ➤ Step-daughter: 11 yrs. old/ 6 th grade Son: 5 yrs. old/ kindergarten

Table 2 (continue)

Synonym	Gender	Age	Nationality	Relationship Status	Children
Christine	F	35	Native American & White	Married Blended family	Three children: ➤ Son: 10 yrs. old/5th grade ➤ Daughter: 7 yrs. old/2nd grade ➤ Son: 11 months/daycare
Olivia	F	35	Chicana	Married	Two children: ➤ Son: 2.5 yrs. old/daycare *Son: Newborn was born after data collection.
Aaron	M	39	African American	In a relationship with his son's mother	One child: ➤ Son: 3 yrs. old/daycare
Charlotte	F	41	Black American	Divorced Single parent	Three children: ➤ Daughter: 18 yrs. old/12th grade ➤ Son: 12 yrs. old/5th grade ➤ Son: 10 yrs. old/4th grade
Alyssa	F	28	African American	Married	One child: ➤ Daughter: 8 weeks old/daycare
Ruben	M	34	White	Married	Two children: ➤ Son: 3 yrs. old/homecare ➤ Son: 1 yr. old/homecare
Gina	F	28	Black & White	Single/In a relationship with her son's father	One child: ➤ Son: 11 months old/daycare
Miguel	M	32	Afro-Puerto Rican	Married	One child: Son: 1 yr. old/ daycare

Samantha: Mothering Ph.D. Student of Two Daughters

Samantha is mothering two daughters as a single parent while seeking her Ph.D. in social science. She is 43 years old, identifies as African American, and calls the Midwest home. Currently, Samantha holds two master's degrees. One is a teaching credential, and the second master's degree is in education. In 2014, Samantha started her doctoral program at another university and transferred to UCR in 2017. From her perspective, the doctoral program at UCR offered more courses around diversity and was a better fit for her research and professional development interest.

Samantha and her two daughters live near UCR. Her oldest daughter is a ten-year-old fourth grader, and her youngest daughter is six and in kindergarten. Both girls attend public schools in the area. Since her divorce in 2014, Samantha has raised her two daughters alone without financial support from her ex-husband. The girls do not see their father regularly. He lives approximately three hours away from UCR.

Both of Samantha's parents are deceased. Her mother died when Samantha was in her twenties, and her father passed away in 2013. They both attended college but did not complete their degrees. Samantha shared that her grandmother and aunt have master's degrees. However, she does not ask her family for any support because she does not want to bother them with her schooling obligations and parenting responsibilities.

While at UCR, her finances have not been stable, and she currently holds a 25% research assistantship and has a tuition waiver from her department. I asked Samantha about her career goals and interest in attaining a doctoral degree. She replied that she was interested in researching about critical issues in education. Before applying to Ph.D. programs, she felt limited in her administrative position and wanted to expand her research skills by becoming a critical

theorist and analyst. Samantha has passed her prelim exam and is officially ABD (all but dissertation). She plans on completing her dissertation by Fall 2022.

Amanda: Mothering Ph.D. Student of Three Children

Amanda is mothering a daughter and two sons with her husband of 14 years. Her daughter is ten-year-old in fifth grade, her son is eight-year-old in second grade, and her youngest son is five-year-old in kindergarten. She is 37 years old and identifies as White. Before attending graduate school to seek her Ph.D. in Social Sciences, Amanda worked full-time for ten years. Deciding to leave her job and pursue her doctoral degree was difficult since her income helped support her family and pay for a mortgage. However, her husband received a promotion at his job, which placed the family in a more financially stable position. Plus, from the start of her Ph.D. program, Amanda secured yearly funding (50% to 67% research assistant appointments) and tuition waivers from her department. Commuting from home to UCR weekly was difficult and made developing relationships with colleagues harder, especially since she could not attend any departmental activities.

Amanda came from a blended family in a rural community in the Midwest. Her biological parents and step-parents raised her. Her father and stepmother have a high school education, and her step-father has a master's degree. Amanda does not consider herself a first-generation student because her mother returned to school to attain her associate's degree when Amanda was ten years old. Amanda is, however, the first in her family to achieve a doctoral degree. She expressed how her mother expected her to attend college after high school. After attaining her master's degree, Amanda worked as an academic adviser and in career services at community colleges. Over time, however, she felt limited in the type of positions she could attain. After an acquaintance informed Amanda about the doctoral degree program at UCR, she

became interested and decided to apply. Being accepted into her graduate program with funding support motivated Amanda to attend graduate school full-time. Since conducting her interviews for this study, Amanda has completed her Ph.D. and holds a full-time job as an assistant director at an ivy league university in Illinois.

Mike: Fathering Ph.D. Student of Two Daughters

Mike is a father of two daughters and has been married for eight years. He is 37 years old, identifies as White, and seeks a Ph.D. in the Social Sciences. His oldest daughter is four-year-old, and his second daughter is two-year-old. When he started his Ph.D. program, his oldest daughter was one-year-old, and his youngest daughter was born in the second year of his Ph.D. program. Before starting his doctoral program, Mike taught an ESL (English as a second language) program. Mike shared that he had been thinking about seeking a doctoral degree because he was interested in working as an administrator. He said a doctoral degree would expand his opportunities to work in a higher-level administrator position in education. At first, Mike was going to attend graduate school part-time. However, after being informed that he would not continue working in his teaching position due to funding shortages, he enrolled in his doctoral program full-time. Plus, his doctoral program offered him some funding for his first semester and tuition waivers.

Mike's wife worked full-time to financially support their family's household and pay for the mortgage and health insurance. Once Mike completed his course work and advanced in his doctoral studies, Mike planned to work full-time to financially support his family so his wife could be a stay home mother. At the time of his interviews for this study, both daughters were in full-time daycare. Family friends from church helped care for his girls in the evening, so Mike could attend night courses before his wife got home from work. Mike and his family are from the

Midwest, and he is a first-generation college and graduate student. Finances have been an enormous challenge for Mike and his wife. To ease household expenses, Mike sold his home to alleviate funds. Mike has completed his doctoral degree and currently working as a full-time high school instructor.

Tina: Mothering Ph.D. Student of a Son

Tina is the mother of a seven-year-old boy in the second grade. She is 36 years old, identifies as White, and seeks a Ph.D. in the Social Sciences. Her son was four years old when Tina began her Ph.D. program. She is a community college transfer student and the first in her family to complete a bachelor's and master's degree and advance to a doctoral degree program. While a doctoral student, Tina went through a divorce and now co-parenting her son with her ex-husband. Her son's father has visitation rights and is providing child support. When I asked Tina why she separated from her ex-husband, she said there was much tension in their relationship because she was seeking her doctoral degree. She said her ex-husband is interested in attaining a Ph.D. but has not completed his degree. Although there was tension in Tina's marriage, she shared that she and her ex-husband get along well to collaborate and raise their son.

Although Tina's ex-husband financially helps support their son. While enrolled in her Ph.D. program, Tina has struggled to get stable funding. There were times when Tina was uncertain if she would secure summer positions. The teaching and research assistant positions Tina held were offered as a yearly contract and did not guarantee her future work in the following academic year. Tina shared how seeking funding every academic year as a single mother caused her to experience stress and worry about financially providing for her household. Since conducting her interviews for this study, Tina has completed her Ph.D. and holds a full-time position in academia as an administrator at a liberal arts college.

Alberto: Fathering Ph.D. Student of a Son and a Step-daughter

Alberto is the father of a five-year-old son and eleven-year-old step-daughter. His son is a kindergartener, and his step-daughter is a sixth-grader. At the time of his interviews, Alberto was a first-year Ph.D. student seeking his degree in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field working as a research assistant (50%). He decided to attend UCR because his home state does not offer doctoral STEM programs. When I conducted Alberto's second interview, he informed me that his six-year relationship with his son's mother had ended. When I asked him why his relationship ended, Alberto said his ex-girlfriend did not understand his program's time commitment and expectations. He also said they would constantly argue and often did not feel supported by his ex-girlfriend, which caused him stress and anxiety. Although Alberto wanted his family to live together, he thought it was best to live apart. After his separation, Alberto maintains a relationship with his son and helps support his family financially.

Alberto is 28 years old, identifies as Latino, and calls Puerto Rico home. Spanish is his first language, and he shared that speaking and writing in English is challenging because it is not his primary language. Regarding his parents' educational background, Alberto's father has a high school education, and his mother holds a bachelor's degree. He does not consider himself a first-generation student because his mother attained her undergraduate degree when he was in high school. Alberto is the first in his family to seek a doctoral degree. Currently, Alberto is in the last year of his doctoral program and plans to defend his dissertation in 2023.

Christine: Mothering Ph.D. Student of a Daughter and Two Sons

Christine is the mother of a ten-year-old son in the fifth grade and a seven-year-old daughter in the second grade. Her youngest son, whom she delivered as a Ph.D. student, is 11 months from her current husband of three years. Both Christine and her husband work full-time,

so their youngest son is cared for by a neighborhood friend. Christine has been a mothering student her whole educational trajectory, starting her postsecondary education at a community college, transferring to UCR to attain her bachelor's and master's degrees, and now seeking an advanced degree. She was a single parenting student until she married her current husband as a master's student. Her oldest son and daughter are from a past relationship.

Christine is 35 years old, identifies as Native American and White, and calls the Midwest her current home. Originally from the west coast, Christine moved to the Midwest to be closer to her parents. She chose to seek her doctoral degree at UCR because the university is close to home, and Christine receives tuition benefits as an employee. Currently, Christine is a full-time employee of UCR and seeking her Ph.D. in the Social Sciences field part-time with an expectation of pursuing a higher-level administrator position at her institution. Christine considers herself financially stable because she holds a full-time position with benefits and her husband's income. However, she shared how she struggled to support her two eldest children and pay for school as a single parenting student receiving no support from her children's biological father. Currently, Christine is preparing for her prelim examinations and shares how COVID-19 has affected her family in many ways. The regulations of COVID at her children's schools make caring for her children and maintaining employment more difficult. Although she is moving forward with her graduate school studies, she sees herself needing more breaks to recuperate from the pandemic stress. Once done with her doctoral studies, Christine would like to teach at a community college and work in administration doing equity work at a four-year degree-granting institution on the West Coast.

Olivia: Mothering Ph.D. Student of Two Sons

Olivia is now a mother of two sons, a five year old and one-year-old. At the time of her two interviews for this study, she was mothering her oldest son, who was almost three-year-old. She was pregnant with her second son in the last year of her doctoral program. Before starting her Ph.D. program, Olivia married, then moved to the UCR community to be closer to her husband's family and start a family. Olivia was a local community school teacher when she became interested in seeking her doctoral degree at UCR. Furthermore, Olivia is the first individual in her family to attain postsecondary degrees and seek a doctoral degree.

Olivia is 35 years old, identifies as Mexican American, and comes from immigrant parents with an elementary school education. She is seeking a Ph.D. in the Social Sciences and calls the Midwest home. During her K-12 education, Olivia dealt with discrimination and oppressive behavior from her teachers. After attaining a doctoral degree, Olivia feels she could contribute to her Latino community by teaching and training instructors to work with Latina/o/x families and students in K-12 schooling and higher education. As an instructor, Olivia wants to help her students teach from a culturally responsive perspective and be aware of community cultural wealth practices. Although Olivia and her husband support each other, she says managing employment as a Ph.D. student while mothering her son and being a wife can be difficult, especially when her son is sick and her husband's work schedule changes. Since conducting her interviews for this study, Olivia has completed her Ph.D. and holds a full-time teaching position at a state university in the Midwest.

Aaron: Fathering Ph.D. Student of a Son

Aaron is the father of a three-year-old son and seeking a Ph.D. in the Social Sciences. He is 39 years old, identifies as African American, and calls the Midwest home. For the last five

years, Aaron has been in a relationship with his son's mother off and on. Not having a stable relationship with his son's mother has made completing his doctoral degree challenging. Before his current relationship, Aaron was married to his high school sweetheart before and after starting graduate school. Aaron said his ex-wife felt neglected during his marriage because Aaron was always studying and away from home. He said his ex-wife did not understand the culture and commitment of his degree program. The challenges that ended his marriage are also affecting his current relationship. Trying to manage time between his studies and family has been complicated. Aaron often feels guilty for not spending more time with his son and girlfriend. A feeling he has constantly experienced as a father, partner, and graduate student.

He and his family live in a small town near UCR. During his first interview, Aaron worked as a teaching assistant and hourly position during the academic year. He shared with me how he used to work in non-academic positions during the summers to support his family because he did not receive funding from his department and could not find a job on campus. Aaron is a first-generation college student and graduate student. Both his parents attended college but did not complete their degrees. His father left his university before Aaron was born, and his mother stopped attending community college to work full-time. A friend-mentor of Aaron's attended graduate school at UCR and encouraged him to move to Illinois and apply to UCR. After that, Aaron applied to his graduate school program at UCR and started building his support network with African American/Black faculty at UCR. In his interview, Aaron said he would hang out at UCR, especially in his proposed department, before his acceptance to graduate school. Aaron developed relationships with departmental faculty and adviser before accepting his doctoral program offer of admission. Of the 13 participants, Aaron is the only participant that did not do a second interview. He was unresponsive to my emails when I tried to schedule a second

interview. Therefore, I do not have an update on his degree progress since conducting his first interview.

Charlotte: Mothering Ph.D. Student of a Daughter and Two Sons

Charlotte is a mother of an eighteen- year-old daughter, twelve-year-old son, and a ten-year-old son. Her daughter is included in this study because she was a high school senior when I conducted Charlotte's interviews for this study. Her oldest son is a fifth-grader, and her youngest son is a fourth-grader. Charlotte is 41 years old, identifies as Black American, is from a southeastern state, and seeks her Ph.D. degree in Social Sciences. She is divorced and raising her children as a single parent. Since her divorce, Charlotte does not receive child support from her ex-husband and her daughter's father. Not receiving financial or care support from her children's fathers causes Charlotte financial strain.

Charlotte's professional development costs are challenging to manage as a single parent with limited income and funding. During her interviews for this study, Charlotte shared how she must maintain several jobs to provide for her family and household and pay for graduate school expenses. She told me that part of her professional development cost includes paying for annual memberships and conference registrations for national research associations in her field. Attending annual meetings and presenting her research at these conferences consist of paying for travel and hotel expenses—added expenses for a single income household.

Charlotte is a first-generation college and graduate student. Her mother is middle school educated, and her father has a high school diploma. Before attending graduate school at UCR, Charlotte attended community college as a mothering student and maintained a career in the medical field. Since conducting her interviews for this study, Charlotte has completed her Ph.D. and is currently a postdoc and adjunct professor at two different state institutions.

Alyssa: Mothering Ph.D. Student of a Daughter

Alyssa is a mother to a newborn daughter. Her daughter was eight weeks old at her first interview for this study. She is 28 years old, identifies as African American, and seeking a Ph.D. in Social Sciences. At the start of her graduate studies, Alyssa was single and met her husband at UCR. He was also a Ph.D. student seeking his degree in a STEM field when they began dating. They both were married in 2016, and their daughter was born in 2018. Alyssa became a mother in her third year of graduate school. Her husband completed his Ph.D. a few months before their daughter was born and now holds a faculty position at UCR.

Her mother (bachelor's degree) and father (doctoral degree) are college educated. Alyssa and her family rent a home in the UCR community. Alyssa has received continuous funding from her department since she began graduate school. At her first interview, she held a teaching assistant position (50%). Since conducting her interviews, Alyssa has completed her master's degree and decided to leave her Ph.D. program in 2019. Alyssa said her interest changed once she passed her qualifying exams. Currently, she is enrolled in a health professional school and chose not to seek a doctoral degree.

Ruben: Fathering Ph.D. Student of Two Sons

Ruben is 34 years old, identifies as White, and was born outside of the U.S. Ruben is a father of two sons and seeking his Ph.D. degree in Social Science. His youngest son is a year old, and his older son is three years old. He is married and a stay-at-home parent who serves as the primary care provider for his two children. His wife of five years is the primary financial provider for the household. Although Ruben loves and supports his wife's career choice, he struggles with the idea of her being the primary financial provider because, as a stay home father,

he does not have a steady income. Ruben's income is from his teaching assistant positions which also provides him with a tuition waiver.

The household income is financially stable because Ruben's wife has a high income. They own their home and can afford childcare so Ruben can attend to his studies. Both of his parents hold master's degrees, and Ruben started his Ph.D. program having attained his master's degree. After completing his master's degree, Ruben worked in human resources before meeting his wife. Once he met his wife, got married, and planned for a family. Ruben knew that his role in the family would be the stay-home parent caring for his children. As a stay-at-home father, he did not want to be considered unemployed, so he decided to seek his Ph.D. to develop his career and professional trajectory. Since conducting his interviews for this study, Ruben has completed his Ph.D. and holds a faculty position teaching at a state university.

Gina: Mothering Ph.D. Student of a Son

Gina is 28 years old, identifies as Black-White, and a mother of a one-year-old son. She calls the Midwest home and has been working on her Ph.D. in the Social Sciences for the last five years. Although she is in a relationship with her son's biological father, she raises her son as a single parent because her boyfriend is incarcerated. Her incarcerated boyfriend has made raising and caring for her son alone challenging because she has no family support in the area. Her boyfriend's mother and family live in the UCR community but rarely help her care for her son. Her mother (master's) and father (bachelor's) are college educated and live in another state away from UCR, so physically, they cannot help to care for her son.

Gina lives in graduate family housing and struggles to find affordable childcare for her son. Limited childcare means she cannot attend her courses without taking her son. When I asked her about her experiences taking her son to class, Gina said that not all her professors are willing

to let her son attend class with her. Some professors did not respond to her email when she asked them if her son could attend class with her. In this scenario, she does not register for these courses. Registering for courses is a struggle for Gina. She is limited in the courses she can register for because of her son's childcare availability.

She received a grant and tuition waiver in the first three years of her graduate program. Now, she works in hourly positions to support her son financially and gets a stipend from her department. As sources of support, Gina relies on social services (e.g., WIC, food stamps, childcare assistance) to care for her son. Without these services, she would not receive childcare and continue graduate school. In her words, Gina says the hourly position and stipend are not enough funds to pay for rent, food, medical needs, daycare, and personal necessities. Since her interviews, Gina continued in her doctoral degree program, and her son started preschool.

Miguel: Fathering Ph.D. Student of a Son

Miguel is a father of a two-year-old son. He is 32 years old, identifies as Afro-Puerto Rican, and seeks his Ph.D. in Social Sciences. In his second year of graduate school, he married and became a father. Although he calls the Midwest home, he was born on an island in the Caribbean. Spanish is his primary language, and English is his second language. When living in the Midwest, he learned how to speak English. Miguel identifies as a first-generation college and graduate student. His mother has a middle school education, and his father has a high school diploma. During his first interviews for this study, Miguel lived in the UCR community with his wife and son.

At the start of graduate school, he and his wife were not married. During his doctoral studies and before his son was born. Miguel's wife completed a degree from UCR. After her son was born, she decided to seek her Ph.D. at the university. While pursuing his Ph.D., Miguel has

maintained employment in his department (teaching and research assistantship). Obtaining consistent funding eased some of the financial strain for Miguel and his household needs. However, the research and teaching assistant positions and fellowship he received were not enough to pay for a bilingual childcare provider, health care for his family, and living expenses. Miguel said all the stress from managing his schooling and family life with minimal funding for his expenses caused him to endure high levels of stress and anxiety. Since conducting his two interviews, Miguel has completed his doctoral degree. His current position is unknown to me. However, before completing his doctoral degree, Miguel moved to a city closer to family members and has reported doing well.

Summary

This chapter describes the 13 mothering and fathering Ph.D. students I interviewed for my dissertation study. Each of them allowed me to sit with them and discuss their educational journey as parenting Ph.D. students. I provide an in-depth portrait of participants' identities, children, family, finances, and personal living situations to give readers background information about participants. All the information discussed in this chapter contributes to their experiences, success, and challenges as parenting Ph.D. students. The next chapter discusses significant findings separated into themes from my data collection and analysis. Throughout the chapter, I will be referencing participants by name (pseudonym) and the information provided in chapter four to discuss and support my findings.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH FINDINGS

I just don't understand why they (UCR) don't seem to care about parents—I feel like they (UCR) support a lot of different groups, and so I don't understand why students with families don't get support.

(Gina, Black White mother of a son)

During the interviews, each participant shared their experiences, challenges, and the type of support they needed and utilized to help them care for their children, financially provide for their household, and advance in their doctoral degree program. Mothers ($n = 8$) and fathers ($n = 5$) openly expressed and gave examples of the challenges they experienced at UCR. I found a common need for on- and off-campus resources, especially for parenting students with younger children and those coming from out of state to attend graduate school. For example, Charlotte, a single mother of three, said the transition to UCR was overwhelming and stressful. Before moving to the UCR community to start her graduate education in the fall semester, she needed to find a place to live that was family-friendly near UCR and the schools her children were going to attend. Charlotte was not alone. I found other participants needing resources to help transition to graduate school and support them in navigating UCR as parenting doctoral students.

As a researcher who draws on intersectional thought, I found that there is not one label or term that gives parenting graduate students enrolled in doctoral education justice. In addition, I found that participants represent a diverse population of individuals parenting their children while seeking postgraduate degrees at a PWI in the Midwest. Each mother and father who participated in this study have unique stories of managing their doctoral studies while caring for their children and families. For instance, their relationship status, the number of children parenting graduate students is raising, and their children's ages, care needs, and schooling all

play a part in managing their studies and parental responsibilities. Their household financial status and income also contribute to the amount and type of financial support they need. Even if participants had similar racial identities, ages, and gender, they navigated caring for their children and providing for their households differently. I also found them to have different graduate school experiences.

Though participants' concerns are specific to UCR, my literature review demonstrated that it is a broader institutional issue for academia. This chapter describes participants' experiences at UCR, their struggles with funding, and the need for institutional resources. I also discuss the diversity and intersections of parenthood between participants. In the last section of the chapter, I talk about the different types of support used and needed by mothering and fathering doctoral students. I organized the findings into the following sections: The University of Casterly Rock, The Diversity and Intersections of Parenthood and Family, and The Different Aspects of Need and Support That Contribute to Mothering and Fathering Ph.D. Students' Successes and Challenges in Attaining a Doctoral Education. When I provide participants' quotes to support my argument, some excerpts will be in a Q&A (question and answer) format to show readers what questions I asked participants before responding. Then, I will present some quotes in a block format with an excerpt. An analytic commentary will follow quotes to support my argument. Lastly, at the end of the chapter, I will provide a summary to highlight the main findings from each theme.

The University of Casterly Rock

Institutional Policies and Practices on Funding and Graduate Assistantships

UCR⁹ benefits from their graduate students' enrollment and student employee status. Participants reported attaining paid research, teaching, and/or graduate assistantships and a tuition waiver. Still, institutional policies limit their funding as doctoral students that do more harm than support, including departmental regulations in distributing who receives graduate assistantships and when graduate students get notified they are receiving an assistantship. As stated in chapter 4, student loans, assistantships, stipends, and fellowships are calculated per graduate student without considering students' dependents and household income or size. According to GEU¹⁰, departmental personnel should provide graduate students a written notification 30 days before the Fall or Spring appointment starts. However, graduate students do not always receive employment notices on time. For example, Charlotte shares how she always had funding during her graduate studies but expresses dealing with the stress and uncertainty of securing an assistantship each academic year, including summers. **Charlotte** shares:

The university being slow about paperwork doesn't stop my rent from being due. And so again, that goes back to coming from a low SES working-class background. The stress of that will kill me. And um, you know, sometimes you run into people who can forget it's payday. I can never forget it's payday, so my urgency is not their urgency—There are better ways to handle that across departments. It's a hazing that is debilitating. It literally can get to me, not knowing if I have employment. That's not even supposed to happen by our GEU contract—it's stressful when you have children and stressful when you don't. And so, this year, I was just kind of more proactive. Like, Hey, I'm about to start applying. Do you want me in that (in that position)? That's pretty much how I handled it, and it worked out for me, but that only comes from multiple years of hustling, and that's, I don't know how I feel about that being a part of the process. That's probably why I'm like stressed out, not stressed out. I'm stressed out. I can't even think at this point about the job market because I feel like I've had to do it every year on a smaller scale. **(First-generation Black mother of three, 41 years old, single/divorced)**

⁹ University of Casterly Rock.

¹⁰ Graduate Employee's Union (GEU), pseudonym used for confidentiality reasons.

Every academic year, Charlotte has to apply for assistantships in her department. Even if she currently holds a teaching position, she has to reapply yearly for the same position. Contract for assistantships is awarded per semester or academic year and does not include summer. As a single mother caring for three children, Charlotte says how her department distributes and awards assistantships is problematic for her consistently providing for her children and household. Graduate students' total financial aid package awarded per academic year affects students' ability for other aid, including student loans, stipends, and fellowships. The financial aid awarded to graduate students does not include household income and size.

Like Charlotte, a stay-home father, Ruben says his department informs graduate students of assistantships and/or funding too late in the summer. He says sometimes graduate students do not know if they will have a research or teaching assistantship until the beginning of the fall semester. **Ruben** expresses:

One thing that drives me nuts about my department is how they do their funding thing every late summer, late fall, and early summer. They ask you like which type of funding will you like assistantship, fellowship, or fee waiver, and I think they changed it this year, but they didn't rank them, so you have to click all that apply, and for me, in my situation, I just need a straight fee waiver, but that's all that I need. That's all I really want. But when I work an assistantship, it's kind of a fee waiver which costs me as much to pay for childcare as I make, right. So, I am not really earning any money. It's a good experience, you know. I'm not going to complain about some of the professional experiences I have been able to get. Still, it's hardly worth it other than a fee waiver, which course, you're taking a lot of classes with the waiver valuable if you just take one to just keep the lights turned on. It was more valuable for me to be home with the kids and get some writing done, that type of thing.

(White stay home father of two, 34 years old, married)

Although Ruben is not economically limited or restricted to have an assistantship to maintain his household because his wife's income provides for their family, Ruben's need for a tuition waiver is necessary for him to pay for his tuition. Similar to Charlotte, Ruben says his department asks graduate students what type of funding support they need every spring semester. However, he

says his department informs graduate students late in the summer, which makes planning care for his children difficult. His children's care services cost the same amount he earns working as a teaching or research assistant. If Ruban were a parenting student who relied on assistantships to pay his bills and care for his children, he would be in a similar financial position as Charlotte.

Tina, a single parent who went through a divorce while seeking her doctoral degree, shared how she constantly worries about securing a position to help care for her son. Even though she receives child support from her ex-husband, Tina needs a job to maintain her household. **Tina** shares:

It's been steady, but I didn't always know what was coming. I always had at least two jobs. But like when my job ended, I didn't. I didn't think I was going to have that supplemental income. I thought I would have 50 percent, and that was it. And just out of nowhere, I got a call from a woman who works at Information Center¹¹ who said I submitted an application before, and she was looking for an assistant, and if I could come in and maybe talk about it? She had a position open. So, it's just something like that. Or they were looking for instructors for graduate assistants. So, it was always something like last minute. I never, we¹² never go hungry. Like it's been fine, but it's just the anxiety of not knowing, and this position ends in this many months. I don't know what's going to happen after that. I know something is going to happen eventually. Something will come through. But it's just the anticipation or just the uncertainty, just not knowing what that thing is going to be. **(First-generation White mother of one, 36 years old, single/divorced)**

Although Tina has been able to attain assistantships as a doctoral student, the constant worrying of not knowing what position she will be able to earn per academic year and summer causes her to experience high levels of anxiety and stress.

The amount of funding parenting graduate students are approved to receive per academic year by the financial aid office is not enough, especially for lower-income students with dependents. Miguel said he must budget and plan his finances ahead of time plus work full-time in the summer to pay for household expenses and childcare for his son during the academic year.

¹¹ Pseudonym used for confidential reasons.

¹² Tina is referring to herself and son.

Furthermore, he says his household income is unstable even though he managed to attain positions during his doctoral studies. **Miguel** explains:

A lot of budgeting. The problem my wife has even though she's highly educated. She only gets one-year contracts here,¹³ so that means she has to look for another job because the contract was just one year. She works in nonprofits, and they give her a year contract. Then, the next thing you know, the contract is done. Then, she has to move on. So, we always have financial insecurity, so we need to plan ahead of time and have some big savings because anytime or her job is done, that might take her other three, four, or five months to get a new job. So, we need to be prepared at any time to, you know, be ready. So, she has applied to the university, you know, maybe like 30, 40 jobs. She had maybe like nine, ten interviews, and she has been asked for final interviews, but she has not been offered a position. So that has been challenging.

(First-generation Afro-Puerto Rican father of one, 32 years old, married)

In addition to managing graduate assistantships, Miguel was offered a fellowship in his second year but did not receive it because of state budget cuts. He did not receive funds from his fellowship until two years later. At that time, Miguel said he had to rely on student loans to help him cover his expenses. Miguel, along with other parenting graduate students, will graduate with higher student debt because of the inconsistent funding availability. The limited funding can cause parenting students to not complete postsecondary degrees, a finding Ma and Baum (2016) reported in their study about parenting students and their need for education to help them support their families while seeking higher education credentials.

When Aaron first started his graduate program at UCR, he was married. Not having stable funding put a strain on his marriage, which ended in a divorce. After meeting his current girlfriend and becoming a father, Aaron said maintaining consistent employment was necessary to provide for his family and son. He said securing a teaching or research assistantship in his department was challenging and competitive. Therefore, to help support his son and family financially, Aaron worked in different positions within and outside of UCR. **Aaron** says:

¹³ University of Casterly Rock (UCR).

I've had a variety of jobs. I've had assistantships through the College of Business. I've had positions for SLA¹⁴. I've done any and everything to get funding. Um, so currently I work for a student support program [...] So in the summertime. I've worked for a federal company. I have held several positions with that company. I've worked for the Labor Ready Express service. I've worked for other temp services. I just got to get money to pay for school and support my family.

(First-generation Black father of one, 39 years old, divorced/in a relationship with son's mother)

During the academic year, graduate students cannot hold full-time employment. A 67% appointment permits graduate students registered full-time to work a maximum of 26.8 hours per week during the Fall and Spring semester. There are no work restrictions during summer sessions. Wavier-generating assistantship appointments (e.g., teaching (TA)/research (RA) assistantships) range from 25% (25% = 20 hours per week) to 67% (67% = 26.8 hours per week) appointments based on a 40-hour week. Graduate students can receive different tuition waiver designated by their departments. Graduate students with at least a 25% TA or RA appointment receive a tuition waiver. Aaron said securing a position at UCR was challenging, especially in the summer. Therefore, he said he had to work outside UCR during the summer to help support his family. Aaron constantly needed to work full-time in the summer, which made managing his studies harder and affected his writing concentration. Aaron did not provide for his family alone; Aaron's girlfriend also works full-time to provide for their son and family financially.

In this chapter, I discussed the difficulties mothering and fathering doctoral students manage to support their children and household financially. The main obstacle they face is the academic policies that pertain to all graduate students regardless of parental and marital status. *One size fits all* guideline is not practical. Doctoral students who are parenting alone with one income need access to more financial support and resources than their peers from two-income households. For example, as Charlotte struggles to maintain, Ruben's and Amanda's spouses

¹⁴ Pseudonyms

have employment that economically provides for their home and does not cause them to stress about paying for rent on time.

Mothering and Fathering Ph.D. Students' Campus Experiences at UCR

Participants feel their university lacks in providing them campus resources and implementing policies related to parental leave, parental rights, lactation rooms, changing stations, and child-friendly spaces and events. Mothering and fathering doctoral students interviewed for this study face challenges when seeking resources independently. Although UCR recently updated a website that serves to support parenting students. When I emailed the *Assistant Dean of Students* and *Co-Chair of the Parenting Student Advisory Council*, he informed me that he was no longer the person of contact. Then, when I emailed the new Co-Chair, she failed to return my email to this day. That was almost two months ago. According to participants, UCR is not intentionally showing support to parenting students. **Ruben** shares his thoughts about UCR not supporting parenting students:

I think to a certain degree; they need to have some thoughtfulness about being a parent. I think the majority of our student parents are not well-to-do and don't have well-to-do spouses. There should be active initiatives to recruit first-generation students and different student populations. Student parents are a type of population that's been traditionally marginalized within higher ed. I think we should have recruitment and retention initiatives and housing. I think fair on-campus childcare, like drop-off childcare. They (UCR) have a child development lab or something like that. It's not fair, but it's just as expensive as anything else in town. I believe it's just full-time enrollment and has a huge waiting list.

So, I feel it's worth recruiting and retaining student parents, particularly ones from lower-class backgrounds that can't afford it (childcare), can't afford to just be off work. There's no way of paying for diapers, formula and paying for rent [...] It's great that you got a fee waiver, but if you have to pay for childcare, I mean you're, you're basically doubling the money you're making to work. Your job is to pay for the childcare. It's not really much of a net benefit thing on how much you're paying for childcare, and so just a straight fee waiver might be more beneficial for some parents. Having that as an option might be huge. (**White stay at home father of two, 34 years old, married**)

Ruben expresses how UCR does not support parenting students enough. He says most parenting students come from lower-income households and do not have the economic means to pay for college and maintain their families without financial aid support. Additionally, Ruben says parenting students are a marginalized population in higher education that do not have access to affordable childcare services and housing. Recruitment and retention initiatives are necessary to help parenting students access affordable childcare and housing, especially for lower-income students with younger children. Without these initiatives, Ruben says students with younger children will struggle to pay for diapers, formula, childcare services, rent, and college expenses.

Gina expresses her disappointment towards UCR for not supporting parenting students. As a mother of an infant, she explains how UCR facilities do not help her care for her son when she is on campus. She says:

I feel like they support a lot of different groups, and so I don't understand why students with families don't get support. Not having childcare really upsets me! Like I get very upset that I have to pay for fees to a facility that I reasonably do not have to go to, and then you can have all these different things in the RAC¹⁵ cooking classes, massage therapy but you can't have childcare, it just shows they just don't care. Um, and I know the university puts a lot of money into different student populations, like international students and things like that, which I didn't think in particular is a problem.

I just don't understand why they don't seem to care about parents. Even in the bathrooms, they really do not have changing tables, and hardly any of the bathrooms, unless maybe you're in the union.¹⁶ I hardly ever see changing tables. Something big enough for you and a stroller? So, my son, for instance, can't stand on his own. So, I have to put the stroller in there¹⁷ or hold him to use the bathroom, or like I have done a few times and leave the door essentially open. Oh, or close the door on my son, which is ridiculous. Um, so I just feel like the institution, the people higher up in whatever it is. Not a lot of care, a lot of focus on parents. (**Black-White mother of one, 28 years old, single**)

The type of physical resources available at UCR sends a message to parenting students that they do not exist. In Gina's case, she feels unsupported and not valued by UCR because of the lack of

¹⁵ Recreation Activities Center (RAC).

¹⁶ University of Casterly Rock Student Union.

¹⁷ Bathroom stale.

physical spaces available for students mothering young children. Yet, Gina pays students fees like every other student without children but feels she cannot use the RAC or public restrooms comfortably because facilities are not equipped for her to care for her son while on campus.

When I asked Alyssa about her experiences at UCR as a mothering student, she said women who never have been pregnant do not understand what it feels like to be pregnant. When I asked her for an example, Alyssa said a woman in her class wrote about being privileged and used pregnancy as her example, saying pregnant women in the workforce use their pregnancy to receive certain privileges. **Alyssa** explains:

I think that people have a really misinformed idea of what it means to be a parent or even a pregnant person because there's this assumption that there are all these entitlements that we demand and we feel entitled to this and you know, whatever. Like I'll give you an example. So, this semester, believe it or not, there was a student, but the assignment was, um, they were supposed to read Peggy McIntosh's article called the invisible knapsack, which basically is about white privilege. And then the assignment was to write, you know, or give an example of a person or even yourself who experienced certain privileges and a young lady actually decided to write about pregnant women. She wrote that pregnant women are privileged because pregnant women go to work, and they get special treatment and use special rooms. But the way that she wrote it was like very negative, like pregnant women demanding to miss work. She's coming from the mindset of someone who's never been pregnant, so she's just, she's just basically going on a diatribe about how pregnant women or, you know, so extra because they feel like they should be able to do this and that. Third, they want the door open for them. And just wild stuff. I was, who gets that privilege? Most pregnant women are miserable, especially at work. So, I don't even know what you're talking about. **(African American mother of one, 28 years old, married)**

When Alyssa shared this story with me, I could tell she was furious. Alyssa deals with what Beal (1969) calls *double jeopardy*. A term to describe the multiple oppression Black women in America face. A system of capitalism run by racism destroys the humanity of all Black people (Beal, 1069). Within a capitalist society, women's roles as ideal caregivers and homemakers is a socialized practice. Although women are enrolling and completing more higher education degrees than men, women of all races and ethnicities continue to face genderism in the academy

(Hill et al., 2016; Johnson, 2017; Turner et al., 2008; 2011). In today's economy, women represent approximately 47% (74.6 million) of the U.S. workforce and 52.5% of the college-educated workforce (Lennon, 2012; Warner et al., 2018). Of these women, 71.5% are mothers (Women's Bureau, 2018). Although women's presence in the workplace has increased over time, some stereotypes and biases challenge seeing White and women of color, mothers, and wives as influential educational leaders.

During her first interview, Christine talks about the lack of support and interest UCR has for students with families. In the following quote, Christine talks about UCR needing to support parenting students 100%. Still, policies such as Title IX do not fully support students caring for children while seeking higher education degrees. **Christine** says:

Yes, 100 percent, but we've got a legal issue on our hands. It's a bigger issue. So, I think that we¹⁸ fall under Title IX without question. Still, I think there needs to be some policy and advocacy on the Title IX level. From my understanding of that policy, the federal policy, you know, you have more rights as a pregnant woman than a student once you first have that baby. After your first baby, my understanding is that the institution themselves has the ability to decide what is considered reasonable accommodations saying the institution has that right? They should not have that highest level. There needs to be some basic foundational information in place, and the other part of that is why your work is so important is that we don't have enough research or numbers showing how many of us (parenting students) there are. So just from a numerical perspective, we can't necessarily make that argument and say, well, there's this many of us.¹⁹ And then the third component, which I've tried to share more with my students, is that until we all come together. We make demands of what they²⁰ need to provide, and we push against that, and we threaten to tell the newspapers, and we threaten to tell everybody else what they aren't doing and how it's not equitable. They will continue not to do anything. So, I think there's that policy piece, the research piece, and then the advocacy piece. (**First-generation Native American-White mother of three, 35 years old, married**)

¹⁸ Christine is referring to parenting students.

¹⁹ Christine is referring to parenting students.

²⁰ Christine is referring to the University of Casterly Rock (UCR) personal/faculty.

Even though Christina says that UCR lacks foundational structures on campus that fully support parenting students, she feels Title IX needs to be updated to hold institutions accountable for implementing support for mothering and fathering students.

On the other hand, Samantha, a mother of two, gives an example of how an institution values students with families. She expresses how disappointed she is at UCR for not supporting parenting students and says that her previous university was intentional in helping students with children. **Samantha** says:

At my previous institution, there were things in place. They value the contributions of families in a different kind of way. At Great University,²¹ they pro-rated more than they do here (laughter) but at least had something in place, and if you are a parent, they had student groups they don't discourage. But here,²² you're almost on your own. Let's think about if I had a baby, a newborn living at family graduate housing, with those horrible floors, and my kid fell. How could they think that is a safe environment for small children? And then when I noticed when I was at Great University is that people could bring their families if they were coming from outside of the country. Think about the whole family plus kids and grandparents living in something with a small square foot. And people would say, "oh, this is better than what they are used to." I was like, this is disgusting. There is this notion saying that people with children are worthless at a university than those without children. **(First-generation African American mother of two, 41 years old, single/divorced)**

All participants said UCR needs to do more for parenting students. The policies that stratify graduate students' funding limit the ability to support basic needs, such as food, housing, and health care. The mothering and fathering graduate students in this study have personal and family expenses, but they are not alone. Most women and men seeking doctoral degrees need full-time employment, are married with children, and seek credentials while managing busy lifestyles (Offerman, 2011). UCR is not implementing family-friendly spaces on campus, but expecting parenting graduate students to pay the same fees as students with no children sends a message to them that their children do not belong at UCR. Suppose most graduate students have

²¹ Pseudonym used for confidential reasons.

²² University of Casterly Rock (UCR).

children and families. In that case, the graduate school culture at UCR needs to implement more policies and practices that support mothers and fathers parenting their children while seeking advanced degrees.

The Diversity and Intersections of Parenthood and Family

I found that parenthood has different aspects and how parents care for their children and household necessities. Relationship status and income contributed to how mothers and fathers navigated caring for their children and managing their doctoral studies. Those married or living with a partner had two sources of income to help them manage their household and daycare expenses. At the same time, single-parent households managed to care for and financially provide for their child/children alone with one source of income. The number of children they raise and their ages, needs, and care are factors in navigating and managing their parental responsibilities and educational obligations.

Married and Two-Income Households

Seven of the participants are married (Four mothers and three fathers). Olivia, Ruben, Christine, Mike, and Amanda were married to their spouse before starting their doctoral studies. Miguel and Alyssa got married while they were doctoral students. Alyssa met her husband at UCR; he was a doctoral student when they started dating. **Alyssa** talks about becoming a mother while in graduate school.

Well, I think when I first started my Ph.D. program, I was like one of those very high achieving slash overachieving individuals who were like, okay, well, the average time it takes to attain a Ph.D. is like six years, maybe seven. I'm going to do it in five and a half, or I'm going to do it in six, you know, so I was very much committed to completing my degree in a certain amount of time. Being in a relationship and now having a child, um, I'm not as committed to the timeline. I'm more like, okay, if the average is seven, six, seven, or eight, maybe I'll just shoot for eight.

Alyssa said that when she started graduate school, she had a goal to complete her doctoral degree in five years. However, after she became a mother, she realized that completing her degree may take longer. In the following, **Alyssa** talks about the changes in her mentality after becoming a mother:

You know, I guess I'm more flexible, and again, this goes back to time. Um, yeah. So, I think just my expectations of myself and the work that I'm intending to do, I think became more realistic, uh, as you know, which is the result of being a mom. I think reality kind of hit when I became responsible for other people. Um, yeah, I think um, as far as the transition, I mean, I think my, my research was shifting toward looking at women because I consider myself to be a feminist scholar, so that was always going to happen regardless. **(African American mother of one, 28 years old, married)**

Once becoming a mother, Alyssa found her mentality changing because she realized she was responsible for another human being. She also said her research interest changed due to her parental status and new family lifestyle.

On the other hand, Miguel started his doctoral program already engaged to his fiancé. They married within the first couple of years, and his son was born. During this time, his wife completed a master's degree as well. Co-parenting his son with his wife can be challenging as he seeks to complete his doctoral degree. **Miguel** talks about how he manages.

A lot of planning. A lot of open communications. I think that we made a lot of conscious choices when we moved here.²³ We had other options, there were other options, but we just decided to come here, and she was my fiancé then, and we planned to have a baby. So, we knew that we wanted to conceive the baby at this time so we can have it at that time. And, but I think that you know because we don't have any family in this area, we had to be even more open with each other right now that everything was great. You know, we obviously, we had a lot of, you know, uh, differences and there was a lot of conversations about our future, our relationship.

But I think that you know, one of the areas that I thought about was the church, um, you know, being able to have a pastor that was Puerto Rican, was really big assistance. Or when we had issues, I would just text him, hey look, I'm a little mad right now, you know, kind of talk, you know, and you know, he guided me through that process of like, hey, you know, you need to come down, you need to think through stuff. Still, I think we made it work, but we split responsibilities, and you know, we needed to 50/50 everything,

²³ Miguel is referring to the community outside of the University of Casterly Rock (UCR).

you know, for the most part, we tried to split things evenly and support each other. Right. So, I helped her get into grad school. I supported her through grad school. I went to every single appointment when she was pregnant. I didn't miss a single appointment. So, I think that showed how strong our relationship was and how committed we were to that relationship. **(First-generation Afro-Puerto Rican father of one, 32 years old, married)**

Furthermore, when Miguel travels to conferences, his wife cares for their son, takes him to daycare, and maintains their home. Although Miguel loves being a father, he said his most significant transition was getting married and becoming a father as a doctoral student.

Olivia, Christine, and Amanda were married when they started their doctoral programs. They are all full-time Ph.D. students, who maintain employment, own their homes, and manage their household expenses with two incomes. Their daily routines are similar because their children attend a school or a daycare facility. Their husbands work full-time and support their wives unconditionally, which means husbands help care for their children and manage household responsibilities, so their wives can study full-time. **Olivia** shares:

If it wasn't for my husband, who was there to emotionally support me with anything I needed. He's like, "what do you need?" He would do all the cooking and all the cleaning and he still, to this day, continue to do that. I was not 100 percent. Even though he was providing all this support, I'm still going through this being a doctoral student, there's all this information, and you know, there's a lot of people who have masks and asked questions. They're fully prepared, and I'm halfway prepared because I can't be 100 percent a student. I couldn't be a 100 percent teacher. **(First-generation Chicana mother of one, 35 years old, married)**

Olivia gives a lot of credit to her husband for helping her care for their home and son. She says she could not manage her duties as a mother, student, and employee without her husband. In Olivia's case, having her husband's support is what helps her advance in her doctoral program.

When Christine and Amanda travel to conferences, their husbands manage daily family routines and take care of their children's necessities (feeding, drop off/pick-up from school or

daycare, bathing, bedtime routines, etc.) **Amanda** shares how grateful she is for having her husband's support:

I think again because I wasn't working full-time, and I think if I was working full-time, I couldn't have done it.²⁴ Night classes can be challenging, but I have the support of my husband. When I first started, some of the required core courses, which were offered between 4 and 6:50 p.m. In the beginning, I would have classes two nights a week, and it was such a long day to be here.²⁵ I usually get here around 9:30 am to work, then I go to class, then I will get home around 8:30 pm, so again having the support of my spouse was imperative because two days a week is when I have those classes. It seems like I was gone from the time they²⁶ got on the bus until they went to bed—again, we made it work because I have a supportive spouse who has a full-time job. **(White mother of three, 41 years old, married)**

Amanda does not live in the UCR area. She commutes to campus for her studies and a part-time position. Her husband works for a local school district near their home, which helps manage their children's care when Amanda is at UCR.

Ruben and Mike shared that their wives are the primary financial providers. Mike said that his wife wants to stay home with their girls. However, Mike and his wife agree that his wife will maintain working full-time so he and his family can have affordable health care and pay their home mortgage until he completes his doctoral degree. **Mike** shares how he and his wife came to their agreement and how he started his doctoral program:

My wife had always wanted to stay home and be a stay-at-home mom. So, in my first year, there were so many changes that happened. We had Sarah,²⁷ and she stayed home, and she got a part-time job at her work, and the idea was that the next year, I apply to programs²⁸, and I apply to UCR. It made no sense we would go somewhere else to find a job. We had a house. We bought a house the year we got married, and it really didn't make any sense to apply anywhere else, so I figured I apply here and figure the rest out.

²⁴ Amanda is referring to managing studies and working full-time.

²⁵ Amanda is referring to UCR.

²⁶ Amanda is referring to her children.

²⁷ Sarah (pseudonym) is Mike's first daughter.

²⁸ Mike is referring to doctoral programs.

So, once I started the program,²⁹ we decided I would talk to my director and get a leave of absence. Then Karen³⁰ will go back full-time, so I can get enough coursework under my belt and take care of the residency requirement and get myself established in the program. But then, in July, everybody in the unit got a letter saying that potentially everybody would be gone.³¹ But that's when I went into scramble mode and started applying for teaching jobs, and I actually secured one near UCR [...]. So Beth said you know what? I will just keep working [...]. So basically, for one semester, I had to be a full-time worker and full-time student. **(First-generation White father of two, 37 years old, married)**

In the end, Mike said his wife maintained working-full time until they sold their home to eliminate their mortgage so Sarah could stay home with their daughters. Ruben has a different story about why his wife financially provides for their family and how he decided to seek his Ph.D. to cover a gap in his employment so he can care for his children full-time. **Ruben** explains:

It was partly intentional. We³² did a lot of advising with returning students. Most of them were parents, and we had them learn different things [...]. One of the things that a lot of mostly women, sometimes men, talked about doing was seeking their degrees when they wanted to stay home with their kids—doing school part-time to cover gaps in employment. It's like, well, that's a good strategy. So, for me starting a Ph.D. when I did [...] I've got a good year of coursework done to load up, and then we'll be having a baby sometime in the next year, and then I have to slow down, and then I can take five or six or eight years on a Ph.D. Especially for women, too, especially for men. Being out of the workforce for eight years to take care of kids is hard. It's hard. I've seen that firsthand working with students who then, you know, you've been out of the workforce, and so for me, part of doing the Ph.D. was to cover gaps in employment because the plan was for me to stay home with the kids. After all, my wife was her career. She couldn't get off the train. She just has to keep working, and I will be a stay home dad. **(White stay home father of two, 34 years old, married)**

A commonality among married participants is their spouses being the primary financial provider for their household. Wives and husbands work full-time to maintain their families financially, so their spouses can achieve doctoral degrees. Miguel is the exception in this group. He and his wife

²⁹ Mike is talking about a University of Casterly Rock(UCR) position he had prior to enrolling in his doctoral program.

³⁰ Karen (pseudonym) is Mike's wife.

³¹ Mike is referring to him and his colleagues getting laid off, and losing their jobs.

³² Ruben is referring to himself and colleagues.

both financially support their household together. Miguel is the primary financial provider when his wife is between positions or unemployed.

Single Parent Households

Samantha, Tina, Charlotte, and Gina are mothering doctoral students raising their children in single parent households. All the men in the study are married or in a relationship with their child's mother. Samantha, Charlotte, and Tina are divorced, and Gina is single. Although Gina informed me that she is in a relationship with her son's father. She is raising her son alone because her son's father is not living with her. Before starting her doctoral program in 2014, Tina was married. By the end of 2015, she had divorced her husband. Tina talked about the first two years of her doctoral program when she struggled with her ex-husband.

Lisa: How about when you were married, did your ex-husband support you in a way?

Tina: He was supportive, but he would also get really frustrated at me. It just was my lack of confidence, you know. So, I mean, he was always like, his first response was, "yeah, you can totally do this," but then he would get to the point where he was [...] just don't do it.

Lisa: So, he would and wouldn't support you?

Tina: No, I think he tried, but he didn't know how to be supportive in that way. I think, and maybe part of that was because I think I told you this in the last interview, that it was always just kind of expected that he would be the one to do the Ph.D. **(First-generation White mother of one, 36 years old, single/divorced)**

Tina continues to say how her husband tried a variety of times to complete a master's degree program. However, he has not been able to attain his degree and continue to a doctoral program. Unfortunately, Tina's ex-husband did not know how to support Tina as she sought her Ph.D. degree. The tension of him not being able to complete his graduate degrees eventually took a toll on their relationship, and they divorced.

Samantha and Charlotte talked about the challenges they manage as mothers raising their children alone with one income. Both of them have strategies for how they work caring for their children as mothering doctoral students. Specifically, Samantha shares how she struggles with parking on campus when she takes her girls to UCR and finds the cost of parking is a lot for her financial budget.

Samantha: For events on campus, parking is crazy. Parking is insane, and if I have to struggle to get parking, it's crazy, but I am like, no. We were supposed to go see, I think, Melissa Harris-Perry or Angela Vise. And I was like, "where am I going to park," if my car gets towed or booted, and if I get a ticket. I mean, I can't afford a ticket. I cannot afford to lose access to my car. I like to know where I can park, and I don't want to deal with them³³. They are like, "I'm tired" because we had to park all the way over here. And these are things that I'm thinking about sometimes.

Lisa: So, it's not about the University having family friend events. Your reason for not bringing the girls to campus is parking. Are you worried about where to park on campus?

Samantha: Yes! Even if I'm talking about something as simple as going to the gym. I got to pay for parking. And it takes away from my parking budget. And the gym is free. I tried to catch the bus when I first got here,³⁴ and I had to make sure I needed to leave to make sure I got to them³⁵ in time. And if I walk, it's the same thing. So, the more efficient thing for me to do is to drive. But it's not the most cost-effective. Even if things are free there, there are other costs associated with it. So that's just an excuse, but I am not going to be on the bus for 2 hours to be on campus for 30 minutes. That doesn't make any sense. Walking from my house is an hour long because I walk slowly. Either way, It is still not efficiently like a 5-minute drive from my apartment to the college.

I think about everything, even picking up my prescription or buying medicine at the campus pharmacy. The pharmacy is not even open on the weekend. I know it's a dollar, but I don't want to pay a dollar to run in and run out or have a \$30 ticket for a prescription. So, whenever I come to campus, I count my coins. So even coming here to the library, it is free parking. At the other library, it's still a coin. Parking cost is something that I think about because I was parking cheaper at Great University. I didn't pay that much for it, maybe \$100 a year. **(First-generation African American mother of two, 41 years old, single/divorced)**

³³ Samantha is talking about her two daughters.

³⁴ Amanda is referring to the University of Casterly Rock (UCR).

³⁵ Amanda is referring to her two daughters.

Non-parenting students may not find the cost of parking at their institution challenging.

However, Samantha says she needs to consider parking costs because she cares for her two daughters and household expenses alone.

Charlotte expressed how brutal summers are for her because her three children want to go back home to see their family, but she needs to stay in Westerlands³⁶ to work, care for her home, and study. **Charlotte** shares:

So, the first year, we³⁷ came in the summer, and the next summer, they went home. But when that happens, I send money home, so I'm kind of taking care of myself here and keeping our home here, but also supporting them there. So that summer, I had one position, and I just didn't tell anybody what was going on. It was like, hella difficult. But also, when they go home, it's big for them. They never have been a summer where they are not going because they miss our family, and we have a huge family. But also, depending on what's going on there, I'll be split between here and there. So, you know, their³⁸ dad kind of, a bunch of the ins and outs. But when they go home, he'll want to see them, or he'll tell them he's coming and then doesn't come. Then I got to deal with it, you know, like the split between the bullshit here and the bull shit there to get through the summer. And I do it every summer because it is the most writing productive time that I can have because they're not here, but also, they want to see their family. I just don't want them to be disappointed by family. So, I'm emotionally pulled between the two places when they go home and also financially poor between two places when they go home. So, it works, and it's weird because every summer, I have to reacclimate my freedom. It takes me about a month. I realized I could go where I wanted to go, do what I wanted to do, and tell nobody where I was. And it's this weird thing, but yeah, they go home every summer. **(First-generation Black mother of three, 41 years old, single/divorced)**

From the beginning of her doctoral program, Charlotte struggled to try to provide for her children and manage her studies. She always felt she was being pulled in different ways trying to make her children and family happy while she studied, striving to attain her Ph.D. When her children traveled home in the summer, Charlotte wanted to go with them to see their family, but

³⁶ Pseudonym used for UCR community town for confidentiality reasons.

³⁷ Charlotte is referring to herself and three children.

³⁸ Charlotte is referring to her two sons. Her daughter is from a previous relationship before she married her son's father.

she needed to maintain employment year-round to care for her children and household needs. A huge obligation for a single mother raising three children while seeking her doctoral degree.

Regarding child support, Tina is the only single mother who receives financial support from her ex-husband. Her son's father also spends time with their son every other weekend. However, Tina shares how she needs to attain employment even though she gets child support from her ex-husband. She also mentions that her work hours are limited because she has her son in the evening and expresses how her supervisor was not always supportive of her mothering responsibilities.

Lisa: Was there a time you felt that UCR faculty/staff treated you differently because you have a family?

Tina: Yeah, in my job in the liberal art college.³⁹ The boss that I had, the first boss that I worked for there. The supervisor was an older lady who had never had kids, and I was the first TA⁴⁰ who had a family. So that was kind of a, I don't, I mean, it wasn't bad. It wasn't like it was contentious or anything, but she just didn't always understand. I couldn't just drop everything and go to campus because he⁴¹ was little then too. Um, so yeah. But as far as like being treated differently, other than that, no, I can't really think of anything.

Lisa: Did you have a conversation with her about why you can't work certain hours because you have a son?

Tina: Yeah, because she expected me to be on call, like on email, and respond to emails right away at all hours because she can do that. And she did that, you know, she lived her work, but any other TA was able to do that because they didn't have a strict schedule with childcare and stuff like that.

Lisa: Was your contract up, or did she decided not to hire you back?

Tina: Oh, so she left. She retired. The professor that took over after she left, everything was fine. He's great. Um, and I mean, he even understands. Like this summer, my son is going to be in camp every single week, so I've had to take him to staff meetings, and I've taken him to my class when I teach a couple of times because he didn't have any school that day or whatever. And he totally understands it. It helps too that the kid⁴² is the most laid back. He'll just sit there and play a video game, and he's not running around

³⁹ Use pseudonym for confidential reasons.

⁴⁰ Teaching assistant (TA).

⁴¹ Tina is referring to her son.

⁴² Tina is referring to her son.

distracting people. So that helps. **(First-generation White mother of one, 36 years old, single/divorced)**

Tina's story exemplifies how single mothers' work schedules can be challenging because UCR faculty/staff are not considerate of students' families and obligations away from campus. Her story of how her previous boss expected her to be on call 24/7 exemplifies the unrealistic demands of graduate students, especially those with children and families. Being on call and requesting to respond to emails immediately throughout the day for full-time doctoral students is unrealistic because their studies (e.g., courses, reading, writing, research projects, publishing) demand a considerable part of their time. Then, when considering parenting doctoral students, these individuals have specific schedules tailored to their children's care and/or schooling, childcare access and affordability, and household situation.

In her first interview, Gina talks about the frustration she deals with trying to register for courses because of her son's daycare availability. Furthermore, course availability and scheduling can be difficult for mothering students caring for their child/children alone with one income and limited access to childcare. **Gina** explains:

So, the daycare center, he goes to daycare from like nine to five. Um, and so like night courses, beforehand⁴³ I ask them if they'd be okay with him⁴⁴ coming. He has attended courses with me. But for one class, they just never responded. And so, I was just like, well, I'm just not going to take that class. Scheduling night classes it's always a nightmare. **(Black-White mother of one, 28 years old, single)**

Most of the available courses that Gina needs are in the evening. Her son's daycare closes at 5 p.m. The strategy she uses to try to register for courses is contacting the professor to ask if she can take her son to class. Unfortunately, some professors do not respond to her email, which puts her in a difficult situation of not being able to register for courses and advance in her doctoral

⁴³ Gina is saying she contacts professors before registering for a course.

⁴⁴ Gina is referring to her son.

program. A limitation that parenting students of younger children face is if professors are not responding to their emails. After interviewing Samantha, Charlotte, Tina, and Gine. I learned that single parent households endure various experiences and challenges that place them at risk. There is a risk of not advancing in their doctoral programs because of course scheduling and professors' lack of support. Then, mothers manage situations where they must choose between caring for their children or fulfilling work demands to provide for their families' necessities, which is unrealistic and unhealthy for any doctoral student, regardless of parental status. So having that expectation of parenting students is unethical.

In a Relationship

Aaron and Albert are in a relationship with their son's mother. As shared in the previous sections, Aaron was married when he started his graduate program at UCR. His ex-wife struggled with his doctoral studies demands. In the following section, Aaron explains how he managed his doctoral studies obligations while also trying to maintain his relationship with his son's mother. He says he is struggling with similar challenges as he did with his ex-wife.

Aaron: Grad school destroyed my marriage.

Lisa: Okay. Can you explain to me what you mean by that?

Aaron: Um, so grad school, I mean I'm having the exact same issues that I had in my marriage, this is what I'm going through with my son's mom right now. And it's because our⁴⁵ work takes us away from our family. Um, and if they⁴⁶ don't understand what it is that you are doing, um, and I don't really know how to explain that. Sometimes I think that sounds mean, but yeah, it's like there's, there's a disconnect between us. If the person that you are with doesn't, isn't involved with the academy, doesn't have any concept of what it takes for you to be able to write, read and process this information. I'm like, the things that we have to go through, like prepping for class. All of these things, you know. We work a lot within our head, um, and so we spend a lot of hours at the library or wherever at a coffee shop, um, and it doesn't look like work to them. Um, they think that because we don't have to go and punch a clock, we don't have to be there. That we can do that work at any point.

⁴⁵ Aaron is referring to doctoral students.

⁴⁶ Aaron is referring to doctoral students' partners.

I learned from Aaron's story that his girlfriend does not understand the time commitment he needs to put forward to advance in his Ph.D. program. There are many components to a doctoral program and several stages graduate students need to accomplish to complete a doctoral degree. The various steps include courses, conducting independent research projects, qualifying exams, and conducting a dissertation study. Performing these tasks is easier said than done. I know the time commitment and mentality it takes to complete these tasks. Sometimes, you feel like you are losing your mind because the capacity your mind goes through in learning about theory and developing an academic writing mindset is exhausting. This process is hard to understand if your personnel does not experience this training. **Aaron** talks about his strategy to help get his writing done. He says:

When I am on a schedule, it helps me to write better. I write better in the mornings, and I do it between these times, and I need to do it. I need to have some type of structure. I'm like, yeah, they're like, well, "you don't have to be there, you could be doing that. so, I need you to do this over here." It just causes all kinds of chaos, and we fight. Um, yeah, it seems like an insult to her. Um, and so it's hard to balance being present and giving time to your relationship and being present. Um, it's so difficult. Um, and that's what killed my marriage. Um, she just didn't understand, and it created a lot of animosities. She had these feelings like I didn't care.

Regarding the challenges of being present, Aaron is talking about the mental strain of switching between his writing mindset and then going home and being mentally present with his family. I am familiar with code switching as a doctoral student with a family. Then, Aaron discusses taking his girlfriend to a conference, so she can be part of his department community and meet some peers. **Aaron** explains:

I network with other grad students and other people in our departments. I had an incident. once at a conference. I took her⁴⁷ with me to my college's mixer. She didn't want people talking to me. People will come up and hug me, and she's never met this woman before. She doesn't know how I know this woman. And she'd be like, "you know, who the hell is this?" She would stand in between us and cause all kinds of problems. It was really, it was embarrassing. It was, you know, it just caused all sorts of issues. I tried to bring her

⁴⁷ Aaron is referring to his ex-wife.

around as much as possible to show her these are the people I'm interacting with regularly. These are the friends I hang out with and work with.

Lisa: Do you think she was having a hard time understanding the culture of what it meant to be a graduate student or what that looked like?

Aaron: Yeah, absolutely.

In addition, Aaron discusses the challenges he manages with his girlfriend, which puts pressure on their relationship. Aaron says:

No matter what the situation is, there are a lot of similarities to my previous relationship to what I'm going through now. So, in my current relationship. I think I can explain best what I'm dealing with now. So, this semester I could defend.⁴⁸ And so I asked her at the beginning of the semester that Dr. Bennington⁴⁹ sat me down, and he was like, "look, you know, if you want to push through this. We can get you out this semester." He's like, "you can do your defense this semester. We need some things to happen." He was like, "but you know, I don't see why you couldn't." And so, um, I sat her down, my son's mom, and I was like, "look, this semester, I just need your support, like, just support. I really want to get out. I really want to finish school. I really want to close this chapter and begin the next chapter. So, I need your support and help to be on a schedule. I need to be able to focus. I need few distractions as possible. I need help pushing through it.

In his part of the conversation, Aaron explains how his doctoral adviser wants him to defend his dissertation and that he needs to concentrate on writing his dissertation to complete his doctoral degree. Aaron knew he needed the support of his girlfriend to accomplish this task. However,

Aaron said when he talked with his girlfriend; her actions caused him more strain than good that semester that he tried to defend his dissertation. He says:

And so, this semester, she's brought up all kinds of stuff. She went through a period where she said, "I don't think we should be together. Like you spent so much time with your work. I think that I will move back in with my mom." So just causing all of these distractions. Like anybody, I was hurt in the process. But like, the thing is, that you took so much energy away. It just created all of this distraction. Now, I can't focus because my schedule is all over the place. I don't have consistent days where I can work on my work because I get a few hours here and get a few hours there. It's just all over the place. It created complete chaos this semester, which is why I haven't defended, and I don't want to blame her per se, but it has a lot to do with my inability to stay focused on the task

⁴⁸ Aaron is talking about defending his final exam.

⁴⁹ Pseudonyms used for Aaron's adviser for confidentiality reasons.

because of all this emotional stuff going on. I was going to break up, but we decided to stay together.

(First-generation Black father of one, 39 years old, divorced/in a relationship with son's mother)

There are several aspects of this excerpt that stand out and are of importance to parenting doctoral students. First, I want to state that not every doctoral program is structured similarly and requires similar milestones. However, doctoral students are required to complete several courses and thesis hours, learn how to conduct independent research projects, attend conferences in their field, pass their qualifying exams, develop and defend a dissertation proposal and pass their final exam. These expectations are common in doctoral programs. Also, a competitive culture exists in doctoral programs, especially at research-intensive (R1) institutions. R1s are all about money, attaining grants to conduct research, and publishing findings in peer-reviewed articles in the field's most competitive journals. In Aaron's case, he is at an R1, and his department expects him to not only complete his dissertation but publish and travel to conferences.

As well, Alberto shared having similar struggles with his relationship. Before starting his doctoral program, Alberto moved his family to Westerlands from Puerto Rico. A year later, after starting his degree program, his relationship with his son's mother ended, and he was looking for a place to live. During his second interview, Alberto gives me an update on his relationship.

Lisa: How is your relationship going with your son's mother?

Alberto: We separated like two months ago.

Lisa: Did she go back to Puerto Rico?

Alberto: No, she's going to stay here.

Lisa: Okay. So, you guys are not living together anymore?

Alberto: I'm living with her now because I have some issues in Puerto Rico. I lost my belongings. I will stay until I have the money to get an apartment. Also, I have to pay her

rent because it's too high for her. But we are managing to live together and being separated.

Lisa: So, it's best financially to live together, for now?

Alberto: Yeah

Lisa: Is living together affecting your studies at all?

Alberto: Uh, I'm trying, so it would not be affected.

After Alberto's relationship with his son's mother ended, he could not get his apartment because he could not afford to live alone. He talked about the struggles he and his girlfriend managed before ending their relationship. To understand what he was experiencing as a fathering doctoral student in a relationship with his son's mother, I asked him if he could share some of his struggles. **Alberto** explains:

You know the stress, and the transition⁵⁰ made the situation harder; we were arguing about all of the issues. One of our arguments is about watching Netflix and not doing anything. I think she is wasting her time, and I think we need to take advantage of that time because we are still buying things for the home, and one of the main things is when she is wasting her time. I also do my part in it because I am also lying down for other issues she doesn't understand very well. I deal with depression and anxiety, and she thinks those days I am a lazy guy, and I don't have the motivation.

Alberto also mentions that he deals with depression and anxiety, which stresses his relationship and studies. He says after he started his doctoral program, his mental health declined. Also, moving from Puerto Rico strained his relationship with his girlfriend. Since he dealt with anxiety and depression prior to UCR, he knew to seek support when his symptoms worsened. In his interview, **Alberto** shares his struggles with his mental health:

Yes, but when I came here,⁵¹ I realized that I couldn't handle it, so that is why I sought help. It was a lot of things all at the same time. It just got out of control.

(Puerto Rican father of one and stepfather of one, 28 years old, in a relationship with his son's mother)

⁵⁰ Alberto is referring to the stress and challenges he and his girlfriend endured during his transition from Puerto Rico to the UCR community.

⁵¹ Alberto is referring to UCR.

The commitment doctoral students make is demanding and life-changing for any individual. Alberto and Aaron deal with challenges like any other couple. However, most of their struggles and disagreements with their current/past partners are about their doctoral studies expectations and time commitment to complete their degrees. In Alberto and Aaron's case, their relationships have ended or continue to be a struggle because their son's mothers find it difficult to understand why there are heavy demands on them to complete their doctoral degrees. These challenges can be a struggle for any doctoral student. However, In Aaron's case, he tries to include his girlfriend in the process so she can understand what he does as a doctoral student. Yet, his son's mother struggles to understand and figure out how to support Aaron. Unfortunately, Alberto's relationship with his son's mother ended, and he continues to seek support for his mental health care while also trying to financially support his son and figure out a new living arrangement.

First-Generation Doctoral Students

Nine participants in this study are the first in their families to attend graduate school and seek doctoral degrees. Allyssa, Ruben, and Gina are not the first to seek and attain advanced degrees in their families. Gina's mother has a master's degree, and her father has a bachelor's degree. Both Ruben's parents have master's degrees. Then, Alyssa's mother has a bachelor's degree, and her father has a doctorate. Amanda's mother has an associate degree, and her step-father has a master's degree. Her biological father finished high school. Amanda and Alberto do not identify themselves as students of first-generation (FG) status. Alberto said his mother completed her bachelor's degree when he completed high school and started college. However, Alberto is the first in his family to attend graduate school and seek a doctoral degree.

Miguel, Mike, Aaron, Tina, Christine, Olivia, Charlotte, Alberto, and Samantha are FG graduate and doctoral students. They are the first in their families to attend graduate school and

seek postgraduate degrees. In the following, **Miguel** talks about his FG status as a doctoral student.

Lisa: Would you say that being a first-generation student stops once you attain your bachelor's degree?

Miguel: No, no. It continues. It continues on to the end, and then it will probably continue in the job market, and it will follow you all throughout your life because you will, will be the first one to do stuff all the time. You might be the first Latina in this college at this particular time in this department. Right. So that will be a new experience. Right. So, I think that's going to be a lot of first everything we do. So, I think your identity will even follow you to your employment.

Here Miguel discusses how he is an FG for life and feels he will always be the first in his family to experience something new in the academy that his family has not experienced. He also says his journey in seeking and completing degrees has been challenging and that receiving mentorship is the main contributor to his success in navigating postsecondary settings and advancing in his doctoral studies. **Miguel** expresses:

I had to attach myself to a lot of mentors and always hustle. Right. I mean always hustling to get those folks, you know. I don't shy away from making friends. Having mentors is always good. Being at the right place at the right time asking questions, uh, to faculty, to staff, other colleges. In every space I've been, I've always been able to go in and ask questions. Uh, and, you know, people have been very willing to help out on most occasions. So, for me, honestly, I just wanted to get an associate degree and cut out and finish, but, you know, having mentorships allowed me to transfer and go to other institutions. **(First-generation Afro-Puerto Rican father of one, 32 years old, married)**

Miguel's original goal was to attend community college to attain an associate degree and get a job. Seeking his doctoral degree was not even a thought until mentors in his life opened up a trajectory of advancing his education further. His mentality is similar to FG undergraduate students reported in the literature. Regardless of degree attainment, individuals of FG status are the first to experience studying and working in higher education than anyone in their family. Guidance and mentorship are a must for them to navigate postsecondary settings as students and

faculty (Cataldi et al., 2018; Dumais & Ward, 2009; Fussell-Ware, 2017; Gardner, 2013; Gardner & Holley, 2011; Ishitani, 2006; Turner et al., 2008; Turner et al., 2011).

During Tina's interview, she describes how her FG status influences her doctoral student experiences.

Lisa: Does being a first-generation student influence your doctoral education experiences?

Tina: I think so. So just two things are happening. One is not having total support from my family because they can't, not that they're not supportive, it's just they don't understand why I would want to do this. Okay. Um, so there's that kind of beyond with that, but I also think it really affected what I studied, the classes that I took, um, the kind of work that I'm pursuing now. Um, the job that I interviewed for last week was for coordinating a program for first-generation, low-income engineering students. It sounds like a really cool program. Um, and so I think that because I've had that experience of being first-generation coming from that environment, um, I get it, and I think that I'd be able to have that informed my work. Um, but yeah, it was more interested in sociology classes and issues about access and equity and things like that, and I think that really comes from having that experience. **(First-generation White mother of one, 36 years old, single/divorced)**

In Tina's experience, she said being an FG helped her relate to other FG students she served at her job. She felt she provided a different perspective by sharing her educational trajectory as an FG student. The UCR program Tina worked for helped FG undergraduate students, and she said her experiences as an FG student assisted her in mentoring students in the program. A great educational advantage for the students she helped in trying to understand them from their perspective. Then, when I interviewed Christine. She expressed her struggles majoring in a White women's dominant field and how UCR made her feel she did not belong in her department because she was Black and White. On the other hand, **Christine** shared how being an FG student influences her perspective.

Lisa: Do you think your first-generation status influences how you navigate your doctoral studies?

Christine: Everything. I've been more able to say it openly now and not feel the shame. It's really messy, and I still don't understand the process. I don't think that anybody really

has one answer. I think it's a very messy process. It might be my age and life experience, but I'm a little bit calmer about it. When I was in my undergraduate studies, I was already very exhausted, but my kids were also younger then. It wasn't until two years later, in 2016. Anyway, when I transitioned to graduate school is when I felt a little bit more at peace, and I think it's because of the setting. People looked more like me, and people were asking more questions about diversity and how it affects education. I could finally see myself a little bit more in those spaces, whereas before, it was a White women's dominant field. The offices I was in and the classrooms I was put in [...] Nobody looked like me, which was really weird. **(First-generation Native American-White mother of three, 35 years old, married/blended family)**

There are several aspects I noticed from Christine's story. Several of her identities contribute to her agency. Her age, parental and FG status, bi-racial ethnicity, and life experiences were all part of her efforts to advocate for herself and understand how to navigate predominately White women's spaces.

Similarly, Olivia talks about feeling out of place when she started her doctoral program because she was unfamiliar with graduate school culture as an FG graduate student. **Olivia** shares:

Oh yeah, yeah. I didn't confide in anyone who was in the program. None of my family had been in a grad program before, so I didn't know what was proper and improper, right, and wrong. Um, and so yeah, I thought I had to do whatever she⁵² wanted me to do, so my research was guided on her needs and whatever she wanted to do, and now it's, it's all about me. It's beneficial for me to help myself in that way.

And so, yeah, now definitely, and even the experiences that I've had with my advisor in terms of my research, that's why I also went to Mexico last summer. Um, my advisor reached out to me, and she was like, you know, "you recently talked to me about your participants and said that, um, schooling in Mexico isn't good." And she's like, and "I'm thinking that your experience tells you the same thing." And I was like, yeah, my mama would be like, "if you were in Mexico, you would be pregnant by now, and he⁵³ would have this, and you would have that, and you wouldn't have finished school." Um, and I was like, I've heard this before. **(First-generation Chicana mother of one, 35 years old, married)**

⁵² Olivia is referring to the adviser that first mentored her at the beginning of her doctoral program.

⁵³ Olivia is referring to her mother who is talking about Olivia's husband.

Imposter syndrome is a common feeling among FG students (Ishitani, 2003; 2006; Pascarella et al., 2004; Terenzini et al., 1996). Olivia in her doctoral program dealt with imposter syndrome even though she held two higher education degrees and a teaching credential before starting her doctoral program. Like many FG students, Olivia found navigating postsecondary settings a guessing game. The imposter syndrome FG students experience does not disappear after attaining bachelor's degrees. They continue needing guidance before and after achieving postsecondary degrees and as academics. Lastly, Charlotte says her FG status inspires how she navigates her doctoral program.

Lisa: Do you feel your first-generation status influences your graduate study?

Charlotte: Absolutely! Everything from how I pick classes to how I choose a dissertation topic. It is more lonely in grad school. I think because as an undergrad, there's a bigger culture of support for first-generation students as long as they're within the 18 to 22 age brackets. But it's a risk when you get to grad school. For some reason, people think that⁵⁴ just disappears. A, you're good now. You are not good! Now first-generation status matters because multiple generations of college mean you've been conditioned to think a particular way about education and navigate spaces. An unofficial curriculum is normal to you. You've been raised in that. So, me getting a bachelor's degree didn't do anything. Three years to do two associates and two years to do a bachelor's degree did not equal any generational worth of information. So, you get to grad school, and it's even more lonely because I have family who finished a bachelor's degree, does not in my direct line and not my mom, not my dad, not either grandparent, but like cousins over there or something. Right. So, there are cousins who've done that? Nobody got a master's, and nobody earned a Ph.D. in my generation and older. And so, who do I talk to now? Like nobody? There's nobody to guide me. I'm that person, and so at the same time, I'm navigating being the first person in my family ever to attempt a Ph.D. I'm also the go-to college person for every kid under me.

As an FG student, Charlotte says she is developing a mindset of how to navigate higher education spaces to attain her doctoral degree. Further, she says that students from families who have achieved undergraduate and graduate degrees for multiple generations beyond grandparents have a mentality of how to approach college and navigate postsecondary settings. Attending

⁵⁴ Charlotte is referring to her first-generation status.

universities and becoming part of their campus culture is not as overwhelming as it is for FG students. For FG students, everything about applying and attending universities, picking courses, communicating with professors, or being part of on-campus activities can be challenging.

Charlotte discusses the stress she experiences as an FG doctoral student:

The amount of stress (she takes a deep breath, and her eyes begin to water), so if you don't have good mentorship and you don't have a family, you can. If you don't have a family, you can talk to them about it. You are really flying by the seat of your pants, and it is extremely stressful. It's stressful, and now you can condition your family because they've seen you go through the process, so they know a four-year takes like four years. Nobody knows how long a Ph.D. takes, "good Lord, aren't you done yet?" I mean, I was at a point where I got a dry erase board at a family reunion and wrote and explained what I was doing so that they could stop asking me so many questions, but they don't know. My family doesn't see the amount of pressure. It is too much pressure. They have no experience with this on either side. **(First-generation Black mother of three, 41 years old, single/divorced)**

Of all the interviews I conducted, in her second interview, Charlotte got emotional when she talked about the pressure she gets from her family. She says as the first person in her family to attain a master's degree and attempt to seek a Ph.D. causes her to endure a lot of stress and pressure. In general, the amount of study time Ph.D. students spend studying is challenging to explain to anybody who has not sought and completed doctoral degrees.

The first-generation literature supports the need for students to receive mentorship and financial support ((Dumais & Ward, 2009; Hartig & Steigerwald, 2007; Ishitani, 2006; Kaufman & Gabler, 2004; London, 1989;; Tierney & Colyar, 2006). Without mentorship or financial support, FG students are likely to leave their institution before completing their credentials (Giancola et al., 2004; Hand & Payne, 2008; Ishitani, 2006; Ishiyama, 2007; London, 1989; Pascarella et al., 2004; Richard & Skinner, 1992). FG doctoral students are no different, they require specific type of support to help them navigate the demands of doctoral programs. FG students of color from lower-income backgrounds raising children while seeking doctoral

degrees are at a greater risk of not completing Ph.D. degrees as those FG students of color from lower-income families seeking bachelorette programs (Gault et al., 2014b; Hauelsman & Engle, 2013; Miller et al., 2011; Nelson et al., 2013). For this reason and more, FG status needs to be considered and implemented as part of mentorship strategies for doctoral students.

The Different Aspects of Need and Support Contribute to Mothering and Fathering Ph.D.

Students' Successes and Challenges in Attaining a Doctoral Education

Support is a broad word and has intersecting parts. The type of support participants mentioned in their interviews is adviser, faculty, peer, and family support. I found support in these areas being described differently per participant.

Doctoral Program Advisers and Professor Support

When I asked participants questions about the support they received from their departments and advisers, I found participants sharing positive stories about their advisers and the funding they received from their departments. For example, Mike shared how his adviser Dr. Maria Martin and her husband, Dr. Robert Martin have been supportive that he has a family and sometimes needs to bring his daughters to class.

Lisa: Can you talk about how your graduate program adviser and department support you as a fathering doctoral student?

Mike: My advisor and her husband were very open to it.⁵⁵ And, you know, I think I tried to let them know if I had conflicts, but at the same time, I tried not to make an excuse all the time. Also, like when I can't meet a deadline, I don't try to use my kids as an excuse, but sometimes some things come up, and there's nothing I can do about it. Like I'm sorry! But then they were always very understanding in that, you know. The one class I took them,⁵⁶ it was a summer class, and um, there was one other woman in the class, and one day her kid was in the back, and my advisor's husband was perfectly fine with it. I think they both⁵⁷ also had kids while they were doing their Ph.D. So maybe that influenced **it**.

⁵⁵ When Mike says "it" he is referring to his parenting status.

⁵⁶ Mike is referring to his two daughters.

⁵⁷ Mike referring to his adviser and husband who is also a professor in Mike's department.

Mike's story he shares about his adviser and her husband is an example of how professors can support parenting doctoral students. As Mike explained, children are not excuses. Being a parenting student means that students are navigating caring for their children while also working on attaining degrees. A task that is common for adults over the age of 24 years old who decides to go back to school to develop their career further, seek different professions or advance their academic knowledge for personal reasons (Day et al., 2011; Frey, 2007; Gault et al., 2014a; Giancola et al., 2008; Offerman, 2011). Furthermore, Mike talks about Dr. Maria Martin and Dr. Robert Martin, making him feel comfortable about being his daughter in class if needed.

Lisa: Do you think your advisor and her husband helped set the tone of acceptance for parenting students, which supports them to feel it is alright to bring their children to class?

Mike: I'm always cautious with it.⁵⁸ So, they always were, and both of them offered it before I ever suggested it. Like, "oh, if you need to bring your kids to class. It's fine."

Lisa: They said that to their classes, or was that offered in one of their classes?

Mike: I think all the classes. I know the class with Dr. Robert Martin.⁵⁹ He had three or four students.⁶⁰ Same thing with Dr. Maria Martin⁶¹. In the second class with Dr. Robert Martin, I needed to take my girls probably 12 or 13 times. Still, at that point, it was like I'd already worked with him before, and so it wasn't, you know, he knew me, and so we had conversations and, we already built some sort of relationship. But yeah. And I don't remember it ever being in their syllabus. It's not the first day of class conversation like, oh, you have kids. Like, feel free to bring them. Like, I think it just came up. **(First-generation White father of two, 37 years old, married)**

Dr. Maria Martin and Dr. Robert Martin made a difference in how Mike navigated his doctoral studies. In this chapter section, I am talking about supportive advisers and professors. However, from my analysis, not all participants have had positive experiences with professors at UCR. In

⁵⁸ Mike is referring to professors being open to parenting students needing to bring their children to class.

⁵⁹ Pseudonym for confidential reasons.

⁶⁰ Mike is referring to parenting students.

⁶¹ Pseudonyms for confidential reasons.

Mike's case, his adviser positively impacted his studies, which helped him care for his daughters while also attending courses at UCR.

In their interviews, Miguel, Samantha, and Amanda shared with me how their advisers are supportive. In talking with Miguel, he said he is unsure if his department provides resources for parenting students. After talking about his department, he tells me how his adviser supports him.

Lisa: Can you talk about how your graduate program adviser and department support you as a graduate student with family?

Miguel: Well, I haven't asked him⁶² too much. I always think they're⁶³ supportive. I don't know if there are any resources for that matter and if they have them, I haven't found them yet. I think my advisor is always alert, and he seems supportive. The department seems supportive, but I'm not sure in terms of resources whether they have them⁶⁴ enough to ensure that students with families are doing well. I know a lot of us⁶⁵ have TAs and RAs, but that's just part of it. We have families, and there are other expenses that come with it that puts a burden on grad students.

Lisa: So, are you saying that your advisor always supports you? What gives you that impression?

Miguel: Conversations. He will ask how my son is doing. Sometimes I bring my son by,⁶⁶ so in that sense, yes. When the baby is sick, and I say, "Hey, I won't make it today or two days or two work." He has always been supportive, and I think that's good. But the department as a whole. Yeah, I don't know if they've done anything really to make sure we⁶⁷ are good. **(First-generation Afro-Puerto Rican father of one, 32 years old, married)**

There are several aspects of this excerpt that stand out and are of importance to parenting students. First, an adviser can be supportive by asking parenting students about their children and by understanding that caring for children can cause a change in parents' availability not being

⁶² Miguel is referring to his adviser.

⁶³ Miguel is referring to his department.

⁶⁴ Miguel is referring to resources.

⁶⁵ Miguel is referring to doctoral students in his department.

⁶⁶ Miguel is referring to his department.

⁶⁷ Miguel is referring to parenting doctoral students.

able to attend class because children's illness is unexpected. So, professors being prepared to support mothering and fathering students who miss class because of their children's illnesses or lack of care can be helpful to parenting students. Secondly, departments need to be involved in the process of professors supporting parenting students. If the typical graduate student is married with children, the professor should not be surprised when their students caring for children need an accommodation to help them succeed in their class.

When I asked Samantha about her adviser and how she supports her, **Samantha** explains:

She and her wife have watched the kids for me when I have something to do, and you know we work differently. She's very Type A, and I stress her out, and of course, she stresses me out because I'm super Type B. I appreciate the things she does [...]. She's definitely thinking of me. She wants me to succeed, and she has me on a tight timeline. I'm not upset about it because I don't want to be here forever.

As a single mother whose family lives in another state, Samantha's adviser caring for her girls is helpful. She goes further and talks about her adviser being concerned for her mental health and encourages her to take care of herself. **Samantha** shares:

I struggle with depression, so in my first year of graduate school, I was not on any antidepressants and had just been on antidepressants. And I didn't have any kind of insurance, and I could not afford the university insurance, and I did not have any kind of funding, so it was prohibited, and I just couldn't. I didn't know if I qualified for any kind of Medicare at the time [...]. So stressed out and anxious. So as soon as I got to Great University.⁶⁸ The first thing I did with my student insurance was go get on antidepressants. Which was great, and I'm grateful for that [...]. She⁶⁹ just made sure that I was on my antidepressants. **(First-generation African American mother of two, 41 years old, single/divorced)**

There is a concern for students' mental and physical health in higher education (American College Health Association, 2016; Bernstein & Cruise, 2020). Readers may think Samantha's adviser being concerned about her mental health should not be of her concern. However, from my analysis, all participants shared that their mental and physical health declined while they

⁶⁸ Pseudonyms for confidential reasons.

⁶⁹ Samantha is referring to her adviser.

were seeking to complete their doctoral degrees. Doctoral program advisers know the stress that Ph.D. students endure completing doctoral degrees. Samantha is one of those doctoral advisers who is concerned for her student. More advisers and departments need to have similar concerns for graduate students. They are an investment in the academy and doctoral students' families.

Amanda as well said her adviser is supportive and flexible with her schedule. In her response, Amanda explains how having an adviser that understands her parent role and mothering obligations helped her advance in her doctoral program as a commuter student.

Amanda explains further:

I can work at home a couple of days a week, and again, without that, I wouldn't be able to do this because my drive is over an hour one way. And, and again I'm, you know, I don't make like a full-time salary and so by the time you factor in gas and parking. Even being away from the kids and the distance it is to get home like if I didn't have the flexibility, that would be hard [...] So I appreciate it, and she is also a mother. And so, from the very beginning, I felt, um, I feel like she knows what it's like to be a mother. You know what I mean. It's not like you read a lot about how academics cannot be supportive of people with kids, you know? Um, but I felt the opposite, you know, I've had a lot of support from other people raising families, whether it be my peers or the people that work here⁷⁰ full time. So that's been helpful. **(White mother of three, 41 years old, married)**

The doctoral adviser, Amanda, talks about accommodating her by letting her work from home so that she can care for her children and not have to commute to UCR every day of the week. She also talks about her adviser understanding her mother's obligations because she is also a mother. The flexibility of getting her work done and being about to manage her studies from home is a considerable advantage for Amanda. Having these advantages helps her advance in her doctoral program. In his first interview, Ruben provided examples of support from his departmental faculty and a female peer.

Lisa: And then when you brought your son or sons with you to class, how are people and faculty with you in those spaces?

⁷⁰ Amanda is referring to her research assistant position at UCR.

Ruben: Oh, they have been good. I never had to bring them both. If I had to bring them both, I would just stay home because it would be too much. I wouldn't be there physically, and I wouldn't learn anything. I might as well stay home and give them a better, more fun environment. But I've never had any issues. As I mentioned, some of them have been really supportive, including Dr. Susan Chan.⁷¹ I brought him⁷² to a meeting with her for a research project we were working on, and she was like, "let me pick him up." Nova⁷³ was in there, too, and they both took turns holding him, which was nice. The first baby gift I got was from a faculty member who has a five-year-old. She got this colorful ball thing before he was born, just as he was being born. It was cool. It's always been female faculty who encourage me to bring my child. Male faculty members feel like, tend to tolerate it, even enjoy it, but they're not going to say it.⁷⁴ I don't really believe they enjoy it. I feel like Dr. Sarah Jackson⁷⁵ really does enjoy it when Brian⁷⁶ is in class, or my son is in there. **(White stay home father of two, 34 years old, married)**

Like Mike, Ruben feels he can bring his children to class if needed. Not all professors want to interact with children of their students. Nevertheless, in Ruben's experiences, his professor and peer saw his son as enjoyable during a research project meeting. In this situation, their actions made Ruben feel his son was welcomed and not a burden even though he was at a work meeting.

Doctoral Program Advisers and Professor Not As Supportive

A variety of participants shared different examples of support from their departmental faculty and advisers in their interviews. Even though Alberto never shared having children with his department personnel or professors, his experiences bringing his family to campus and his department have been positive, except for one incident with a professor in his department.

Alberto says:

One time, like two weeks ago, a professor told me he⁷⁷ could not be there in the classroom because of insurances purpose because they⁷⁸ don't have accident coverage?

⁷¹ Pseudonym used for confidentiality.

⁷² Ruben is referring to one of his sons.

⁷³ Pseudonym used for confidentiality. Nova is a mothering doctoral student in Ruben's department.

⁷⁴ Ruben is referring to male faculty not expressing in words that students can bring children to their courses.

⁷⁵ Pseudonym used for confidentiality.

⁷⁶ Pseudonym used for Ruben's son for confidentiality reasons.

⁷⁷ Alberto is referring to his son.

⁷⁸ Alberto's professor is referring to the University of Casterly Rock (UCR).

But then, after that, I Google it⁷⁹ on the UCR page. No policy tells us we cannot bring our kids. But after in her other class, she told me it did not matter that I could bring him.

I then asked Alberto if he had told his professor that UCR did not have a policy that did not permit his son in her classroom. He responded by saying, “No, I just kept quiet.” In addition, Alberto talked about some comments he heard from his peers about graduate students with families. **Alberto** explains:

Actually, I have heard, you know, outside the building⁸⁰ when I was hanging out with people. They have said things like. “You⁸¹ are an academic, you are not supposed to have kids. “ And uh, yeah, I didn't know that there are many people that have that mindset. I cannot understand them, you know. I do not have that kind of mindset.

(Puerto Rican father of one and stepfather of one, 28 years old, in a relationship with his son's mother)

Alberto's incident with his professor not letting his son be in her course ended up in his favor of being able to take his son to his course. Unfortunately, some participants expressed not having positive experiences with their department. For example, in her first year of her doctoral program, Olivia's first adviser told her not to get pregnant. Olivia and her husband were trying to have a baby during this time. Therefore, when Olivia became pregnant, she was afraid to let her adviser know she was pregnant.

Lisa: When you found out you were pregnant, were you comfortable sharing that with your advisor at the time?

Olivia: No, it was very stressful. Like I waited until I was showing to tell her.

Lisa: You didn't feel comfortable telling her?

Olivia: No. No, because, um, yeah. I'm going to share with you, but she told me, “don't get pregnant until you graduate because you need to be 100 percent in everything you do.” I was like, and I'm an adult, I know what I'm doing. You can't tell me what I can and can't do. And so, when we finally did get pregnant, um, that was something that was pretty much not allowing me to sleep. Like the little hours I had to sleep. I couldn't sleep

⁷⁹ Alberto is referring to him searching for UCR's insurance policy about not being able to bring children to classrooms.

⁸⁰ Alberto is referring to his department building.

⁸¹ Alberto peers were referring to graduate students.

because “what if she can tell I am pregnant. How am I going to tell her?” And so, I actually ended up reaching out to my employer at that time, my supervisor.

I approached him, and I was like, “I haven't told my advisor yet.” They⁸² were also very close [...] they were close enough that he would understand how she would take the news. And so, I felt like I had to navigate very carefully, and I had to really think about how I was going to approach my advisor because I am doing research assistant work. I was teaching a course for her. [...] I decided at that point that I couldn't have a family [...] teach at the university and do all these other things that I was doing.

And so, I approached him⁸³ and told him, “first of all, I have missed a number of days because I had to have procedures to get pregnant.” And so, I wanted to inform him why I was missing all of these days. And this was why. Um, and I was like, now I'm happy to say that “I'm pregnant,” and at that point, I was almost four months pregnant. I did not want to risk him⁸⁴ or anybody finding out. And so, I'm like, “we're in a safe zone,”⁸⁵ and I have to tell my advisor, and I told him, I'm like, I'm going to let you know I won't be returning next year.

Learning of Olivia's experiences with her female adviser not recommending she start a family until she completes her doctoral studies leaves me wondering if academia is ever supportive of women and childbearing. There is research supporting parenthood's impact on women in academia, which explains the gender productivity gap among mothers (Guarino et al., 2017; Morgan et al., 2021; Stack, 2004; Staniscuaski et al., 2021). Historically, women have been marginalized and not seen as leaders in education and the workforce (Beal, 1969; Blea, 1992; Burke & Mattis, 2007; Cortera, 1980; Macias & Stepens, 2019; Perez & Turner, 2020; Pollar, 1997). Women like Olivia are marginalized for being a mother and having a family even after completing their doctoral degrees and becoming faculty in higher education. Olivia seeks support from her boss to help her tell her adviser she is pregnant. A navigational method of agency.

Olivia explains:

I want to be a mom. Like that's my number one priority. Um, and so I talked to him, and then I asked him for advice on how I could approach my advisor, and he gave me a few

⁸² Olivia is referring to her adviser and current supervisor being close friends.

⁸³ Olivia is referring to her current supervisor, not her adviser.

⁸⁴ Olivia is referring to her unborn son.

⁸⁵ Olivia is referring to her fourth month trimester, which meant her pregnancy was passed a certain amount of weeks where she felt comfortable enough to share with people that she was pregnant.

tips, and then I ended up meeting with her at a cafe. He was like, “meet her in a public place,” and that's how bad it was. He then said, “make sure you set up what you're doing and what you're going to do.” And I did. I went, and I told her, and surprisingly, she was really excited, which to me, I was like, “this is really weird because you told me not to get pregnant, and you're excited for me.” So, it was really strange.

Here is a conversation between Olivia and me about her adviser's reaction to finding out she was pregnant. After Olivia told her adviser she was expecting a baby; her adviser was excited to hear she was expecting a baby. Her actions surprised Olivia because in her first semester of graduate school, her adviser clearly told her what she needed to do to advance in her program. Olivia found her adviser's outlook on children disturbing because her adviser was a mother and woman. In her adviser's opinion, having children would be a distraction.

Lisa: She did not remember you two having a conversation about how women are treated in academia and women feeling the need to give up their lives because they want to be a professor?

Olivia: Well, we had those conversations, but it was always like “what you should be doing.” So, she thought very highly of herself because I think she had a child at the time that she was looking for a position.

Lisa: Oh, so she's a mother as well?

Olivia: Yeah, she is a mom. She has two children. One was already in college, and one was in high school at that point. She was pregnant during her dissertation writing time and then had given birth. She shared her story, and that's kind of what she wanted me to do if I was going to have a baby, weight to the dissertation phase. **(First-generation Chicana mother of one, 35 years old, married)**

Olivia informed me that her adviser encouraged her to seek her doctoral degree at UCR and that she was one of the reasons she was at UCR. Her adviser even shared with Olivia the challenges she experienced as a women professor working in a male-dominated field and environment. However, her adviser still encouraged Olivia not to have children until she completed her doctoral degree. As a first-generation graduate student, Olivia explained how she did not know what proper or improper behavior was. Once, she decided to change advisers with the help of

another women professor. Olivia said her new/current adviser acknowledged her multiple identities as a Mexicana⁸⁶ mother and educator. The conversation I had with Olivia was informative. Her story helped me realize the oppression and discrimination women, especially Black and Brown women experience in academia regarding childbearing.

Gina also had a similar experience with her adviser when she got pregnant. She talked about her adviser not being supportive from starting her graduate program. When Gina got pregnant, she was worried about the stigma around pregnancy, single mothers, and single black mothers. A female friend told her that her adviser had a conversation with her discussing whether she should have the baby or not. Gina offers further details:

Gina: Come to find out through other advisees that he⁸⁷ had a whole conversation with my friend about whether or not I should have my son, and I feel that was inappropriate. One, what about confidentiality. Maybe I did tell her,⁸⁸ but that's beside the point. Um, so I went home.⁸⁹ My whole life was so stressful.

Lisa: So, was Dr. Smith⁹⁰ supportive of you going home to have your son?

Gina: Yeah, I mean, I don't think Dr. Smith cared, period. At all. I'm actually. I should've looked into switching advisors a long time ago, but I didn't know how. The only time he's ever emailed me back is whenever I told them that I was switching advisors, and that was like in minutes. I don't think he was very supportive, and he sounded supportive whenever I talked to him, but I don't think he was very supportive of that period, like almost kind of a, well, it's probably not a good idea for him right now type of thing. Like all the reasons, he had been valid, which is why I was also contemplating myself.

In higher education, the federal law FERPA (The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) discloses personally identifiable information about students. The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) is another federal law protecting students' privacy. As employees of UCR,

⁸⁶ A woman of Mexican descent.

⁸⁷ Gina is referring to the graduate program adviser, Dr. Smith (pseudonyms).

⁸⁸ Gina is referencing how she might have told her friend that she was pregnant prior to Dr. Smith's conversation about her pregnancy.

⁸⁹ Gina is referring back home where she was raised and lived prior to UCR.

⁹⁰ Pseudonym used for confidential reasons.

we are mandated to take annual training that the Office of the Registrar regulates. Gina's adviser sharing personal information about Gina with other graduate students is a violation. She goes further and expresses how having a baby is her choice, not that of her adviser. **Gina** says:

I think it should have been my decision, and he should have kept his comments and feelings to himself and not had conversations with other graduate students. I know he had a conversation with her, but who knows who else he had a conversation with. There's already a stigma about having kids, period! Getting pregnant in graduate school, being single and pregnant, and being pregnant. So, he should have kept his comment to himself or at least to me. Even if he was coming from a caring place, that should have been with me. **(Black-White mother of one, 28 years old, single)**

When Gina talked about her experiences with Dr. Smith, I observed and could tell she was upset and frustrated. As she told her story, the tone of her voice would go up and down. Then her facial expressions and body movement gave me the sense that Dr. Smith's behavior caused her tremendous stress and that the incident with her adviser still bothered her.

Charlotte talked about the challenges in developing relationships with professors and shared a story about one professor not being honest, which made her feel the culture of graduate school consists of professors not being reliable. After that, creating relationships with professors has been challenging. She explains:

It is very hard for me to open up to a professor because I've done that and been burned. So, it is important that I have professors who know my work overtime because they can see my growth. They can also see the areas I need to improve. There are a couple of professors who will stop me in the hallway and say, "you're not okay. What's wrong?" And put me in their office. There are exactly two of them. So, in a way, I have no support network.

Um, but it's only been like in the last year that I've allowed that to be a thing because most of the time, I've been like, "what are you going to do, stab me in my back?" Like, when are you going to know? Just say you don't want to be a part of my support network anymore. What if I'm a shitty part of your support network, and I don't realize it. You know, this has been like the first stretch that I've been like no! That person is my friend and knows that people don't give a damn and will not be surprised if a professor actually reads your work. Like that's only been in the last year. **(First-generation Black mother of three, 41 years old, single/divorced)**

Charlotte expresses how hard she struggles to develop relationships with professors in her department. She says establishing relationships with professors and navigating graduate school at UCR is a process. A process she calls benign neglect. In her case, Charlotte felt the professional development part of her program was missing, which affected her confidence in how she saw herself as a trained researcher and writer.

Christina has many roles at UCR. Not only is she a mothering student seeking her doctoral degree. She says she is one of the least paid faculty of color advocating for students in a college that does not care to serve students of color. **Christine** expresses:

You know something about this space⁹¹ that I think I may have figured out, which blows my mind. Is that there is assumption students of color don't need support. So, it's a very color blinded way of looking at all these kids that come in. These students, well, they're all going to make it at the end. We'll make sure they are. We have one of the highest graduation rates among the colleges on the UCR campus. The problem is that I've continued to dig the narratives, specifically our students of color, that are not supported.

And I marched into the Dean's office last Friday with somebody else,⁹² I've been networking with and sharing narratives of students, and said, "So what are you gonna do about it? But if they're not willing to serve students of color and feel like they can give equitable services or think that it's even an issue. Unfortunately, they're probably not going to help students with families. **(First-generation Native American-White mother of three, 35 years old, married/blended family)**

Some participants feel supported by their department and adviser, while others do not. I found mothering doctoral students in this study to report more negative experiences. Olivia and Gina, two mothers of color, shared how their advisers did not see their pregnancy as a positive contribution to their families, but rather their pregnancy limiting their successes and advancement as doctoral students.

⁹¹ Christine is referring to the college she works for at UCR as a full-time staff member.

⁹² Christine is referring to a colleague.

Doctoral School Supportive Peers

Participants mentioned that their doctoral school peers and colleagues were helpful and supportive of them and their families. The peers and colleagues that participants referred to were doctoral students seeking doctoral degrees at UCR in the same college/department or other colleges. Amanda said as a graduate student who commutes to and from UCR. She did not have much time to attend campus activities or social events. Therefore, the peers she worked with helped her the most, especially with her transition to UCR. **Amanda** explains:

Yeah, I think peers have been huge. I really have limited opportunities to build social relationships. Michelle⁹³ was here⁹⁴ when I came in, and we share this office, and she is the one that really helped me understand how to be a doctoral student or like what the expectations are. For example, like how do you navigate relationships with faculty, or how do you navigate the bus system? I know that sounds silly, but I've never been anywhere where I've had to rely on a bus. It's not like second nature for me to be, "Oh, let me just figure this out." So, things like that or even like commuting, like where do I park and what's the best deal⁹⁵ and you know, so I think peers have been really helpful.

(White mother of three, 41 years old, married)

Michelle helped Amanda understand her department's expectations and how to be a doctoral student. Something as small as explaining the public bus system and teaching her how to develop relationships with faculty was critical to her doctoral education development. In addition, Amanda said developing relationships with Michelle, and other parenting student colleagues contributed to her not feeling alone but supported.

As well, Olivia expressed gratitude toward her friend Tiffany.⁹⁶ She said developing relationships with peers who did not have children was challenging. Even though Tiffany is not a mothering student, Olivia was grateful for Tiffany's friendship and willingness to accept her for her multiple identities and roles. **Olivia** shares:

⁹³ Pseudonyms used for confidentiality reasons.

⁹⁴ Amanda is referring to the research center where she works.

⁹⁵ Amanda is referring to parking pass cost.

⁹⁶ Pseudonyms used for confidentiality reasons.

I've had conversations, and it's interesting because I hold a lot of identities. I have a lot of identities and hats and so. And being in academia if you're not close to someone like Tiffany. Then, my peers see me, especially if they don't have families. They see me as someone that doesn't have a family. And so, um, it has come up. So, they're like, "Oh yeah, I forget you have a child. We're not going to invite you because you probably can't come because of this and that." And it's like, well can you change locations or something. I've had a lot of that where people assume, "oh no, but you probably can't come because, you know, little Miguel⁹⁷ can't come." [...] Um, but yeah, I think it's really challenging for people unless they're open to changing their perspective. I feel Tiffany is one of those. She and I think it kind of has to do with her background and how, um, she has been a babysitter, and she does babysitting. And so, she's kind of had that experience of working with children of different ages. So, I think that helps her understand the kinds of things that I go through. And even now, she still babysits, and sometimes she'll call me after babysitting. She was like, "how do you do this? I just spent six hours with a two-year-old, and he drove me nuts." And she's like, "I try to do homework during his nap time, but every time he naps, I nap too." But other than that, I mean, I think it's really hard for people to put themselves in those spaces. **(First-generation Chicana mother of one, 35 years old, married)**

Having Tiffany be part of her graduate school process made a huge difference in Olivia's experiences in graduate school and how she advanced in her doctoral program. Having a supportive friend help her with her son made navigating her studies manageable.

During his first interview, Ruben talked about having friendships with other mothering and fathering doctoral students with whom he can relate and share parental strategies. **Ruben** expresses:

There's definitely been a few friends who have kids, you know. Everyone's situation is different, right. I was close to one guy when I had my son, and he also had kids. He had a stay home wife who was taking care of the kids. And so, he was free enough to just focus on school and play with the kids when he wanted to, which was cool. And then most of the others have been women with kids who were married and had husbands who were working. And then the one guy I talked about earlier. He was married, and his wife wanted to have kids, and eventually, she wore him down. He has three kids that are grown, and so he decided to take another plunge and have another kid. So, it's been nice to have those different perspectives. I was talking last week with one of the ladies in my program who has a child. Well, actually, I think her kid was born like one month before mine and we were just talking about parenting strategies and stuff like balancing work, so it's nice to see what other people are doing. **(White stay home father of two, 34 years old, married)**

⁹⁷ Pseudonyms for Olivia's son.

Ruben understood that not all parenting students need the same support or have the same experiences. On the contrary, Ruben expressed how having access to other parenting graduate students helped him navigate his needs as a fathering Ph.D. student, which gave him an outlet for strategies he may not have considered before talking to his peers. Participants' support system included friendships with peers and colleagues who helped them develop academic skills and parental strategies to help them care for their children and navigate their doctoral studies as mothering and fathering students. Charlotte says having access to peers she can trust is essential to her academic and professional development. She offers further insight into how developing trustworthy relationships can be challenging.

Lisa: Can you talk to me about your support system with peers?

Charlotte: Um, and so a couple of other people have been people who get me. I think, um, and I don't know what I would do without that. I am a loner, but that's been by, not by design but by evidence. You know, I'm like a creature of habit. Um, but I can't do this process alone. I can't even outside of my personal needs when I process my work. It's hard for me to do that if I don't have anybody to talk to about it out loud. But the environment can often be so competitive that I can't. And sometimes, I've not been able to progress because I don't feel like I can trust anybody. I'm working through this part of my work, and it doesn't make any sense. What do I do? Like I can't trust you to do that. And I have finally reached spaces where I'm able to push past that instantly, and my work has benefited from that personal stuff. It's easy for me to talk to a couple of other people where I don't have to explain my whole humanity every time I want to talk. And maybe three people that I've had that relationship with, and there are supportive professors too.
(First-generation Black mother of three, 41 years old, single/divorced)

In Charlotte's situation, developing relationships with peers is a challenge for her. Creating trust with her peers is especially hard for her. Therefore, her department having social events for parenting graduate students or having a peer mentor program where graduate students get to talk with other students with children may help students build community.

When it comes to peer support, Tina talked about her friend Linda. Tina said Linda⁹⁸ showed her compassion when she felt alone. Linda included Tina in her doctoral graduation celebration when she found out Tina's family would not attend her graduation.

Lisa: You mentioned your family not understanding why you went to grad school to get a Ph.D. How did you navigate through that?

Tina: I feel like I've pulled away a bit more than I already was. I don't know. I don't know how to describe it. It's because I always felt disconnected from my family, but now especially, I find it difficult to even communicate with them now.

Lisa: So, do you feel your family adds more stress to your life?

Tina: Um, yeah, in some ways, but I don't, I don't visit that often. I've talked to my mom fairly regularly, but I was a little bummed when she didn't come to my graduation. I figured my mom would come for graduation. I just did. She came for my bachelor's and master's graduations, but she didn't. I was like, but this is actually a big deal like this is, this is it, there's not going to be any more of these ceremonies. I was a little upset about that. Um, but she didn't come. She didn't even make an effort to come. I didn't expect my brother and anybody else to come, but I thought. I really thought that she might.

Lisa: So, you didn't have any family who attended your graduation?

Tina: No. Fortunately, I have friends, so I have a lot of people who are really supportive. [...] Linda was having a party, and she found out that I didn't have any family coming. She's like, well, you're going to be a part of our party. My name was on the cake.

(First-generation White mother of one, 36 years old, single/divorced)

Participants intersecting identities and personalities contribute to how they sought, attained, and navigated relationships with peers and colleagues. Parental status, among other social identities and characteristics, is what I found contributing to the development of participants' support system with their peers.

Family and Community Support

Participants' immediate and extended families plus in-laws provided physical and/or emotional support to participants, their children, and their households. Not all participants'

⁹⁸ Pseudonyms used for confidentiality reasons.

extended family members lived near UCR. Seven participants (Samantha, Alberto, Charlotte, Aaron, Alyssa, Ruben, and Gina) are out-of-state graduate students where family members live. Six participants (Miguel, Amanda, Mike, Tina, Christine, and Olivia) are in-state graduate students, but their extended family members live two-plus hours away from UCR. Christine is the only participant whose parents live in the UCR community. Olivia's and Gina's in-laws live in the UCR community as well. However, Olivia's parents live three hours away from UCR, and Gina's parents live in another state.

Therefore, I found participants utilizing different forms of support from their extended families and their local community in various ways. For instance, Charlotte expressed difficulties managing her doctoral program and traveling expectations from her department as a single mother of three. She is an out-of-state graduate student, and all of her extended family lives in another state. Paying for childcare is expensive and not an option. Charlotte explains how her mother travels to Westerlands to help her care for her children so that she can travel to conferences.

Lisa: Can you talk about the support you receive from your immediate family and your community?

Charlotte: So immediate family, my mom was here⁹⁹ at some point. Um, in terms of support in my family, my mom and my father. My parents have been my number one support network as far as my family's concerned. My sisters have helped with my children in terms of the summers. I've gone to very few conferences. If my mom was here, she would watch my children during those times. When my mom left, and there were conferences that were already paid for it, my sister watched them, and this last time my sons stayed with a friend.

In her story, Charlotte expresses how her mother and sisters helped her care for her children so she can travel to conferences to present her research. Her mother and sister live out of state and if Charlotte's family members did not help her care for her children, she could not travel. The

⁹⁹ Charlotte is referring to her home in the UCR community.

expectation for doctoral students to travel to conferences in their field is part of the hidden curriculum of doctoral education. The hidden curriculum, which is the informal part of education that consists of pedagogical codes, school climate and effective schools, peer culture and influences, power dynamics, and school as an informal agent of socialization (Ballantine, 2007; Karabel & Halsey, 1977; Halsey et al., 1997). In referring to this practice, conflict theorists argue that the social control function of hidden curriculum reproduces students' social class (working-class, middle-class, and elite). The outcomes of this feature replicate different outcomes for students of these classes, which places students from elite status at more of an advantage in society (Ballantine, 2007). Power dynamics is a result of this function as well because, in any hierarchical system, power dynamics exist. **Charlotte** then continues to say how she will not be able to travel in the following semester and how paying for conference fess will be challenging. She says:

This semester, I know which ones aren't possible for me to attend. My mom always comes back and forth if I want to go to a conference, for example. I know that she needs to be back in October. Um, so I can't last minute a conference anymore. So, I don't know what next year looks like, but I do know, for example, that all three of the conferences I went to this semester materially benefited my dissertation. I don't know what they¹⁰⁰ did for the job market. But all three of them improved my dissertation, so that was worth it. [...] so, I don't regret any of it. It is just how they do conference travel funding, which is not helpful for a parent because you have to pay on the front end for some of these conferences to get reimbursed. It's not the kind of conference funding where they can make their arrangements on the front end. Suppose there's something that I have to pay for and get reimbursed. Waiting for that reimbursement could decimate my household, which means I've never really could afford conference travel. I just do it because I'm supposed to do it aggressively¹⁰¹. But it's never been financially comfortable to go to even a single conference. So, I prefer to have a situation where I know the funding is upfront, and I can have reservations and stuff. **(First-generation Black mother of three, 41 years old, single/divorced)**

¹⁰⁰ Charlotte is referring to the three conferences she attended.

¹⁰¹ Charlotte is referring to her department expecting her to attend and present her research at conferences sponsored by professional associations in her field.

Charlotte paid her mother to care for her children and paid for her mother's travel expenses to and from UCR. Additional costs and reasons why Charlotte worked in more than one position yearly, including summers. Her income was not enough to cover all her expenses most of the time. Student loans were her only option at times. Her shared experiences are part of what single parents manage with one income.

Alberto does not have any family living near him locally. His extended family members are in Puerto Rico. He talks to me about his family in Puerto Rico and how his fathers help him even though he lives far away.

Lisa: How about your support system? Can you talk to me about the type of support you receive from your extended family and local community?

Alberto: Yes, my father has been a support. He visited me once, and he is planning to come again. Yes, I think he's the most support I have in Puerto Rico. And because of the hurricane and everything. I don't expect them to help me. They need the help.

L: So, is the support like words of encouragement?

Alberto: He¹⁰² usually sends clothes to my son or tells me if I need some money for anything. I try not to take money from him, but he sends money anyway. **(Puerto Rican father of one and stepfather of one, 28 years old, in a relationship with son's mother)**

While Alberto is working on attaining his doctoral degree, he says staying connected with his family in Puerto Rico is essential. Though Alberto's father lives in Puerto Rico, he finds ways to support his son and visits his son when possible. In talking with Ruben, he explained how his mother sometimes helps care for his boys.

Lisa: You talked a little bit about friends and your wife. Are there other ways that you seek support?

Ruben: My mom lives in Indianapolis, which is close enough. She can drive. So, she wasn't able to come out for my qualifying exams. So, it's not like I can drop my kids off at her house on the way to school, but if it's something big, she can usually work it out to come.

¹⁰² Alberto is referring to his father.

Lisa: Is she retired?

Ruben: Yes, she is retired. Well, she has some health issues where she doesn't really feel comfortable being alone with both the boys for too long because picking them up, they're big, sort of 30 pounds. So, it's picking them up and putting them down over and over again. Like after a few hours, she's pretty much flourished. I'll put them in the crib for her at nap time and then go back to work. That's not too bad.

Then when it comes to his local community, Ruben expresses developing relationships with his local community is challenging. **Ruben** shares:

In terms of community support, it's been tough because my older son often just shuts down in social situations. So, like going to church, he might just have a meltdown. And if we tried to drop them off at childcare, then after 20 minutes, we had to come back and get him.

And so that's made it kind of hard to seek support. [...] So, it's made it harder to reach out because it's like a time bomb sometimes. And then the gender thing feels like it makes it harder for me to reach out a little bit because so many spaces are for moms. And uh, and so sometimes I don't know. It is just in my head how welcome I would be if I came and how cool it would be if they came to different things. Yeah, so not a ton of support outside of pay childcare. **(White stay home father of two, 34 years old, married)**

Ruben expresses how difficult connecting with his local community can be. Saying most parent and children's activities and social programs in his community are directed toward mothers and do not include fathers.

Samantha, Mike, and Alyssa refer to social media to connect to their local community to help them search for childcare and support. For instance, I asked Samantha how she met other parenting graduate students at UCR. Samantha said Facebook. She also noted that both her parents passed away after her second daughter was born, and her ex-husband does not help her financially support the girls. Therefore, she relies heavily on her community for support.

Lisa: Can you talk to me about your support system with your local community?

Samantha: So, Sasha¹⁰³ watched the girls for me during Dr. Harrison's class last year. I met her through one of the Facebook groups before coming here.¹⁰⁴ Facebook groups

¹⁰³ Samantha is referring to the UCR community.

¹⁰⁴ Samantha is refereeing to the UCR community.

we're real sources of support. Networking and making connections about things I never thought about prior to being back in school. After I met her in one of the Facebook groups, we talked on the phone a couple of times. Then once I moved here. We met, and she was like, "bring the girls." I kept the girls with me that whole first semester, so I didn't have to pay for childcare. She insisted on helping me, which was super helpful.

Samantha talks about Facebook being a source where she has been able to connect with other parenting graduate students at UCR. Social media helped her transition to the UCR community.

The peers she does meet on social media are now part of her community and have helped her care for her daughters. In addition, social media gave her an outlet for other childcare services, such as Care.com, that help her care for her daughters within her single income budget.

Samantha says:

Another thing, a couple of people had recommended Care.com, and it is fee base. I didn't first use it for a couple of years because it was not something I could afford. I had a really good experience with Care.com in Indiana. A really good experience, and so I figure I try it again. When we got here¹⁰⁵ we had a young lady, she was nice. I don't use her as much as I use the other caregiver in Indiana. She was at my house three nights a week. The current young lady comes one night a week and then helps me with drop-offs another night once a week to help with activities. So, I worked it¹⁰⁶ into our budget. I have the girls with me when we interview candidates. That is how I manage that aspect of it. Care.com has been good, so we just use it, and I never had a bad experience. **(First-generation African American mother of two, 41 years old, single/divorced)**

Mothering students raising their children alone need support married students may not need because they have spouses who help care for their children. Childcare services are a must for Samantha to attend courses, work, and help her care for her two daughters. Sometimes, her daughters need to be picked up from school when Samantha is in class. During these times, she used Care.com, or peers would help her care for her daughter so that she could attend to her studies.

¹⁰⁵ Samantha is refereeing to the UCR community.

¹⁰⁶ Samantha is referring to childcare expenses

Mike's wife was more comfortable connecting with friends on social media to learn about resources to help them care for their daughters. **Mike** explains:

A lot of resources that I know have come from friends that have pointed me in the right direction—like a friend of mine who works for the university in admissions told me about the Children's Center.¹⁰⁷ They have a website listing childcare services. When we first explored childcare services, it was somewhat helpful, but my wife felt better about getting personal references. Rather than getting resources from a brand new website, she went on Facebook and said, "okay, who has experience with childcare services in Westerlands?"¹⁰⁸ She got reports from people she knew, and she said, "okay, great!"
(First-generation White father of two, 37 years old, married)

Mike's daughters are two and four years old. He and his wife have concerns about who cares for their daughters since they are young. Receiving childcare recommendations from friends was crucial for Mike's wife. I found that social media is an outlet for parenting students caring for younger children. This method is free of cost and allows parenting students to network before and after attending UCR.

Participants' children's needs, ages, and the number of children they have plus income level contribute to the type of support they use to care for their children and household. Some care and support come directly from spouses, extended family members, and the local community, including peers, close family friends, and social media outlets. The support participants discuss and mention in their interviews is intersectional and does not look similar for all mothering and fathering doctoral students.

Summary

This chapter discusses the main findings of my dissertation study. I organized the findings into three sections (1) The University of Casterly Rock, (2) The Diversity and Intersections of Parenthood and Family, and (3) The Different Aspects of Need and Support That

¹⁰⁷ Pseudonym used for confidentiality reasons.

¹⁰⁸ Pseudonym used for UCR community town for confidentiality reasons.

Contribute to Mothering and Fathering Ph.D. Students' Successes and Challenges in Attaining a Doctoral Education. The first theme describes participants' experiences at UCR, their struggles with funding, and the need for institutional resources. Policies of how UCR and their departments distribute assistantship is especially problematic for mothering doctoral students parenting single. These mothers do not have spouses to rely on for financial support or assistance caring for their children. They need access to financial resources and funds according to their household size and income.

The second theme discusses the diversity and intersections of parenthood between participants. My study presents that not every mothering and fathering doctoral student need or requires the same resources. Although parenting doctoral students from two-income households do not want to pay for tuition out of pocket. Single parent households need help paying for tuition and supporting their children and family's basic needs, such as food, rent, and healthcare. For example, Amanda, Ruben, and Alyssa received healthcare from their spouses' jobs, so seeking affordable healthcare was not a concern for these individuals. Ruben and Alyssa stayed home parents who cared for their children. So they did not have a need to access affordable childcare as Gina struggled to attain. I found intersectional differences of need that caused economic strain for some mothering doctoral students of color that others did not experience.

In the last section of the chapter, the third theme talks discuss the different types of support used and needed by mothering and fathering doctoral students. Again, mothering and fathering doctoral students with spouses had the support of a partner in the household, which helped them navigate attaining their Ph.D. easier than parenting alone. Peer and family support was critical for participants. Participants, such as Amanda said, developing relationships with her peers contributed to her ability to navigate UCR and advance in her doctoral program.

The three common themes developed from my analysis were explained in detail and supported by personal quotes from participants. Past studies have not reported on the experiences of FG mothering and fathering doctoral students. My study includes nine first-generation doctoral students parenting their children while seeking Ph.D. degrees at a Midwestern PWI. Readers learned about participants' experiences navigating their doctoral programs as mothering and fathering doctoral students with intersectional identities and statuses. Next, the following chapter includes my discussion, conclusion, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND LAST THOUGHTS...

Implications: Discussing What Matters

What the System of Higher Education Considers Worth and Value

First and foremost, this dissertation study is of value because it includes the voices and narratives of 13 doctoral students mothering and fathering their children, providing for their household, and attaining a doctoral education at a Midwestern institution that is unapologetic for the lack of policies, practices, and services that stratifies mothering and fathering students instead of supporting them and the families they represent. Conducting this study allowed me. The opportunity to address and discuss challenges from the perspectives of mothering and fathering doctoral students themselves. In this study, I used the collected data to respond to the following research question and sub-questions:

1. What are the experiences of mothering and fathering Ph.D. students seeking their degrees at a predominately white institution in the Midwest?
 - How do parental status and other intersectional identities influence the experience of mothering and fathering Ph.D. students?
 - What challenges do mothering and fathering Ph.D. students experience?
 - What type of support does mothering and fathering Ph.D. students need and utilize to help them care for their children, financially provide for their household, and attain their degrees?

As shared in the previous chapter, participants do not feel UCR sees them as worthy and valuable. UCR's lack of acknowledgment and support for parenting students sends a message to mothering and fathering students across campus that they do not exist and do not matter.

Currently, UCR has updated a webpage displayed on the Office of the Dean of Students, but the contact person is outdated, and when I email the person of contact. She failed to respond to my emails. The webpage contains information about academic support, parenting resources, and getting connected. When mothering and fathering graduate students try to use resources, I question whether these resources will be helpful and up to date to help serve parenting students. For example, on UCR's website, under *Academic Support*, it says UCR does not have a policy that does not permit children in the class. Then, it says, "each instructor makes his/her own decisions about how to manage the classroom, and asking the question at the start of the course is the best way to learn your professor's preference" (UCR Board of Trustees, 2021, p. 1). Instructors have the choice of whether children can attend their courses with their mothers or fathers. This policy is questionable because of what will occur if instructors, such as Olivia's and Alberto's professors, believe children should not be part of academic spaces or doctoral students' lives. Does that mean students with children are not permitted to attend those instructors' courses without a care provider? If so, mothering and doctoral students need an income and funding to support that policy. This policy is the stratification of lower-income parenting students. The policy is to enhance access to those who can afford childcare or have access to spouses and family members to support them—a limitation for Samantha, Tina, Charlotte, and Gina.

Higher Education as a Battlefield of Dehumanizing and Neglect

Conducting this study exposed me to positive stories of success contributing to the educational advancement of nine first-generation doctoral students from diverse backgrounds,

racess, genders, ages, children, families, and other intersecting identities. Since conducting their interviews, six of these nine first-generation doctoral students (Tina, Olivia, Charlotte, Miguel, Mike, and Aaron) have completed their doctoral degrees. I discussed how Miguel said his FG status would follow him to his career in higher education. Recent data from the U.S. Department of Education (2019c) shows a discrepancy between White faculty and faculty of color. For instance, White men (54%) hold most full-time faculty/professor positions with tenure, and White women (27%) are the second leading group with tenure (U.S. Department of Education, 2019c).

For faculty of color, Asian/Pacific Islanders men (8%) and women (3%) and Black men (2%) and women (2%) represent the faculty of color in postsecondary education with the highest percentage of tenure. Latino/a (Men 2%, women 1% or less), American Indian/Alaska Native (1% or less), and multiracial (1% or less) individuals represent the lowest number of faculty of color with tenure (U.S. Department of Education, 2019c). When considering lecturers, instructors, assistant professors, and associate professors at degree-granting postsecondary institutions, Blacks, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latina/o, American Indian/Alaska Native, and multiracial women and men represent less than 8% of non-tenured faculty members (Johnson, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Miguel, Charlotte, Olivia, Samantha, and Gina plan to seek faculty positions in higher education. As FG people of color, not only are they the first in their families to seek faculty positions in higher education. They represent individuals that face marginalization in securing tenured positions in the academy.

Eight (Miguel, Mike, Aaron, Tina, Christine, Olivia, Charlotte, and Samantha) of the nine FG doctoral students deal with imposter syndrome. All nine FG doctoral students reported high levels of stress. Regardless of the degree program, FG status continues to play a part in doctoral

students' experiences who are the first in their families to attend graduate school and seek doctoral degrees. The effects of FG status in doctoral education require more research to understand the type of support and guidance graduate students need. In addition, more research needs to inquire about the experiences and achievements of FG faculty in higher education securing tenured positions.

Despite the successes and achievements participants reported, their mental and physical health was affected while seeking their Ph.D. degrees. Each of them reported dealing with guilt and high levels of stress not because they were not capable of advancing in their doctoral program but because some lacked support from advisers and had to deal with the uneven distribution of graduate assistantships in their department. Others struggled because of UCR's policies and practices on awarding and distributing stipends, fellowships, and/or travel assistantships. The hidden curriculum played a factor in the graduate culture at UCR. Some graduate students hustle less to gain their adviser's support and access to employment and funding. Others struggled per semester to secure an income to provide their children with basic needs, such as housing, food, care, clothing, and health care.

The Power of Intersectional Approach and Analysis

Charlotte, Samantha, Gina, Olivia, Christine, and Gina's stories represent the struggles of mothers of color. More specifically, Charlotte, Samantha, and Gina represent how single mothers of color deal with different types of challenges as Amanda, Tina, and Alyssa. Amanda and Alyssa have husbands that financially provide for their household and family necessities. Constantly worrying about securing funding was not a struggle for these ladies. Charlotte, Samantha, and Gina were alone in managing their household and caring for their children. I

found married parenting students had access to more resources in caring for their children than single family households.

Then when it comes to the diversity of mothering and fathering Ph.D. students represented, their stories demonstrated the different types of support that parenting students require. Some children were younger and needed more care, while school-age children required help with homework or after-school activities. What did seem consistent among participants was the need for course flexibility and professors' expectation of students when it comes to parenting students. Parenting students are committed to their studies, but having children means they have responsibilities in caring for other human beings that may unexpectedly get sick. Graduate students can be married or single with children leading their household with one source of income (Macaluso, 2020; Offerman, 2011, Perez & Turner, 2021). Accommodation needs to be part of the process of attaining doctoral degrees.

Recommendations for Mental and Physical Health Concerns

Analyzing my data, I found that all 13 participants' mental and physical health changed drastically since beginning their doctoral program. Even though some participants managed anxiety and stress before attending UCR, they said that their mental and physical health declined while attaining their doctoral education. Guilt is an emotion that all 13 participants reported feeling and managing. Trying to manage time between their families and studies is a significant challenge. In chapter 6, I talked about Aaron struggling to balance his doctoral studies work and his relationship with his son's mother. Individuals, such as Aaron's girlfriend, are challenged in understanding the mental weight Aaron navigates to complete his doctoral degree.

In the findings chapter, I reported how some participants dealt with negative comments about parents, parenting students, children, racism, genderism, ageism, classism, and more isms

at UCR. These negative experiences resulted in emotional stress. Stress led to health issues, weight gain, headaches, eating disorders, self-neglect, lack of sleep, and financial insecurities. Furthermore, some participants share how not receiving hands-on training, guidance, mentorship, and feedback on their doctoral education development caused them to experience imposter syndrome, self-doubt, stress, and anxiety. However, the expectation put on doctoral students is to complete the work and figure out strategies for getting tasks done.

The word HAZING got mention by a few participants as their way of explaining the process of their doctoral education. The feeling and endorsement to succeed in completing a Ph.D. came with the practice and expectation of them withstanding humiliation, risk of emotional and verbal abuse, physical harm, and neglect. These mental and physical health concerns are not individualized because most causes are not in the control of doctoral students.

As a reminder, the following quotes tell us what Olivia, Alberto, and Gina experience:

A first-year doctoral student was told by her adviser not to get pregnant and to wait to have a family until she finished her doctoral degree.

(Olivia, a first-generation Chicana mother of one, 35 years old, married)

A professor told a fathering doctoral student that his son could not be in her class because of UCR insurance policies but later searched to find out that no policy exists.

(Alberto, a Puerto Rican father of one and stepfather of one, 28 years old, in a relationship with his son's mother)

A friend is telling a doctoral student that her adviser is discussing her pregnancy with his students and sharing confidential information.

(Gina, a Black-White mother of one, 28 years old, single)

Then, UCR and other research-intensive institutions are responsible for revisiting policies and practices that harm doctoral students, especially parenting students, because if this type of behavior and lack of humanity continues, then seeking and completing doctoral degrees is a hazing process. Only some will make it to the end!

Limitations of Study

My dissertation study focuses on learning about the experiences, challenges, and support systems of mothering and fathering doctoral students at a Midwestern PWI. This study does provide the stories of 13 mothering and fathering graduate students seeking their Ph.Ds. while caring and providing for their children and families. However, the findings in this study do not represent all mothering and fathering doctoral students. Furthermore, I want to acknowledge same-sex parents and other intersectional identities not present in my research. Participants in my study did not self-identify as LGBTQ+. Also, not all UCR doctoral programs are part of this study.

My study provides counternarratives to the master narratives for parenting students caring for children under 18 years old seeking doctoral degrees. The parenting population in higher education nationally in the U.S. is more than eight mothering and five fathering doctoral students participating in my study. As an advocator of parenting students, more research should be done on mothering and fathering doctoral students and their children.

Future Research

Conducting this dissertation study while navigating to completing my doctoral degree inspires my research interest and goals. However, this part of my life and education journey is ending. My future includes researching and advocating for the hidden voices, counternarratives, and testimonios of underrepresented populations (e.g., parenting students, first-generation, women of color, working-lower-class, and racial/ethnic groups) in higher education at two- and four-year colleges and universities. Furthermore, I am interested in expanding intersectional frameworks and epistemologies.

I am also interested in understanding and critically analyzing the issues and challenges of second-generation students in higher education. For example, Jose and Savannah face challenges in seeking their postsecondary degrees. As their mother, I helped them apply to colleges, assisted them in filing for financial aid, and encouraged them to seek internship opportunities. However, my degrees did not shield them from oppressive behavior, or discrimination Savannah dealt with in her STEM courses. Children of FG students need more support and access to student services that eliminate them because their mother or father completed college degrees.

In my case, I completed my bachelor's degree a year before Jose started his first year at San José State University. Jose did not qualify for the student support programs (e.g., The Educational Opportunity Program) that support me in completing my bachelor's degree. As a Latino, he is still underrepresented because Latinos complete degrees at a lower rate than other racial groups (Frank et al., 2010; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Martinez, 2018; Santiago et al., 2015; Solórzano et al., 2005). Jose dealt with racism and classism as an undergraduate student. His college-educated mother did not shield him from these struggles and acts of oppression. Similarly, Savannah struggles with marginalized comments and practices at her HIS (Hispanic-Serving Institution) in California. She is seeking a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science. Developing relationships with peers and her professors have been challenging, although I guide her with her college trajectory. Regarding higher education achievement and attainment, there are blind spots and gaps in the second-generation literature that does not consist of the children of first-generation doctoral students.

This research interest is valuable because what becomes assumed about second-generation students is that they do not require support as first-generation students require. Second-generation students of color, for instance, need guidance and manage systematic

oppression as any other student of color. Postsecondary degrees do not shield them from systemic oppression and racial bias practices. I found this to be true for my son Jose and daughter Savannah. I am proposing is that we expand and elaborate further on some of the main arguments presented in this study on FG mothering and fathering doctoral students of color. I am suggesting future research and studies include a deeper analysis and unpack the organization of the FG ideology and master narrative of parenting students in higher education. From an intersectional approach, consider how other social dynamics such as race, gender, age, sex, and parental and relationship status influence students' outcomes in higher education. Additionally, addressing how education as social institutions impact parenting students is overlooked and ignored in higher education scholarship. Not considering institutional implications for parenting doctoral students puts the blame on individuals. Meaning, they are at fault for lacking the ability to access and achieve postsecondary and doctoral degrees.

Last Thoughts...

Considering Future Scholars: Our Children

Lastly, I want to discuss the future of our children. Their opportunities in society and attaining a quality education are essential to me and the mothers and fathers I interviewed for this study. Gaining access to opportunities is not a matter of their mothers and fathers completing postsecondary degrees, especially for families of color. Those of us who hold various postsecondary and advanced degrees still encounter challenges with discrimination and racist practices within different social systems (education, health, government, economics, etc.) As a woman of color with intersecting identities, I am not shielded from racism and racist practices because I am educated and successful in completing an advanced education.

Suppose we want to address equity issues among minoritized groups. In that case, it is necessary to unpack the first-generation and second-generation ideologies and understand how students' multiple identities, such as race, gender, age, parental and relationship status, contribute to students' educational experiences and outcomes. *Intersectionality* as a theoretical framework is one way. Initially, *intersectionality* has a historical connection to Black feminist movements dating back to the 1960s (McCall, 2005). Kimberly Crenshaw (1991) introduced *intersectionality* in her study's analysis of gender and race and talked about the intersectionality of these two social characteristics influencing the work experience outcomes of Black women. This theory sets to be "a tool for analysis, advocacy and policy development that addresses multiple discriminations and helps us understand how different sets of identities impact access to rights and opportunities" (Symington, 2004, p.1; McCall, 2005; Crenshaw, 1991).

Although this theoretical framework is related to feminist movements, *intersectionality* as an analytical tool helps us understand and respond to how race, gender, age, parental and relationship status intersect with other identities such as FG status (Symington, 2004). In my first semester of graduate school, I will never forget what Dr. Adrienne Dixson said in her critical race theory course. She said, "racism will never end." Now, I understand what she meant. For these reasons and more, minoritized students gaining access to education and higher education is not a matter of ability, affordability, or opportunity. The U.S. educational and higher education systems must stop promoting academic achievements beyond merit alone.

When it comes to educational access and attainment, racial and educational inequality seem to come hand in hand in how academics and policymakers direct their work (Allen & Solórzano, 2001; Anderson & Collins, 2016; Delgado, 1996; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Espino et al., 2012; Gerald & Haycock, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002b). Lacayo (2016) highlight that:

Many academics and policymakers continue to advocate integration because they understand that high levels of segregation lead to high levels of racial inequality.

Integration is a valued principle in America that comes out of the Civil Rights

Movement, which fought against segregation because separate, is not equal. (p. 1)

I feel educational scholars have responded to their interest in inquiry about educational issues and social shifts so far. Historically, "segregation was used as a social mechanism to keep perceived subordinate groups apart from Whites and maintain a racial hierarchy with non-white at the bottom" (Lacayo, 2016, p.1).

My goal now is to continue raising concerns about parenting students and their children to promote the access, persistence, and successes of traditionally underrepresented populations (e.g., first-generation, parenting students, mature adult learners, women of color, working-lower-class, and racial/ethnic groups) in higher education through ethnography and qualitative examination of students' testimonios, counter narratives, and stories of their experiences at two- and four-year colleges and universities.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANTS CORRESPONDENCE LETTER

Participants Correspondence Letter

Greetings,

I would like to invite you to participate in my Dissertation Research Project that looks to understand the experiences of graduate students raising a child/children at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I am interested in learning from your perspective. Your participation can contribute to the missing narratives and misperceptions of parenting students in postsecondary settings.

Criteria for participation:

- Currently a parent of a child/children between the ages of infancy to 17 years old
- Enrolled in a graduate degree program (master's/doctoral) at the University of Illinois
- Between the age of 22 to 55 years old
- Identify as a *domestic student according to the University of Illinois' citizen/visa status (*A citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States, or have been granted Asylee, Refugee or Paroled in the Public Interest status by the United States government.)

Participation includes:

- Filling out a *Personal Information Form* electronically
- Taking part in two 90 minute interviews that will be conducted at a private location of your choice within a two to three month period.

Questions about you and your family's experiences will be asked on the form and during the interviews. You may endure in some mild discomfort from the questions being asked on the form and during the interviews, as the questions asked include background information and your feelings and familial experiences, but this research does not otherwise involve risks beyond those mentioned.

Participation is strictly voluntary, and your decision to participate or to decline participation at any time will not affect our relationship, your relationship with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, or the relation with your academic department in any way. Identifying as a parent and graduate student of the university myself, I understand how precious you and your family are. I am awareness of how parents and their families are underrepresented and in a vulnerable state of not being acknowledged from an institutional and departmental level. With you and your families' best interest in mind, any information shared during this study will be kept entirely confidential.

If you are willing to participate in my study, please fill out the *Personal Information Form* included in this email and **list your preferred contact information at the end of the form**. If not, thank you for your time! For those interested, once I receive your information, I will contact you to set up an interview date and time.

Please feel free to contact me at (408) XXX-XXXX or mperez13@illinois.edu if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

M. Lisa Perez

Education Policy, Organization and Leadership

University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

Perez IRB #: 15596

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

Purpose and Procedures: This study, under the direction of Dr. Adrienne Dixon, will be conducted by Marielisbet Perez, Graduate Student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership. The study is intended to analyze the experiences of parenting students enroll in graduate programs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to fill out a *Personal Information Form* electronically prior to participating in two 90 minute interviews, an interview today, and one scheduled for a later date at a location of your choosing. Additionally, with your permission, interviews will be audio recorded. You can choose to stop the recording at any time during the interview.

***I give permission for my interview to be audio recorded: _____YES_____NO**

Voluntariness: Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, discontinue participation, or not answer any questions you do not wish to answer at any time without penalty or loss of the benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your academics or relations with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Risks and Benefits: You may experience some mild, temporary discomfort relating to the interview, as the questions asked concerning your feelings, outlook, and familial experience, but this research does not otherwise involve risks beyond those mentioned. Also, you may be concerned that others will find out about your opinions/perspectives regarding your family, information about your current and former academic departments, and your attitudes about the academy in general, especially if the comments are not favorable. In addition, a great deal of the interviews will focus on your personal life, this type of disclosure may also cause concern as a participant. Therefore, great care will be given throughout the consent procedure to acknowledge this risk, and great care will be put forth in the analysis process and the write up of the data that no data will be reported/released to identify you as a participant in any way. If given consent, your participation will help me and other researchers understand societal and cultural factors regarding educational success and completion. Risks are minimized through omission of personal information relating back to your identity, as stated in the Confidentiality section below.

Confidentiality: Only the responsible project investigator and the investigator will have access to consent forms that indicate your identity. There will be no personal identifying information such as names on the transcripts of the interview. In the event of publication of this research, no personal identifying information will be disclosed. Faculty and staff who may see your

information will maintain confidentiality to the extent of laws and university policies. Personal identifiers will not be published or presented.

Who to Contact with Questions: Questions about this research study should be directed to the responsible project investigator and person in charge, Adrienne Dixson, Professor of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership. She can be reached at (217) XXX-XXXX or email at addixson@illinois.edu. Marielisbet Perez can be contacted at (408) XXX-XXXX or by email at mperez13@illinois.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Illinois Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at (217) 333-2670 or via email at irb@illinois.edu. You will receive a copy of this consent form.

I certify that I am currently a parent and graduate student at the University of Illinois, have read this form, and volunteer to participate in this research study.

Please print name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM

Personal Information Form

Currently, are you a parent: Yes ____ No ____

Please check all that apply.

Biological/birth parent____ Stepparent____ Adoptive parent____ Primary care provider____
Co-parent____

Are you currently enroll in a graduate degree program? Yes ____ No ____

Please check all that apply.

Master's Degree program____

Doctoral Degree program____

Combo Master's & Doctoral Degree Program____

Age:

(*fill in response)

Gender:

(*fill in response)

How do you identify racially/ethnicity/national origin?

(*fill in)

Are you a domestic student?

(*A citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States, or have been granted Asylee, Refugee or Paroled in the Public Interest status by the United States government.)

Yes ____ No ____

What is your current relationship status?

Please check all that apply.

Single ____ Married ____ Separate____ Divorced ____ Remarried____ Widow ____

In a Relationship____

Occupation: _____

Where you a parent at the time you were seeking all of your college degree(s)?

Please check all that apply.

Associate Degree:

Bachelor's Degree:

Master's degree:

Doctoral Degree:

(*checkbox grid)

What year did you start graduate school?

(*fill in response)

How many children do you have currently?

One ____ Two ____ Three ____

Four ____ Five or more ____

What was the highest level of education your mother/guardian completed?

Elementary school ____ Middle school ____ High school ____ Some College ____

Trade/technical/vocational training ____ Associate/Two-year Degree ____

Bachelor's/Four-year Degree ____ Master's Degree ____ Doctoral Degree ____ Other ____

Unknown ____

What was the highest level of education your father/guardian completed?

Elementary school ____ Middle school ____ High School ____ Some College ____

Trade/technical/vocational training ____ Associate/Two-year Degree ____

Bachelor's/Four-year Degree ____ Master's Degree ____ Doctoral Degree ____ Other ____

Unknown ____

Did you attend a community college?

Yes ____ No ____

What is/was your employment status while working on your college degree(s)?

Please mark all that apply.

Associate Degree: Full-time ____ Part-time ____ Both ____

Bachelor's Degree: Full-time ____ Part-time ____ Both ____

Master's Degree: Full-time ____ Part-time ____ Both ____

Doctoral Degree: Full-time ____ Part-time ____ Both ____

(*Multiple choice grid)

Did the institutions you attended have campus family housing available for students who were parents? If yes, did you use family housing?

Please mark all that apply.

Associate Degree/Community College: Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____

Live in campus housing ____

Bachelor's Degree/University: Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____

Live in campus housing ____

Master's Degree/University: Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____

Live in campus housing ____

Doctoral Degree/University: Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____

Live in campus housing ____

Please list your best contact information for interview scheduling.

(*fill in response)

Thank you for your time and participation!

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Interview Protocol #1

Interview #1

Participant #:

Time & Date:

Location:

Consent Form

Before I start the interview, I will like to go over the Participation Consent Form to make sure you are aware of your rights and that you give your consent to participate in my study and agree to be audio recorded. Please read and sign the form if you agree.

Introduction

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me. Today I would like to talk to you about your experience as a parenting graduate student raising children (a child) at the University of Illinois. I am interested in learning from your perspective.

Before I proceed with my questions, I will like to follow-up with your Personal Informational Form.

Warm Up Question

1. Can you tell me why you choose to attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for graduate studies?

Campus Experience

Now I would like to shift to focus on your experiences as a graduate student with family.

1. What does it feel like to be a parenting student at the University of Illinois?
 - Can you talk about any support services on campus available to you and other parenting students?
2. Can you talk about how your graduate program adviser and department support you as a graduate student with family?
3. As a graduate student with family, do you find university and departmental spaces, events/activities, employment, and program scheduling (e.g. office hours, course availability/scheduling) inviting to you as a student with family?

Child Care Services

Now I want to ask a few questions about your children and family.

1. In the time that you have been in enrolled in graduate school, can tell me what an average day looks like for you and your family?
 - Has your child/children live with you the whole time while in graduate school?
 - Do/Did you use childcare services while in graduate school?
 - If yes, was finding childcare services challenging? Expensive?
 - If no, who helped you take care of your child/children?
 - Do you think U of I and other institutions of higher education should have daycare services available to parenting students?
 - What type of support do you need as a parenting student?

*Here I can ask about previous day care needs at other institutions if applicable according to Personal Information Form.

Transition to Graduate School, Transportation, and Support System

Now I will like to talk about your transition to graduate school and your support system.

1. Can you talk to me about your transition to graduate school and talk about your housing process and where you decided to live with your family?
 - Family housing follow-upOr

Can you talk to me about your transition from a non-parent to parent while in graduate school?

2. What type of transportation do you rely on when navigating around town, to/from campus, and to/from Champaign-Urbana?
 - Any challenges with getting travel accommodation for your child/children?
3. Can you talk to me about your support system with your family and friends?
 - Support from immediate family members (e.g. mother, father, grandmother, siblings)
 - Community support (e.g. church, community programs, neighbors, mentors)

Wrap Up

Thank you for answering my questions, for being open and for sharing your experience. This concludes our first interview. I will be in touch to schedule our second interview. For the second interview, I will be asking questions about your identity, health, and financial means. Before we wrap-up will you like to share or add anything.

Thank you!

Participant's Children Informational Sheet

Without listing any names, please answer the following per child:

Child #1:

Age:

Gender:

School Grade:

Child # 2:

Age:

Gender:

School Grade:

Child #3:

Age:

Gender:

School Grade:

Child #4:

Age:

Gender/other:

School Grade:

Interview Protocol #2

Interview #2

Participant #:

Time & Date:

Location:

Introduction

Thank you for taking time in your busy schedule to meet with me again! In the first interview we talked about your experiences as a parenting student, care services, and personal support. Today I like to continue our conversation and focus on your identity and how your multiple identities influence your choices and experiences as a student. Additionally, I will ask you questions about your health and financial means.

Identity Influences and Experiences

1. Can you talk to me about how your role as a parent influence your choices as a graduate student?
2. Do you feel people treat you different because of your parental and relationship status?
 - Any changes in your relationship status (married, divorce, single, widowed, in a relationship) while in graduate school?
 - If yes, can you talk about what changed?
 - If no, can you talk about how you have managed to maintain being in a relationship with your partner while in graduate school?
 - If no, do you find it challenging to be in a relationship as a graduate student with family?
3. Do you feel people treat you differently because of your gender, race/ethnicity, and/or socioeconomic status?
 - If yes, can you tell me of a time where you felt you were treated differently?
 - If no, did you ever witness another student being treated differently as a result of their gender, race/ethnicity, and/or SES?
4. Do you feel you experience judgement as an older student?
 - If yes, can you please tell of a time where you felt judged?
 - If no, do you feel your age plays as a factor in how you navigate your graduate studies and maintain your family?

If applicable, first-generation college student question.

5. Are your graduate studies influenced by your first-generation status?
If yes, what are those influences?
If no, how has your past college experience as a FGC influence your graduate studies?

Health Care Questions

Now I want to ask a few questions about your health and insurance access.

1. While in graduate school, have you experience any changes in your physical health?
 - If yes, can you please explain what changed?
 - If no, how have you been able to maintain a healthy life style while in graduate school?
2. While in graduate school, have you experienced any changes in your mental health?
 - If yes, can you tell me what changed with your health?
 - If no, how have you been able to maintain a healthy mental state while in school?
 - What type of activities do you do to maintain your mentality?
3. Can you talk about you and your family's (child/children/partner) access to health, dental, and visual insurance and care?
 - Any challenge with cost or accessing care in Champaign-Urbana?

Financial and Funding Questions

1. Can you talk to me about any challenges and benefits when it comes to funding your education and financially supporting your family while in graduate school?
 - Spouse/partner financial contributions
 - Biological mother/father financial support
2. While enrolled in graduate school, have you utilized any social services, such as food stamps, Medicaid, WIC, housing, and cash assistance to help support you and your family?
 - If yes, can you talk to me about the benefits of receiving assistance?
 - If no, is there any other type of aid or financial assistance you used while in graduate school?

Wrap Up

Thank you for answering my questions, for being open and for sharing your experience. This concludes our interview. Before we wrap-up will you like to share or add anything that we have not discussed in the interviews.

Are you willing to participate in any follow-up questions I may have in the future?

Thank you!

APPENDIX E

POST-INTERVIEW NOTES AND JOTTING GUIDE

Post-Interview Notes and Jotting Guide

Participant's #/Name (synonym):

Interview #:

Date

Time:

Location:

Format of data collected (handwritten, typed, voice recorder):

Interview Reflection:

Observed	Researcher Thoughts and Comments

Interview Summary:

Narrative description of context (Including location, setting, participants' behavior, noted reactions during interview, etc.).

--

--

Narrative description of content (Including topics discussed, added questions, comments).

--

Methodology comments on interview quality and data collection (limitations and enhancements).

--

Analytic comments on relevance to guiding research questions.

--

APPENDIX F

DATA TRANSCRIPTION TRACKER

Data Transcription Tracker

Date	Participant #	Synonym	Notes

APPENDIX G

DATA ANALYSIS TABLE OF CONTENTS

Data Analysis Table of Contents

# of Entry	Participant (synonym)	Start Date	End Date	Comments

APPENDIX H

MASTER CODE WORKBOOK

Master Code Workbook (Short Version)

Code Titles	Subtitles
Financial (Light Pink)	Funding & Managing Finances
	Employment & Income
	Professional Development & Mobility Expenses
	Children Care & Expenses
	Health Insurance Cost & Access
Graduate School (Grey)	Graduate School Pipeline & Transition
Institution (Light Green)	Institution Spaces & Resources
	Institutional Access & Experiences
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	Family Lifestyles & Members
	Relationship Status
	Personal Accomplishments
	Last Thoughts
Identities & Background (Light Blue)	Demographic Identities
	Personal Characteristics
	First-generation
Support & Resources (Mustard)	Support System & Resources
	Social Services
	Transportation

FINANCIAL	Funding & Managing Finances	Participant #
	Employment & Income	

	Professional Development & Mobility Expenses	
	Children Care & Expenses	
	Health Insurance Cost & Access	
Code Abbreviations: Funding & Managing Finances	Code Description: Financial expenses, employment positions, and funding resources to support parents and their children/families while in graduate school	
FUNDING (received/not received, (summer, fellowships, stipends, loans)		
MANAGING FINANCES (loans, skills or management plan in managing money/finances, seeking funding, credit)		
Code Abbreviations: Employment & Income	Code Description: Navigating employment as a graduate student and their income status/struggles.	
EMPLOYMENT		
INCOME (1v.2 income, child support, partner income, unstable income)		
SES (socioeconomic status, working-class, middle-class, upper-middle-class)		
Code Abbreviations: Professional Development & Mobility Expenses	Code Description: Managing expenses around traveling for professional development (conferences, events, employment), relocating, and personal reasons.	
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COST		

MOBILITY EXPENSES		
Code Abbreviations: Children Care & Expenses	Code Description: Finances around paying for childcare and children expenses.	
CHILD CARE		
CHILDREN EXPENSES		
Code Abbreviations: Health Insurance Cost & Access	Code Description: Finances and experiences around health insurance (access & cost).	
HEALTH CARE EXPENSES (cost, care financial support)		
HEALTH CARE ACCESS (positives/negative of having or not having access to health services, types of care/insurance, care sacrifices)		

GRADUATE SCHOOL	Graduate School Pipeline & Transition	Participant #
	Graduate School Culture	
Code Abbreviation: Graduate School Pipeline & Transition	Code Description: Parenting students talk about what contribute to their educational pipeline to their PhD program and their transition to grad school.	
COMMUNITY COLLEGE		
WHY UOFI		
WHY GRAD SCHOOL		
PRE GRAD SCHOOL		
EDUCATIONAL PATHWAY		
TRANSITION		

INSITITUTION	Institutional Spaces & Resources	Participant#
	Institutional Differences & Experiences	
Code Abbreviations: Institutional Support & Resources	Code Description: Support and/or no support from the university and their department.	
INSITUTIONAL SPACES (Campus, department)		
DEPT & DEPT SPACES		
CAMPUS POLICY & RESOURCES		
Code Abbreviations: Institutional Differences & Experiences	Code Description: Parents talk about their experiences at different institutions when it comes to access and their transition to their PhD program.	
ACCESS		
CC		
4 YEAR (Bachelors)		
MASTER		
PRE PHD		

MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH	Mental Health	Participant#
	Physical Health	
Code Abbreviations: Mental Health	Code Description: Parents express dealing with emotions, high levels of stress, anxiety, etc.	
MENTAL HEALTH		

(mental behavior changes, stress, eating habit change, anxiety)		
MENTAL HEALTH CARE		
Code Abbreviations: Physical Health	Code Description: Parents express dealing with changes in their physical body after starting graduate school.	
PHYSICAL HEALTH		
PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE		

MOTHERS & FATHERS	Parental Perspectives	Participants#
	Parenting Dynamics	
	Child Care	
	Family Lifestyles & Members	
	Personal Accomplishments & Growth	
	Last Thoughts	
Code Abbreviations: Parent Perspectives (Being a mother/father/parent/graduate student) Parental status	Code Description: Parents talking about their parental status and navigating as a parent in social and campus spaces.	
OUTLOOK OF PARENTS (perspective of parents)		
MOTHERS PERSPECTIVE		
FATHER PERSPECTIVE		
NEW DAD		
NEW MOM		
PARENTAL DUTIES (average day)		

HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS		
SOCIAL CIRCLES		
PERSONAL NECESSITIES		
Code Abbreviation: Parents Graduate School Progress & Experiences	Code Description: Parents talk about their experiences in different settings in navigating life, personal challenges, and career while in graduate school.	
NAVIGATING GRAD SCHOOL (transition, struggles, progress, hidden curriculum)		
PHD STUDENT EXPECTATIONS		
PARENT SCHOLAR		
ACTS OF AGENCY		
NAVIGATIONAL SKILLS		
THOUGHTS OF LEAVING		
END OF GRAD SCHOOL		
Code Abbreviations: Parenting Type	Code Description: Different parenting dynamics.	
SINGLE PARENTING		
CO-PARENTING		
BLENDED FAMILIES		
PARENTING W/O FAMILY		
Code Abbreviations: Family Lifestyles & Members	Code Description: Parents talking about their family (children/partners) and leading a family lifestyles as a graduate student.	

FAMILY LIFESTYLES		
CHILDREN		
PARTNER (academic, non-academic, husbands, boyfriend/girlfriend, fiancé)		
Code Abbreviations: Relationship Status	Code Description: Parents talk about being and not being in relationships (married, divorce, partners).	
SINGLE		
MARRIED		
DIVORCE		
BIOLOGICAL PARENT		
IN A RELATIONSHIP		
Code Abbreviations: Personal Accomplishments & Growth	Code Description: Parents talk about a time they were proud of their academic work and then how that relates back with their families.	
PROUD MOMENT		
Code Abbreviations: Last Thoughts	Code Description: At the end of the second interview, parents give their last thoughts of what they like for others to know about parenting students.	
LAST THGOUGHTS		

IDENTITIES & BACKGROUNDS	Demographic Identities	Participant#
	Personal Characteristics	
	First-generation	
Code Abbreviations: Demographic Identities	Code Description: Relating to parenting students' demographic identities.	
PARENTIAL STATUS		
RACE		
GENDER		
AGE		
MULTIPLE IDENTITIES		
Code Abbreviations: Personal Characteristics & Statuses	➤ Code Description: The different social divisions and axes of parents that intersect with each other.	
RESIDENTIAL STATUS		
EMPLOYMENT STATUS		
Code Abbreviations: First-generation	Code Description: Navigating graduate school as a first-generation student.	
BEING FG		
FG GRAD SCHOOL		
FG ACADEMIC SUPPORT		

SUPPORT & RESOURCES	Support System & Resources	Participant#
	Social Services	
	Transportation	
Code Abbreviations: Support System & Resources	Code Description: Different types of support system and resources	
SUPPORT SYSTEM		
FAMILY SUPPORT (extended family)		
GRAD PEER SUPPORT		
COMMUNITY SUPPORT		
SOCIAL MEDIA		
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT		
FACULTY SUPPORT		
DEPARTMENT SUPPORT		
Code Abbreviations: Social Services	Code Description: Parents talk about different types of support services they use and qualify for.	
SOCIAL SERVICES		
SOCIAL SERVICES CHALLENGES		
Code Abbreviations: Transportation	Code Description: Parents talk about transportation (car, public transportation, Uber, taxi) as supporting them navigating daily task as parents and students.	
TRANSPORTATION BENEFITS		
TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES		