



# Exploring the Impact of Othermothering

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# What is Othermothering?

- Othermothers are defined as “women who assist blood-mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities of child care for short- to long-term periods, in informal and formal arrangements” (James, 1993; Collins, 2000; Guiffrida, 2005).
- Othermothering in the school setting, Foster suggested “an appropriate pedagogy for Black students cannot be limited only to academics, but must deal with political, social, and economic circumstances of children’s lives and communities.” Foster likened these issues to “the hidden curriculum” (Guiffrida, 2005).



# What is Othermothering?

- Components of Othermothering
  - Ethic of Care
  - Cultural Advancement
  
- Benefits of Othermothering
  - Creates an institutional culture where all students are affirmed and valued
  - Builds a sense of belonging
  - Fosters student communalism and school engagement



# Othermothering-Faculty and HBCU-driven

- Previous research has focused on faculty at HBCUs to analyze the impact of othermothering.
- Mawhinney (2011) discussed the mission of HBCUs to
  - 1) provide education to newly freed slaves enriched in Black history and tradition
  - 2) delivered educational experiences that were consistent with the experiences and values of many Black families
  - 3) provided a service to the Black community and country by aiding in the development of leadership, racial pride, and return service to the community



# Othermothering-Faculty and HBCU-driven

- An underlying, unspoken expectation to develop othermother relationships to students
- Othermothering is a natural way of being at HBCUs with the expectation to “return service to the community”
- Students report faculty and staff at HBCUs “going out of their way” to assist and are more committed to their success than PWI staff
- Professors in another study felt the need to provide support to Black students specifically because of the isolation that occurs at PWIs for both Black students, faculty, and staff and the shared experience of Blackness (Griffin, 2013)



# Why is Othermothering important beyond HBCUs?

- A research brief by Palmer and Williams (2019) highlights the uptick in HBCU application and enrollment among black students as a result of the “Missouri Effect” and 2016 presidential election:
  - 140 hate incidents were reported at PWIs in the 10 days following the election of President Trump (Miller & Werner-Winslow, 2017)
  - Campus hate crimes rose 25% for a reported 1,250 crimes in 2016 (U.S. Department of Education)
  - Black college-bound students are/have been affected and influenced by the current social and political climate in the United States.
  - Campus climate and campus culture rank high on scales of what is important to prospective students and families.
  - Regardless of what is occurring the wide society, PWIs should be fostering a climate of civility and inclusion.



# Why is Othermothering important beyond HBCUs?

## Theoretical Frames

- Belonging – with peers, in the classroom, or on campus – is a critical dimension of success at college. It can affect a student’s degree of academic adjustment, achievement, aspirations, or even whether a student stays in school (Strayhorn, 2019).
- Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005)-Othermothering supports four of the six forms of capital: aspirational, familial, social, and navigational



# Othermothering-Student Affairs and PWIs

- **Diversity within Student Affairs in Place**
  - A 2018 CUPA-HR report found that about 71% of student affairs positions are held by women, compared to only 58% among all higher education professionals
  - The report also found that Black students are proportionately represented among student affairs professionals today (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018).
  - While achievement gaps still exist, Guiffrida and Douthit (2010) counter that various academic advising, student support, and retention programs are well suited to provide support and systemic changes that will assist in the success of Black students at PWIs



# Othermothering-Student Affairs and PWIs

- **Less Pressure on Black Junior Faculty**
  - Cultural taxation describes the unique burden placed on ethnic minority faculty in carrying out their responsibility to service the university.
  - Increased expectations on faculty of color as it related to; representation on committees, mentorship for students of color, and the ‘publish or perish’ requirement for tenure track faculty. The expectation of serving as a voice and support for students of color can be detrimental for the career viability of professors of color, especially at predominantly white institutions (Cleveland, Sailes, Gilliam, & White, 2018).



# Othermothering-Student Affairs and PWIs

- **In loco parentis**
  - In loco parentis serves as the foundation for student affairs work in the university system. Student affairs professionals' work is centered around students feeling engaged and supported at the institution. Thus, students are more likely to persist, be retained, and graduate.
  - Student affairs work has become more intrusive/proactive. The idea behind this model is to provide students with information before they request it, while also building a relationship with the student at the same time.
  - The millennial generation is characterized as closely tied to their parents, positive and progressive in thought, team-orientated and community-focused, and insistent of a secure and regulated environment (Sweeton & Davis, 2004)



# What does Othermothering look like in practice?

- Going above and beyond
- Follow-up and follow through
- Authentic caring and attentiveness



# The Impact on the Professional

- Advocacy and Limitations
- Professional Boundaries
- Self-care



# Implications for Practice

- Black graduates of historically black colleges and universities are significantly more likely to have felt supported while in college and to be thriving afterwards than are their black peers who graduated from predominantly white institutions, according to data from a GallupPurdue University study (2015). PWIs have the opportunity to create similar supports through the othermothering frame.
- Black students are more likely to benefit from othermothering as they tend to find solace and support from those that look like them. However, White, Latinx, and all other student populations benefit as well.
- Increasing the sense of belonging on campus can impact the participation in other areas that statistically have not been strong areas of engagement for black students.



# Discussion



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